Electronic Communication

for publicly appointed and sworn experts

Competent, credible, trustworthy – every independent expert must meet these criteria. With the introduction of electronic legal communication, these criteria must also be ensured in digital communication. The key information at a glance:

- Both court and private expert reports can be produced in electronic form. Authenticity of the sender and protection against falsification must be ensured. Both criteria are met by using the qualified electronic signature (QES). This procedure is also provided for in the expert regulations of the appointing bodies.
- The equipment for the qualified electronic signature consists of: a personal signature card for the publicly appointed and sworn expert, containing the details of the scope of appointment and the appointing body; a card reader; signature software. Further information on the signature equipment: see pages 2 and 3.
- Electronically signed private expert reports can be sent as email attachments.
- Since January 2024, experts have been expected to communicate with the courts via the electronic citizen and organisation mailbox (eBO). Information about the eBO and currently available software: https://egvp.justiz.de/buerger_organisationen/index.php
- As the eBO is regarded as a secure transmission channel with an identity-verified sender, it is generally no longer necessary to additionally sign documents with a QES. However, we continue to recommend using the IHK expert signature card within the eBO as well: if expert reports leave the secure eBO environment – for example when they are forwarded to recipients outside the eBO – the QES continues to ensure their integrity and authenticity.
- For electronic inspection of files, the portal www.akteneinsichtsportal.de is available. For access authorisation, experts receive a “Safe ID” from the competent court.

Signature Guide for Experts

The benefits of electronically signed expert reports at a glance

- Saves time and effort, especially for extensive expert reports in multiple copies
- Authenticity of the sender and integrity of the expert report are ensured
- The scope of appointment and the appointing body are shown in the signature, i.e. the details of the expert's official stamp are represented electronically
- Applicable to court and private expert reports
- Legally compliant and up to date

Step 1: Signature equipment

Applying for the signature card. Experts must apply for their signature card in person and be identified. The card is valid for 24 months and is produced by the officially accredited trust service provider D-TRUST GmbH, a subsidiary of Bundesdruckerei GmbH. The IHK signature card for experts can be applied for at many IHKs or via the PostIdent procedure at a price of €169 plus VAT.

Allow about three weeks from application until receipt of the signature card and the PIN letter.

Ordering accessories

- To use the signature card, you need an external card reader with its own keypad, available e.g. from the Bundesdruckerei online shop.
- You also need signature software to sign your files (e.g. expert reports in PDF format) – Bundesdruckerei also provides recommendations here.

Step 2: Activating the signature card

Please follow the D-Trust instructions at: https://www.d-trust.net/de/inbetriebnahme-karten

Step 3: Signing and sending expert reports

- Save the expert report as a PDF file (ideally in PDF/A format).
- Depending on the signature software used, either upload the file to your signature application, or right-click the file in your file manager and select the “Sign” option.
- Insert your signature card into the reader and click “Sign”. You will be prompted to enter your signature PIN; confirm with OK. The signed file is saved in the original location and can be recognised by its file extension.
- You can now send the signed expert report as an attachment.

The signature is permanently linked to the expert report. Please note: the signature is not displayed visually on the file itself. It is a mathematical function that must be validated electronically using free verification software. During electronic validation, the details of the expert's official stamp are also displayed.