All you need to know about the electronic residence permit (eAT)

Contents

Introduction

Until now the residence permit, or 'title', (residence permit, permanent settlement permit, permanent EU residence permit or Blue EU Card) issued to you by the Aliens Department has come in the form of an adhesive label in your ID card/passport.

From 1st September 2011 the electronic residence permit (eAT) is being issued as a separate document in credit-card format incorporating a number of electronic functions. All third-country citizens (non-EU nationals) will be issued with their own card.

The new card will also cover residence authorisations (residence card, permanent residence card or residence permit for Swiss nationals), which have hitherto taken the form of a separate paper document issued to dependants of EU citizens and Swiss nationals and their family members.

The eAT contains a contactless chip carrying personal data, biometric characteristics (photo; two fingerprints from individuals aged 6 or over) and any additional provisions (special conditions) pertaining to the cardholder. The chip also contains electronic proof of identity and offers an electronic signature function.

The electronic residence permit at a glance

- Introduction on 1st September 2011

- Replaces the current adhesive label

- Europe-wide uniformity of residence permit for all third-country nationals (foreigners who are not citizens of an EU member state).

- Credit-card format

- Contactless chip built into the card

- Prevention of forgery and abuse by means of digital photo and fingerprints of all persons aged 6 and over, resulting in unambiguous link between residence status and cardholder

- Electronic ID function for business/activity conducted on the internet and at machines.

- Supports electronic signatures for legally-binding signing of digital documents

1 The electronic residence permit

Why is the eAT being introduced?

Pursuant to Council Regulations (EC) nos. 1030/2002 and 380/2008 all EU member states are required to introduce the electronic residence permit. The aim is to standardise EU residence permits for third-country nationals and, by using biometric data, to strengthen the link between document and document holder, thereby preventing abuse.

Are the old residence permits still valid?

Existing residence permits in passports and replacement travel documents retain their stated validity until 30.04.2021 at the latest.

How long is an eAT valid?

The validity of the eAT is determined by the kind of residence permit/authorisation issued and the ruling of the Aliens Department. Where an open-ended residence permit has been granted, a new card must be issued every ten years.

> **Important:**
> As was the case with the former residence permit and notices detailing the right to reside, the eAT is valid only as long as the holder is in possession of a valid passport or alternative travel document relating to the eAT. Please ensure, therefore, that you apply to renew your passport or other travel document in good time.

The functions of the eAT in detail:

1. Your photo and fingerprints are stored on the eAT chip. This measure is designed to prevent abuse of the eAT. The biometric function also protects your identity.

Important:
Your digital photo and fingerprints can only be accessed by official bodies such as the police and the Aliens Department. The section of the card containing the chip in which these data are stored is particularly well protected.

2. With the introduction of the eAT, additional provisions (special conditions) relating to the residence permit are no longer printed on a label and stuck into the passport but are stored on the eAT chip and printed on a supplementary sheet. This supplementary sheet is issued along with the eAT.

Important:
Only official bodies such as the police and customs authorities have access to the additional provisions stored on the chip.

3. One new function of the card relates to online identification. You can use the eAT to register securely and safely on websites and prove your identity when using machines. Thanks to this online identification function you can be sure that the person or company you are dealing with online is really the party that he/it claims to be. This function provides better protection for your personal data.

Important:
You yourself can determine which personal data are transferred.

4. The new signature function has all the validity of a handwritten signature. You can use it simply and conveniently to sign any online agreements or applications that would otherwise be legally valid only if signed in ink. The electronic signature dispenses with the need for paper copies bearing written signatures and the associated mailing by post.

What information is stored on the eAT chip?
The chip contains the biometric data (fingerprints and photo), any additional provisions (special conditions) and also the information printed on the card itself (e.g. first names, surname, address).

2 Photo and fingerprints

The photo is stored electronically on the chip and printed on the card itself. The photo must comply with the following conditions:

■ The picture must be recent.

■ The face must be centred and uncovered in such a way that it is recognisable (facing forward, not in profile).

■ Head coverings that do not obscure the face are admissible on religious grounds.

■ The eyes must be open and clearly visible.

■ Exceptions may be permitted, e.g. for medical reasons.

> Further information on the requirements relating to photographs is available at: **www.bmi.bund.de**

For all foreigners aged 6 or over and coming from non-EU member states two fingerprints must be stored on the electronic residence permit's chip. Fingerprints strengthen the link between document and document holder, thereby preventing abuse.

Are the fingerprints stored permanently in a location other than the eAT?

Fingerprints are stored on the data carriers of the Aliens Department only until you have picked up your eAT, at which point the data must be erased permanently. There is likewise no storage of your data by the Federal Printing Office, which produces the eAT. There is no legal provision for the creation of a nationwide database.

Who can access the photo and fingerprints stored on the chip of the eAT?

Only authorised bodies such as the police and aliens authorities may access the photo and fingerprints to verify the authenticity of the card and the ID of the eAT holder. For this to happen the eAT must be in the possession of the relevant authority. The information cannot be accessed online.

All information and transfer of data is safeguarded by internationally recognised encryption procedures. An access system based on permissions allocated by the government regulates who may access which private information stored on the eAT.

How are the fingerprints taken?

Fingerprints are taken when the individual applies for a residence permit at the Aliens Department. Fingers are scanned; no ink is used. Normally the two fingers are each scanned three times. Only the best print of each three scans is saved.

Which fingers are scanned?

As a rule the two index fingers are used for fingerprinting for the eAT chip. If necessary, other fingers (but not the little finger) may be used.

3 Additional provisions (special conditions)

Any additional provisions (special conditions) relating to the individual's residential status are stored on the chip and printed on a supplementary sheet. The card itself bears the words "siehe Zusatzblatt" ('see supplementary sheet'). If the special conditions are altered a new supplementary sheet will be issued and the data on the chip changed. A new eAT need not be issued.

Important:
Only official bodies such as the police and customs authorities may read the additional provisions stored on the chip. For this to happen the eAT must be in the possession of the relevant authority. The information cannot be accessed online.

4 Online-identification function

What is the online-identification function?

Wherever the facility is offered on the internet or by machines, you will be able to use the residence card in combination with your 6-digit PIN number to prove your identity.

This chip-and-pin identification facility will be offered increasingly not only by online shops, insurance companies, banks, email service providers and social networking sites but also by local authorities and government departments. You will be able to perform tasks such as taking out car insurance or registering a car online using your eAT. Chores such as filling in forms, sitting in waiting rooms and entering your personal details will be a thing of the past.

Who can use the new online-identification function?

The online-identification function can be used by any individual aged 16 or over. Identifying yourself online is voluntary; the decision of whether to use the function is yours alone. The function can be switched on and off at will.

How can I use the online-identification function?

To prove your identity online using the eAT the identification function must be switched on.

Card-reading device and driver:
- To use your eAT in combination with your computer you will need a card-reading device (available at retail outlets) and
- the "AusweisApp" driver, a small piece of software that allows the eAT to communicate with your computer. The driver can be downloaded from **www.ausweisapp.bund.de.**

The PIN letter:
When you have applied for your eAT you will receive a PIN letter by post. This letter will contain a secret 5-digit Personal Identification Number (PIN), a 10-digit Pin Unblocking Key (PUK) and a code word for blocking the online-identification function.

Personal Identification Number (PIN):

> **Important:**
> The 5-digit PIN is a transport PIN and must be replaced with a private 6-digit PIN of your choice once you have received your eAT.

You can either do this at home using a card-reading device or at your local Aliens Department office. The PIN can be changed any number of times. Each time you use the online-identification function, you will need to enter your persona 6-digit PIN.

The Pin Unblocking Key (PUK):

If you enter an incorrect PIN three times in succession, it will be blocked. The PUK is used for unblocking your PIN.

The code word for blocking:

If your eAT has been stolen or lost you will have to block the online-identification function. To do this you must call the blocking hotline or the visit the Aliens Department and quote the code word.

> **Protection of your information:**
> Make sure not to note down your PIN, PUK or code word on the card itself.
> Do not keep a note of your PIN in the same place as your card.

What is the 'pseudonym'?

You can use the eAT, for instance, to prove your identity on social networking websites without revealing personal information. The eAT chip generates a pseudonym that identifies you to the relevant service provider without allowing access to your private data. Used in conjunction with the 6-digit PIN, the process is as easy as a standard log-in procedure and is considerably safer.

What does 'verification of age and place of residence' refer to?

Some providers of online services require only information on customer's age or place of residence. The eAT card can check age or place of residence. Where an individual's age is being verified, the eAT does not give the date of birth of the cardholder but only informs the relevant party whether the individual has reached the required age (e.g. is 16 or over).

In cases where the place of residence is being verified, the card merely offers a check on whether the holder is officially registered as living in the town or federal state that he/she has stated.

These two functions ensure that the party soliciting data on an individual is provided only with information that is essential to its purpose.

Using the online-identitication function to buy an item online

You visit an online shop and identify a product that you wish to buy. Before the online supplier can process your order he will require your full name and address. This information can be given using the online-identification function.

Prior to data transfer the online retailer will identify himself to your eAT by means of an authorisation certificate. Your card checks the validity of the certificate while the online retailer checks that your card is valid and not blocked.

A window will open up in which you will select which information you wish to provide. By entering your 6-digit PIN you agree to transfer the selected data, which are encrypted and transmitted to the online retailer.

Only when you have made a separate statement of intention is the purchase officially completed.

> **Important:**
> If you pick up your new electronic residence permit over the next few days, you will be asked if you would like to use the online-identification function. Depending on your response, this function will be switched on or off.
> If you change your mind at a later date, you can return to your Aliens Office and have it switched off/on.

5 The electronic signature

The eAT supports qualified electronic signatures (QES), also known as the signature function. Only you yourself can activate this function.

How does the signature function work?

The signature function can be used, for instance, for the legally-binding signing of digitally drawn-up agreements, in which the handwritten signature is replaced by a 'signature certificate'. With an electronic signature the recipient of the document (the contractual partner) can ascertain whether the document was altered after being digitally signed.

The eAT supports digital signing of documents. If you wish to use the signature function, the online-indentification function must be switched on.

What do I need to do to use the signature function?

An eAT cardholder wishing to use the signature function must obtain a special signature certificate and a hand-held card-reading device. The cost can vary from provider to provider.

Signature certificate:

The signature certificate can be obtained from an authorised signature provider (also known as a certification service provider). A list of providers is available from the Federal Network Agency website (www.nrca-ds.de/en/index_e.html) under 'Accredited certification service providers'. You will have to load the signature certificate onto your eAT.

Signature PIN:

To use the signature function you will need a separate signature PIN, which you will set up yourself when loading the signature certificate.

Hand-held card-reading device:

You will need a hand-held card-reading device which features a keypad and display and supports cards using a contactless interface. Please follow the directions accompanying the relevant software application.

6 New uses for your residence permit

Uses for the online-identification function

Online registrations: When first registering for an online service, users are often asked to provide personal information such as their name or even their complete address. This information can be transferred quickly and accurately using the eAT.

Providing personal details when using machines: In the future, vending machines and information booths will increasingly offer personalised services. Here, too, you will be able to use your electronic residence permit simply and quickly for the purpose of personal identification.

Internet access using a pseudonym: Although you are not always compelled to provide personal information online, services still have to be able to "recognise" their users once they have registered. The eAT can generate a "pseudonym" for this purpose.

Online signatures: You can use the electronic signature function to sign agreements easily and securely online.

Verifying age and place of residence: Many services can be used only by persons who have reached a minimum age or who are officially registered as living in a particular location. The eAT can confirm an individual's age or place of residence without revealing non-essential information. The card will merely communicate a "yes" or "no".

Automated form filling: Filling in forms can be a chore and spelling mistakes can easily be made when writing out names and addresses. The online-identification function allows this information to be drawn electronically from the eAT.

Interacting with local authorities: Local authorities will come increasingly to offer their services via the internet (e.g. electronic filing of tax returns). These services require reliable evidence of the identity of users. In future it will be the online-indentification function that provides this information.

7 Data security

What data can be transferred using the electronic residence permit?

By entering your PIN you can provide the following information:

- Your first name(s) and surname, academic title, if applicable

- The issuing country

- Verification of age and place of residence

- Date and place of birth

- Address

- Type of document

- Identification via pseudonym

Choosing which data are released ... It's your right.

In the final analysis it is always you, the cardholder, who determines which data are to be transferred. The only information which is released automatically without your active consent is that relating to the validity of your eAT and to whether your card has been blocked.

Are my personal details secure?

Yes. In fact, they are more secure than when you conduct transactions, make purchases or interact in networks on the internet without the help of your eAT. The new functions of the electronic residence permit protect your personal data. The online-identification function checks that the provider of online goods or services is indeed the person he purports to be.

Is my information safe from hackers during the transfer process?

Your data are always encrypted before they are transmitted. All information and data transfers are protected using established, internationally recognised encryption procedures.

Every provider of goods or services who wishes to use the eAT for his/her transactions must apply to the Issuing Office for Authorisation Certificates (VfB) for an authorisation certificate. The Office applies strict criteria in ascertaining the minimum data that must be obtained by the provider to enable transactions to go ahead. A certificate is then issued approving the release of this information alone.

8 What happens if the electronic residence permit is lost or stolen?

How can I block the card's electronic functions if I lose my eAT or it is stolen?

You can have the online-identification function blocked by calling the **Hotline 0180-1-33 33 33** (3.9 ct/min. from a German landline, max. 42 ct/min. from a mobile phone; also diallable from abroad). You will be asked to give your name, date of birth and the code word for blocking the card. This ensures that no one other than you is able to block your card. You will also have to inform the relevant Aliens Office separately of the loss of your card. Alternatively you can contact your local Aliens Office direct to block and report the loss of your card.

What happens to the signature function if I lose my eAT?

You must report the loss immediately to your signature provider and have the signature function blocked. **This does not happen automatically when you report the loss of your document to the Aliens Office. You must report the loss separately to your signature provider.**

9 What happens if … ?

… I enter the wrong PIN?

After entering an incorrect PIN twice, you will be asked to enter your access number, which can be found on the front of your eAT.

If you then enter an incorrect PIN a third time the online function is blocked as a security measure.

If this happens you can unblock the card using your Pin Unblocking Key (PUK). The PUK can be used up to ten times.

… I forget my PIN?

A new PIN can be set up at any Aliens Office on presentation of your eAT.

… I change my address?

If you change your place of residence you must report to the Registry Office or Aliens Office responsible for your new location. The Office will change the address stored on your chip and on the visible part of the card.

… my passport has lapsed?

You must apply for a new or extended passport in good time. Your future eAT is only valid while your passport is valid.

… I would like to have the online-identification function switched on or off?

As long as the eAT is valid, you can have the online-identification function switched on or off at any time at your local Aliens Office.

10 We're there to help!

– Your Aliens Department –

Applications for residence permits must be made at the Aliens Office responsible for your place of residence. The Office can provide further information on the application procedure.

> **!** You may also call the service hotline: 0180 - 133 33 33 from Mon. to Fri., 7am to 8pm. (3.9 ct/min. from a German landline, max. 42 ct/min. from a mobile phone; also dialable from abroad).

– Information on the internet –

This information is also available online at **www.bamf.de/eaufenthaltstitel**, where you will also find the answers to many key questions. Information on related subjects, such as signature providers or how to download the "AusweisApp" driver, can also be found on the internet.

Abbreviations	
eAT	elektronischer Aufenthaltstitel (electronic residence permit)
PIN	Personal Identification Number
PUK	Personal Unblocking Key
QES	Qualifizierte elektronische Signatur (Qualified Electronic Signature)
VfB	Vergabestelle für Berechtigungszertifikate (Issuing Office for Authorisation Certificates)