

Checking German invoice emails signatures

To comply with German law buyers must receive a copy of each invoices signed with a certificate issued in accordance with the regulations of the Federal Office for Information Security (BSI) in Germany (<http://www.bsi.bund.de/english>).

An approved signing application must be used to sign each invoice email and a similarly approved software tool must be used to check or prove the validity of such a signature. Microsoft Outlook and other common email clients are not approved applications in this context.

These requirements restrict the manner in which German invoices can be presented. Each email will contain two attachments, a HTML file containing the invoice image, and a PKCS7 file containing the signature for that invoice image. To check the signature you will need:

- To download and install SecSigner, the approved signature validation application
- To download the invoice image and the signature from the email to a single folder
- Double-click the signature to launch SecSigner to validate the signature

Download and Install SecSigner

The SecSigner application is available from the OB¹⁰ web site. The following instructions apply to Microsoft Internet Explorer:

- Go to the Downloads page at www.ob10.com (see the menu at the left of the page)
- Right-click the link to SecSigner and choose to Open the file
- Follow the instructions for installing the program to your computer

Save the Invoice and Signature

Here, the exact steps depend on the email client you are using. But generally, you need to save the two attachments to the same folder. You might use a new folder you have created for the purpose of checking the invoice signature, or you might save them both to your computer's Desktop.

Here are the instruction for Windows and Microsoft Outlook:

- Right-click your Desktop and choose New | Folder
- Name the folder, e.g. "Signature check"
- Right-click the first attachment, invoice.html, and choose Save As
- Save the invoice file into the folder you have just created. Do not change the file's name
- Right-click the second attachment, invoice.html.pkcs7, and choose Save As
- Save the invoice file into the folder you have just created. Do not change the file's name

Check the Signature

If you have installed the SecSigner application it will have associated itself with signature files. This means it is very easy to check signatures using SecSigner:

- Double-click the certificate file, "invoice.html.pkcs7"
- SecSigner opens and verifies the signature against the invoice image
- Press DOKUMENT ANZEIGEN to check the content of the invoice image file, you can check the text content and the HTML content, or the HTML content displaying all text (i.e. including invisible or white text)