The federal invoice submission portals

Information for suppliers of goods and services to public-sector contracting authorities

Due to existing legal regulations for invoice processing in the federal administration, you are required to send invoices electronically to your federal administration client as of November 27, 2020.

This requirement does not apply in case of certain exceptions. Exceptions are given in section 3 of the federal E-Invoicing Ordinance (*E-Rechnungsverordnung*, ERechV)[1]. For example, it is still possible to submit invoices in paper form for direct orders valued at up to €1,000 net.

What is an electronic invoice? And what is the XRechnung standard?

As defined in the federal E-Invoicing Ordinance and in Directive 2014/55/EU on electronic invoicing in public procurement, an electronic invoice is an invoice that has been issued, transmitted and received in a structured electronic format. This must be a format which allows automated and electronic processing of the invoice. So, an **electronic invoice cannot be** an image file or a simple **PDF document**.

The requirements are based on the European standard EN 16931 and the German specifications of the standard. This resulted in the **XRechnung standard** for public procurement invoices sent to Germany's public administration.

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[1] See https://www.e-rechnung-bund.de/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/E-RechV.pdf (German only).

The **XRechnung** standard can also be used for submitting invoices to federal state and local contracting authorities. The latest version of the standard can be downloaded free of charge[2].

An electronic invoice compliant with the XRechnung standard is a structured, standardised XML data record. Data from such invoices can be processed digitally in an accounting system, and all related documents can be embedded in the invoice.

How can I submit an electronic invoice to the federal administration?

Electronic invoices using the XRechnung standard for contracts with the **direct federal administration** can be transmitted free of charge using the Federal Central Invoice Submission Portal (ZRE). Electronic invoices for contracts with the **indirect federal administration** (such as foundations and authorities under public law) can be transmitted using the Online Access Act-compliant Invoice Submission Portal (OZG-RE), which is also free of charge. **Your contracting authority will inform you which portal to use.**

Electronic invoices created using other standards are also accepted. However, they must comply with the European standard, the terms of use for the invoice submission portal in question and the requirements of the E-Invoicing Ordinance.

You can access both portals via www.en.e-rechnung-bund.de. You can access the **ZRE** directly at xrechnung.bund.de and the **OZG-RE** at xrechnung-bdr.de. There you can register to use the portals. The registration process is similar to that of other websites. Once you have entered all the necessary data and accepted the terms of use and the privacy statement, a link to activate your account will be sent to the email address you provided. Clicking on the link completes the registration process and activates your user account.

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[2] See https://xeinkauf.de/xrechnung/ (German only).

How do I submit electronic invoices using the portals?

You can submit electronic invoices using one of the following five options:

Web submission: You can create and send electronic invoices directly and manually via your web browser, then download them for your records.

Upload: You can upload and send electronic invoices you have created yourself.

Email: Electronic invoices you have created yourself can also be submitted through the ZRE by email using the address xrechnung@portal.bund.de. To use this option, you will need to select email as the submission type on the ZRE account management page, where you must also provide an email address. **If you are using the OZG-RE, after registering you will receive an individual email address to use for submitting invoices.**
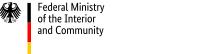
Peppol: You can submit electronic invoices from within your own software via automated information exchange (machine-to-machine communication). To use this option, you will need to select Peppol as the submission type on the ZRE account management page. This will allow you to track the status of your submitted invoices.

De-Mail: It is also possible to submit electronic invoices using De-Mail. To use this option, please use the address xrechnung@portal-bund.de-mail.de. Otherwise, the same requirements apply for this submission type that apply for submission via email. De-Mail is currently only available for the ZRE.

It is up to you to choose which option is best for you. You can select your preferred submission type, based on your technical environment, on the ZRE account management page.

What information must I provide when creating my own electronic invoices?

If you can create your own electronic invoices, you may submit these invoices via upload, email, De-Mail or Peppol. When creating electronic invoices compliant with the XRechnung standard or the European standard EN 16931, you must provide the following information required by section 5 of the E-Invoicing Ordinance:

Information required by section 5 of the E-Invoicing Ordinance	To be entered in the following fields of an XRechnung (see XRechnung, current version)
Buyer reference (*Leitweg-ID*)	BT-10 (BT = Business Term or information element)**
Bank details	For credit transfer: BG-17 (BT-84 to BT-86) For direct debit: BG-19 (BT-89 to BT-91) (BG = Business Group or group of information elements)
Payment terms	BT-20 and/or BT-9
Seller contact email [or De-Mail] address	BT-43
Seller identifier*	BT-29
Purchase order reference*	BT-13

*If provided by the contracting authority.

**BT fields and BG groups are used to identify and categorise information elements in an invoice.

How does my invoice reach the correct recipient?

To ensure that your electronic invoice can be forwarded from the relevant submission portal to the intended recipient, you must provide the **buyer reference** (*Leitweg-ID*), which is the recipient's unique identifier. Your contracting authority should provide you with its buyer reference. If you do not have it, please ask the contracting authority. To use the Peppol transmission method, you will need a participant ID (also known as Peppol ID) to be properly addressed. For offices of the federal administration which are connected to the ZRE and the OZG-RE, please note: the **participant ID** is composed of the prefix 0204 and a buyer reference (e.g., 0204:991-33333TEST-33).

How can I check the status of electronic invoices I've submitted?

After you submit your electronic invoice, the portal immediately checks whether the invoice data are complete and meet the formal requirements so they can be processed. No matter which transmission method you use to submit your invoices, you can check the status of invoices in your user account. If you use Peppol, you will receive an automated reply confirming that the invoice was successfully transmitted.

Where can I enter information about discounts?

Information about discounts can be entered in the field "Payment terms" (BT-20) in the web submission form.

Can I add attachments to an electronic invoice?

You can add up to 200 attachments to your electronic invoice by embedding them in the XML file. A technical solution for sending supporting attachments larger than 15 MB was successfully rolled out for the OZG-RE on 11 July 2022. A similar solution is to be implemented for the ZRE in the course of 2023. The following size restrictions currently apply to electronic attachments sent via the ZRE: up to 10 MB for transmission by email or De-Mail, up to 11 MB for web submission, and up to 15 MB for uploads and Peppol.

The following types of attachments are possible:

- PDF files
- Image files (PNG, JPEG)
- Text files (CSV)
- Excel sheets (XLSX)
- OpenDocument tables (ODS)
- XML (since 1 January 2021, using the XRechnung extension)

How can I help make sure I am paid on time?

To ensure that your invoice is processed and paid as smoothly as possible, it helps to avoid using symbols that are not permitted in financial transactions, such as /, § and %.

Where can I find more information?

Detailed information about the XRechnung standard can be found on the website of the Coordination Office for IT Standards (KoSIT). An English summary will soon be available. The official website run by the Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community (BMI) and the Federal Ministry of Finance (BMF) also has helpful information for invoice senders.

Where can I find help if I have questions or problems?

Help is available to answer invoice issuers' questions about electronic invoicing in general, and questions about the federal invoice submission portals.

Questions about the ZRE and OZG-RE:

Tel.: +49 30 2598 4436

Email: sendersupport-xrechnung@bdr.de

The telephone support service is available Monday through Friday from 8:00 to 16:00.

If you have questions about the buyer reference (*Leitweg-ID*), whether to use the ZRE or OZG-RE and the like, please contact your contracting authority.