Frequently Asked Questions -
Smart cards

Smart Cards - general information

1. Why did the EPO decide to use smart cards and how secure are they?

   Smart cards are credit card-sized plastic cards that contain a microprocessor and a small amount of memory.

   The EPO decided very early on in the planning process for its online services that the certificates which would allow users to conduct secure transactions with us would be stored on smart cards. Unlike passwords, smart cards allow us to provide the more secure two-factor authentication, comprising something that is held (the card) and something that is known (the PIN.) Two-factor authentication means that PINs can be simpler and therefore easier to remember than with a password, since, without the card, the PIN is useless, and vice versa. Also, the simpler PINs are not susceptible to brute-force attacks because the smart card locks out after several unsuccessful attempts to enter the PIN.

   Smart cards were chosen both for practical reasons (they are small and portable) and for their security characteristics, as they afford a much higher level of secure storage for certificates than, say, storing them on a hard drive. For example, smart cards offer tamper-proof storage of the user's private keys and digital certificates. They are highly resistant to unauthorised deletion or copying of the certificates and keys, and any attempt to tamper with them requires significant effort which would invariably result in physical damage to the cards themselves. Also, it is easier to spot the loss or theft of a card than of a certificate stored on a computer.

2. Which EPO Online Services can/must be accessed using a smart card?

   For information about the EPO Online Services which can be accessed using a smart card, see the Products and services page on our website at www.epoline.org.

3. Can I use my smart card on a laptop as well?

   Yes, you can use it either with the EPO-supplied smart card reader, or with an internal smart card reader, supported by the GemSAFE Libraries software.

4. I have to use a non-EPO smart card to log on to my company network. Can I use my EPO smart card on the same PC?

   Yes, you can use your EPO smart card as well, provided that you have installed the GemSAFE Libraries software. You cannot, however, use your EPO smart card to access your company network.

5. How much does the smart card/reader/software package cost?

   Smart card packages, which include your personal smart card, reader and software CD-ROM, are supplied free of charge.

Smart Cards - enrolment

6. Our company would like to order several smart cards. Can we enrol for them in a batch?

   This is not possible, as each person has to enrol individually (there is a secret security question for each card holder).
7. Can my assistant(s) get a smart card too?
   Yes (see also SMART CARDS - Online Filing)

8. Can you issue a collective smart card in the name of my company?
   No. We can only issue EPO smart cards to individual natural persons.

9. Can I have more than one smart card.
   The EPO can only issue one smart card per person per address/company as entered in the EPO list of authorized representatives.

10. How can I obtain a smart card?
    You can enrol for an EPO smart card online at https://nrm2.epoline.org/myepoline/pcf/scEnrolment.html

11. What are the various stages involved in the smart card application procedure?
    See www.epoline.org >“Getting started”.

12. Can I use a non-EPO smart card to access the EPO’s secure online services?
    Some non-EPO smart cards can be registered online at www.epoline.org => Enrol for a smart card => Register non-EPO smart card. For further information contact EPO User Support.

13. How long will I have to wait for my smart card?
    You should receive your smart card within 28 days of the date on which we receive the signed paper copy of your enrolment form.
    If you do not receive your smart card within 28 days, you should contact EPO User Support.
    If we do not receive the paper copy of your enrolment form within two months of your online enrolment request, your smart card request will be automatically rejected. If you still require a card you will have to start the enrolment procedure again.

Smart Cards - life circle: validity, renewal, replacement, revocation

14. How long are EPO smart cards valid for?
    EPO smart cards have a standard validity of three years. The “valid to” date is indicated on the card.

15. I am about to move to a different company. Can I continue to use my present smart card?
    No, you will need to request a new card. You will also need to request the revocation of your old card (by e-mail to support@epo.org).

16. My smart card is going to expire soon. How can I renew it?
    The expiry date of your smart card is printed on the card next to your name. You can authorise renewal of your card within 60 days prior to expiry by going to www.epoline.org => Smart card actions => Renew EPO smart card (existing card still valid) or Renew EPO smart card (existing card already expired). You will be sent your new card within a few days.
17. My smart card has expired. How can I get a new one?

You should send an e-mail to EPO User Support with your smart card details, postal address, e-mail address and phone number. Your new card will be dispatched to you within a few days.

18. If I get a replacement or renewal smart card, will my PIN code stay the same?

No, each new smart card is allocated a new PIN code and new Admin PIN. As soon as you receive your new smart card, you should sign and return your acceptance letter. You will then be sent your new PIN code within a few days (see also “How can I change my PIN code?”).

19. What do I need to do in order to revoke a smart card?

Smart card holders, or their direct superiors in matters relating to the EPO, can request the revocation of a smart card by sending an e-mail to EPO User Support.

20. What should I do with my revoked/expired smart card?

If your smart card has already expired or if you have already asked EPO User Support to revoke it, you can cut the smart card across the metallic chip and dispose of it. You do not need to return it to the EPO.

Smart Cards - activation and access rights

21. I have missed the time limit for returning my acceptance letter. What shall I do?

Contact EPO User Support.

22. I have not received my PIN code. What should I do?

First of all, check that you have actually returned the smart card acceptance letter that was enclosed with your smart card package. If you have not done so yet, sign it and send it by fax to the following number: +31(0)55 5214594. You will receive your PIN code within a few days.

If you have already returned your acceptance letter, send an e-mail to support@epo.org mentioning your smart card details, the date on which you sent the letter and, if possible, enclosing a copy of the letter as an attachment to your e-mail. You will then be contacted by EPO User Support.

23. I have lost/forgotten my PIN code and can no longer use my smart card. What should I do?

Contact EPO User Support.

24. I have not received my Admin PIN (PUC). What should I do?

The Admin PIN allows you to unblock your smart card should it become blocked. It is given to users on request only. To request your Admin PIN, contact EPO User Support.

25. How can I change my PIN code?

See the GemSAFE Readme file for more information:
Start => Programs => Gemplus => GemSAFE Libraries 3.2.5 => GemSAFE Card Details Tool => PIN
- or -
Start => Programs => Gemplus => GemSAFE Toolbox => Card Administration => PIN Management

26. How can I check that my PIN code is correct and not blocked?
GemSAFE Libraries version 3.2.5

First make sure that your smart card is correctly inserted in the reader.

Then run the GemSAFE Administration Tool by clicking on Start => Settings => Control Panel, then double-clicking on the Gemplus smart card reader icon:

The system will prompt you for your PIN code:

If your PIN is wrong or blocked an error message will appear. Otherwise the PIN dialogue will close. Press "Card" and then "Information" for more information about the certificates and keys stored on your card.

GemSAFE Libraries version 4.2 or 5.1

First make sure that your smart card is correctly inserted in the reader.

Then run the GemSAFE Toolbox by clicking on Start => Programs => Gemplus => GemSAFE Toolbox.

Click on “Certificates” under “Card Contents” and enter your PIN code to log in.
If your PIN code is wrong or blocked an error message will appear. Otherwise the private keys will be added to the items in the dialogue window.

27. I have entered an incorrect PIN code and my smart card is blocked. What should I do?

You should contact EPO User Support with your smart card details and ask for your Admin PIN so that you can unblock your smart card.

GemSAFE Libraries version 3.2.5

First make sure that your smart card is correctly inserted in the reader.

Then start the smart card details tool (Start => Programs => Gemplus => GemSAFE Libraries 3.2.5 => GemSAFE Card Details Tool). The Unblock PIN window is displayed. Enter the Admin PIN and then your desired PIN code twice.

GemSAFE Libraries version 4.2 or 5.1

First make sure that your smart card is correctly inserted in the reader.

Then start the GemSAFE Toolbox (Start => Programs => Gemplus => GemSAFE Toolbox). Click on Card Administration => PIN Management => Unblock PIN => Next.
The Unblock PIN window is displayed. Enter the Admin PIN and then your desired PIN code twice.

Smart Cards - Online Filing

28. What is the difference between digital (smart card), alphabetical and facsimile signatures?

Only authorised representatives, i.e. professional representatives before the EPO and authorised employees whose names are entered in the official list maintained by the EPO, may use a smart card to sign their submissions. Each smart card contains a personal electronic key, which is equivalent to a “live” signature in the paper world.

Alphabetical signatures can be used by anybody, although their original function is to allow filing by non-EPO representatives such as, for example, administrative staff. The name of the signatory is entered between slashes in the indicated field.

A facsimile signature is a reproduction of a live signature in TIFF or JPG format and may be used by both authorised EPO representatives and administrative staff alike.

29. I am an administrative assistant to an EPO professional representative but I am not a representative myself. Can I use Online Filing?

Yes. You can not only draft applications in File Manager and send them, but also sign them by selecting either the alphabetical or facsimile signature option (see also “What is the difference between digital (smart card), alphabetical and facsimile signatures?”).

Check the Online Filing quick reference guide for more details: http://docs.epoline.org/onlinefilingdocs/OLF4_QRG_EN.pdf

(See also “Can my assistant(s) get a smart card too?”.)
30. My name is on the EPO list of authorised representatives but I am not an EPO professional representative. Can I use Online Filing?

Yes. You can draft, sign and send filings. You can use all three modes of signing: digital (via smart card), alphabetical or facsimile.

See also “What is the difference between digital (smart card), alphabetical and facsimile signatures?” or check the Online Filing quick reference guide for more details: http://docs.epoline.org/onlinefilingdocs/OLF4_QRG_DE.pdf

Smart Cards - Online Fee Payment

31. What are the requirements for accessing the EPO’s Online Fee Payment service?

See www.epoline.org > “Getting started” for details.

32. Can I pay fees or view the balance of my EPO deposit account without a smart card?

No, this is not possible. For more information see www.epoline.org > “Getting started”.

Smart Cards - Certificates

33. How can I check that both certificates - digital signature and non-repudiation - are present on my smart card?

In Internet Explorer, go to Tools => Internet Options => Contents => Certificates. You may need someone with higher PC access rights to do this.

In Mozilla Firefox, go to Tools => Options => View Certificates, and enter your PIN.

- or -

See “How long are EPO smart cards valid for?”

34. I seem to have accidentally removed the certificates from my smart card. What should I do?

Your smart card will have to be replaced. Contact EPO User Support.

35. I am about to get a new PC and would like to use my smart card on it. Do I need to export my certificates from my current Web browser?

Certificates are stored on the smart card and are dynamically registered in the Internet Explorer Web browser, so there is no need to export them.

Internet Explorer users:

Your certificates are stored on your smart card and are automatically registered in the new Web browser on your new PC.

- => GemSAFE Libraries Version 3.2.5

Start => Programs => Gemplus => GemSAFE Libraries 3.2.5 => GemSAFE Card Details Tool, => click on Card => Register Certificates.
-> GemSAFE Libraries version 4.2 or 5.1

Start => Programs => Gemplus => GemSAFE toolbox => click on Certificates. Then log in and click on the Register All button.

Mozilla Firefox users

If you want to set up Mozilla Firefox to recognise GemSAFE Libraries so that it can read your smart card, you will have to manually register your certificates.

See also “I use the Mozilla Firefox Web browser. How can I set it up to recognise my smart card?”

36. Can I sign e-mails with my EPO smart card?

No. The certificates in your smart card are meant for use with the EPO’s Online Filing and secure online services only.
Smart Cards - reader - installation and GemSAFE software

37. Can I use any other smart card readers apart from the one supplied by the EPO?

We recommend that you use the readers we supply, as they have been tested and approved. However, you can also use any other reader that is recognised by the GemSAFE Libraries software.

We cannot, however, offer support for readers not supplied by us.

38. Where can I get extra smart card readers?

If your reader is faulty or if you did not receive one with your smart card, you can request one from EPO User Support.

39. Are there any system requirements for smart card reader installation?

No, but you have to install the complete GemSAFE software (smart card reader driver and the appropriate GemSAFE Libraries) on your computer.

40. Is there an online tool or guide which will explain to me, step by step, how to install and use my smart card?

Yes. Go to [http://docs.epoline.org/onlinefilingdocs/OLF4_Quick_Installation_Guide.pdf](http://docs.epoline.org/onlinefilingdocs/OLF4_Quick_Installation_Guide.pdf)

41. How can I be sure that my smart card software is installed and functioning correctly and that my smart card is recognised by the system?

GemSAFE Libraries 3.2.5

Look at the icon in the Windows system tray on the right-hand side of the task bar.

- indicates that your smart card reader is functioning correctly, but that it does not contain a card.

- or indicates that your smart card is recognised by the reader/software.

42. My smart card reader is connected but the light is not flashing. What should I do?

Try changing the connecting lead to another USB port. If that does not work, try it on a different computer. If your reader works on another machine, you should consult your computer dealer/IT department. If not, you should request a smart card reader replacement from EPO User Support.

43. I have connected my smart card reader to my computer. How do I turn the power on?

If the green light on your smart card reader is flashing, that means your smart card reader is switched on.

If the light is not flashing, plug the connecting lead into any functioning USB port on your computer.

If you have a serial reader, you should plug the connecting lead into the PS/2 port (keyboard or mouse) of your computer. The keyboard or mouse can then be safely plugged into the back of the smart card reader. To avoid port damage, you should switch off your computer before plugging/unplugging the reader.
44. The green light on my smart card reader is flashing. How do I know if the reader recognises my card?

The green light should go from blinking to steady when you insert your card. If it does not, check that the end of the card with the chip element is inserted face-up in the direction of the arrow, and that the GemSAFE Libraries software is installed.

45. Is there any way of checking whether my smart card reader has been correctly installed?

Run the GemSAFE Administration Tool by clicking on Start => Settings => Control Panel, then double-click on the Gemplus smart card reader icon:

A window similar to the one below opens. Select the menu option "Information" in the "System" menu and you will see confirmation that your smart card reader is present.

If you can’t find the above icon in your control panel, you can also run the card tool from Start => Programs => Gemplus => GemSAFE Libraries 3.2.5 => GemSAFE Card Details Tool.
Users of GemSAFE Libraries version 4.2 or 5.1 should click on Start => Programs => Gemplus => GemSAFE Toolbox => Certificates. You will see the window below, with the reader icons shown.

46. I am in GemSAFE Libraries 3.2.5, Before logging in I received the error message “No compliant card found”. What does this mean?

This means that GemSAFE Libraries 3.2.5 is unable to access the smart card driver, and that you may need to install it. The driver can be found on your installation CD. If you no longer have the CD, contact EPO User Support.

47. I am in the GemSAFE Toolbox (Libraries 4.2SP4 or 5.1) and I cannot see my smart card reader or certificates. What does this mean?

This means that GemSAFE Libraries 4.2SP4 or 5.1 is unable to access the smart card driver and that you may need to install it. The driver can be found on your installation CD. If you no longer have the CD, contact EPO User Support.

48. What is the current GemSAFE Libraries version?

The current version of GemSAFE Libraries, which has been distributed since mid-November 2007, is version 4.2SP4.

49. How do I know what version of GemSAFE Libraries I have?

Go to Start => Settings => Control Panel => Add/Remove Programs

50. Where can I obtain the GemSAFE Libraries software?

Contact EPO User Support to obtain the software via e-mail or on installation CD.

51. Which GemSAFE Libraries version supports Windows Vista?

You need GemSAFE Libraries version 5.1 to work under Vista. The software is for use on Microsoft Windows 2000, XP and Vista (Home and Business) only.

GemSAFE Libraries version 5.1 supports ONLY those EPO smart cards issued after 11 November 2007 or valid to 11 November 2010 or later.
Contact EPO User Support to obtain GemSAFE Libraries version 5.1 via e-mail.

52. I have received a replacement/renewal smart card that was issued after 11 November 2007/is valid to at least 11 November 2010. Do I need to install GemSAFE Libraries version 4.2 SP4?

Yes, your new smart card requires GemSAFE Libraries version 4.2 SP4. If you have not yet received this software, you should contact EPO User Support. Before you install the new version, you should first uninstall any earlier GemSAFE Libraries versions using the Add/Remove Programs option in your control panel.

53. I have GemSAFE Libraries version 4.2 SP4 installed on my PC. Can I use a smart card issued before 11 November 2007?

Yes, smart cards issued before 11 November 2007 also work with GemSAFE Libraries version 4.2 SP4.

54. I have GemSAFE Libraries version 5.1 installed on my PC. Can I use a smart card issued before 11 November 2007?

No. If you use Vista, you need GemSAFE Libraries version 5.1 and a smart card issued after 11 November 2007 or valid until at least 11 November 2010. To request a new card, contact EPO User Support.

If you do not use Vista, you should uninstall GemSAFE Libraries version 5.1 and install version 4.2 SP4, so that you can use your card.

55. We have a network Online Filing installation. Do we need to install GemSAFE Libraries version 4.2 SP4 on all clients?

GemSAFE Libraries version 4.2 SP4 must be installed on every PC where a smart card reader is used. For further information, please consult the installation manual for Online Filing available under www.epoline.org > download centre > documentation

Smart Cards - Web browser

56. I use the Mozilla Firefox Web browser. How can I set it up to recognise my smart card?

For instructions on Firefox setup follow this link:
http://docs.epoline.org/doc/epoline/firefox/GemSAFE_Firefox_EN.pdf

57. I have GemSAFE Libraries 5.1 installed. I am no longer able to log in to My.epoline. Instead I get the message “Page can not be displayed in Internet Explorer under Windows Vista” What should I do?

If you use Microsoft Internet Explorer 7.0 you should uncheck the protected mode option to allow secure access to EPO online services.
and
-> You should also make sure that the options “Enable Integrated Windows Authentication” and “Use SSL 2.0” are checked in the Advanced tab of Tools/Internet Options.

If you use Mozilla Firefox you should read the document below to complete the setting-up procedure:
http://docs.epoline.org/doc/epoline/firefox/GemSAFE_Firefox_EN.pdf