

# ELECTRONIC INVOICING IN THE BRUSSELS-CAPITAL REGION

## Guide for companies

Version September 2022





Since 1 November 2020, only electronic invoices have been accepted for all contracts awarded by the regional public administrations of the Brussels-Capital Region.

From November 2022, this obligation will progressively extend to local governments for public contracts over €3,000

Invoices sent in another format (paper, email, etc.) will no longer be accepted by public administrations.

In this guide, you will find information on:

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## What is an electronic invoice?

An invoice is an accounting document which requires a number of steps before it can be archived: production, dispatching, transmission, reception, approval, accounting, payment and, lastly, archiving.

The electronic invoice eliminates or automates some of these steps for both the supplier and the customers (administrations):



**An electronic invoice is an invoice that has been submitted, transmitted and received in a structured electronic form that allows automatic and electronic processing.**



An invoice sent by email in other formats (pdf, xls, xml, etc.) is therefore not considered an electronic invoice.



Electronic format differs from the simple PDF format by the **secure framework** it guarantees: the dematerialised document is sent to the customer via a secure platform, in a structured electronic form that allows its automatic processing.

## What are the benefits of electronic invoicing?

Electronic invoicing is part of the dematerialisation of the purchasing process. It is a tool for **administrative simplification** for both businesses and administrations.



It allows for **cost savings**: reduction of printing, mailing and payment time.

It ensures gains in **efficiency**: elimination of possible encoding errors, guarantee that the invoice arrives at the right department for faster processing.



It offers more **transparency**: the supplier can monitor the status of the invoice.

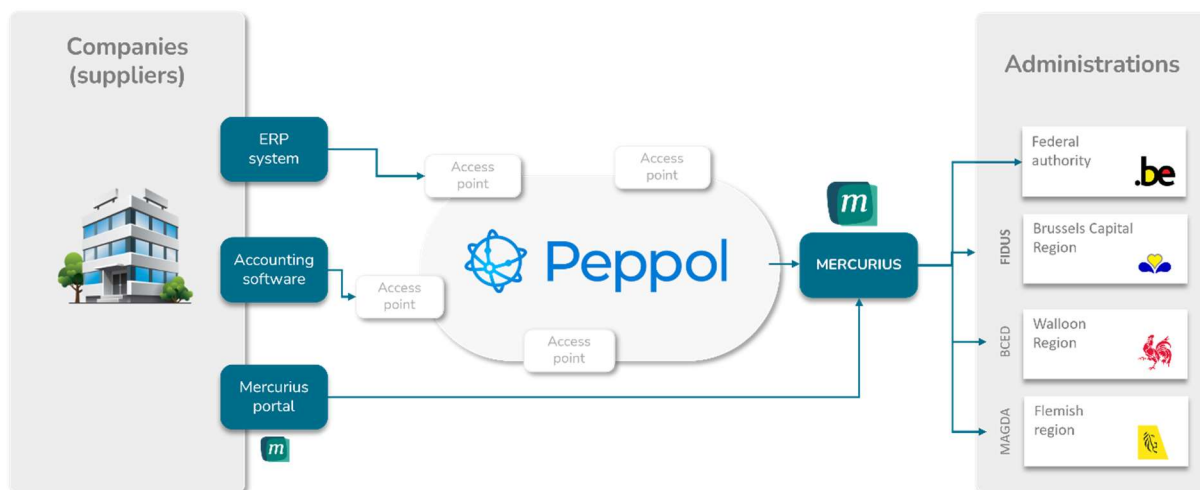
On top of these benefits is the **reduction of the environmental impact**, which reinforces the importance that the public service must attach to this tool.



## How does it work specifically?

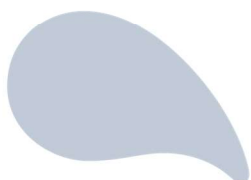
Automated invoice processing requires that both business and customer IT systems speak the **same language**. Europe has therefore created a framework, called **PEPPOL**, which facilitates the circulation of invoices in the European Union. It has also defined a standard format for structured invoices, the **European Standard for Electronic Invoicing**. These two elements combined enable the use of electronic invoicing on a large scale.

In practice, electronic companies send invoices using the **secure European Peppol network**. Connection to the Peppol network is possible via different access points:



**Companies** (suppliers) that send invoices can connect via their ERP systems, their accounting software or by using the Mercurius portal.



To receive electronic invoices, **Belgian public administrations** use a specific platform called **Mercurius**. Each federated entity then distributes invoices to its administrations and institutions via its own platform (Fidus, Magda, BCED).



## What is the legislative framework for electronic invoicing in the Brussels-Capital Region?



In the Brussels-Capital Region, invoices must be sent electronically to the **regional authorities** for all public contracts awarded from **1 November 2020**.

-  [Directive 2014/55/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council on electronic invoicing in public procurement](#)
-  [Circular - Extension of the use of electronic invoices by the entities of the Brussels-Capital Region \(July 2020\)](#)

A Royal Decree published in March 2022 extends this obligation to all institutions in Belgium, including **local administrations**, and progressively for all public contracts above €3,000 awarded from **November 2022**.

However, if they wish, administrations can decide to impose electronic invoicing on their suppliers earlier, by indicating it as a condition in the specifications for their public contracts.

-  [Royal Decree of 9 March 2022](#)



## How do you send electronic invoices?

According to the European standard, electronic invoices must be sent to your customer **via the Peppol network in UBL<sup>1</sup> - XML** format.



An invoice sent by email in other formats (pdf, xls, xml, etc.) is therefore not considered an electronic invoice and can therefore be refused by the administrations.

There are several options for sending an electronic invoice:



### 1. You have an ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) system

If you issue a lot of invoices, you probably have an ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) system.

In this case, we advise you to get in touch with your contact person at your ERP provider, who will explain the access requirements and guide you through the basic settings you need to configure to send electronic invoices.

Here are the main steps to consider when setting up:

#### 1. Creation of the invoice template according to the Peppol BIS v3 standard<sup>2</sup>

-  To design your XML file, use the documentation available at the following link: <http://docs.peppol.eu/poacc/billing/3.0/>
-  You can then check online for free to see if your file meets the XML-Peppol standards: <https://ecosio.com/en/peppol-and-xml-document-validator/>

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<sup>1</sup> Universal Business Language

<sup>2</sup> If you choose to use a third party to create your XML file, you can transfer the information below to your contact.

Note: In addition to the Peppol criteria, it is also important to consider the following points:

- 🕒 The Belgian legal data applicable to any invoice, regardless of its form: <https://einvoice.belgium.be/en/article/business-expert-group-overview>
- 🕒 Your customer's specific needs: additional data requested by your customer (e.g. order number) or compliance with certain guidelines (e.g. limited number of characters for certain fields, format of any attached document, etc.). To do this, contact your customer directly and they will be able to provide you with the information you need.

## 2. Choice of Peppol access point

An access point is required to communicate via the Peppol network. The list of PEPPOL-approved access points is available at the following link: <https://peppol.eu/who-is-who/peppol-certified-aps/>

3. **Ask your customer to perform an end-to-end test** by sending them an electronic invoice. This will ensure that the configuration has been done correctly, and that your future invoices arrive at their destination and can be processed automatically.

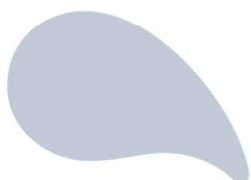
## 2. You use an accounting and invoicing software

If you already have standard accounting and invoicing software, ask your supplier or check on the internet if they plan to send electronic invoices via the Peppol network.

If so, they will explain the procedure for activating the option for sending an electronic invoice.

If not:

- 🕒 choose another accounting software. Consult the (non-exhaustive) list of accounting software for sending electronic invoices via the Peppol network: <https://overheid.vlaanderen.be/e-invoicing-low-volume>
- 🕒 You can also manually encode your invoice via the Mercurius online portal (more information below).






### 3. You do not use an accounting and invoicing software

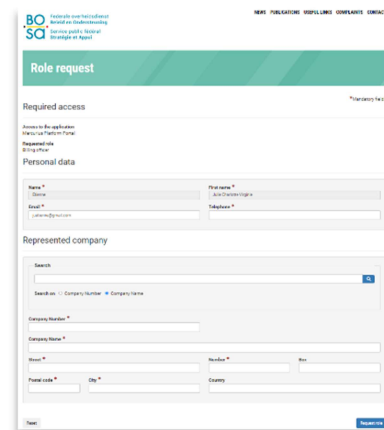
Until your ERP system or accounting software is configured, or if you do not send many invoices to public administrations, you can use the **Mercurius encoding portal** free of charge.

Link to the Mercurius portal: <https://digital.belgium.be/e-invoicing/>

-  **To access the Mercurius portal** and be able to enter invoices on behalf of your company, you must be a legal representative of your company.



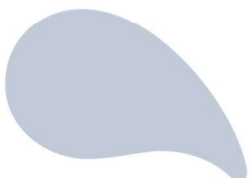
If you are not the legal representative of your company and you wish to encode invoices for your company, you must request authorisation via the **"Role Request" online form** available on the Mercurius portal ([https://apps.digital.belgium.be/forms/show\\_/bos/a/role-request](https://apps.digital.belgium.be/forms/show_/bos/a/role-request))



You can find more information on how to access the portal behind the following link:

<https://openpeppol.atlassian.net/wiki/spaces/Belgium/pages/638222479/How+get+access+to+Mercurius+portal>

You can also contact the Mercurius helpdesk directly: <https://digital.belgium.be/e-invoicing>



 **Encoding an invoice in Mercurius:**

In the portal, you can manually enter the different fields of the invoice (customer details, invoice number, due date, payment reference, invoice lines, etc.) and also attach an appendix (PDF, Word, etc.). By clicking 'Send', your invoice will automatically be sent to your customer in electronic format.

Customer

IF APPLICABLE, SPECIFY THE NAME OF THE DEPARTMENT, AGENCY, OR ENTITY THAT IS BEING INVOICED

STREET\*

CP, LOCALITY\*

COUNTRY\*

BELGIUM

BCE CODE

GLN CODE

CONTACT NAME

CONTACT EMAIL

CONTACT TEL.

Invoice headers

INVOICE NUMBER\*

ISSUE DATE\*

16/10/2022

DUE DATE\*

ORDER NUMBER\*

COMMENT

PAYMENT REFERENCE

OTHER REFERENCES

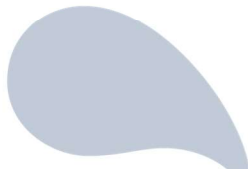
ADD

APPENDES

ADD

Invoice lines

Item reference	Item name*	Quantity*	Unit price*	Discount(%)*	Taxes*	Total Total with taxes
		1		0	0%	0.00 EUR 0.00 EUR
ADD						0.00 EUR 0.00 EUR



- 🔍 If you have any questions about the **status of your invoice**, you can find more information on the [Mercurius help page](#) (<https://openpeppol.atlassian.net/wiki/spaces/Belgium/pages/638222589/Questions+about+the+status+of+my+invoice>) or you can contact your client's accounting department directly.

In the long run, to avoid manually encoding your invoice or if you regularly send invoices to public administrations, we recommend that you look for accounting software that allows the sending of electronic invoices via the Peppol network.

On the following page or on the easy.brussels website, you will find a list created by the Flemish Region that includes various accounting suppliers:

<https://overheid.vlaanderen.be/e-invoicing-low-volume>



## Which administrations can receive electronic invoices?

In principle, all public administrations in the Brussels Region are able to receive electronic invoices.

Go to the following site to find an administration based on its company number (CBE number), its official name, etc.: [https://directory.peppol.eu/public/locale-en\\_US/menuitem-search](https://directory.peppol.eu/public/locale-en_US/menuitem-search)

For example, here are the contact details of the Brussels Region Public Service (BRPS) for sending electronic invoices to the BRPS and all the administrations that report to it:

-  CBE No: 0316381039
-  Official name FR: Services du Gouvernement de la Région bruxelloise
-  Peppol ID: 0208 :0316381039



## Need help?



Do you have a question about the **Mercurius portal**, how to access it or how to enter an invoice?

Contact the Mercurius helpdesk

<https://digital.belgium.be/e-invoicing/>

Do you have a question about **paying your invoice** or the **status of your invoice**?

Contact **your client's accounting department**



For all other questions about electronic invoicing, the **easy.brussels** team is at your disposal at [info-efact@sprb.brussels](mailto:info-efact@sprb.brussels)

