Billing Solutions – receiving e-invoices

Find out more about receiving electronic invoices and the benefits for you.

PostFinance

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Introduction

There are solutions that will benefit your company – and your business partners – over the short, medium and long term. These solutions include receipt of electronic invoices. Invoices are processed digitally on an automated basis, avoiding manual processes and high costs on materials. Some companies are putting off the introduction of electronic invoices, as time is required to set the system up – and time is money. But you'll save both with e-invoices: the sooner you switch, the quicker you'll make your company fit for the future.

By digitizing and automating billing, you'll reduce errors, improve the efficiency and transparency of processes, speed up payments and benefit the environment. Alongside your e-invoicing provider, you can meet the technical requirements and enable your providers to benefit from e-invoices, too.

On the following pages, you'll find out more about the benefits of e-invoices, the different types of electronic invoice, the technical requirements and the optimal way to connect providers. We wish you every success with electronic invoicing and would be happy to answer any questions.

The benefits of receiving electronic invoices

You save time and money
By automating your invoice processing, you will receive invoices electronically via an interface. More efficient invoice management and faster processes with less manual work result in cost and time savings. Accounting is also more transparent, as invoices can be accessed electronically at any time and payment transactions run via existing processes.

You reduce costs
Digital process automation can cut administration costs by around 60 percent. You save on materials, and your staff can spend a large amount of their working hours on other tasks. Discounts can also be secured through faster processing.

You improve security
Manual invoice processing has a higher error rate. A digital creditor workflow enables you to automate your bookkeeping and avoid errors. What's more, fraudulent invoices are identified and further processing is prevented.

You gain transparency
Automation is transparent and simple. Automated invoice processing enables all actions to be traced and archived electronically. It also improves the data quality of tax-related documents.

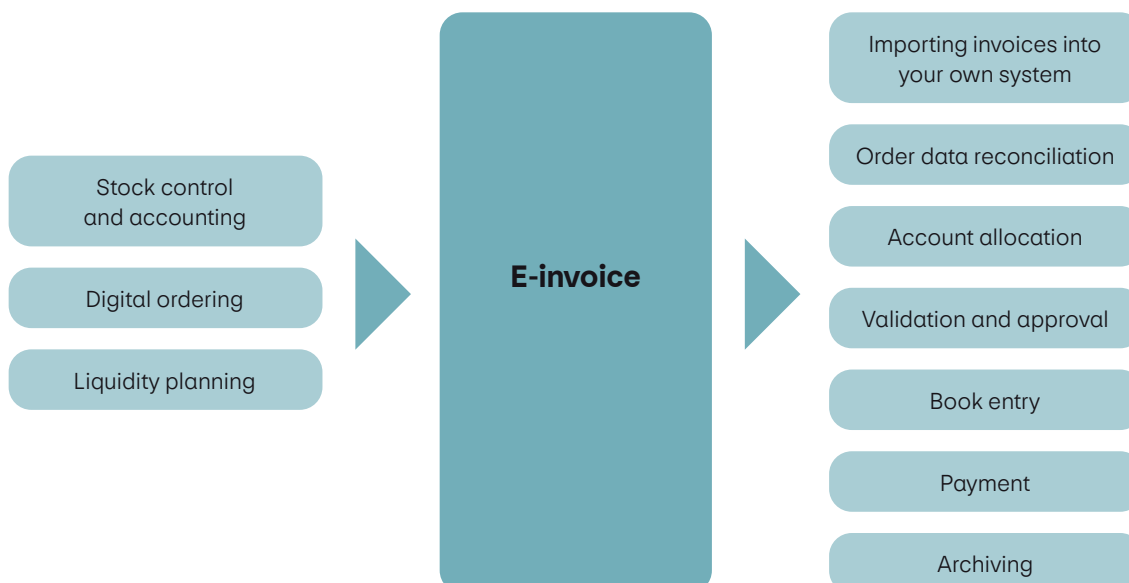**You improve provider satisfaction**
Digitizing the creditor workflow speeds up payment processes. This results in improved provider satisfaction and better relationships with creditors. You'll also be seen as a modern and sustainable customer.

You protect the environment
Digital invoices do not need paper, ink or delivery by post. This saves on resources and reduces CO_2 emissions.

Which processes are automated?

E-invoicing allows you to fully automate incoming invoices, which streamlines your process costs. Here are a few examples of how up- and downstream processes related to billing can be simplified.

Stock control and accounting		Importing invoices into your own system
Digital ordering	**E-invoice**	Order data reconciliation
Liquidity planning		Account allocation
		Validation and approval
		Book entry
		Payment
		Archiving

What are electronic invoices?

The relevance of invoices as a means of payment in Switzerland

More and more Swiss companies are using electronic invoicing, as both invoice recipients and issuers benefit from digital invoice exchange via an ERP/accounting system. In some European countries, e-bill transactions are mandatory in the B2B sector, and in the EU, the trend is heading towards companies in Member States being obliged to use electronic invoices within a few years.

What types of digital invoices are there?

Paper invoices are becoming less and less important. This is because the requirement for a digital signature has been eliminated, and electronic and (scanned) paper invoices have had equivalent status since January 2018. Hybrid and structured invoices are enjoying greater popularity amongst companies as digital invoicing solutions.

We would now like to introduce you to three types of electronic invoice: the e-mail invoice, the structured invoice and eBill.

> **The definition of an electronic invoice**
> An electronic invoice is a digital document that is delivered electronically and has the same content and legal consequences as a paper invoice. The file format and type of data transfer can vary.

E-mail invoice

The e-mail invoice is basically an invoice in PDF format. The PDF format has three possible forms: the PDF invoice, the QR-bill and the hybrid invoice. They differ in terms of the way in which data is send to the invoice recipients.

PDF invoice
The PDF invoice is an unstructured digital invoice that, while it contains an IBAN, also requires a separate payment process: the payment information has to be either transferred to mobile or e-banking, sent to the bank as a payment order by letter or paid over the counter.

Document format	PDF
Type of payment details	IBAN
Level of data digitization	Not available
Delivery channel	E-mail

QR-bill
After a transition period of around two years, the QR-bill replaced the inpayment slip (ISR) in September 2022. Recipients can pay invoices either by scanning the QR code or, as is the case with the PDF invoice, via mobile/e-banking, letter to the bank or directly over the counter. QR-bills do not have to be issued electronically, they can also be sent to invoice recipients by post.

Document format	PDF
Type of payment details	QR code
Level of data digitization	Low
Delivery channel	E-mail

Hybrid invoice

The hybrid invoice consists of both an image file (e.g. PDF) and a data file (e.g. XML). Unlike a structured invoice, the latter focuses on a small amount of key data. For companies with the right software, it is possible to read the structured data automatically. However, this also means that invoice recipients who prefer to process structured data will always need to archive the image file as well.

Document format	PDF and XML (or similar structured data)
Type of payment details	IBAN and fully structured data
Level of data digitization	Medium
Delivery channel	E-mail and channels for structured data

Structured invoice

Digitizing document processing can reduce costs and optimize processes. A structured data set makes automated and seamless processing and interoperability of invoices possible. The invoicing company sends structured invoices to the invoice recipient company's software solution via a provider. The provider converts the format issued by the sender into that of the recipient so that the data can be processed automatically.

Document format	XML (or similar structured data)
Type of payment details	Fully structured
Level of data digitization	High
Delivery channel	Channels for structured data

> **Useful information**
> PostFinance offers structured invoices for companies under the product name "B2B e-invoicing".
> → Find out more

eBill

With eBill, customers do not receive their invoices by post or e-mail, but rather directly in their mobile or e-banking account. To do so, they register on the eBill platform with an e-mail address. After successful registration, customers can either register for eBill with invoice issuers of their choice or open their "eBill mailbox" to all invoice issuers (function: Add invoice issuers automatically). If an invoice is issued, the recipient receives a push message, in response to which they either approve the eBill or set up standing approval.

eBill is a huge success story for the Swiss financial center: more than 3.5 million Swiss residents were using eBill at the end of 2024. This means that eBill reaches just over half of all Swiss households. A study by gfs.bern (2022) indicates that 70 percent of the population now uses e-banking, enabling these people to receive eBills. In the B2B sector, eBill is mainly relevant to smaller companies without an ERP system.

Document format	PDF
Type of payment details	Fully structured
Level of data digitization	High
Delivery channel	Mobile/e-banking

How can incoming invoices be digitized?

Incoming invoices can be digitized in three steps: firstly, set up electronic invoices in your system, then check which providers are also using e-invoices and create a connection to the providers. In this section, we explain how to set up receipt of electronic invoices at your company – using the example of PostFinance's "B2B e-invoicing" product.

Requirements
You have an ERP system capable of processing structured electronic invoices. Find out about this from your software suppliers.

E-invoicing registration
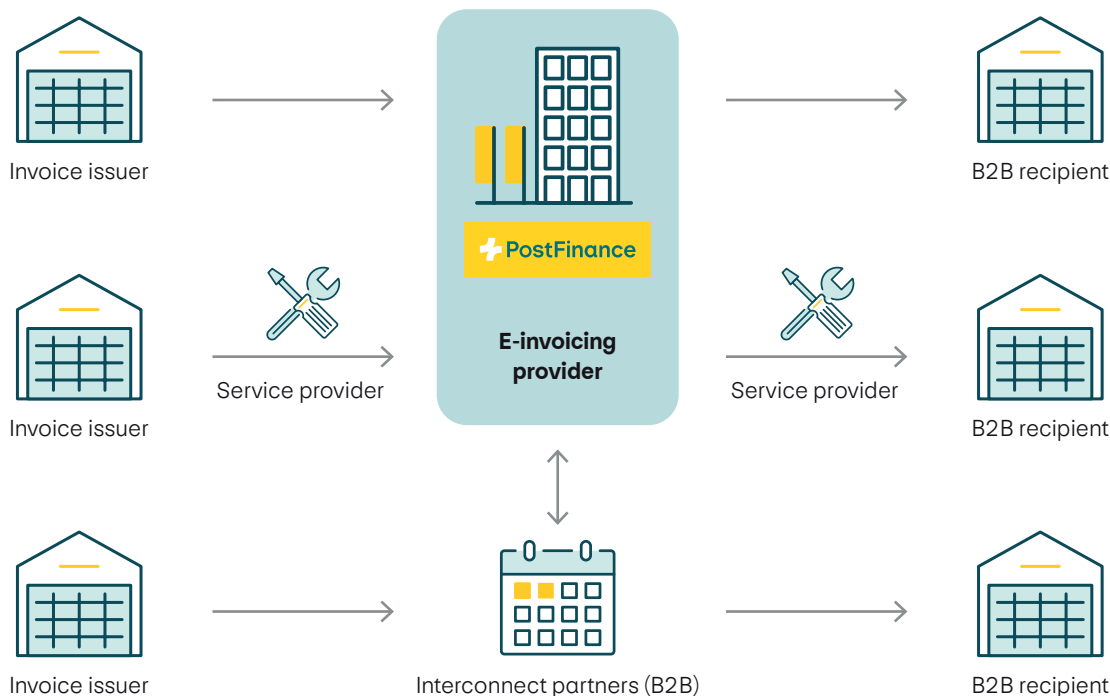Register online for electronic invoicing with a provider of your choice.

Connect with your invoice issuers
You can register with the invoice issuer via the e-invoicing portal or directly with the invoice issuer themselves. The e-invoicing portal enables bill issuers to deliver their invoices and download processing data and bill recipients to download electronic invoices.

If you opt for PostFinance as your e-invoicing provider, you can register online on the e-invoicing portal.

Discover the e-invoicing ecosystem

To ensure smooth communication between invoice issuers and recipients, there are ERP software solutions, service providers and interconnect providers which enable data transfer with your e-invoicing provider. It is essential that the digital solutions are compatible – and are ideally provided by the same supplier. Find out more about the tasks involved in the various stages of invoice transfer.

Invoice issuer → ⮕ **PostFinance** — **E-invoicing provider** → ⮕ B2B recipient

Invoice issuer — Service provider → **E-invoicing provider** — Service provider → B2B recipient

Invoice issuer → Interconnect partners (B2B) → B2B recipient

ERP
The ERP software enables invoice recipients to import their providers' e-invoices via an interface.

Service provider
Under the e-invoicing system, the invoice issuer sends the invoice to the e-invoicing provider via a service provider. You then receive the invoice in your ERP via your service provider. All administrative processes – such as downloading of registrations/ deregistrations, monthly billing of transactions, etc. – are carried out via the service provider. A classic service provider is one that today handles invoice printing and dispatch for customers.

Interconnect provider
As e-invoicing providers, interconnect providers offer a platform for the exchange of electronic B2B invoices. Inform your provider that you would like to receive their invoices electronically and give them your recipient ID.

Useful tip: with regard to the number of individual data fields, make sure that you request only mandatory information to save your providers additional costs. This simplifies the connection of providers and makes processing easier for your own software. We recommend using the swissDIGIN content standard from GS1 Switzerland.

How can you connect providers?

The exchange of invoices via ERP or accounting systems provides many benefits for both invoice issuers and recipients. To harness the solution's full potential, as many participants as possible need to be connected to electronic invoicing. For invoice recipients, this means connecting as many providers as possible.

Here is some useful advice on persuading your providers to use e-invoices.

Connecting providers who already use electronic invoices

It is particularly easy to connect providers who already use electronic invoices and who are entered in the eDirectory.

Step 1: Based on your priority list, compare your providers against the eDirectory and filter out those who are registered in it for sending e-invoices.

Step 2: Send a letter to your providers from the eDirectory covering the following points (see PostFinance letter template):
- Make your providers aware that you as a customer receive electronic invoices from providers and give them your Payer ID.
- Ask your providers to send an e-invoice to your Payer ID, with prior information (before sending the first invoice) by e-mail.

Step 3: Check if the provider invoice has been received successfully, and then ask the provider to send all their invoices digitally in future.

Recommendation: not all companies that work with e-invoicing are registered in the eDirectory. Do you have providers on your priority list who are not in the eDirectory? If so, it is a good idea to ask these providers directly whether they use e-invoicing, and whether they could send you their Payer ID.

**Provider directory:
how to easily find providers
that already use e-invoicing**

In the eDirectory.ch registry, you will find the majority of business partners domiciled in Switzerland who send and/or receive e-invoices, and who work with a service provider listed in eDirectory.ch.

Tip: check if your own company is listed in the eDirectory. If you do not find an entry, inform your e-invoicing service provider so that they can enter the data.
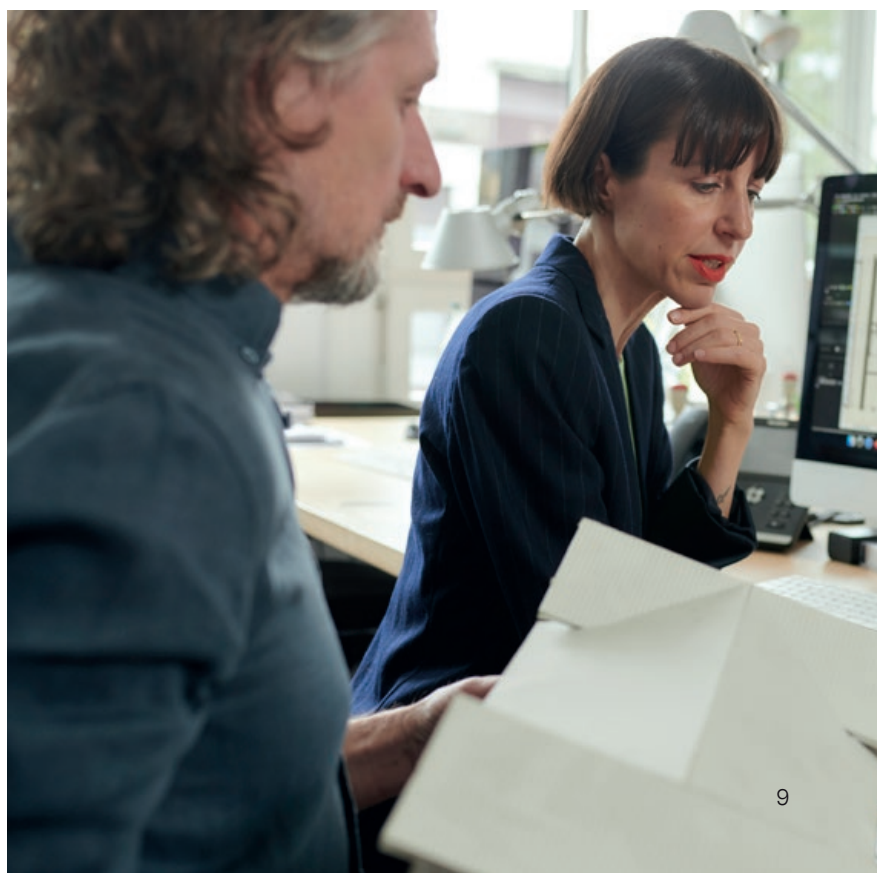
Connecting providers who do not yet use B2B electronic invoices

Connecting providers who do not use electronic invoices involves more work, as the ERP software require-ments must be met. There are three different scenarios:

**Providers who use software
that is compatible with e-invoicing**
Tell these providers that you would like to switch to electronic invoicing as a customer. Also be sure to ask these customers to get in touch with their soft-ware partners, who can help them to get connected.
→ Software partners who provide a standardized interface for e-invoicing

**Providers who use software
that is incompatible with e-invoicing**
Tell these providers that you would like to switch to electronic invoicing as a customer. Ask them to get in touch with their software partners to set up an interface with e-invoicing.

Providers who do not use any software
Tell these providers that you would like to switch to electronic invoicing as a customer and suggest that they use a PDF upload function with their e-invoicing provider.

Persuading providers of the benefits of electronic invoices

Switching to electronic creditor invoicing involves initial costs. There is often a fear that high investment costs will be incurred, and that major interventions will be required in processes and IT. Counter these arguments by outlining the many benefits of electronic creditor invoicing, which go well beyond savings on printing and shipping costs:

- Faster payment receipt thanks to accelerated control, approval and payment processes
- High level of transparency thanks to seamless traceability
- Fewer errors, as manual processes are eliminated
- Improved productivity thanks to a more efficient invoice process

- Financial savings through elimination of paper, printing and postage costs
- Greener approach, as the use of resources is avoided

Outlook

B2B e-invoicing isn't just convenient, direct and fast for both invoice issuers and recipients, it also ensures your company is fit for the future. You position yourself digitally, optimize your processes and save time and money – while adopting an eco-friendly approach by conserving resources.

The trend is also shifting towards electronic invoicing when it comes to political regulations. For example, e-invoicing legislation is being introduced in the EU which will modernize the VAT system and impose joint digital reporting obligations. This also includes reporting to local tax authorities, which is likely to have an impact on Switzerland in the medium to long term. It is advisable for Swiss companies to digitize their invoicing processes as soon as possible to meet international standards.

PostFinance, a reliable partner for payment and payment collection solutions, would be pleased to support you on the path to your digital future. We will assist you with the set-up of your invoice ecosystem and help you to connect your providers to e-invoicing. Invest in your digital capabilities now.

Contact

PostFinance is one of the leading Swiss e-invoicing providers and the number one in Swiss payment transactions. PostFinance combines these areas of expertise and provides its customers with one-stop shop solutions. One of Switzerland's leading financial institutions, it's a dependable partner for over 2.7 million private and business customers and provides innovative, comprehensive financial services in the sub-markets of payment, saving, investment, retirement planning and finance.

PostFinance advisors are proven experts and advise companies from a wide range of sectors on their financial requirements.

→ Personalized advice
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