International Civil Aviation Organization

WORKING PAPER

**TECHNICAL ADVISORY GROUP ON MACHINE READABLE
TRAVEL DOCUMENTS (TAG/MRTD)**

TWENTY-SECOND MEETING

Montréal, 21 to 23 May 2014

Agenda Item 2: Activities of the NTWG

SURVEY ON THE USE OF SIGNATURES IN PASSPORTS

(Presented by the NTWG)

1.   **INTRODUCTION**

1.1   By initiative of the German Ministry of the Interior the NTWG conducted a survey on the current use and interpretation of the regulations on "signatures or usual marks" in the MRP in ICAO member states. Currently, ICAO requires the use of "holder's signatures or usual mark" in Doc 9303 (Part I, volume 1, section IV, 6th edition 2006).

1.2   With this regard, of special interest are the national practises in the case if the holder is unable to provide a signature.

1.3   According to ICAO, it is currently left to each individual Member State to determine what the "usual mark" is supposed to be, in the event that the passport holder is unable to provide a signature.

2.   **BACKGROUND**

2.1   The following Member States participated in the survey and answered the questions: AUS, AUT, CAN, CHE, D, FIN, FRA, GBR, JPN, SGP, SWE, USA.

2.2   The six questions asked in the survey were:

  1.   Do you require children to sign a passport? From which age on?
  2.   If an applicant is not able to sign a passport (e.g. too young, disabled),
    a)   do you leave the appropriate data field empty or

        b)   do you personalise it with a default character or symbol (e.g. "too young to sign", "no signature", horizontal line "——" , …) or

        c)   do you require somebody else to sign (e.g. parents)?

3.   Would you prefer an ICAO standardised solution regulating default content in the signature field if the applicant is not able to sign? If yes, which content would you suggest?

4.   How should a missing signature or usual mark be represented in the chip?

5.   How do you consider the importance of the signature? Would you consider removing it from the datapage (and relocating it e.g. on page 3) or remove it completely? Where is the signature or usual mark located (on the datapage, page following the datapage, elsewhere)?

6.   Any other suggestions?

3.   RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

3.1   The detailed results of this survey can be found in the Appendix to this WP/14.

3.2   The NTWG concluded that the majority of the Member States participating in the survey:

a) regard the signature (still) as an important means of identification and would not like to see it removed;

b) require children to sign the MRP, however with different age limits;

c) would prefer a default content in the signature field if the holder is unable to provide a signature.

4.   ACTION BY THE TAG/MRTD

4.1   The TAG/MRTD is invited to:

a) Approve the presented work of the NTWG on signatures and

b) endorse further research in the area with respect to a possible standardisation for the use of signatures and usual marks with regards to i) a minimum age limit from which on children shall sign the MRP, ii) the avoidance of empty signature fields and iii) a standardized default content in the signature field if the holder is unable to provide a signature.

— END —

Appendix to the WP on the Survey on Signatures

Signatures or usual marks in MRTDs

Dr. Uwe Seidel
Head of Unit Identity Document Systems,
Bundeskriminalamt

ICAO TAG/MRTD/22, Montreal, Canada, 2014

Introduction

- By initiative of the German Ministry of the Interior the NTWG conducted a survey on the current use and interpretation of the regulations on "signatures or usual marks" in the MRP in ICAO member states. Currently, ICAO requires the use of "holder's signatures or usual mark" in Doc 9303 (Part I, volume 1, section IV, 6th edition 2006).

- With this regard, of special interest are the national practises in the case if the holder is unable to provide a signature.

- According to ICAO, it is currently left to each individual Member State to determine what the "usual mark" is supposed to be, in the event that the passport holder is unable to provide a signature.

1. Do you require children to sign a passport? From which age on?

2. If an applicant is not able to sign a passport (e.g. too young, disabled),

   – do you leave the appropriate data field empty or

   – do you personalise it with a default character or symbol
   (e.g. "too young to sign", "no signature",
   horizontal line "——" , …) or

   – do you require somebody else to sign (e.g. parents)?

3. Would you prefer an ICAO standardised solution regulating default content in the signature field if the applicant is not able to sign? If yes, which content would you suggest?

4. How should a missing signature or usual mark be represented in the chip?

5. How do you consider the importance of the signature? Would you consider removing it from the datapage (and relocating it e.g. on page 3) or remove it completely?
   Where is the signature or usual mark located (on the datapage, page following the datapage, elsewhere)?
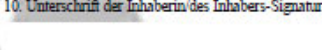
6. Any other suggestions?

Examples from Participants

Participant D

Participant D
Example children's passport

2010   2010   2007

12 Participants
(11 answers received)

- AUS
- AUT
- CAN
- CHE
- (D)
- FIN
- FRA
- GBR
- JPN
- SGP
- SWE
- USA

Q1.	Do you require children to sign a passport? From which age on?
AUS	Children from age 10 to sign on passport application which is then scanned and printed. If a child aged under 10 has signed the signature box we will accept it, provided is meets our normal acceptability criteria.
AUT	Yes.
CAN	No signature for Children 11 and under (if they sign, no transfer in passport). Children aged 11-15 are encouraged to sign, but if not, no reason for rejection. All applicants 16 and older are required. Image is printed on data page. On receiving, signature on page 3.
CHE	From 7 years on.
D	From 10 years on.
FIN	Not - if the child is not able to write his/her name. There is no specific age limit.
FRA	Yes, if the child is able to do so.
GBR	From 12 years on.
JPN	Yes. If a child can sign, we principally require her/his signing.
SGP	For children below the age of 16, parental consent required. Singapore will only require passport holders of age 16 years and above to Signature required from 16 years on.
SWE	No. When the child can [not] sign the passport we recommend the guardians to let the child sign.
USA	If the child is old enough to sign, then he/she may. If the child cannot, we ask the parent or other legal guardian to print the child's name and to sign with their legal signature.

2. If not able to sign, then...

Q2.	If an applicant is not able to sign a passport (e.g. too young, disabled), then ...
AUS	Print on data page "No Signature". (Statement or certification needed)
AUT	Parents have to write the name in capital letters.
CAN	Print on data page "Signature Not Required/non requise" The signature line on page 3 is to be left blank. No signature by someone other than the passport bearer.
CHE	ID card: Print on data page "***" Passport: Signature line stays empty. Parents are not allowed to sign the passport for their child.
D	Print on data page a horizontal line. (Provided at the time of application)
FIN	Print on data page a horizontal line.
FRA	Parents sign (?)
GBR	Print on data page 'holder is not required to sign'.
JPN	We require signature of a person with parental authority.
SGP	The signature data field will be left empty.
SWE	Print on data page: Kan ej underteckna (Swedish) / not able to sign (English).
USA	We ask the parent or other legal guardian to print the child's name and to sign with their legal signature.

3. ICAO standardised solution?

Q3.	Would you prefer an ICAO standardised solution regulating default content in the signature field if the applicant is not able to sign? If yes, which content would you suggest?
AUS	Yes. We would prefer "Unable to Sign". (Maybe "No Signature" for young children and "Unable to Sign" for other cases)
AUT	No.
CAN	Default content would have value. Need to accommodate manual and digitally printed signatures. ICAO to publish standards (e.g. age etc). Comfortable with "Signature not required".
CHE	Yes, this would be our suggestion "***"
D	Horizontal line.
FIN	Horizontal line.
FRA	Have parents sign it and remark PARENTS OR LEGAL GUARDIAN
GBR	Standardised solution would be desirable. Suggestion: "Holder not required"
JPN	Yes. Data field shouldn't be empty for security reason. Line or parents.
SGP	No need for an ICAO standardised solution.
SWE	Yes "not able to sign" in the language of the issuing state and in English.
USA	Yes, ICAO standardised solution for signature of minors.

Bundeskriminalamt

4. Missing signature in DG7?

Q4.	How should a missing signature or usual mark be represented in the chip?
AUS	TBD
AUT	Austrian passports contain a "signature" in any case.
CAN	Default image file containing a standard "Signature not required" or text or boolean
CHE	Should not be mandatory to include the signature in the chip.
D	Not necessary to put it in the chip.
FIN	Not in the chip. No need to indicate a missing signature in the chip.
FRA	"No missing signature."?
GBR	'Holder not required to sign' is also reflected on the chip.
JPN	No use of DG7. If DG7 and signature is is used, a missing signature should be reflected in the chip. Image-data that show "No Signature".
SGP	Signature not critical for the chip.
SWE	"Not able to sign" in English only.
USA	TBD

5. Importance of signature?

Q5.	How do you consider the importance of the signature? Would you consider removing it from the datapage (and relocating it e.g. on page 3) or remove it completely? Where is the signature or usual mark located (on the datapage, page following the datapage, elsewhere)?
AUS	Some value in the signature. We would not consider moving it from the data page or to remove it completely.
AUT	The signature is an identification feature. We don´t prefer moving the signature to another place.
CAN	CAN is considering removing the digitally transferred signature from the travel document. However, the hand written signature will remain on page 3 in respect of ICAO requirements and the value to document experts.
CHE	No signature on the data page, the signature is on page 1 (directly after data page).
D	Signature is by law still required.
FIN	Signature on data page. We prefer not to move the signature because of costs and logistics.
FRA	(Remove it or?) keep it on page 3 as in the current French passport.
GBR	UK will go 'digital by default' and reviews the requirement for a signature. Recommendation to remove the signature. Ongoing wider considerations (public, banks, …).
JPN	We prefer to keep signature image on passport datapage and not to relocate.
SGP	Holder's signature is not a unique. Nevertheless, the signature is currently located in the inner book cover of the passport.
SWE	The signature is a biometric identifier that is used to seldom. Don't remove it. Keep it on the datapage.
USA	We do consider the adult signatures important. The passport bearer's signature appears adjacent to the datapage. We would not like removing the bearer's signature from the passport.

Q6.	Any other suggestions?
AUS	If passports are to include a signature it should always be protected by the physical security features of the booklet i.e. printed under a laminate or as part of a polycarbonate personalisation. This implies that signatures are digitised. WE believe signatures entered by hand directly into passport booklets are less secure.
AUT	n/a
CAN	Digital signatures should be large enough to be easy to read and make out. Manual signatures should avoid being placed too close to book binding, page edges or visual elements that may constrain the bearer's signature and give it an unnatural appearance. Additionally, for a person who signs with a mark or ''X'' instead of a traditional signature, the mark or "X" is transferred to the signature area of the biodata page. The Canadian Passport Program currently accepts digital signatures, signature stamps and analogue (i.e. by hand/manual) signatures on the application forms.
CHE	n/a
D	n/a
FIN	n/a
FRA	n/a
GBR	n/a
JPN	n/a
SGP	n/a
SWE	Check the Swedish passport with the signature printed on page 3 and countersignature on page 4 when the passport is extradited.
USA	n/a

Summary

1. Age: Most countries (9/12) require children to sign (from age 7, 10, 16). Others have parents signing the passport.

2. Not able to sign: 6/12 countries have default content (line, "No signature"). 4/12 have parents signing the passport.

3. ICAO standard for that case: 9/12 prefer (different, but default) ICAO solution.

4. DG7 representation: No need. But if default content on data page and DG7 is usually filled, then use the default in the chip also.

5. Importance of signature: 8/12 see value in the signature and would not like to see it removed. Others (CAN, GBR) are considering changes or see less importance (SGP).

6. Suggestions: If signature is used, protect it. Make them large and readable.

Actions by the TAG

The TAG/MRTD is invited to:

- Approve the presented work of the NTWG on signatures

- endorse further research in the area with respect to a possible standardization for the use of signatures and usual marks with regards to

  - a minimum age limit from which on children shall sign the MRP,

  - the avoidance of empty signature fields and

  - a standardized default content in the signature field if the holder is unable to provide a signature.

Thank you for your attention.

uwe.seidel04@bka.bund.de