



P

Title

PERSONAL IDENTIFICATION NUMBER (PIN)

Created 01/09/2009

Modified 25/11/2009

References:

- **Recitals :**
- **BR :**
- **IR:** art 52(3)
- **AC Decision :** <forthcoming decision on SED and data>
- **ECJ CASE Law:**

Comments:

- Definition: "A unique personal identification number issued by a state or organisation". This formal definition must be read in the context of social security offices that issue a PIN to be able to identify people in their records. The PIN is unique in the sense that, within each registry, there cannot be two numbers for one person. However, different institutions/offices may have separate registries and could identify one same person with different PINs.

How do I recognise a PIN?

- A PIN is between 9 and 16 characters long. You will find it on official records of your social security contributions or benefits. If you are a clerk and receive a claim message from another country, you will find the claimant's PIN in your country and that in the sending country included in the message.

Is there a unique European PIN?

- No. A European PIN does not exist. Because of the diversity in the structure of the social security systems in the various Member States of the EU, a unique PIN system, valid throughout Europe, could not be established. PINs can be national, sectoral or even at institutional level, depending on countries and type of benefit. This means that two people in the same country, affiliated to two different health care institutions may have the same PIN. For this reason, the PIN alone may not be sufficient to identify a person. It may have to be accompanied by an indication of the social security sector and/or the institution keeping the registry. In any case, all PINs need to be accompanied by an indication of the country where it was issued. You may have a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC); this bears a PIN that is valid for health care benefits abroad; this PIN is national and must be

accompanied by an indication of the country that issued the card.

Does each of us have a unique national PIN?

- You may have a single PIN or several PINs. In some countries, a single PIN identifies you at the institutions (offices) of all social security benefits. In others, different offices may identify you with different PINs, e.g. the pensions services may assign you a different PIN from the health services. If you worked or resided in several countries, you will have at least one PIN from every country. A PIN, complete with its sector (type of benefit) and country (and possibly social security institution) is unique to you; and this same PIN may also identify you for other benefits, but certainly you will have different PINs in any other countries where you might work or reside.

Why do we need a PIN?

A PIN is used primarily to find a person's file in a social security registry. This process is often referred to as "identification" and is a step in a procedure, for instance deciding on a claim.

Do PINs expire?

- Every few/several years, countries proceed to re-organise their registries and may assign new PINs. People who are no longer in the country may miss the event and are never assigned the new PIN. They should keep their old PINs and social security offices should keep the facility to identify their insurance records through their old PINs. This can be important for pension claims, which can be based on work periods many years earlier.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION FOR CITIZENS

If there is no EU-level PIN, how am I identified in cross-border procedures?

- This is indeed a challenge and the coordination makes special provisions for a reliable and effective identification. In practice, when two institutions collaborate on an application, each makes sure that they know the applicant's PIN, not only in their own country, but also in the country of their correspondents. For your records, however, it is always useful to keep track of the various PINs that are assigned to you in the course of your life, as you move from one country to another.

What if my PIN is lost?

- There are provisions for recovering a lost PIN. These can take some time, especially if the PIN had been assigned many years before, as can be the case when processing pension claims. Your social security office will start a search based on your names, birth-date, birth-place, previous addresses and parents' names.

How long should I keep my PIN?

- As a general rule, you should keep the PINs that you are assigned by social security clerks forever. If you stay in the country where the PIN is issued, you will probably need it. If you leave that country, it is wise to store the PIN securely; one day you may be claiming a pension from that country and the claim will be processed faster if you have the PIN. For other social security benefits, it is less important to keep old PINs from countries that you have left.

What about health care?

- Your European Health insurance Card (EHIC) includes a number that acts as a PIN. Please make sure that you have your EHIC always with you when travelling abroad. This will make reimbursements

easier and more reliable in case you fall ill and seek medical attention.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION FOR SOCIAL SECURITY CLERKS

- PINs must be used in cross-national exchanges of information among clerks when processing claims. Each sent message must bear the PIN numbers of the claimant, both in the sending country and in the receiving country. This means that a clerk must do their utmost to have the claimant's PIN in the country to which they are sending the message, including asking the claimant.

How do I get the claimant's PIN in other countries?

- This depends on the benefit and, remember, that different benefits may require different PINs. For pensions, the provisions of Art 52 IR apply; this means that, whenever someone moves from a country to another, the registering clerk in the new country exchanges PINs with the clerk of the country of origin. Both clerks are required to store the thus obtained reciprocal PINs securely; this is done via the EESSI system, which has a special protocol for this, consisting of a special "Art 52" flow with special SEDs; the clerk's input is minimal. They are also to inform the person's country of birth (or first immigration to Europe) whose clerks will store securely all the PIN's in the person's work/residence history. This also helps in other sectors in countries where there is a single social security PIN. Otherwise, for health care, the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) number acts as a PIN; this makes it all so more important for people to have their EHIC cards with them when travelling. For other benefits, more ad-hoc sources may need to be tapped.

What if I do not have claimant's PIN in the other country?

- A clerk should always strive to obtain it, including asking the claimant who may have kept a receipt or other document bearing their PIN. Should this fail, they can launch an exchange with clerks in the other country, similar to that envisaged under Art 52; the receiving country will then search their records on the basis of the claimant's ID data (names, names at birth, parents' names, birth date, sex, place of birth and previous addresses). This should be done only as a last resort as the search tends to be resource-intensive and unreliable.

What if I am processing a health care reimbursement?

- If the health care was provided upon presentation of the EHIC, you should have the EHIC PIN. This identifies the patient with their home health insurance. If the patient did not produce an EHIC when requesting care, they need to be identified via the procedure above in case of missing PIN.

To go further:

-