The new French electronic driving license

A major step forwards in modernizing the country’s national documents
Improving road safety and eradicating identity fraud

Driving licenses have evolved from a means of generating revenue to fund road infrastructure to become the proof of a person’s ability to operate a motor vehicle safely. As such they have become fundamental to ensuring public safety on roads. As underlined by the European Commission in January 2013: “fake driving licenses are a license to kill” and tackling fraud is central in improving road safety.

Until now, the French driving license has been the most commonly forged document in the country, according to experts. Out of 38 million driving licenses in circulation in France, more than 3 million are counterfeit (source: “L’usurpation d’Identité”, Guy de Felcourt, CNRS éditions - July 2011). Of these 3 million, 700,000 are used for driving, threatening the safety of road users, and more than 2 million are used as identity documents, used in welfare fraud in particular. According to the same source, document fraud represents a cost of at least €5 billion for the French state.

In addition to its old design (dating from 1954), this administrative document had another weakness: no expiry date. However the new license, which remains free for the holder, is valid for a limited period of 15 years.

Finally, the European Directive of 2006 (2006/126/EC) gave member states until January 19, 2013, to make the switch to a credit-card format license. Since this date, driving categories and license format have been harmonized across the European Union.

The replacement of the pink three-section French license began on September 16, 2013.

International standardization and European directives

The development of international standards has driven the introduction of a common framework for universally recognized driving licenses. Standard ISO/IEC 18013, which came into force in 2009, provides a common toolkit for the implementation of secure driving license programs. Initially oriented towards physical format and visual security features, the standard has evolved to include directives on electronic security, testing and interoperability. It now includes provisions for migration to a secure, electronic, credit-card format license. In Europe, the 2006 directive (2006/126/EC) paved the way for migration to a credit-card format with a harmonized data set, physical security features and a document validity period. The 2011 directive (2011/94/EC) made further progress, notably to integrate Romania and Bulgaria. January 19, 2013, was set as the deadline to start issuing these new documents. The directive made no reference to the potential for member states to add a microprocessor to the card.

European regulation 282/2012 of May 2012 defined as an option the requirements for a common European electronic driving license for the first time. The 28 members of the European Union are in the process of implementing these requirements.

The new electronic driving license: a powerful means of protecting identity

Gemalto is delivering its secure embedded software, Sealys for driving license, to Imprimerie Nationale, the French public printing office, as part of a multi-year contract. This software solution will allow the polycarbonate driving license incorporating a microprocessor to be read and verified via a contactless reader. Imprimerie Nationale also selected Gemalto’s Coesys Issuance solution to personalize the new eDocument at its Douai site.

Imprimerie Nationale who is responsible for designing, producing and personalizing the new high-security document, chose Gemalto as a key supplier of electronic ID solutions.

The Sealys e-driving license will securely store the personal details printed on the document, allowing police to quickly and efficiently authenticate the identity of the license holder. The chip will only hold the unique information visible on the document, namely: the driver’s civil status, the date of issue and document number, and permitted driving categories, as well as any driving restrictions [requirement to wear glasses, use of an adapted vehicle, etc.].
Potential new applications for driving licenses
Combining an electronic chip with new physical security features improves not only the global security of the document, but also opens up potential for new usages, acting as a secure pass to access a range of driving-related services (license, test, license points management, driver training, etc.). In addition, it could provide secure access to rental or pool vehicles via fully automated terminals.

Creating safer roads and combating document fraud
Public awareness in France regarding the rights and responsibilities associated with driving will continue to evolve. With the introduction of the new driving license program, the French authorities are modernizing an important French document and contributing to the fight against document fraud.

Guaranteeing driving license validity
The experience gained by Gemalto through talking to customers and learning from its project teams working on major electronic driving license programs worldwide shows the importance of upstream processes, in particular the quality of registration (enrolment) and identity checks (documents). In all cases, Gemalto recommends a secure, “face-to-face” registration process and the presentation of several identity documents to guarantee that the person receiving the card is the right person. In the document issuance chain, there is a real risk that false credentials may be used to obtain valid identity documents. Each year in France, for example, more than 20 million documents are used to apply for administrative services (mainly bills as proof of address, bank details and tax assessments).

AIMS OF THE FRENCH PROGRAM

> Improve road safety
> Eradicate identity fraud
> Ensure more effective application of the law
> Strengthen public trust in the driving license
> Modernize the administrative process
> Develop new driver-oriented services

In the long term, document registration/issuance procedures, such as those carried out for electronic passports, could be combined. It would also be clearly desirable to avoid duplication of technology and combine the verification or identity management processes for large-scale national projects such as electronic ID cards, passports, voting cards, residence permits or even social security cards.

Gemalto contributes to more than 80 national programs worldwide. The company provides end-to-end solutions for national identity initiatives, with a particular focus on next-generation driving licenses and associated services.
EXPERTISE AT YOUR SERVICE. Gemalto is the world leader in digital security with 2012 annual revenues of €2 billion and 10,000 employees based in 43 different countries. In the public sector, Gemalto provides secure documents, robust identity solutions and services for governments, national printers and integrators in the service of citizens. Its products and solutions are deployed in more than 80 government programs worldwide.

Gemalto is contributing to more than 25 ePassport, 24 eID national programs and is active in all major eHealthcare schemes and numerous e-driving license, vehicle registration and tachograph projects. Gemalto also collaborates with its clients to analyze, report and share best practices from around the world.