

Passport photograph instructions by the police

These instructions describe the technical and quality requirements on passport photographs. The same instructions apply to all facial photographs used on the passports, identity cards and permits granted by the police. The instructions are based on EU legislation and international treaties.

The photographer usually sends the passport photograph directly to the police electronically, and it is linked to the application with a photograph retrieval code assigned to the photograph. You can also use a paper photograph, if you submit your application at a police service point.

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Photograph format

- The photograph can be a black-and-white or a colour photograph.
- The dimensions of photographs submitted electronically must be exactly 500 x 653 pixels. Deviations as small as one pixel are not accepted.
- Electronically submitted photographs must be saved in the JPEG format (not JPEG2000). The file extension can be either .jpg or .jpeg.
- The maximum size of an electronically submitted photograph is 250 kilobytes.



1. **Correct** ✓
2. **Correct** ✓

Technical requirements on the photograph

- The photograph must be no more than six months old.
- The photograph must not be manipulated in any way that would change even the smallest details in the subject's appearance or in a way that could raise suspicions about the photograph's authenticity. Use of digital make-up is not allowed.
- The photograph must be sharp and in focus over the entire face. The photograph may not be blurry or grainy. The depth of field must reach from the ears to the tip of the nose (pictures 4–6).
- The photograph must not have colour defects (picture 7).
- The photograph must not have optical or other distortions that change the dimensions of the face and make visual or computerised recognition of the person more difficult (pictures 8 and 9).



3. **Correct** ✓

4. **Incorrect** ✗
Compression issues

5. **Incorrect** ✗
Blurry

6. **Incorrect** ✗
Grainy

7. **Incorrect** ✗
Colour defect



8. **Correct** ✓

9. **Incorrect** ✗
Optical distortion

More information about the image resolution

Image resolution may suffer due to various reasons. If the image file is compressed too much, it results in file compression issues called JPG artefacts in the image (picture 4). The photograph becomes blurry if the camera has not been focused correctly (picture 5). Poor camera resolution causes graininess (picture 6). In addition, the contrast of the photograph can be so sharp that some details are lost.

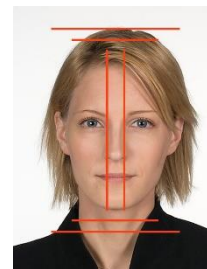
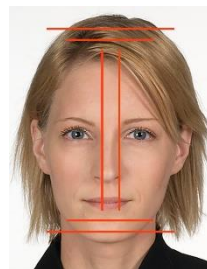
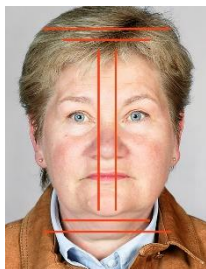
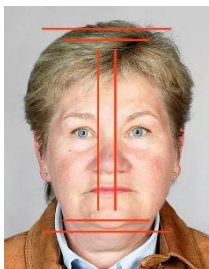
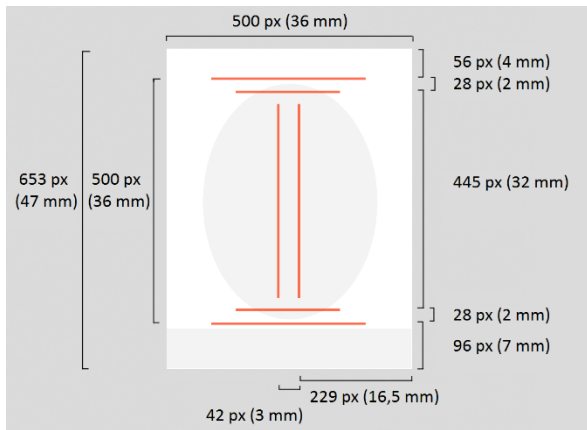
More information about optical distortions

Smart phones and tablets typically have a wide-angle lens and the pictures are taken at a short distance. This causes an optical distortion that makes your nose and other facial features appear too large in relation to other facial features in a passport photograph.

Dimensions and positioning

The size and position of the head are measured from the crown of the head to the chin. The hair and beard are not included in the size of the head, and if necessary, the location of the crown of the head and the chin is estimated. The dimensions in pixels (abbreviated as px) only apply to photographs submitted through the photograph server, and the dimensions in millimetres only apply to paper photographs. Otherwise, the positioning requirements are the same for both types. The same requirements also apply to subjects of all ages.

- The distance between the crown of the head and the chin must be at least 445–500 px (32–36 mm).
- There must be at least 56 px (4 mm) and no more than 84 px (6 mm) above the crown of the head. There must be at least 96 px (7 mm) and no more than 124 px (9 mm) below the chin. The head must be positioned in the centre of the image so that the centre line of the face differs a maximum of 21 px (1.5 mm) from the centre line of the photo.
- There are no specific measurements for the width of the face. If the length of the face complies with the requirements, you do not need to pay attention to the width of the face.
- Hair and beard do not need to be completely visible in the photograph, although it is recommended. The most important rule to consider is making sure that the length of the face, excluding the hair and beard, from the crown of the head to the chin falls between the approved limits.



10. **Correct** ✓

11. **Incorrect** ✗
Head too high

12. **Incorrect** ✗
Head too far to one side

13. **Incorrect** ✗
Head too large in the photograph

14. **Incorrect** ✗
Head too small in the photograph

Posture

- Hold your head straight in the photograph. Do not tilt your head sideways, forward or backwards. Your face and eyes must point directly at the camera. The position of the head is considered based on the outer edges of the head when seen from the front, not from the position of the eyes, for instance.
- Your shoulders must be in the same line with your face, or facing straight at the camera. Portrait style photographs where the subject looks over their shoulder are not allowed (picture 16).
- Your posture does not need to comply with these requirements if you have a medical condition. If this is the case, a photograph that can be best used to identify you will be taken. It is more important that the face is in the right position than the shoulders. If you cannot hold your head straight, the camera angle can be adjusted so that your head is positioned correctly.
- Both ears do not need to be visible in the photograph, as one ear can be further back, smaller or different in shape than the other naturally.

15. **Correct** ✓16. **Incorrect** ✗
Shoulders at
an angle17. **Incorrect** ✗
Head is not
facing directly
at the camera18. **Incorrect** ✗
Head tilted19. **Incorrect** ✗
Head bent
forward

Lighting

The most challenging part of taking passport photographs is usually the lighting, which is why it needs extra attention.

- The lighting over the entire face must be even; there must be no shadows on your face or behind you and there must be no overexposed areas that are completely white, caused by light that is too strong and has not been softened (pictures 21 and 22).
- The photograph must not have the red-eye effect.
- The lighting must be natural in colour, meaning that it cannot have for example blue or red hues.
- The photograph must not be over- or underexposed (pictures 24 and 25).



20. **Correct** ✓



21. **Incorrect** ✗
Light coming from only one side, overexposed forehead



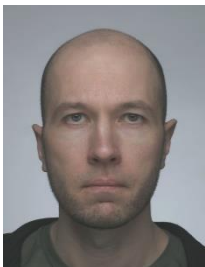
22. **Incorrect** ✗
Light coming from only one side, shadows in the background



23. **Correct** ✓



24. **Incorrect** ✗
Overexposed



25. **Incorrect** ✗
Underexposed

Expressions, glasses, head-wear and make-up

As a rule of thumb, your face and especially your eyes must be completely and clearly visible.

- Your facial expression must be neutral.
- Your mouth must be closed. These rules are flexible when it comes to very young babies, but even their mouth can only be slightly open.
- Eyes must be open with no squinting. Even small children must keep their eyes open.
- Your face must be completely visible. Your face must not be covered by accessories or hair. Make sure that your eyes can be seen clearly in the photograph. In picture 29, the frames of the glasses cover the eyes partially. In picture 30, the eyes are partly covered by reflections and in picture 31 the eyes are partly covered by frames and hair. For best results, make sure that no part of the frames of your glasses is near your eyes. The frames of your glasses should also not be so thick that it would make it difficult to see your facial structure clearly. You can always take your glasses off when you have your passport photograph taken.
- Tinted glasses or an eyepatch can only be worn for medical reasons.
- You may wear a wig if you wear one daily for medical reasons, for example. The same rules that concern hair also apply to wigs, meaning that it must not cover your face and in particular your eyes.
- You may only wear a scarf or other head covering if it is required by religious reasons or due to an established tradition, or if it is necessary for health or medical reasons. However, the head covering must not cover the face too much and it must not cause shadows over the face.
- You may wear make-up in a passport photograph but only if it does not make it more difficult to identify you. It is impossible to provide a comprehensive list of rules concerning make-up, which is why the effects of make-up are always evaluated on a case-by-case basis.



26. **Correct** ✓



27. **Incorrect** ✗
Entire forehead covered



28. **Incorrect** ✗
Shadow of the scarf



29. **Incorrect** ✗
Frames over the eyes



30. **Incorrect** ✗
Reflections



31. **Incorrect** ✗
Frames and shadow of the hair, hair over the eye

Background

The best background colour is light grey. However, the key is to make sure that your face, hair and clothes can be clearly distinguished from the background. If the subject's shirt or skin colour is as light or dark as the background, it makes them blur into one in the laser engraved picture on the identity document. The laser engraved picture is always in greyscale even if the original photograph was a colour photo. To make the subject stand out from the background, the photographer can adjust the lighting or change the background to a lighter or darker colour. The background must not be lit so strongly that the reflected light reduces the contrast in the face and makes the outline of the subject glow.

- The background must be monochromatic and flat.
- The background colour must be light and neutral.
- There must not be any shadows in the background.
- The subject's face, hair and clothes must stand out clearly from the background.
- There must not be other people or objects in the photograph. You may support a small child, but there must not be any part of you visible in the photograph.



32. **Correct** ✓



33. **Incorrect** ✗
Background too dark



34. **Incorrect** ✗
Uneven background



35. **Incorrect** ✗
Shadows in the background



36. **Incorrect** ✗
The background is too strongly lit



37. **Correct** ✓



38. **Incorrect** ✗
Toy, a pillow in the background



39. **Incorrect** ✗
Person supporting the subject is visible