

Certified Senders Alliance

Quality and Trust in the Email Ecosystem through Self-Regulation



Quality and Trust in the Email Ecosystem through Self-Regulation

WHO WE ARE

The [Certified Senders Alliance](#) is a service of the [eco - Association of the Internet Industry](#), in cooperation with the [German Dialogue Marketing Association](#) (DDV). Since its foundation in 2004, the CSA has acted as a neutral interface between mailbox providers and senders of commercial emails. The goal is to enhance the quality of commercial emails such as newsletters, invoices and order confirmations, while protecting email recipients. To achieve this goal, the CSA develops and establishes quality standards for commercial emailing, thereby actively contributing to the protection of users and strengthening the email communication channel.

WHY EMAIL IS WORTHY OF PROTECTION

Following on from its establishment over 50 years ago, email is currently used by over four billion people worldwide and is the most important means of communication for companies. With the evolution of its design and functions, email has survived countless trends, thereby proving its relevance and functionality. In comparison to other centralised messaging services, email is a decentralised system based on open standards. Users are independent of a specific provider, and they even have the option to operate their own email server. In the midst of a digital age characterised by concepts such as security, data protection and autonomy, email remains as an essential pillar of global communication that is worthy of protection.

STARTING POINT IN 2004

Over the past decades, not only did the volume of emails rise significantly, but so too did the number of unsolicited spam emails. While email providers tried to solve the problem via strict spam filtering, this meant that even desired emails could be blocked or sent into the spam folder. This often resulted in so-called “false positives”, i.e. desired emails that were not delivered to the recipient’s mailbox due to incorrect filtering. Consequently, senders and mailbox providers were keen to designate a protected area for desired, legitimate emails that are delivered to the inbox. The criteria for this area needed to be transparent and public, as well as developed and supported by senders and mailbox providers. In response to this need, the CSA was founded in 2004 by an expert group of senders and mailbox providers. Since then, it has benefited throughout from the support of the two founding organisations, which have played a significant role in shaping the Internet in Germany and Europe.

WHAT WE DO

1. Setting up quality standards:

We develop legal, technical and reputational standards, called [CSA Criteria](#), that enable secure and trustworthy email communication. These are updated regularly and in a practical manner in order to comply with current legislation and contemporary market requirements. We set out legal requirements in our CSA Criteria in a clear and concise manner and support senders in their implementation. By implementing technical standards such as SPF, DKIM and DMARC in the email ecosystem, we not only protect email recipients and mailing brands from spam and the associated consequences such as phishing or scam, but also promote an enhanced and contemporary user experience.

2. Establishment of quality standards:

We certify senders who agree to comply with the CSA Criteria. We keep all the IPs of these certified senders on an IP list, which is used as a filter for [participating mailbox and security providers](#). As one of the filter decisions on which mailbox providers are based is IP, certified senders can be granted corresponding advantages, such as improved delivery, no IP warming, no “throttling” etc.

3. Ensuring quality standards:

We provide certified senders with software that enables them to monitor compliance with key CSA Criteria and detect anomalies in the sending of their emails. This software incorporates real data from mailbox providers and the [eco Complaints Office](#), enabling them to optimise and protect their email delivery. The eco Complaints Office campaigns against illegal content on the Internet and assesses individual user complaints related to spam. If a CSA-certified sender is implicated in the mailings, a thorough investigation is conducted and the sender is notified accordingly with improvement measures. In the event of repeated violations of the CSA Criteria, we impose sanctions in accordance with the CSA Rules of Procedure. Some of these sanctions are published on the CSA website. With this transparency and sanctioning, we support mailbox providers in implementing quality standards for mailings and effectively protect email recipients from spam.

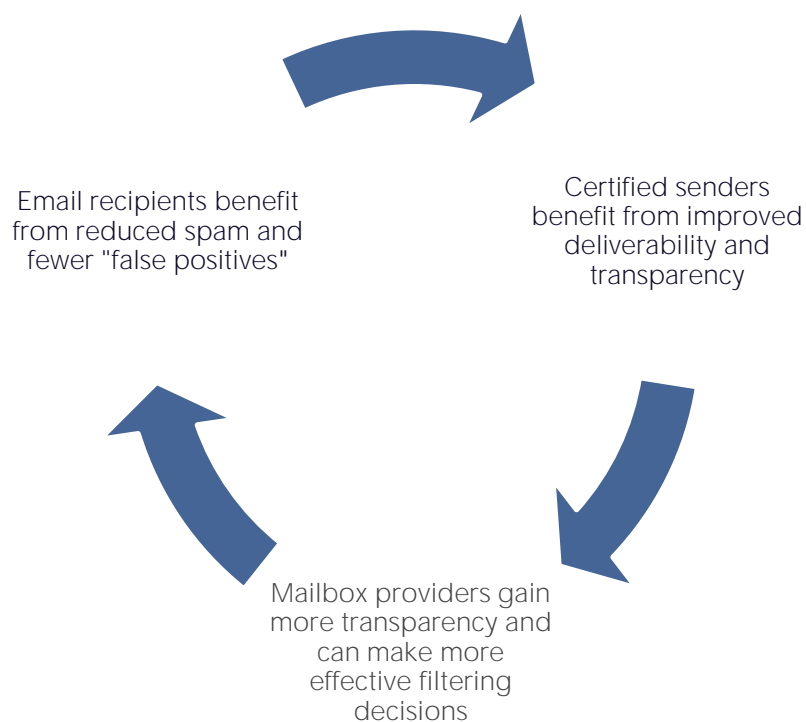
SELF-REGULATION AS A SUCCESS FACTOR

The CSA intervenes in instances where there are no existing laws or where the implementation of these laws is not fully effective in practice. Certified senders commit to adhering to the CSA Criteria and thus to the protection of the email ecosystem. In

return, they receive benefits and transparency. By complying with the CSA Criteria, the incoming email traffic for mailbox providers is improved and users are protected. Mailbox providers can transparently and reliably track which companies are behind specific IP addresses and, where necessary, can tighten the spam filters without blocking desired emails.

Based on the CSA's successful existence for almost 20 years - alongside the internationalisation of participating senders and mailbox providers and the increasing number of IPs and DKIM domains on the certified list - it makes sense that this form of self-regulation should be expanded even further in the future. Ultimately, sending emails is becoming increasingly complex, primarily due to constantly evolving technical requirements to protect senders and recipients.

OUR CONTRIBUTION TO AN ENHANCED EMAIL ECOSYSTEM



CONTACT

eco - Association of the Internet Industry
Certified Senders Alliance

Lichtstr. 43h
50835 Cologne, Germany

certified-senders.org
info@certified-senders.org
+ 49 (0) 221-70 00 48-0

