



Datafox GmbH • Dermbacher Straße 12-14 • D-36419 Geisa • www.datafox.de

Guide to
**Parameterization and integration
of microcontroller devices**

Flexible data collection with method



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Changes within this document

Date	Chapter	Description
07.08.2013	Alle	New edition of the documentation
08.09.2013	Alle	Expression correction
14.05.2014	4.3 4.4	Note Differences active mode -> passive mode Online function Access control via HTTP
11.05.2015	4.3.4 und 4.4.5	Encryption added
09.08.2016	4.2	Overview / online offline access control functions added
07.11.2016	2.2 2.3 4.3.4.1-4	Language Characters / Encryption method in detail
22.12.2016	4.2	Display Designer
28.12.2017	5.6	http Level 1
28.12.2017	5.7	https
23.01.2018	4.2	wireless security
17.12.2019	5.6	More options for the http Level 1
28.07.2020	Appendix Structure of the Chapter	Information for HTTPS Main structure of the document changed
30.09.2022	All	update the links
21.12.2023	All	Updating all links for the new Homepage http Level 0 deleted. Not relevant for new integrators new side with all important download-links

1. Introduction

This document is a guide to training in the topics:

- a) Configuration and
- b.) integration of communication

The guideline applies to all microcontroller devices MasterIV series and EVO series, as well as integrated embedded modules in the industrial PC .

(Note: The built-in Industrial PC embedded modules can also be operated in HID mode.)

This document will help you to estimate the integration effort.

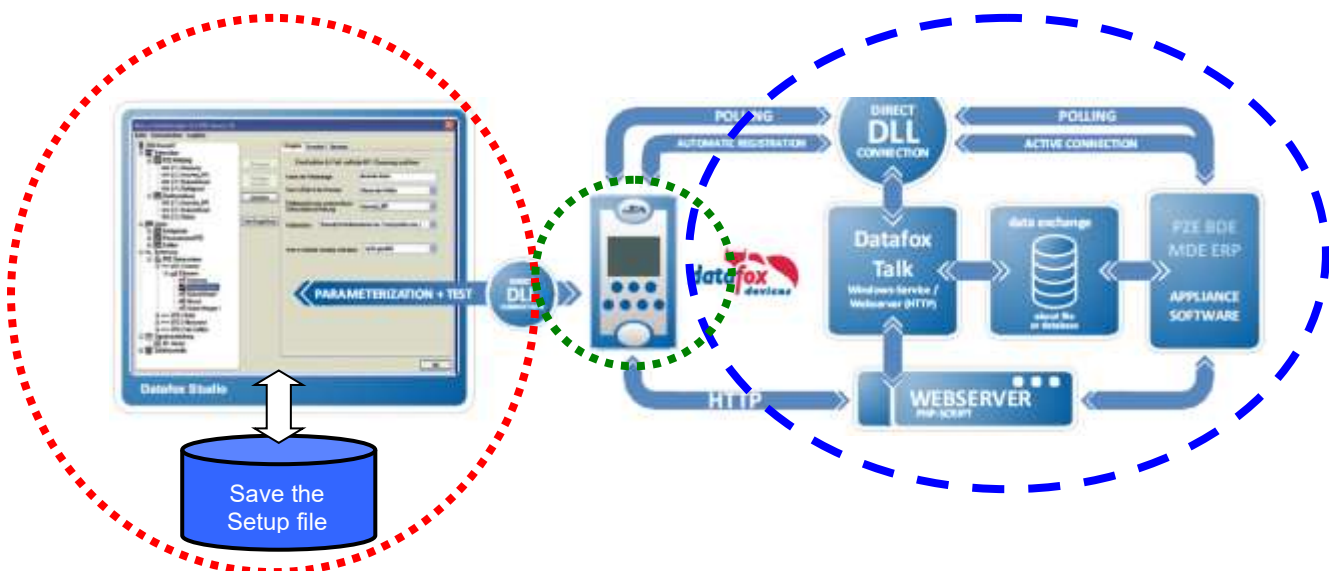
There you will be given links and notes, where you will find information on each topic.

The **Parameterization of the devices** is done via Datafox studio. *This program allows you to create the desired acquisition and testing functions quickly, easily and without any programming knowledge or, as we say, to parameterize.* The free of charge/licence free program can be found on our website.

When **integrating communication**, we give you an overview of the possible communication channels with Datafox terminals. The individual channels are shown and described with their advantages and disadvantages. *On our website you will find sample programs for the integrati-on of the DLL in the current programming languages for your use.*

2. System Structure

This overview shows the basic structure of the complete data acquisition system and its areas:



The following components are explained in the following chapters:

Structure of the hardware / device and firmware ([Link](#))

Creating a setup ([Link](#))

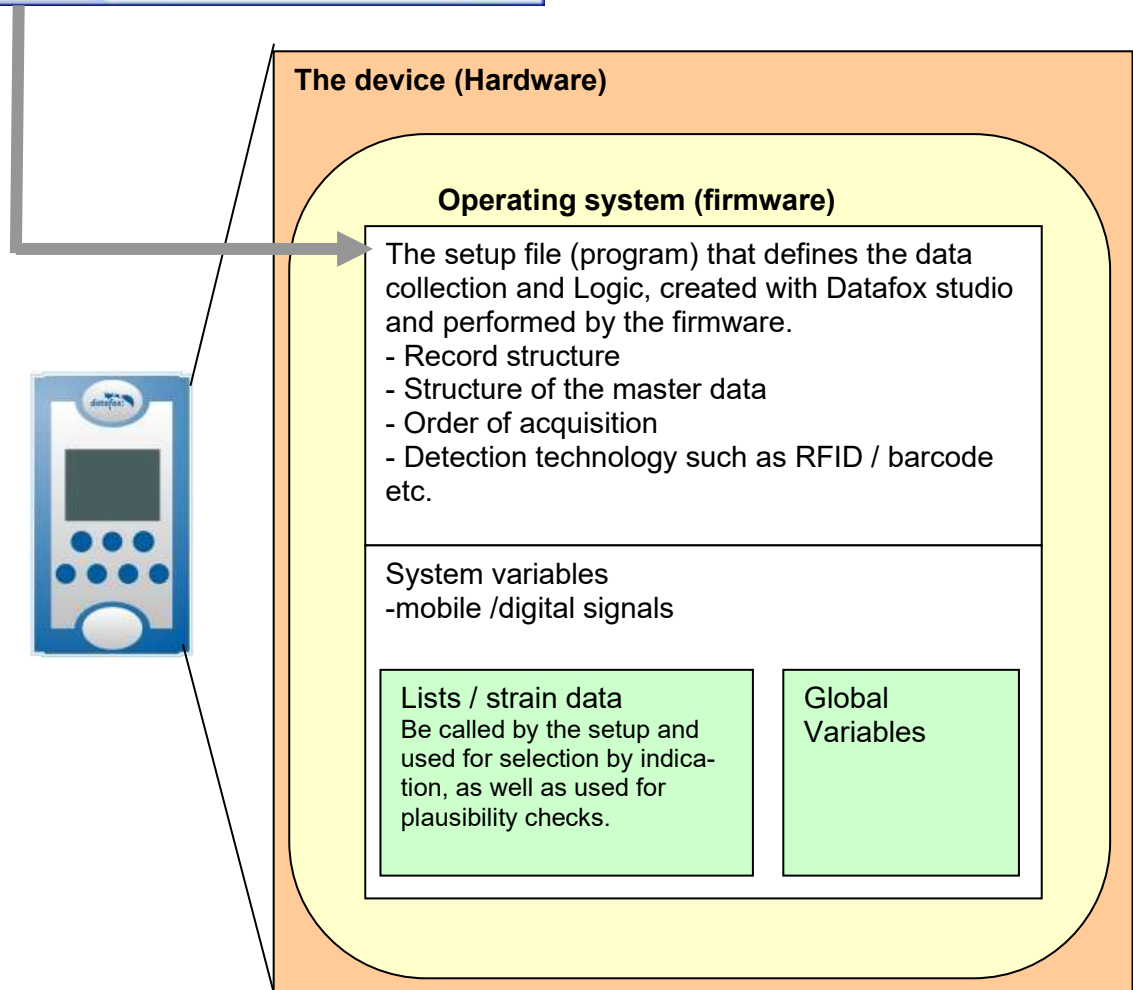
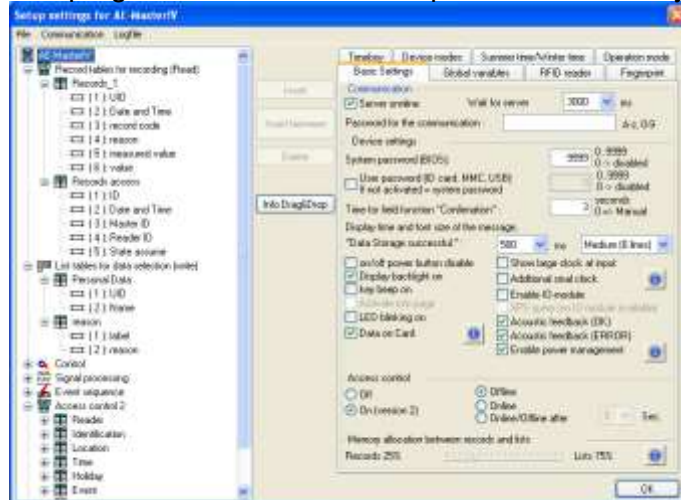
Communication techniques with Datafox devices ([Link](#))

2.1. Structure of the hardware / device and firmware

This graphic shows the structure of data acquisition devices in context. Underlying hardware is fitted out as desired.

Then there is the firmware, which is the operating system.

The program, which we call setup file is executed by the firmware.



This connection is important because you do not have access to the individual areas of the system with every communication technology.

2.2. Usable Characters

For your information, we have put together an explanation of the characters in the standard scope of delivery.

This information can also be found in the manuals.

The Datafox devices support a part of the character encoding Latin-1 (ISO-8859-1) for the character output on the display and the data.

ISO 8859-1, more accurate **ISO/IEC 8859-1**, also known as **Latin-1**, is a standard for information technology on eight-bit character encoding, updated by the ISO last 1998, and the first part of the standards family **ISO/IEC 8859**.

Character Table - Latin-1:

Code	...0	...1	...2	...3	...4	...5	...6	...7	...8	...9	...A	...B	...C	...D	...E	...F
0...	not usable															
1...	not usable															
2...	SP	!	"	#	\$	%	&	'	()	*	+	,	-	.	/
3...	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	:	;	<	=	>	?
4...	@	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O
5...	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	[\]	^	_
6...	`	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m	n	o
7...	p	q	r	s	t	u	v	w	x	y	z	{		}	~	
8...	not usable															
9...	not usable															
A...	NBSP	ı	¢	£	¤	¥	¦	§	¨	©	ª	«	¬	SHY	®	¯
B...	°	±	²	³	´	µ	¶	·	¸	¹	º	»	¼	½	¾	¿
C...	À	Á	Â	Ã	Ä	Å	Æ	Ç	È	É	Ê	Ë	Ì	Í	Î	Ï
D...	Ð	Ñ	Ò	Ó	Ô	Õ	Ö	×	Ø	Ù	Ú	Û	Ü	Ý	Þ	ß
E...	à	á	â	ã	ä	å	æ	ç	è	é	ê	ë	ì	í	î	ï
F...	ð	ñ	ò	ó	ô	õ	ö	÷	ø	ù	ú	û	ü	ý	þ	ÿ

SP = space, NBSP = hard coded space, SHY = conditional separator

	Control characters according to ISO standard can not be used
	characters can not be used
	Usable characters of Firmware-Version 04.01.xx.xx to Firmware-Version 04.03.02.xx
	Character extension Firmware-Version 04.03.03.xx (only Hardware V4)
	character extension Firmware-Version 04.03.04 when using character table Latin-1 (only Hardware V4)

2.3. Language / Table

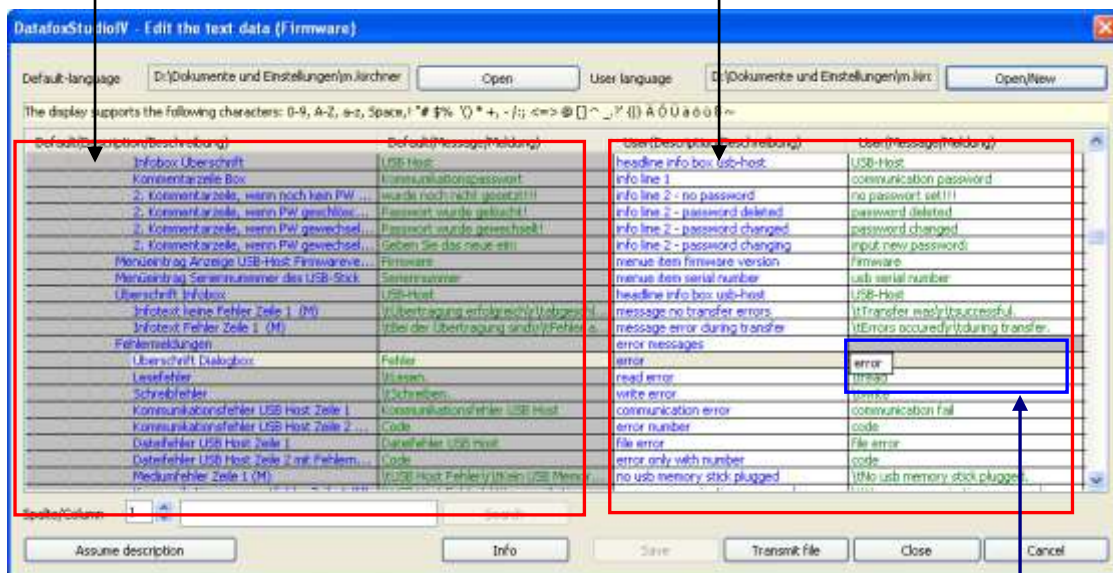
In order to ensure language compatibility, it is possible to edit the texts and messages displayed by the firmware.

Open the editing dialog via the menu

"Configuration – Language file for device (*.dfl) – Edit file for language table".

Open a device file archive (firmware)*.dfz. The default texts of the firmware with a description and the corresponding message are displayed.

Open or create a new language file for the firmware with the extension *.dfl. If you have created a new file, the right column of the list is empty.



Work within the lists with single mouse clicks only. NO double-clicks! Select a line from the list with a single click.

With another single click on the column User (Description/...) or User (Message/...) the cursor is displayed in this field.

Now you can enter or edit the text. When you finish the entry, the description from the column Default (Description/...) is taken over and you can edit it as well. You can find prepared .dfl-files on the Datafox DVD.



Note:

Cyrillic and Chinese characters can not be displayed.

You find different language file.dfl on our product DVD:

[Englisch](#), [Niederländisch](#), [Französisch](#)

Default setting is German. German is always included in the firmware file.

Datafox DVD\MasterIV_EVO_TimeboyIV\Datafox Geräte\Datafox Software MasterIV-04.03.07\Datafox Studio-IV_und_Firmware\Sprachdateien der Firmware

https://www.datafox.de/d67/unternehmen/downloads/software/master4-v4/Datafox_Softwarepaket_MasterIV-V04.03.21.zip

(Laden Sie immer das aktuelle Release)

Beispiel: Datafox Software-MasterIV V04.03.19.zip

2.4. Displaydesigner

scope of application:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>						<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

For the devices AE-MasterIV V4, PZE-MasterIV V4 and PZE-MasterIV Basic V4 the Designer is only usable with the optional color display.

With the Display-Designer, Datafox offers the possibility for partners and users to customize the display according to your requirements. But due to the necessary operating sequences, this cannot be a completely free design, but things like headlines, menu structures and footers have to be guaranteed. The aim of the display designer is to enable the feasible settings with minimal effort.

We are looking forward to many users and recommend:

Create an individual Display-Design for your Company:

Example picture for EVO 4.3



Example picture for EVO 2.8 / 3.5

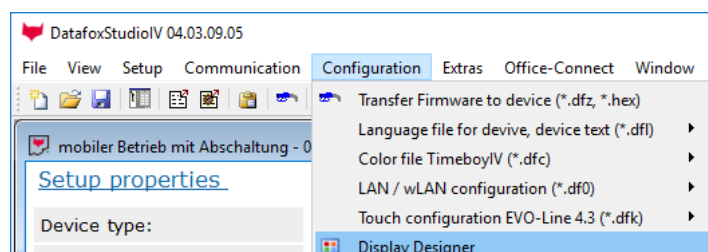


Example picture for PZE-/ AE- Master V4 with color display

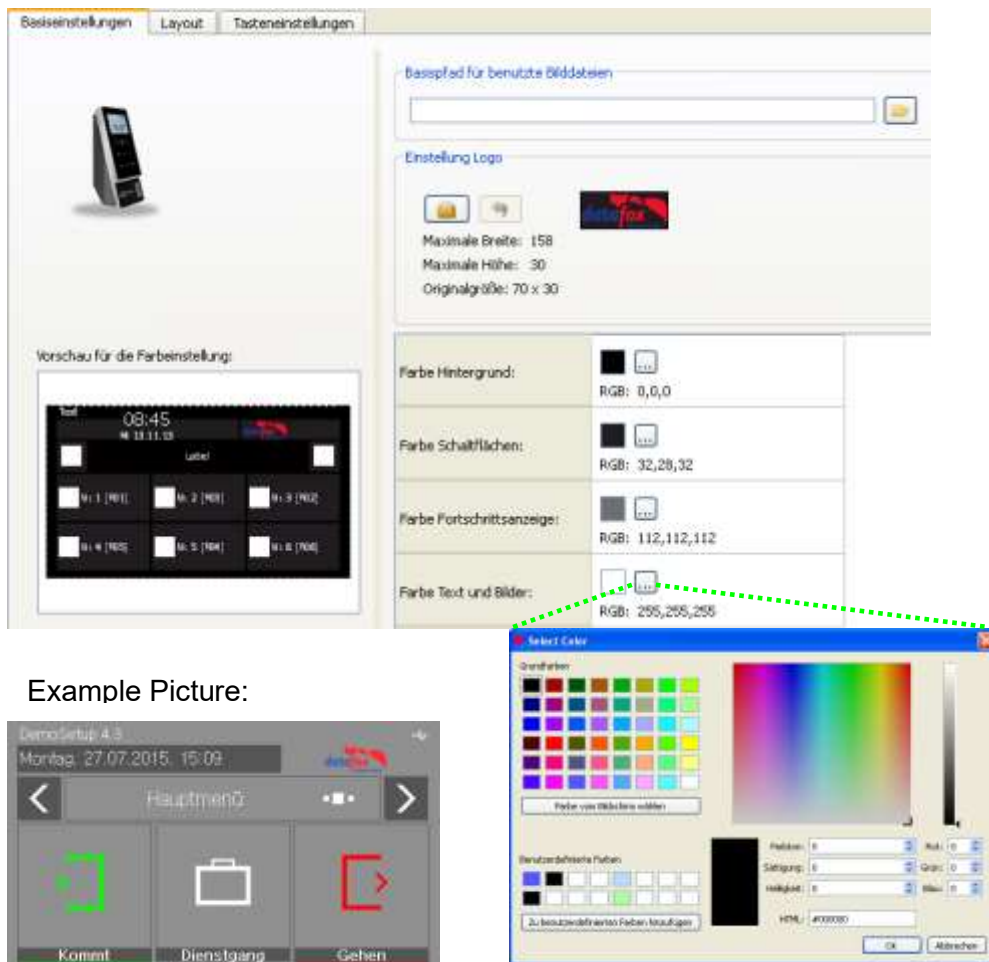


To create an individual display design for your device, you need at least the DatafoxStudioIV 04.03.09.05.

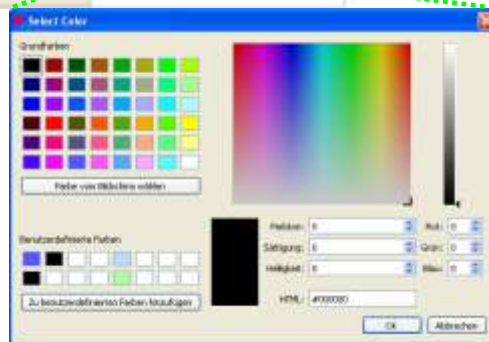
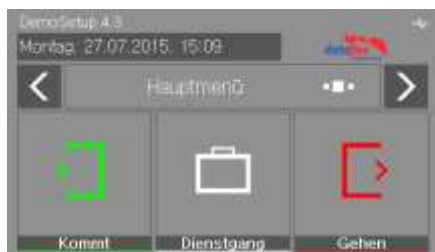
The display designer can be opened via the Configuration menu or directly from the setup edit mask.



2.4.1. Color Setting for the Displays of the EVO 4.3 Multifunctional Terminal / 2.8 and 3.5 Pure



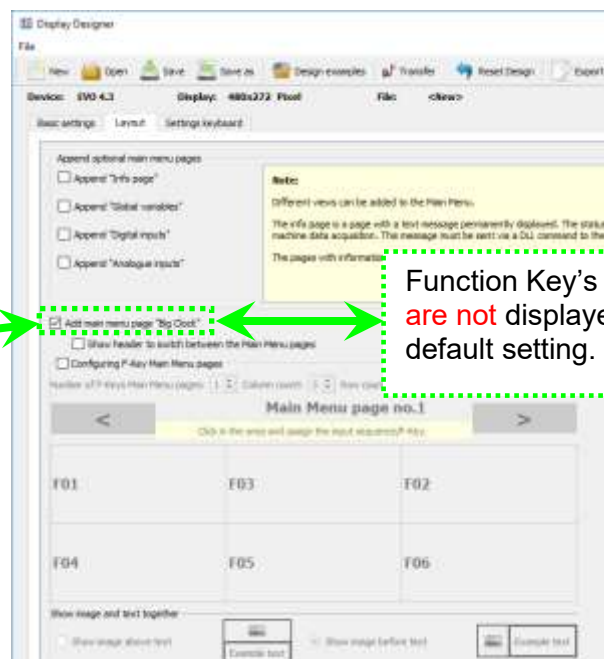
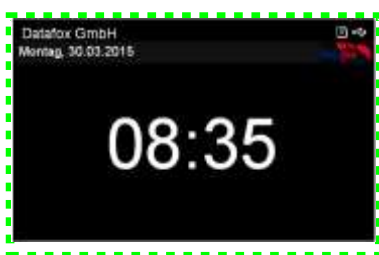
Example Picture:



2.4.2. Default Setting

The device is delivered in the default „PZE“-design.

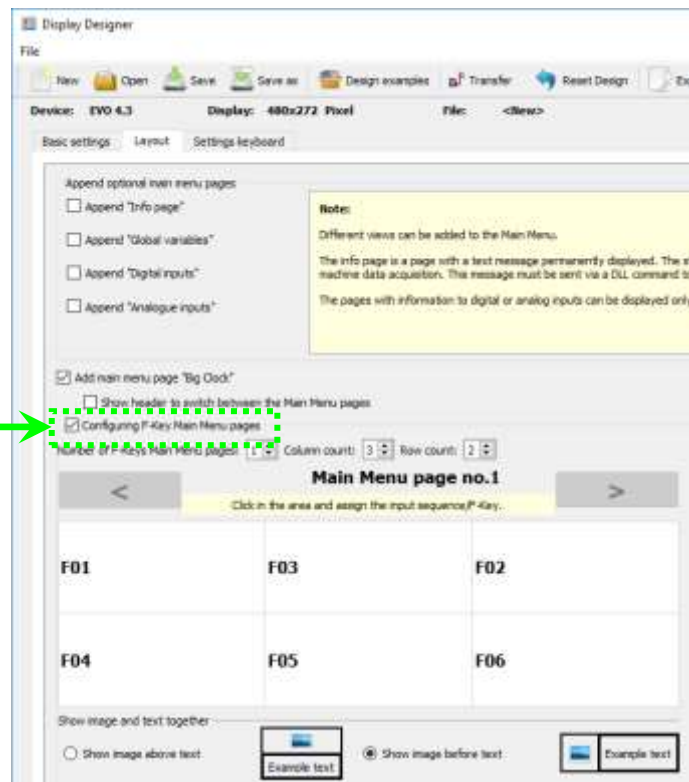
This design is also set as default when you first create a new theme in Display Designer.



Function Key's are not displayed in the default setting.

2.4.3. Display function buttons on the EVO 4.3 Multifunctional Terminal / 2.8 und 3.5 Pure display

By showing the function buttons from the setup, the number of buttons displayed in the display can be adjusted.



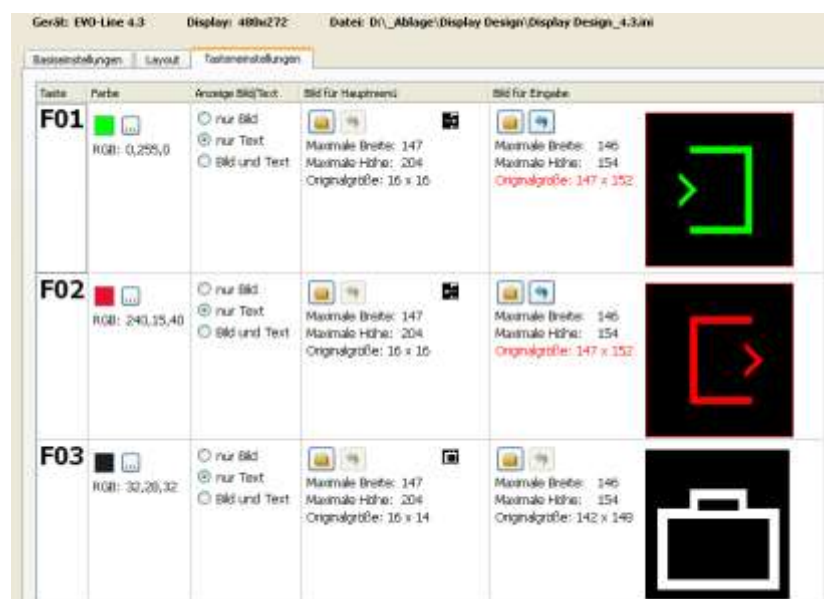
Example:



2.4.4. Upload images for function buttons of EVO 4.3 Multifunctional Terminal / 2.8 / 3.5 Pure

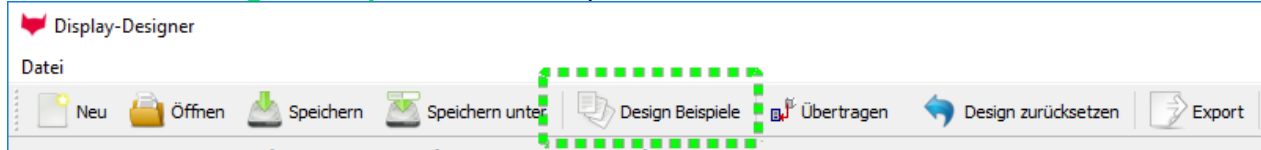
Under this menu item "Key settings" you can import the image file for each function key.

Sample picture for the key figures:



2.4.5. Design examples in the designer

With the installation of the DatafoxStudioIV you get several design examples for the devices. Click on the **"Design Examples"** button to open them.



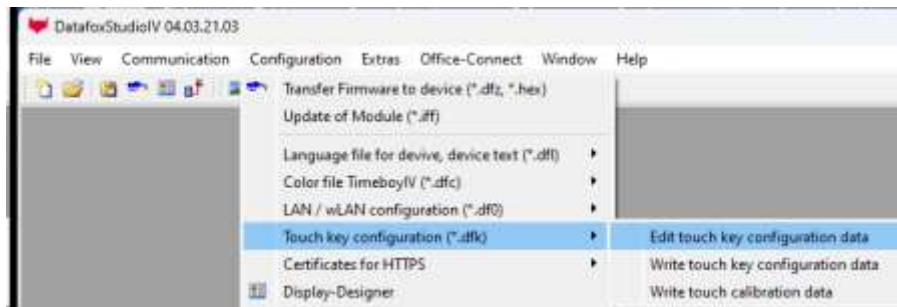
Datafox gradually extends the examples. If you have any suggestions or wishes, please let us know.



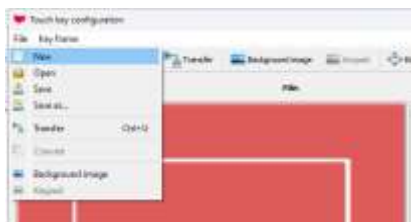
2.5. Individual touch layout for EVO 5.0 Pure and 4.6 FlexKey

In the devices EVO 5.0 Pure and EVO 4.6 FlexKey, you can individually design the touch surfaces. For this purpose, an image for the keyboard is stored and displayed on the device. With Datafox-StudioIV you can then place the desired keys on the image.

You can open the Touch menu:

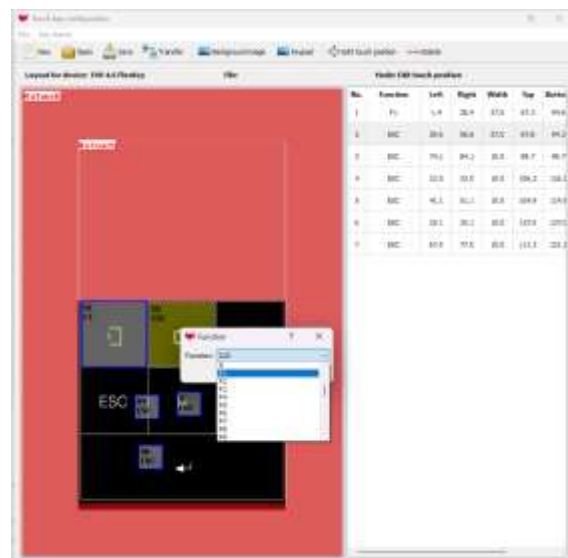


With „New“ can you create a touch-config.



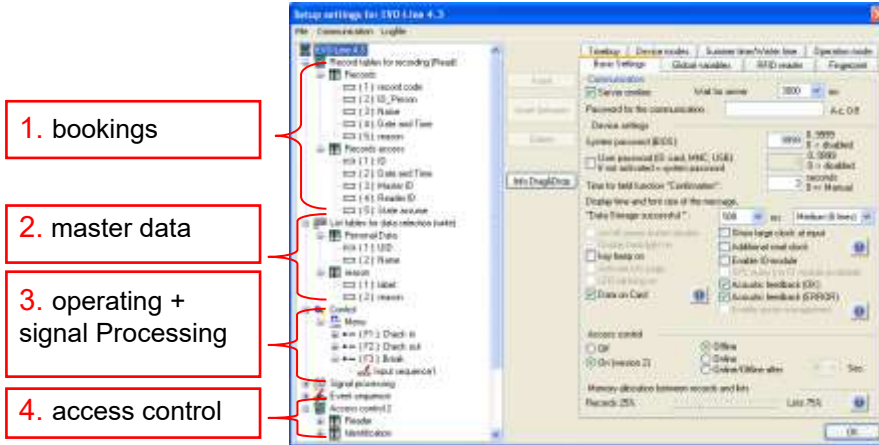
You find a description in the Manual DatafoxStudio.

This is what your display could look like.

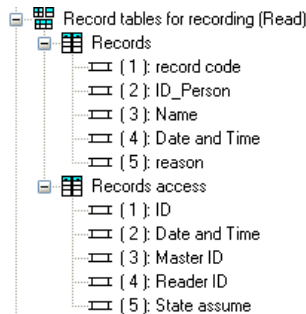


3. Creation of a setup (program)

The creation of the setup is done with the free of charge "Datafox StudioIV" tool. The structure of the tables for master data and bookings as well as the operating procedures, are freely definable. **There are no programming skills required.**



1. Insert the data structure of the tables individually for bookings

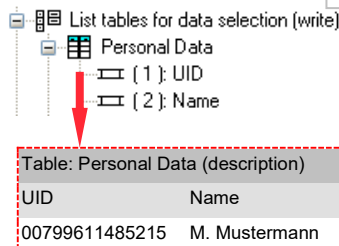


Record table: Records (Data description)					
record code	ID_Person	Name	date and time	reason	
K	656556	M. Müller	21.02.2013 12:31:15	0	
K	656556	F. Muster	21.02.2013 12:32:45	0	

Access Tabelle: Records access (Data description)					
ID	date and time	Master ID	Reader ID	State	
0566236654	21.02.2013 12:31:15	1	010	20	
	21.02.2013 12:32:45	1	010	42	
1566959651	21.02.2013 14:12:05	1	020	20	
-	21.02.2013 16:55:14	1	020	42	

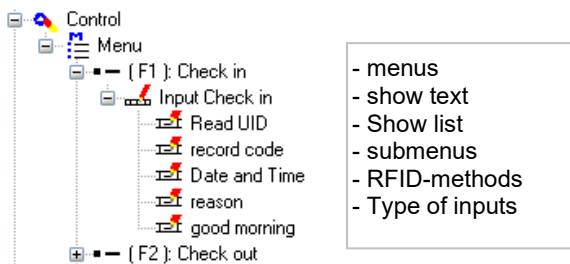
2. Define the structure of the tables for master data.

There can be: **20 record tables** and **20 list tables** be defined, each with 25 fields

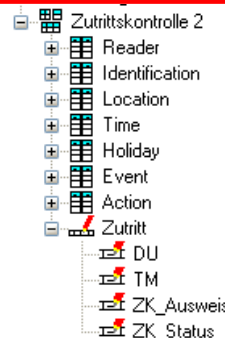


Lists are for example Master or order data that already exist and in a defined shape (list description) are transferred to the device. For example, HR master, cost centers, production orders, etc .. These data support the data acquisition by allowing a choice to carry out from a list or to compare data with a list (plausibility check).

3. Specify the operation and signal processing.



4. Create the Access Control



- Detection order
- Status
- online / offline

5. Transfer the setup to the terminal.

6. Collect data

4. Device key and security

There are different techniques for the Datafox devices to protect the device from unqualified access.

4.1. Device passwords

Device passwords are used to prevent devices from being unintentionally / accidentally or intentionally read or manipulated in the settings for communication or data.

These settings are only intended to ensure the operational safety of the devices and should be part of the standard.

These settings do not have the encryption passwords.

Please see the chapter on encryption via http and DLL.

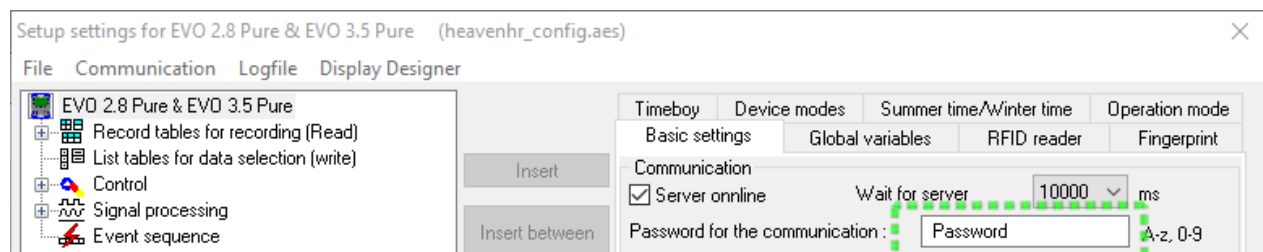
4.1.1. Communication password

Our software "Datafox StudioIV" is freely available on the homepage.

The devices are configured by our partners.

To prevent misuse or manipulation by users, a communication password can be stored in the device. Only those who know this can change the configuration of the device.

The **Password** is transferred to the device with the configuration (setup file).



4.1.2. Bios Menu Password

All display devices have a bios menu.

Settings can be made as followed:

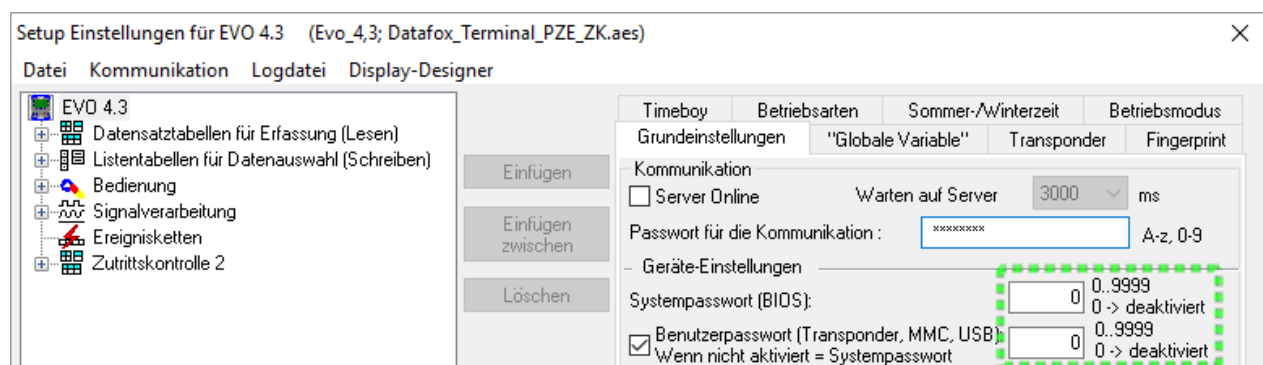
- IP - address

- The type of Communication (GPRS, USB, TCP/IP) etc.

- Display brightness, volume etc.

To prevent access to the bios menu, a password can be entered here.

This password is then transferred to the device with the configuration (setup).



4.2. Wireless security

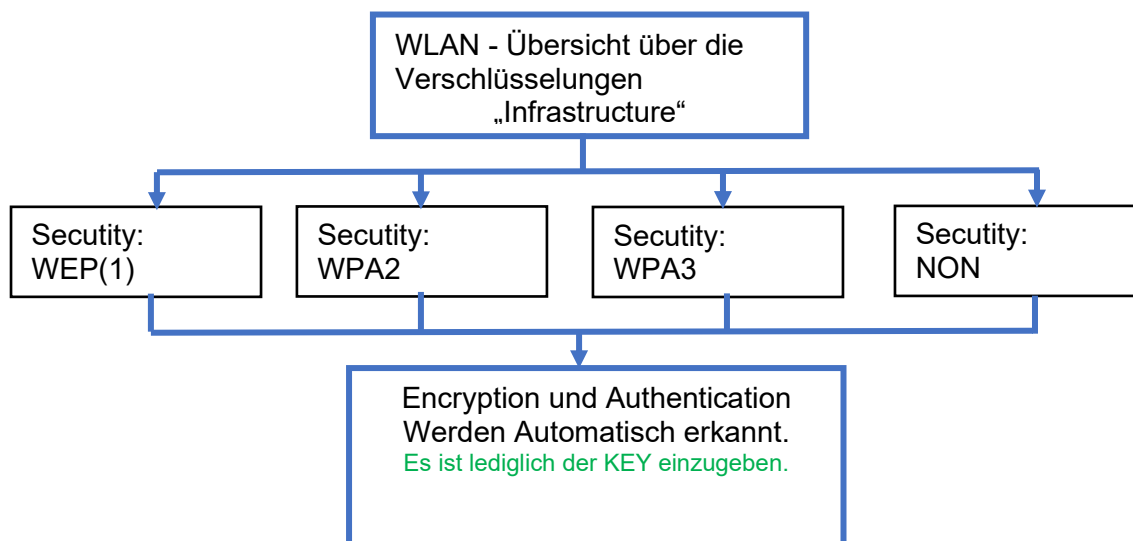
4.2.1. M111_WLAN ESP32-c3 ML01 (WLAN-Modul DF-WL03)

This overview shows you which **WLAN** methods are supported.

The DF-WL03 module automatically detects the encryption of the AP. Therefore, only the Security parameter needs to be set. The other parameters (Encryption and Authentication) are detected automatically.

Routers that operate WPA3/WPA2 in mixed mode can already be used now.

Supported is here the 2.4Ghz band.



Attention:

We cannot test every Access point on the market.
Therefore, it is not possible for us to guarantee a connection to every AP..

4.2.2. Texas Instruments TI-CC3135 (Generation 2)

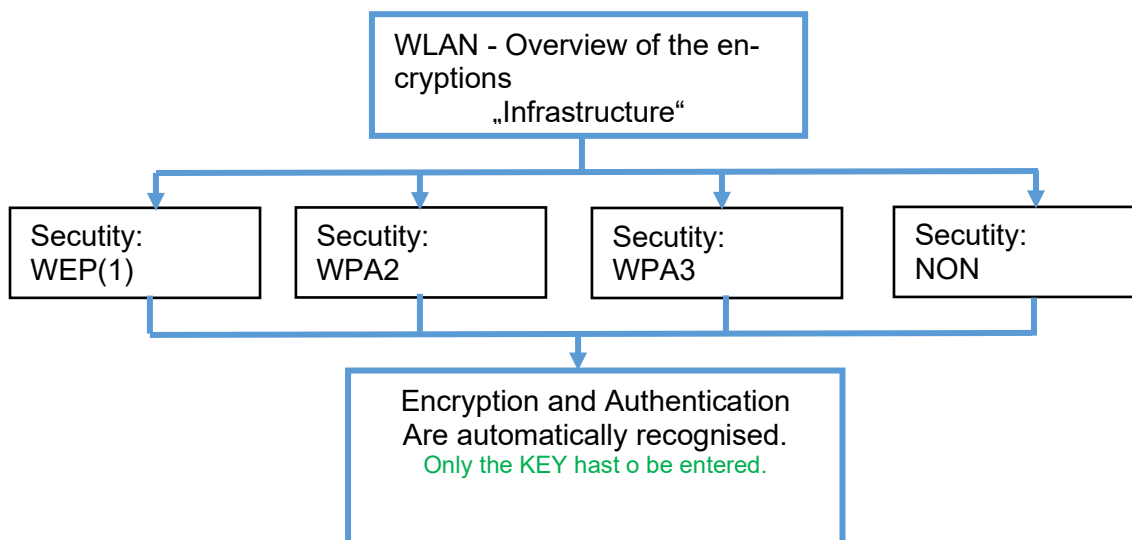
The module is currently not available for the Universal

This overview shows you which **WLAN** methods are supported.

The TI-CC3135 module automatically detects the encryption of the AP. Therefore, only the Security parameter needs to be set. The other parameters (Encryption and Authentication) are detected automatically.

Routers that operate WPA3/WPA2 in mixed mode can already be used now.

If the networks in the 5Ghz and 2.4Ghz bands have the same name, the network with the better reception quality is selected. This is usually the network in the 2.4Ghz band.



Attention:

We cannot test every Access point on the market.
Therefore, it is not possible for us to guarantee a connection to every AP..

4.2.3. Redpine (Generation 1)

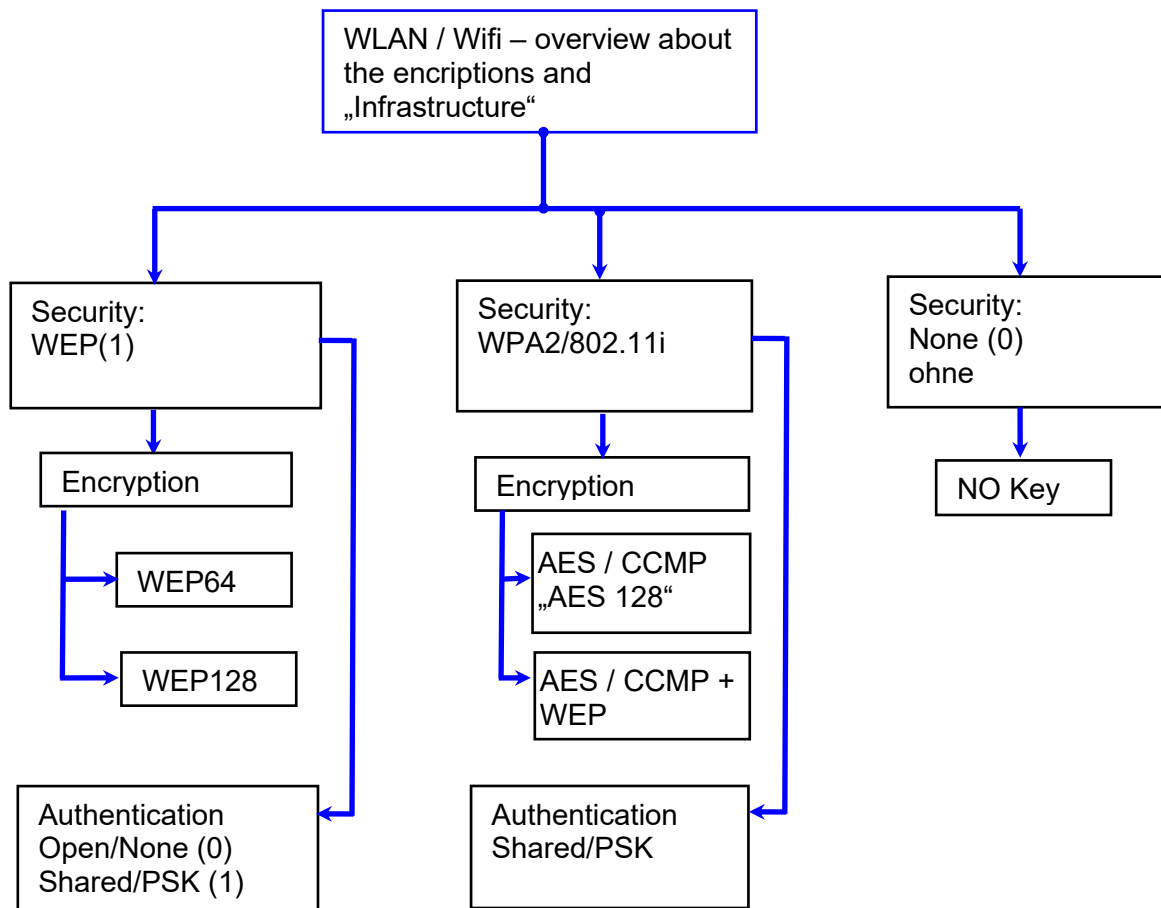
This overview shows you which WLAN methods are supported.

Not supported is WPA (Predecessor of WPA2).

Not supported is multiple-input multiple-output (MIMO)

5 GHz connections are **not supported** and no mixed operation 2.4 GHz / 5 GHz.

Authentication via WPA2 Enterprise according to IEEE 802.1x is **not supported**.



Attention:

We cannot test every available Access-Point on the market.
Therefore, it is not possible for us to guarantee a connection to any AP.



Attention:

multiple-input multiple-output (MIMO) is not supported. If you change the AP from b/g/n to b/g, only SISO is automatically used.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Single-input_single-output_system

When setting the encryption AES or WEP, only one type is used at a time.

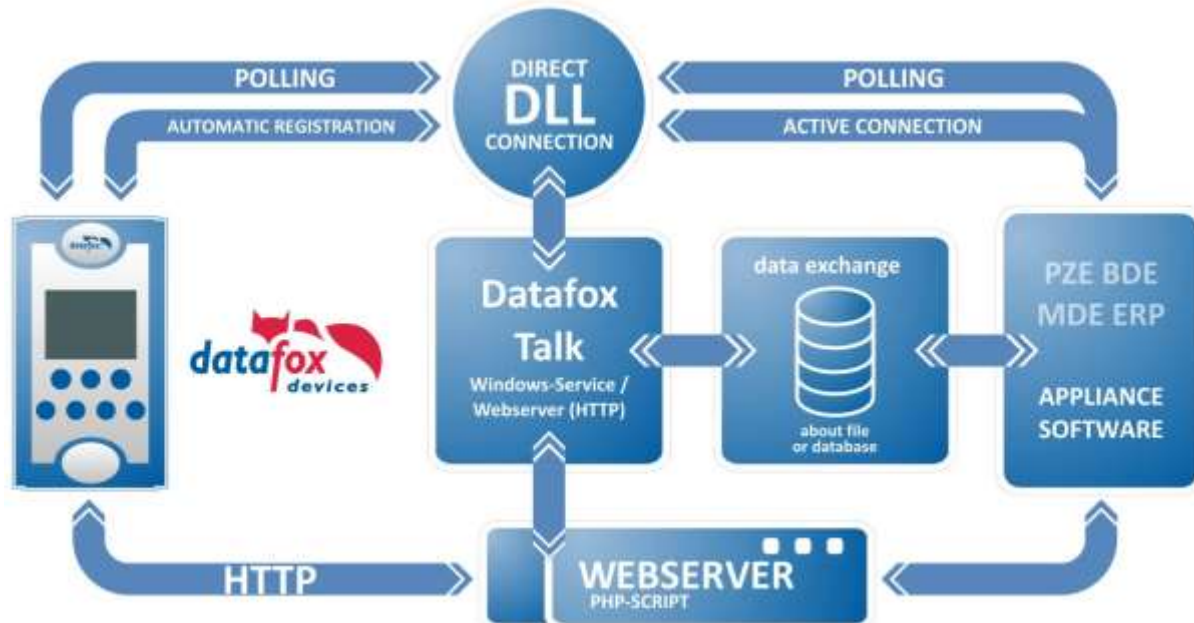
The setting AES+WEP means for some access points that AES encryption is performed first and then additionally encrypted with WEP.

In this case, only set AES.

5. Description of the different communication techniques

5.1. Overview of the communications technologies

This overview is valid for all microcontroller devices of MasterIV series and EVO series, as well as for the embedded modules integrated into the Industrial PC. (Note: The built-in Embedded modules inside the Industrial PCs can also be operated in HID mode.)



**DLL integration
„Passive-mode“
= Polling**
(free of charge)

















































**DLL integration
„Active-mode“**
Permanent Active
connection to the
terminal
(free of charge)

„Datafox-Talk“
Data exchange via
file storage or data-
base with a service
(License Required)

**„http“
Level 1**
Automatic sending
of data to a
Web Server
and transfer list to
the device
(free of charge)

In order to enable the respective communication, the main communication must be set in the BIOS of the device. How to enter the BIOS menu, please see the respective manuals in the chapter "Display structure and Bios".

5.2. Function overview of communication techniques

access to:	description	DLL integration Polling	DLL active-mode	http Level 1	Datafox Talk
Data sets	Generated data from the data acquisition				
Transfer master data	-staff lists -Article Master -orders				
System	-Firmware -Language -Colour/Display				
System	-Setup				
GV global variables	8 x free use				
System-variables	GPRS COM I/O				
Message to The device	Direct display of text on the display				
Online Mode					
Online Mode access	All access authorizations are decided directly from the server				
Access control alternating online offline	In case the server is offline: automatic change to Offline-Mode				
Access control offline	The device uses its own access control lists				
Access control with assisted onl	The device check self in the list and send the result to the server. the server then checks				
Timeliness of data ca. in seconds	How fast is the generated data available	Depending on how often the data is retrieved	Message "data sets exist" <1s	<1s HTTP via Lan, 1-2s via GPRS	300s or more depending on the setting; 300s rec.
Download Hinweise Zusatzinfo		Downlaod: Windows Linux	Downlaod: Windows Linux	Download Hinweise/Info	

6. Communication via DLL

6.1. Program library [Dynamic Link Library (DLL)] - General information

6.1.1. What is a program library?

"A program library referred in programming as a set of subroutines that provides solutions to thematically related problems. Libraries, unlike programs, are not stand-alone units, but auxiliary modules that are requested or called by programs."

Wikipedia about program library

In order to address the functions (subroutines) of the program library, it must be integrated into your software solution. Depending on the development environment a certain procedure is required. In principle, all have one thing in common: the required functions have to be announced to your software solution (they must be declared).

6.1.2. Advantages of a program library in DLL or so-form.

Here specifically for the Datafox DLL.

- The integration of a DLL is easier and faster than the direct integration of a protocol.
- Can be used independently of the programming language..
- Single Programming Interface (API) to the different Datafox devices.
- The DLL shows defined error messages if operations can not be performed correctly.
- The DLL automatically writes log files for debugging.
- Updateable without rebuilding your software solution. Downwards compatible.

6.1.3. The communication library is available for the following systems:

As DLL for Windows 32bit, DFComDLL.dll; 64bit, DFCom_x64.dll

As Shared Library or Static Library for Linux 32/64bit libDFCom.so (Makefile)

<https://www.datafox.de/download/Datafox%20DFComDLL%2004.03.21-Dokumentation.zip>

<https://www.datafox.de/download/Datafox%20DFComDLL%2004.03.21-Source.zip>

<https://www.datafox.de/download/Datafox%20DFComDLL%2004.03.21-x64.zip>

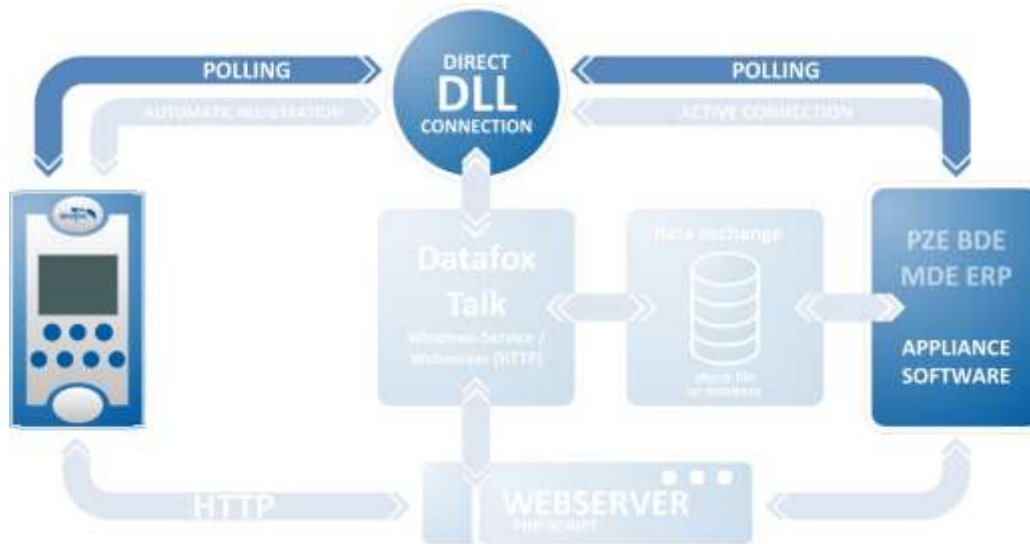
<https://www.datafox.de/download/Datafox%20DFComDLL%2004.03.21-x86.zip>

6.1.4. Program library (DLL) - Integration Passive mode (polling)

In the passive mode the communication link is established starting from the program library to the devices. For this you need a single function to establish connections and another for disconnection.

Functional principle when transferring the bookings:

The application queries the device via the DLL regularly to collect the data.



The following connection types are supported by the passive mode:

- RS232 (via converter also RS485)
- USB (via virtual COM-Port)
- Modem (analog / GSM)
- TCP / IP (LAN / WAN / WLAN)

An exemplary query of a device serial number in an device connected via TCP / IP using the C programming language:

```
int err, serial;
DFCComOpenIV( 5, 0, 3, "192.168.0.3", 8000, 3000 );
DFCGetSeriennummer( 5, 254, &err, &serial );
DFCComClose( 5 );
```

advantages:

- All connection types and device types are supported.
- All functions of the program library are fully available.

disadvantages:

- If you want to receive the generated data sets immediately after creation, a constant communication with the device is necessary (polling). In TCP / IP networks, this, depending on the number of units, may lead to an undesirable loss of bandwidth.
- Not recommended for mobile communications as it may cause high costs.

6.2. Program library (DLL) - Integration active mode (active connection)

In Active mode, the communication link from the devices to the program library is made. Prior to this, the devices must be informed at the time of installation where they are to be connected. In the program library, you need a single function to start the active mode and another to end the active mode.

The "DFCStartActiveConnection" function in this case replaces the function "DFComOpenIV" in passive mode.

After activation of active mode in the program library this waits for incoming connections and is then making them available for further processing in your application.

Functional principle when transferring the bookings:

The devices sign in to the DLL. This writes a list of registered devices. If a device has a booking, this sends a trigger to the DLL. The application responds to the trigger and fetches the booking. The necessary connection data is available in the registration list. The collection of the booking is made with the same functions as with polling. As a result, polling and active connection upon collection of the data differ only slightly.



The following connection types are supported by the active mode:

- TCP / IP (LAN, WAN, WLAN, GPRS)

advantages:

- The device log on independently and also report existing records.
- The application does not require a device list, since the devices sign in automatically into the DLL and the DLL provides a list of active devices.
- All functions of the program library are fully available.

disadvantages:

- Here, since the multi-master principle is necessary, only connections by connection type TCP / IP are supported.

More information and documentation can be found here:

https://www.datafox.de/d67/unternehmen/downloads/software/master4-v4/Datafox_Softwarepaket_MasterIV-V04.03.21.zip

6.3. Encrypting the data when using the DFCom.dll

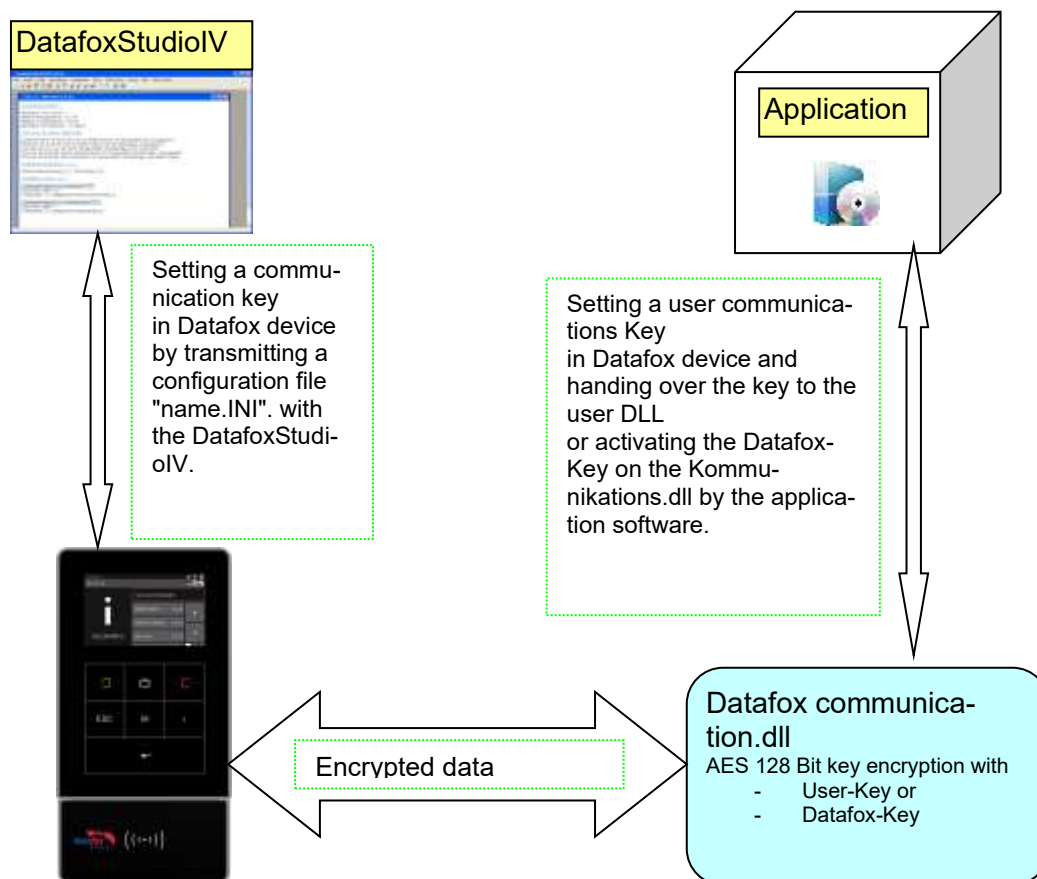
When using the Datafox communication DLL all data coming from the device or sent to the device may be transferred with an AES 128-bit encryption.

Thus, there are only 3 types of communication:

1. Unencrypted communication
2. Encrypt with Datafox-Key
3. Encrypt with user-Key

When integrating the Datafox DFCom.dll from the application side, only a user communication key is handed over to the .dll. The effort of integration of encryption is thus very low.

Overview of the encryption, schematic illustration.

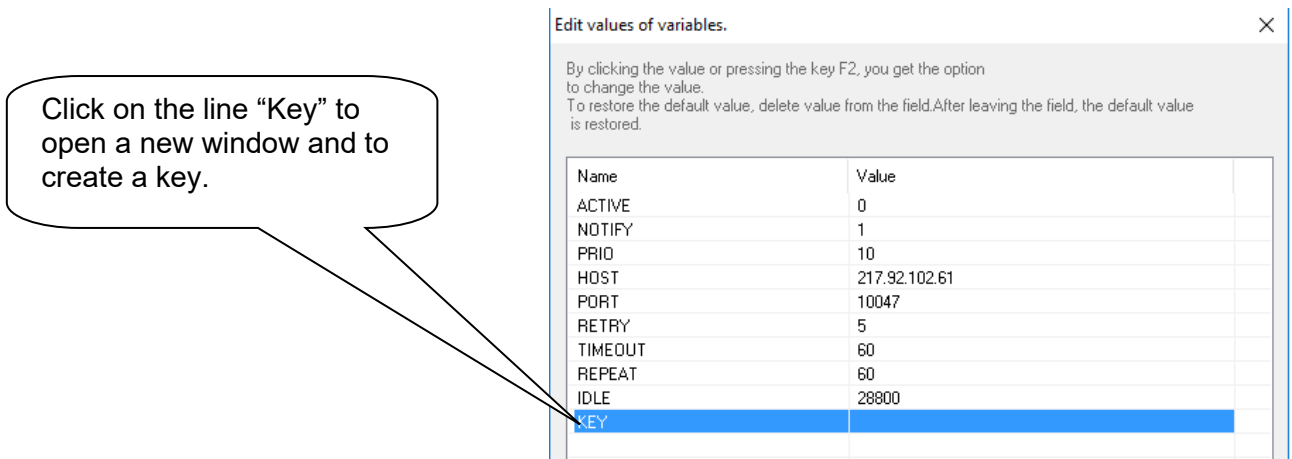


A detailed description of how the handover of the key takes place, you will find:

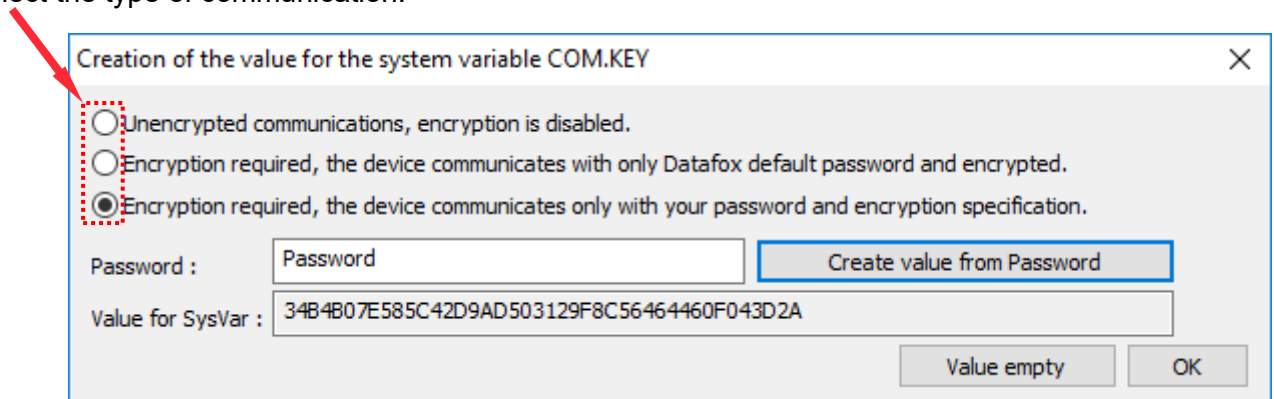
- for Datafox StudioIV in the manual in the chapter "encrypt communication with MasterIV devices"
- and for the DLL in the DLL documentation

6.3.1. Create and save a communication key for the device

In the menu „Configuration“ -> “System variables active mode “open the configuration file to edit.
For example: „active.ini“.



Select the type of communication.



If you want the communication to be encrypted with your own stored password, enter a password and click on the button "Create value from password".

A communication key is now created. Finish the entry with "OK".

After a key has been created and the active. ini file has been transferred, communication with the device is only allowed if the password is entered.

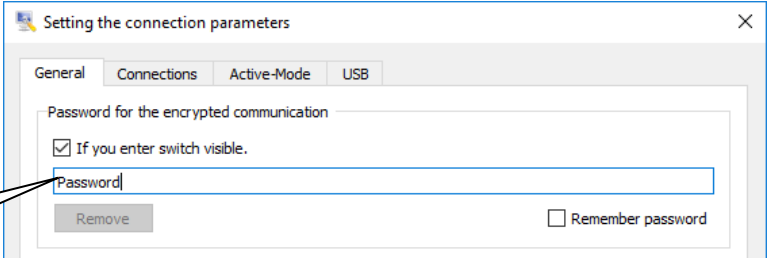
6.3.2. Save the communication key in the Datafox StudioIV

If a device is using a communication key, then the Datafox StudioIV needs the same key. Otherwise no communication with the device would be possible,
In the menu „Communication -> Settings“ you may edit the key for the Communication.

The password is used for all types of communication.

Enter your password here.

The plaintext input is only possible at the first input. If you reopen the window you won't see the plaintext.



6.3.3. Transfer the communication key for DFComDLL

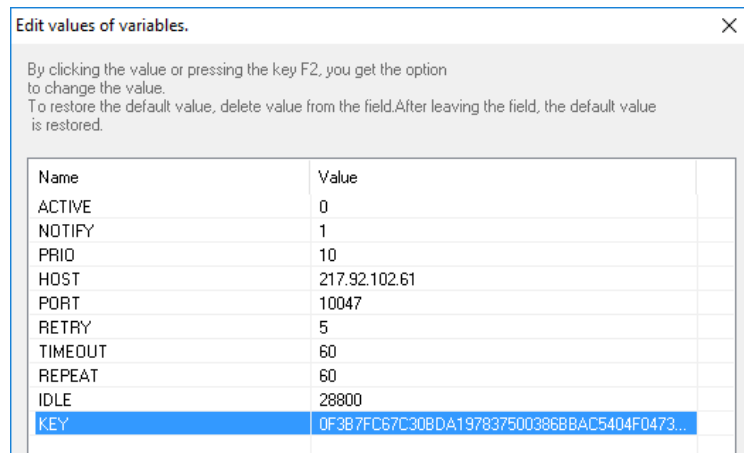
The key for the communication transferred to the DLL is called “DFCSetCommunicationPassword”. The key has to be in plaintext (**123456**) and not the created key of the Datafox StudioIV.

More information can be found in the documentation of the DFComDLL.

6.3.4. Clear the communication key

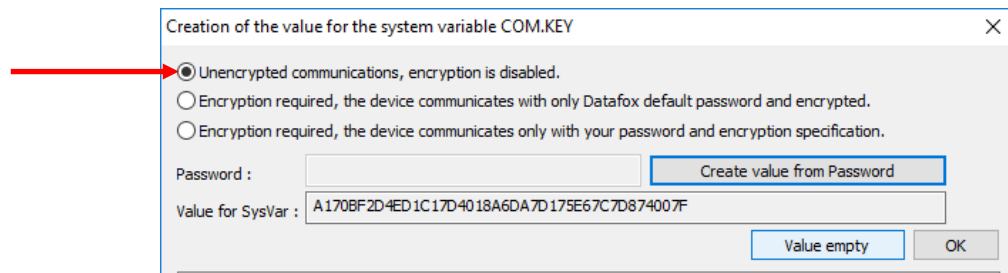
If created a communication key and transferred to the device then clear this key as follows:

Click on “KEY” to edit.



Name	Value
ACTIVE	0
NOTIFY	1
PRIOD	10
HOST	217.92.102.61
PORT	10047
RETRY	5
TIMEOUT	60
REPEAT	60
IDLE	28800
KEY	0F3B7FC67C30BDA1978375003868BAC5404F0473...

Switch to unencrypted communication.



Creation of the value for the system variable COM.KEY

Unencrypted communications, encryption is disabled.
 Encryption required, the device communicates with only Datafox default password and encrypted.
 Encryption required, the device communicates only with your password and encryption specification.

Password : Create value from Password

Value for SysVar :

Value empty OK

Click on: “Value empty”.

Then click on: “Create value from Password“. The created Value from the empty Password is necessary to clear the old key in the device.

Save the file and transfer to the device.

Name	Value
ACTIVE	0
NOTIFY	1
PRIOD	10
HOST	217.92.102.61
PORT	10047
RETRY	5
TIMEOUT	60
REPEAT	60
IDLE	28800
KEY	A170BF2D4ED1C17D4018A6DA7D175E67C7D874...

After this you can clear the created key from the .ini file.

7. http Level 1

7.1. Requirements

Required for data transfer via http Level 1:

Hardware **V4**:

- Device with TCP/IP (LAN / WLAN) or mobile radio
- min. Firmware 04.03.10. XX

Software:

- Server must accept an http request and give an active response
- Server must provide master data such as personnel lists or order lists for downloading



Note:

If you still have older devices, they can be converted.

http Level 0 you find in the SDK http(s)

7.1.1. Request

Request from the client to the server.

7.1.2. Method: GET

For communication via http level 1, Datafox has developed a specific context that applies only to Datafox devices.

The GET method is used for http communication.

The context now offers extensive possibilities for exchanging data quickly and conveniently with Datafox devices.

Function overview via GET:

Parameter name	Meaning
df_table	Name of data set description
df_record_state	online / offline state of the records
df_col_{Feldname}	Name of the data field and value. According to the device configuration „Setup“.

7.1.3. Response

The server's response to the client.
 Each dataset from a Datafox device must be acknowledged by the server.
 The confirmation is carried out with:
df_api=1 und HTTP-Result „200 OK“

7.1.3.1. Optional parameter specifications for the response

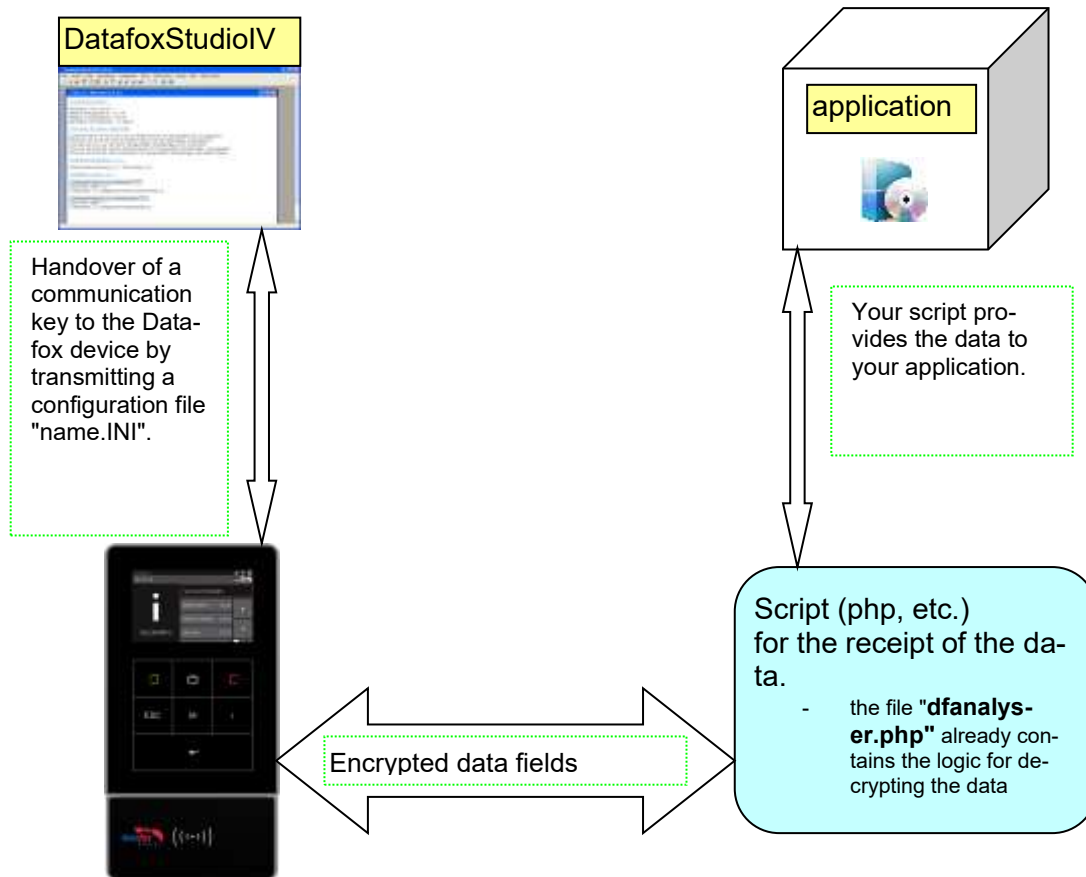
Instruction Name	Meaning
<code>df_time=2016-11-17T12:13:14</code>	Set the date and time on the device.
<code>df_beep=1 (1-11)</code>	OK signal / generate beep on the device
<code>df_service=1,www.datafox.de,10047</code>	Connect to the DLL. Also possible with the Datafox StudioIV. Specification of IP/URL and port possible.
<code>df_var=setup.1,wert</code>	Change the value of a global variable in the setup.
<code>df_ek=name</code>	Trigger an action in the device. Start an input chain in signal processing.
<code>df_msg=This\r\n\r\nMessage,5,1,0</code>	Send a text message to the display.
<code>df_msg_icon=2</code>	Defines the icon to be used when showing a message in the device. The icon is taken from the design and associate to an input sequence (F2 in this example)
<code>df_backlight=0,5,255,255,0,192</code>	Defines the colour of a device's backlight – for a certain period of time as a RGBW value.
<code>df_info_msg=Info\r\nMessage,0</code>	Defines the text of an info message.
<code>df_ac2=010,1,10,20,5</code>	AC = access control. Trigger access control actions.
<code>df_custom_msg_ac2=010,1,1,0,Hell o%20World</code>	Sends a message to a device that is connect to the access control bus.
<code>df_ao_ac2=0,1234</code>	Acknowledges an action of the pre-checked access control.
<code>df_trigger_ac2=1,011,6543210,0</code>	Simulates a clocking performed at an access control RFID reader.
<code>df_kvp=var,ID</code>	Instructs the device to send the value of a system variable. The value is sent as a key-value-pair to the server.
<code>df_set_relay=2,close,5</code>	Defines the state of a relay for given period of time that is not handled by the access control module.
<code>df_toggle_relay=2,5</code>	Changes the state of a relay for a given period of time. The relay may not be handled by the access control module.
<code>df_load_file=/path/on/server</code>	Instructs the device to download a file from the server.
<code>df_send_file=/logs/,syslog,0</code>	Instructs the device to upload a file to the server.

Instruction Name	Meaning
<code>df_remove_file=root:datafox.cert</code>	Instructs the device to delete a specific file.
<code>df_remove_finger=1980,all</code>	Remove fingers from a fingerprint sensor.
<code>df_setup_list=Personal,/path/to/list.txt</code>	Give the device a new list of personnel, for example.
<code>df_ac2_list=Identification,/path/to/list.txt</code>	Give the device a new access control list.
<code>df_table_count=list.PID</code>	Counts the number of entries within a list stored on the device.
<code>df_table_select=list.PID,/upload/form,Unit=Development,PID=5</code>	Selects one or more entries from a list and uploads them to the server.
<code>df_table_append=list.PID,9999,,Visitor,</code>	Appends a record to a list stored on the device.
<code>df_table_update=list.PID,,,Unit=</code>	Changes values within a list stored on the device.
<code>df_table_delete=list.PID,Unit=Development</code>	Removes rows from a list stored on the device.

7.1.4. Encryption of the data fields when sending via HTTP

If data records are sent via HTTP, the field contents can be transmitted in encrypted form. The data fields of the data set are then encrypted using a RC4 encryption. The so encrypted characters are transferred as field contents in hexadecimal.

Overview of encryption with HTTP; schematic representation:



A detailed description of how the handover of the key takes place, can be found:

- in the manual of Datafox StudioIV Chapter „5.4.5. “Encryption of the data fields when sending via HTTP“
- and the file "dfanalyser.php" can be found on the Datafox DVD or in the download - Software for Windows

Note:

If you use encryption for several customers, you have to pass a customer ID into the plain text.



This allows you to use different keys per customer.

PORT	80
HTTPSEND	GET /getdata.php?Mandant=1024&
ALIVE	60

Activating Encryption via Datafox StudioIV

Open the configuration file (e.g. GPRS.ini) for editing via the menu entry Configuration "GPRS / HTTP - Configuration".

Name	Value
USER	blau
PASSWORD	blau
HOST	www.datafox.de
PORT	80
HTTPSEND	GET /httpdemo/getdata.php?
ALIVE	60
HTTPTIMEOUT	15000
HTTPTYPE	1.1
SIMPIN	0
SIMPUK	0
ROAMING	1
RESETTRIGGER	32
ATTACH	32
ERRDLLEVEL	1
HTTP	1
KEY	
DNS1	8.8.8.8
SMSKEY	

By clicking on the line "KEY", the window for creating the key opens.

Enter your password here.

Creation of the value for the system variable HTTP.KEY X

Password : Create value from Password

Value for SysVar :

Value empty OK

Note:
From your entered password is created by pressing the button, an encrypted value for the system variable KEY. Your password is thus always present in an unreadable format for storage in the ini file and transfer.

- The password must be minimum of 6 characters long and can consist of maximum 16 characters.
- Do you want to delete the password in the device, please create a value with an empty Password and transmit it.
- To delete the value in the ini file, please clear the value and accept with OK.

Creation of the value for the system variable HTTP.KEY X

Password : Create value from Password

Value for SysVar :

Value empty OK

Note:
From your entered password is created by pressing the button, an encrypted value for the system variable KEY. Your password is thus always present in an unreadable format for storage in the ini file and transfer.

- The password must be minimum of 6 characters long and can consist of maximum 16 characters.
- Do you want to delete the password in the device, please create a value with an empty Password and transmit it.
- To delete the value in the ini file, please clear the value and accept with OK.

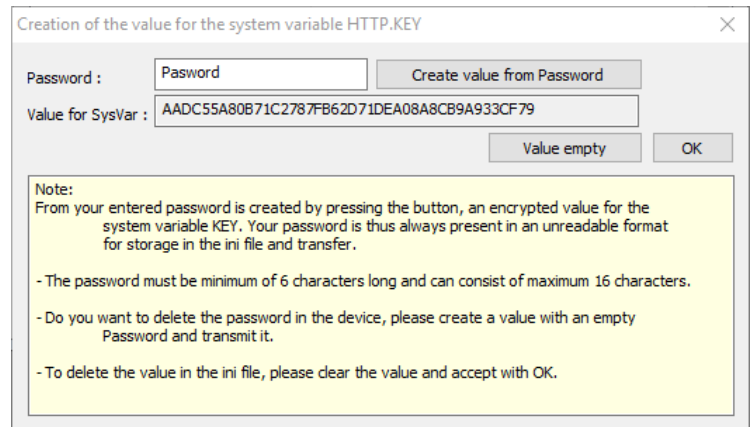
By clicking the button "Create value from password", a key for transfer is generated.

Click "OK" to take the key over.
Subsequently, you can save the settings and transfer them to the Datafox device.

Disable encryption

To deactivate the key which has been transferred to the device, it is necessary to create an empty password field with the button "Clear value" and to transfer this empty key to the device.

Click on „Value empty“



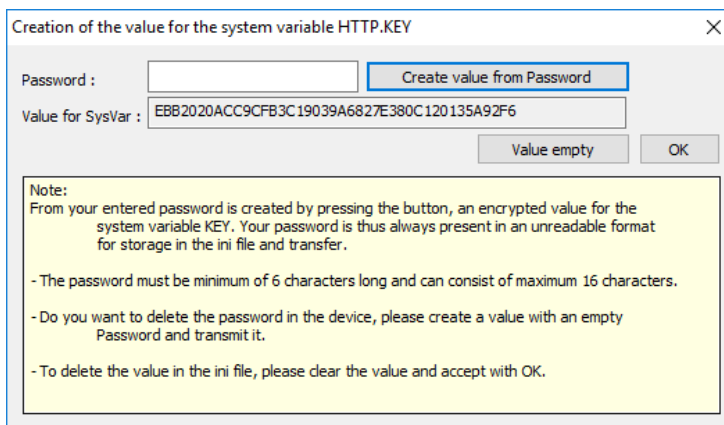
Creation of the value for the system variable HTTP.KEY

Password :

Value for SysVar :

Note:
From your entered password is created by pressing the button, an encrypted value for the system variable KEY. Your password is thus always present in an unreadable format for storage in the ini file and transfer.

- The password must be minimum of 6 characters long and can consist of maximum 16 characters.
- Do you want to delete the password in the device, please create a value with an empty Password and transmit it.
- To delete the value in the ini file, please clear the value and accept with OK.



Creation of the value for the system variable HTTP.KEY

Password :

Value for SysVar :

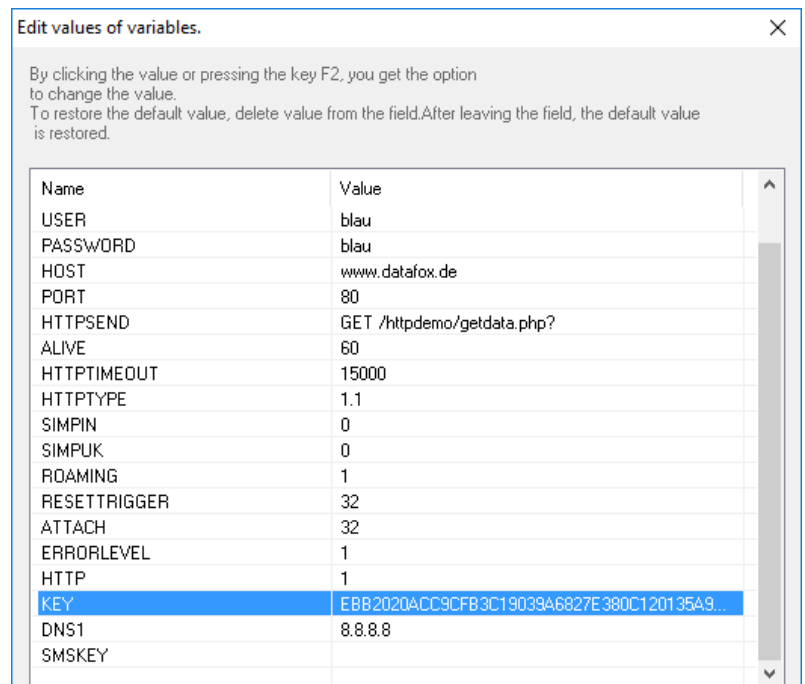
Note:
From your entered password is created by pressing the button, an encrypted value for the system variable KEY. Your password is thus always present in an unreadable format for storage in the ini file and transfer.

- The password must be minimum of 6 characters long and can consist of maximum 16 characters.
- Do you want to delete the password in the device, please create a value with an empty Password and transmit it.
- To delete the value in the ini file, please clear the value and accept with OK.

Click on "Create value from Password“.

and then on „OK“

Save this file with the new key.



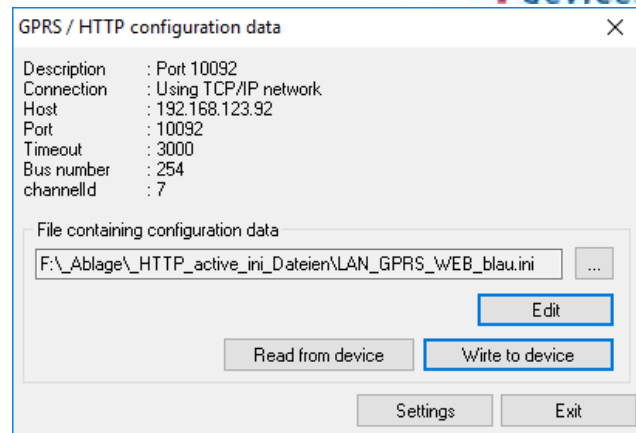
Edit values of variables.

By clicking the value or pressing the key F2, you get the option to change the value.
To restore the default value, delete value from the field. After leaving the field, the default value is restored.

Name	Value
USER	blau
PASSWORD	blau
HOST	www.datafox.de
PORT	80
HTTPSEND	GET /httpdemo/getdata.php?
ALIVE	60
HTTPTIMEOUT	15000
HTTPTYPE	1.1
SIMPIN	0
SIMPUK	0
ROAMING	1
RESETTRIGGER	32
ATTACH	32
ERRORLEVEL	1
HTTP	1
KEY	EBB2020ACC9CFB3C19039A6827E380C120135A9...
DNS1	8.8.8.8
SMSKEY	

Klick on "Write to device"

Now the key in the device is deleted.



In order to deactivate the key transferred to the device, you must create an empty password field by clicking the button "Empty value" and transfer the empty key to the device. The data records are then sent unencrypted.

The data fields of the data set can be encrypted using a stream cipher RC4. The field contents are then transferred to their hexadecimal representation.

parameter name	importance
df_cb	The parameter specifies that all these fields until and including df_ce have encrypted field contents. The value of df_cb contains the four-digit (1000-9999) public key of the applicable password for the stream cipher.
df_ce	The parameter indicates that all the following fields are not encrypted any more. If the value is decrypted correctly it must match the value of df_cb.

7.1.4.1. Illustrate the GET request

In plain text (unencrypted) and encrypted:

Plaintext request
df_api=1&df_record_state=1&df_table=Booking&df_col_sn=2042&df_col_recordtype=1&df_col_badge=3974679390&df_col_timestamp=2017-11-22T08:23:39&df_col_status=online
Plaintext Reply
df_api=1&df_time=2017-11-22T08:24:00
Encrypted request
df_api=1&df_cb=6102&df_record_state=CC&df_table=66E9B37516AA8C&df_col_sn=0BDC8F79&df_col_recordtype=AB&df_col_badge=AF9B3A929994A5BD7D88&df_col_timestamp=B237B8CA4FA80FD563359C3EE70FE7FC99AF60&df_col_status=9BACFC1E5E0B&df_ce=A344D33B
encrypted response
df_api=1&df_cb=6102&df_time=e1ba6575855619c4d634f7865c01c4b2bc2ec138670ac2&df_ce=a414ebd6

7.1.4.2. Encryption detection

To see whether the data fields are sent encrypted, the initial encryption is with 'df_cb' (Datafox Crypt Begin) in and with 'df_ce' (Datafox crypt end) in the end. 'df_cb' the first field in the request and 'df_ce' the last field in the request is.

The value of the field 'df_cb', itself is transmitted in plain text and is 'public key'. It is a random number between 1000 and 9999. The value must be used in conjunction with the communication password for the encryption and decryption.

7.2. https Communication

7.2.1. Requirements

Requirement for using an SSL certificate (https):

Hardware **V4**:

- Device with TCP/IP (LAN / WLAN) or mobile radio

Minimum firmware 04.03.11. XX (currently usable as prototype firmware)

Software:

- Server must accept an https request and give an active response

A detailed description of your development can be found here: [Link](#):

<https://www.datafox.de/d67/unternehmen/downloads/software/master4-v4/datafox-sdk-http.zip>

7.2.2. Elements of the https infrastructure

Like http, https is a client-server protocol. The client establishes a connection to the port of the https server via TCP/IP, the data stream is encrypted to protect it against listeners.

Both asymmetric encryption (negotiation of the connection) in the form of a server certificate and symmetric encryption for (later) data exchange are used.

7.2.3. Use of encryption / certificates

Several certificates can be stored in the Datafox devices for communication.

You can use a certificate signed by Datafox or your own certificate.

The firmware rejects the use of the encryption methods according to specification TLS 1.0, which are no longer considered to be up-to-date (because they are unsafe). Only procedures introduced as of TLS 1.1 are accepted.

Certificates are transferred with the DatafoxStudioIV

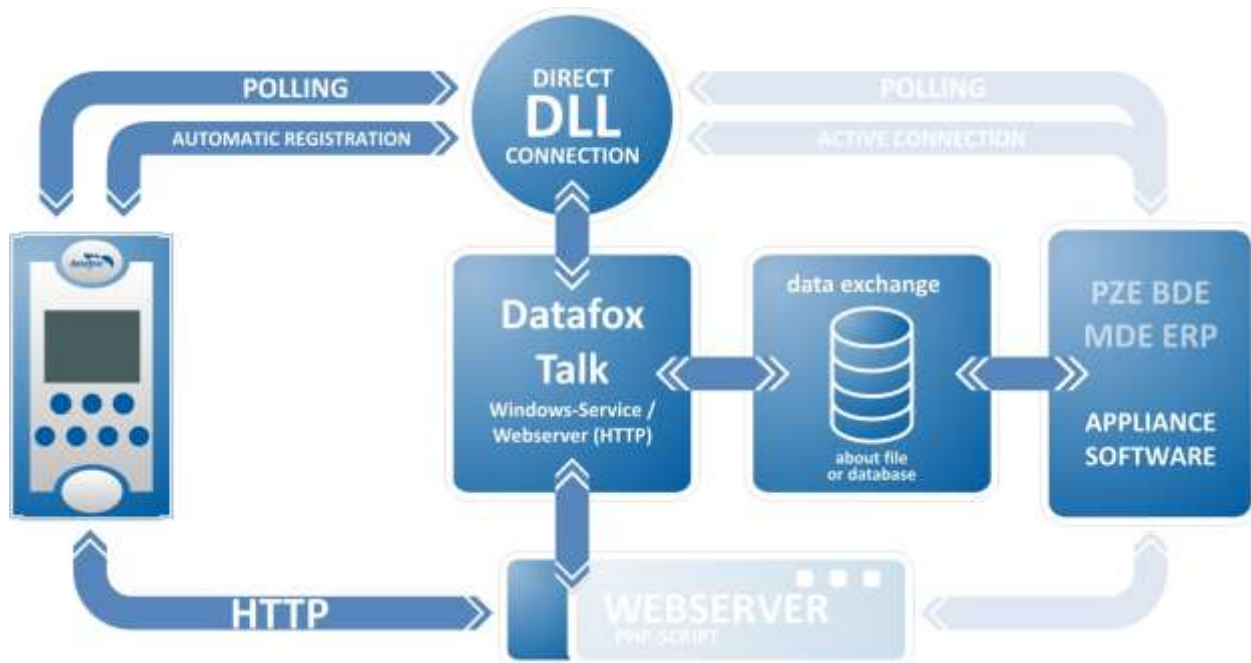
The menu item is available as of StudioIV version 04.03.11. XX.

You will find them under: "Configuration>Transfer Certificates".

8. Talk

Datafox - Talk enables the exchange of data with Datafox AEIII +, Timeboy and the Master IV - Series on file and database level. It therefore represents an alternative to communication via DLL and has the great advantage that no programming is required. Lists and devices can be transferred manually or by timer settings data can be read. At extra cost calculation a direct access to customer databases can be provided. Here, the customer determines which database tables and fields are linked.

Datafox- Talk supports all functions for transmitting data.



8.1. Advantages and disadvantages with Datafox Talk

advantages:

- Easy data exchange via file storage or database
- Automatic fetching of the data via services
- Integrated web server to accept data via http
- No programming required
- Simple updating of master data

disadvantages:

- No access to system variables
- No online functionality

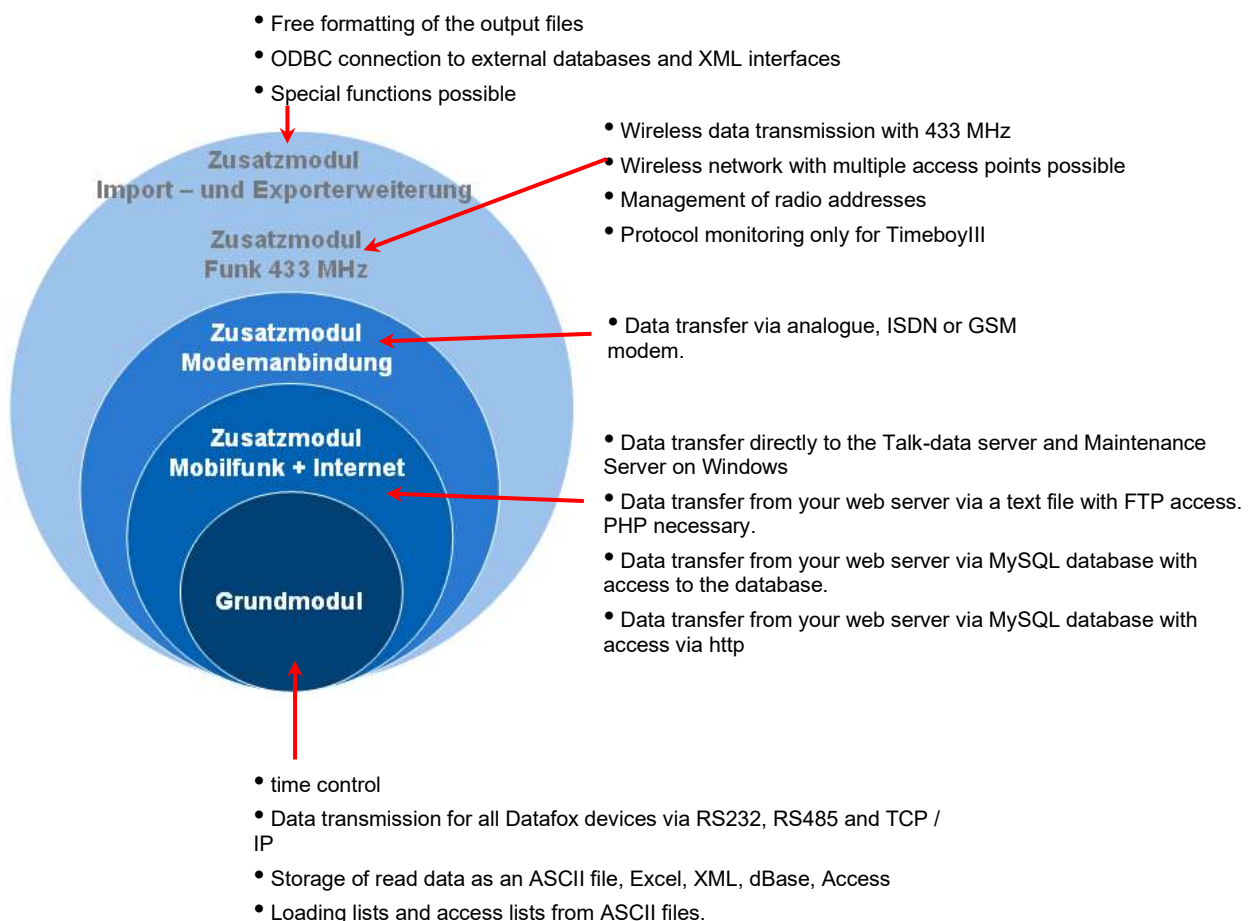
8.2. When do I use Talk?



advantages:

- Expanded use possibilities of the devices
- Simplifies commissioning and maintenance
- No programming skills required
- Communication with any application software
- No need to create a special interface
- Data can be run directly into the application

8.3. Overview of the Function Modules Talk



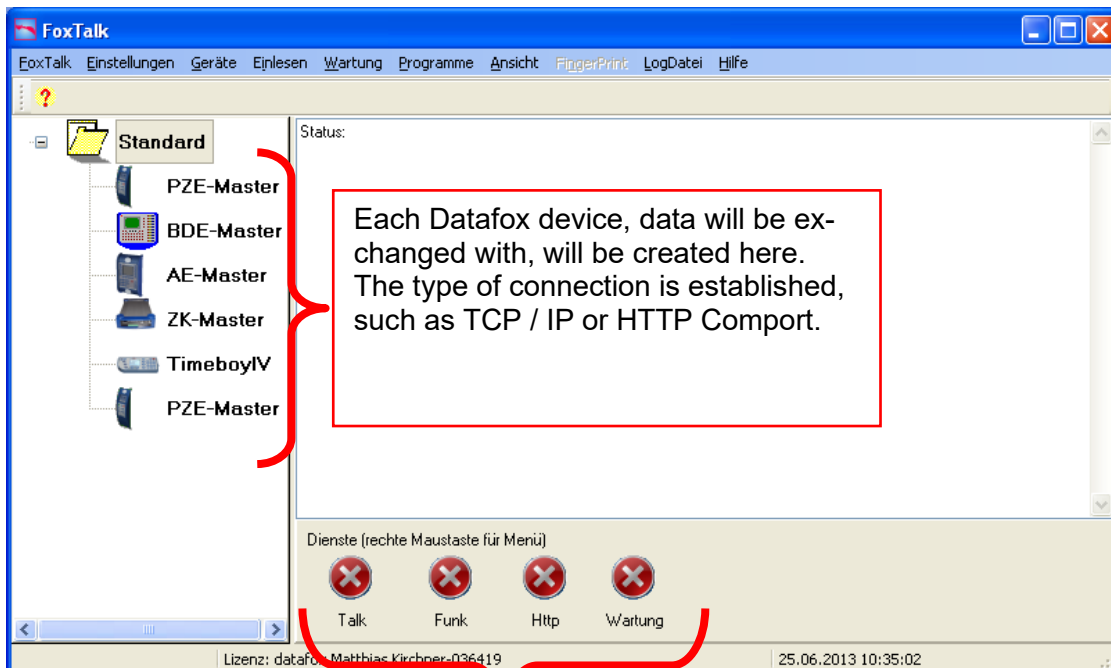
8.4. Establishment of Talk

For the establishment of Talk, we recommend a training by Datafox.
Current training dates can be found on our website:
<https://www.datafox.de/support/datafox-akademie>

The Datafox Talk Manual can be found on the homepage.
<https://www.datafox.de/d67/unternehmen/downloads/software/datafox-talk/datafox-talk-handbuch.pdf>

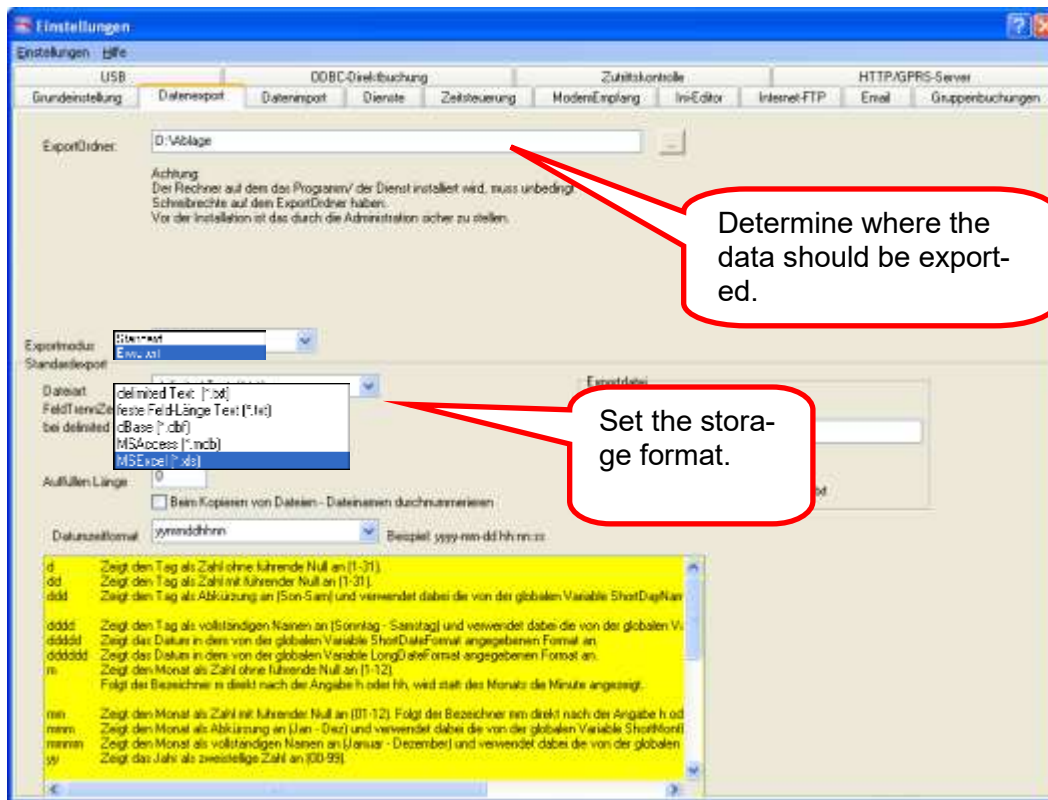
A quick tour of setting up Datafox Talk.

User interface:



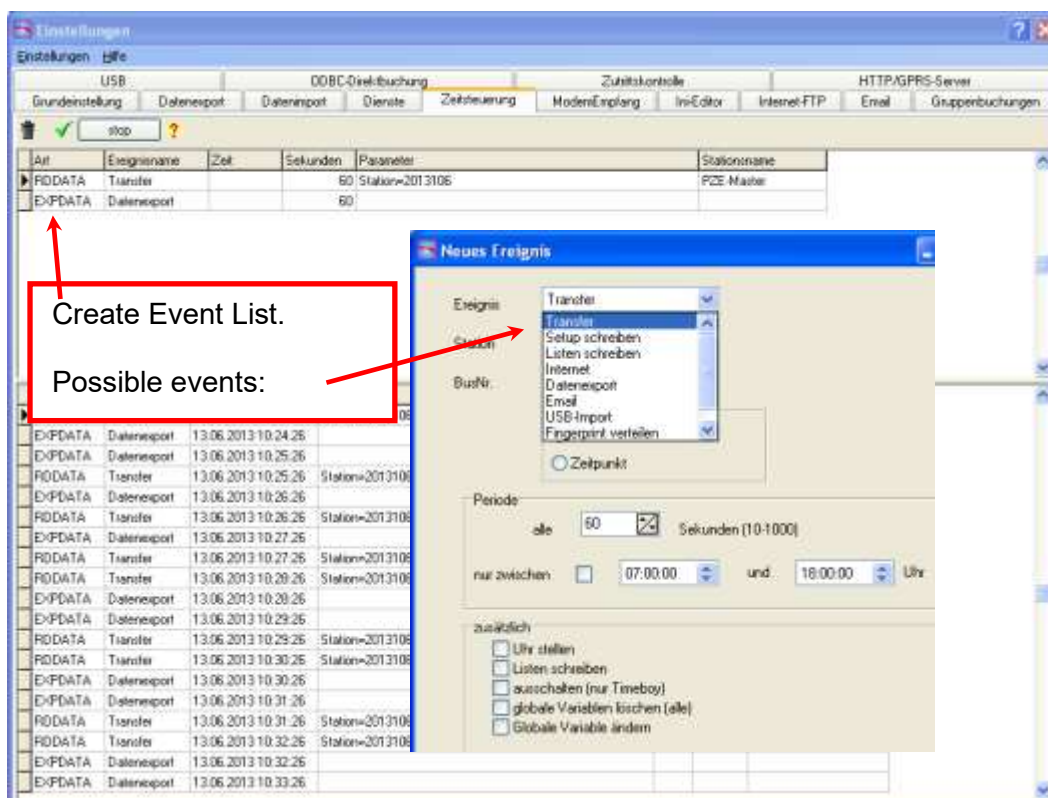
For each module there is a separate service that is installed here as needed and can be started and stopped.

Settings for data export:



Settings for time control of the service:

Here are all tasks that the service performs time controlled are created.



9. Appendix

9.1. All important Download-links

9.1.1. Manuals for the devices

[https://www.datafox.de/download/Datafox EVO 2.8 Pure-DE.pdf](https://www.datafox.de/download/Datafox%20EVO%202.8%20Pure-DE.pdf)
[https://www.datafox.de/download/Datafox EVO 2.8 Pure-EN.pdf](https://www.datafox.de/download/Datafox%20EVO%202.8%20Pure-EN.pdf)
[https://www.datafox.de/download/Datafox EVO 3.5 Pure-DE.pdf](https://www.datafox.de/download/Datafox%20EVO%203.5%20Pure-DE.pdf)
[https://www.datafox.de/download/Datafox EVO 3.5 Pure-EN.pdf](https://www.datafox.de/download/Datafox%20EVO%203.5%20Pure-EN.pdf)
[https://www.datafox.de/download/Datafox EVO 3.5 Universal-DE.pdf](https://www.datafox.de/download/Datafox%20EVO%203.5%20Universal-DE.pdf)
[https://www.datafox.de/download/Datafox EVO 3.5 Universal-EN.pdf](https://www.datafox.de/download/Datafox%20EVO%203.5%20Universal-EN.pdf)
[https://www.datafox.de/download/Datafox EVO 3.5 Universal Handbuch.pdf](https://www.datafox.de/download/Datafox%20EVO%203.5%20Universal%20Handbuch.pdf)
[https://www.datafox.de/download/Datafox EVO 3.5 Universal Manual.pdf](https://www.datafox.de/download/Datafox%20EVO%203.5%20Universal%20Manual.pdf)
[https://www.datafox.de/download/Datafox EVO 4.3-DE.pdf](https://www.datafox.de/download/Datafox%20EVO%204.3-DE.pdf)
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[https://www.datafox.de/download/Datafox Fahrzeugdatenlogger V2-DE.pdf](https://www.datafox.de/download/Datafox%20Fahrzeugdatenlogger%20V2-DE.pdf)

[https://www.datafox.de/download/Datafox TimeboyIV-DE.pdf](https://www.datafox.de/download/Datafox%20TimeboyIV-DE.pdf)
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[https://www.datafox.de/download/Datafox IPC Vario-DE.pdf](https://www.datafox.de/download/Datafox%20IPC%20Vario-DE.pdf)

9.1.2. Software and SDK (Interface descriptions)

[https://www.datafox.de/download/Datafox StudioIV Handbuch.pdf](https://www.datafox.de/download/Datafox%20StudioIV%20Handbuch.pdf)
[https://www.datafox.de/download/Datafox StudioIV Manual.pdf](https://www.datafox.de/download/Datafox%20StudioIV%20Manual.pdf)

[https://www.datafox.de/download/Datafox data protocol HTTP\(S\)-communication.pdf](https://www.datafox.de/download/Datafox%20data%20protocol%20HTTP(S)-communication.pdf)
[https://www.datafox.de/download/Datafox Datenprotokoll zur HTTP\(S\)-Kommunikation.pdf](https://www.datafox.de/download/Datafox%20Datenprotokoll%20zur%20HTTP(S)-Kommunikation.pdf)

DFCom-DLL
<https://www.datafox.de/download/Datafox%20DFComDLL%202004.03.21-Dokumentation.zip>
<https://www.datafox.de/download/Datafox%20DFComDLL%202004.03.21-Source.zip>
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9.1.3. Other important links

https://www.datafox.de/download/Datafox-Infoblatt_Ausweis_im_Kartenhalter.pdf
https://www.datafox.de/download/Datafox-Infoblatt_KYO_Oneloc_neue_CPU.pdf
[https://www.datafox.de/download/Datafox-Infoblatt_phg_crypt_Umsetzung_\(Intera_II,_Agera\).pdf](https://www.datafox.de/download/Datafox-Infoblatt_phg_crypt_Umsetzung_(Intera_II,_Agera).pdf)
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https://www.datafox.de/download/Fingerprint_Modul-Firmware_Update-Info.pdf

9.1.4. All news in a compact form

Jede neue Softwaregeneration wird mit einem Begleitheft vorgestellt.
Hier sehen Sie genau, ab wann die Neuerungen Verfügbar waren.

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https://www.datafox.de/download/Datafox_Companion_Software_Version_04.03.20.pdf
https://www.datafox.de/download/Datafox_Companion_Software_Version_04.03.21.pdf

9.1.5. Softwareversionslisten

Hier werden alle Änderungen und Bugfixes beschrieben.

<https://www.datafox.de/download/MasterIV%20Software-Versionsliste%2004.02,%2004.03.pdf>
<https://www.datafox.de/download/MasterIV%20Software-Versionsliste%2004.02,%2004.03-EN.pdf>

9.2. Information for HTTPS



<https://pixabay.com/illustrations/cyber-security-technology-network-3374252/>

HTTPS is used for establishing encrypted connections as well as for encrypted transmission of data via LAN, WLAN or mobile radio.

This document describes the functionality in principle, gives hints for the implementation and background information on the technologies used.

Datafox Devices implements **TLS** (Transport Layer security) using the mbed-TLS library. With this implementation the devices provide TLS 1.1 and TLS 1.2 functionality, TLS 1.3 is not available currently (May 2020).

This document does not analyse if the data transported between Datafox Devices and an OEM application is with the cost of “cracking” the encryption. This evaluation is left to the reader. However since clocking events are personal data without a doubt, the GDPR requires protecting these data elements – seldom they are matter of secrecy.

Establishing an HTTPS communication

HTTPS communication takes two phases:

- During the TLS handshake client and server check the authenticity of their corresponding communication partner. This phase uses the Diffie-Hellmann-Algorithm. After the verification an encryption key for the exchange of data is established. This process takes place whenever a communication is being negotiated.
- During data exchange, all communication is done encryptedly using the previously established key.

During the TLS handshake asymmetric cryptography is used, during data exchange symmetric cryptographic algorithms are used. Typically RSA (named after Rivest, Shamir and Adleman, who specified the algorithm) or ECC (Elliptic curve cryptography) are used for the handshake, AES (Advanced encryption standard) for data exchange. This makes HTTPS a “hybrid cryptographic algorithm.”

Asymmetric vs. Symmetric cryptography

Asymmetric algorithms use different keys for encryption and decryption – symmetric algorithms use the same key for encryption and decryption. Using different keys at asymmetric methods allows creating a public and private part of the key – as required for a “Public key infrastructure” (PKI). Splitting the key typically results in higher resource consumption of the algorithm (computation time as well as memory) when comparing to symmetric cryptography.

Key factors influencing cryptographic security

The security of encrypted data exchange depends on different factors:

- Safety of the algorithm,
- Length of the key,
- Safety of the systems that exchange data,
- Safety of the infrastructure used to exchange data.

Typically not all above mentioned aspects can be influenced by the user. Algorithms are implemented as software or hardware, safety of a server system may be in your hands, that of the client typically is not as well as the infrastructure used for communication – if it is a non-private network. The key length seems to be the essential parameter of control.

Comparison of Algorithms

Additionally it has to be considered that different algorithms offer different security. To make algorithms comparable they are projected onto an ideal block cipher and the resulting key length (named “Security bits”) of this cipher is used to compare algorithms. Since TLS uses asymmetric as well as symmetric ciphers, the minimal security bits of both algorithms is a good figure for the overall security of the hybrid algorithm.

Microchip [2] provides the following comparison for AES, RSA and ECC algorithms, citing the NSA as source.

Schlüssellänge Security Bits	Symmetrisch Verschlüsselung Symmetric cipher	Asymmetrisch Verschlüsselung Asymmetric cipher
112	3DES	RSA-2048
128	AES-128	RSA-3072, ECC-256 (prime256v1)
192	AES-192	RSA-7680, ECC-384 (secp384r1)
256	AES-256	RSA-15360, ECC-521 (secp521r1)

The BSI (Germany federal agency for IT safety) gives the following recommendations:

- Until end of 2022 100 security bits shall be sufficient,
- From 2023 on 120 security bits are recommended (BSI TR-02102-1 from 2020-03-24, page 14, see [1])

Using different certificates/keys on a single server

If you require to use different certificates/keys on the same physical server-host (hardware) and to access the services by a common port, TLS offers **SNI** as a mechanism comparable to virtual hosts in plain HTTP communication. The TLS handshake offers Server Name Indication (SNI, see [7] and [9]), which is supported by Datafox Devices. Using SNI the selection of the correct HTTPS server process (Software) is done already during the handshake.

Enabling SNI differs between web server implementations. A guideline how to use SNI with a Microsoft IIS is available at [8]. Should you be using reverse proxies or load balancers, please ensure that they support SNI – detailing this here is way beyond the scope of this document. Please consult your network admins as well.

Using SNI you can e.g. associate different TLS certificates/keys to your ERP system and Datafox Devices using the same server infrastructure. Datafox Devices may use a 2048 bit or 3072 bit key whereas you may see to tighter security concerns of the ERP system by using a 4096 bit key – if you have the requirement concerning security.

Summary

We recommend to use an ECC-based certificate with a 256 bit key together with Datafox devices. This is conform to the BSI recommendation for 2023. Compared to comparable RSA certificates you increase the performance of the devices and need less memory.

Information on creation and usage of RSA- or ECC-based certificates are available at [9].

Detailed considerations on symmetric and asymmetric cryptography will follow in the appendix.

With SNI you may use cryptography with different key sizes on a single host – if you should require stronger security for some services. SNI is a standardized method used by many cloud platforms.

Appendix

Standards in use

The cryptography standards TLS 1.1 and TLS 1.2 define a set of ciphers and signature algorithms. These algorithms are subject to cryptographic analysis, which results in aging of the algorithms – a method considered safe 10 years ago may not be safe anymore – due to algorithmic weaknesses or the increase of computational power available. Thus our devices do not support TLS 1.0 or even older standards SSLv2 and SSLv3 intentionally.

Asymmetric cryptography

Asymmetric cryptography is used during the TLS handshake when authenticating client and server. The key parts (public and private) are represented as X509.3 certificates. For encryption and decryption both key parts are needed. If one of the parts is unknown the computational requirement is significantly higher and the results of decryption will be ambiguous.

The private part of the key is the fragment to be safeguarded. All devices that have access to the private key can use it to prove their authenticity – a client cannot distinguish servers by cryptographic methods if the servers are using the same key.

To mitigate the problems that arise from loss of a key, the X509.3 certificate includes a validity period, enables hierarchic certificates and supports revocation lists. Please be aware that certificates at the top of a certificate hierarchy have a very long validity period, typically 10 years or more. The “real” server certificate offers a shorter validity period ranging from 90 days to 2 years typically. Obviously a certificate authority (CA) deserves a higher amount of trust than us using key concerning safeguarding keys – as far as the algorithm is concerned.

TLS authentication is design in a way, so that not all public certificates are needed when verifying authenticity. The CA's certificate is sufficient. This makes short validity periods of a server's certificate bearable at the client side since the CA certificates (see above) have a long validity period.

Comparable to checking the server authenticity by the client, the server may check the client authenticity during the TLS handshake. For this a so-called client-certificate may be used.

Once authentication is completed, the symmetric cipher algorithm and its key are negotiated. Details on the functionality of the Diffie-Hellman-Algorithm are described in many places on the World Wide Web, the documents at [5] seem to be good entry point.

Symmetric cryptography

Typically the AES algorithm is used as symmetric cipher. This algorithm is specified for key lengths of 128, 192 or 256 bits – which seems rather short when comparing it to typical RSA key lengths. Hence the AES algorithm is well studied which led to some non-dramatic weaknesses of the algorithm.

Estimates on necessary computational power for cracking a 128 bit AES key are

- 30 years using an ideal quantum computer (~10 Seconds if the key has only 100 bits)
- $2.15 \cdot 10^{12}$ years on hardware currently available (~6000 years for a 100 bit key)

Our sun has an estimated lifetime of $5 \cdot 10^9$ years.

The symmetric encryption is negotiated with every handshake. An HTTPS connection is disconnected by the infrastructure typically after being idle for 30 seconds. So, cracking the symmetric channel encryption requires computation resources after each re-negotiation of the communication.

Attack scenarios

Currently no feasible attack on an established AES encrypted channel using current hardware is known, so attacking TLS focuses on the handshake as well as the algorithms in use. Some of these attacks made it to be internally renowned by now:

- Heartbleed (OpenSSL < 1.0.1g: A client could retrieve data from the server – potentially the server's key.)
- FREAK (faulty implementation of US export regulation could lead to accepting very short keys for asymmetric cryptography)
- BEAST (TLS < 1.1: Implementation issues of symmetric encryption)

Exploits that may be used over the network are of particular interest – the system attacked is not aware of that attack typically.

Attacking the Handshake

During attacks on the handshake, either negotiating the algorithm or the key to be used may be influenced (resulting in either weaker symmetric cipher or a key with some “known” bits).

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Compromised client or server

If an attacker has access to client or server, it may be possible that the key is retrieved or changed.

Random number generator attack

Many encryption and signature algorithms use “entropy” to harden the algorithm against attacks. Entropy typically is part of a negotiated key as well. Having a system that does not produce “good” random numbers and knowing their distribution is helpful when determining the encryption key.

Timing attacks

In many algorithms there is a time difference between checking an incorrect key and checking a correct key. These deviations may be observed externally and harvested to deduce the proximity of the test key and the real key.

Attacking the encrypted channel

Attacking an established channel encryption is difficult if the attacker may not influence either side of the communication. The key space of algorithms used currently is too big to determine the key by guessing (“brute force”). In addition to the guess work it is necessary to know the content of a transaction in order to determine the right key.

Padding oracle attacks

Many symmetric ciphers are encoding a fixed length of data (“block”). Consequently, a message which has a length not dividable by the block length will be padded. Some algorithmic implementations have weak padding algorithms that may be used to have an own message encoded.

Exploiting weaknesses of an algorithm

If an algorithm has weaknesses, these may be exploited when decrypting a message. The AES-128 bit algorithm has weaknesses that reduce the key space roughly to the billionth part of the original key space – which is a vast reduction for a brute force attack.

If the algorithm has no additional weaknesses, that allow guessing additional parts of the key, it may still be put to use. In the case of AES-128 there are still roughly 1030 keys left.

Guessing the key by brute force

Brute force attacks are typically not usable on today's algorithms.

However, [6] details the steps in chronological order that lead to the DES algorithm with a key length of 56 bit being considered unsecure. A substantial part in this is attributed to increased computational power since 1975 which resulted in brute force attacks being feasible when using distributed computing. It is likely that quantum computing – when being available – will lead to a comparable situation with current cipher algorithms.

Key length considerations in PKI

In addition to above mentioned security aspects, that should be considered when exchanging data, the key length remains the main factor of security.

Today typically RSA and ECC based algorithms are used.

RSA

The BSI recommends using a key with at least 2000 bits. A key of this length is expected to provide reasonable security until end of 2022 (see [1]: BSI TR-02102-1, March 24th 2020)

RSA and the symmetric cipher being used are compared concerning the security bits of an equivalent ideal block cipher. The BSI recommends a key length equivalent to 100 security bits (roughly 1900 bit RSA) to be used currently, from 2023 the key length should be at least 120 bits (roughly 2800 bit RSA).

Microchip [2] uses the same scale for its recommendations and reaches the same conclusions as the BSI. The Microchip table shows that a key length increase does not result in a proportional increase in security bits. To reach the security level of an AES 256 algorithm, a hypothetical RSA key of equivalent strength should have 15360 bits.

The time estimates for factorizing ("cracking") a 2048 bit RSA key deviate when checking web, please check [3] and [4].

The estimates seem to emphasize, that a 2048 bit certificate still has enough security reserves to be safe against attacks with reasonable effort. BSI sees RSA as a technology on the way to obsolescence and suggests migration towards ECC based algorithms.

ECC

Algorithms based on ECC reach a security level comparable to RSA with shorter keys (see [2]). We have additionally measured memory consumption while comparing RSA-2048, RSA-3072 and ECC-256 ciphers during the TLS handshake and we have seen that ECC-256 consumes

- 6 % less memory than RSA-2048 and
- 22% less memory than RSA-3072.

We came to the conclusion that ECC based cipher's resource efficiency is worth using the ciphers, despite RSA is widely considered industry standard. Thus we recommend using ECC.

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Erläuterung zur Nutzung von SNI mit dem Microsoft IIS</p> | <p>Explanation for using SNI with a Microsoft IIS</p> |
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