

Threema.

The best-selling secure messenger

The story behind Threema

In 2012, three young software developers from Switzerland decided to create a secure mobile messaging application they could use to communicate with their friends. The aim was to build an app that's designed from the ground up to protect the users' privacy – an app that stores as little data as possible and prevents surveillance and data misuse. The app was called “EEEMA”, an abbreviation of “End-to-End Encrypted Messaging Application”. Later, the three “E”s were replaced with “Three”, and it became “Threema”.

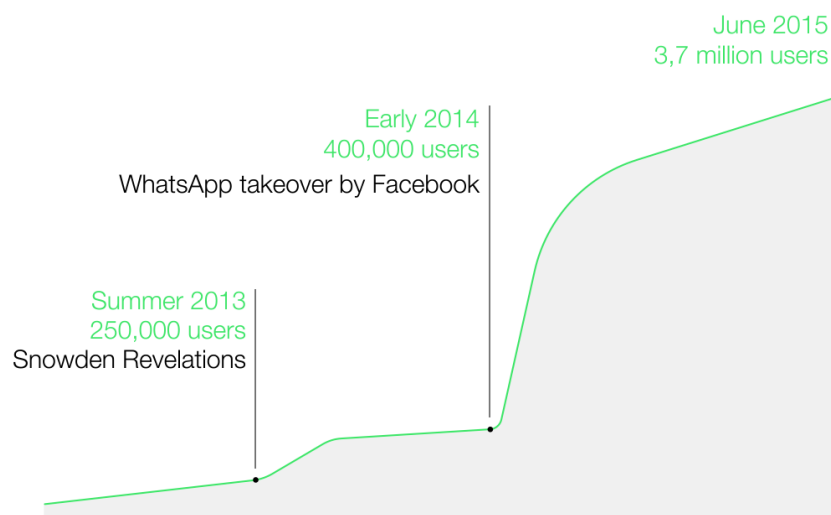
The founders had no idea they were at the forefront of a movement. Three years later, the app had attracted more than 3.7 million users.

- Protect users' privacy
- Prevent mass surveillance

The early years

In December 2012, the Threema app for iPhone was launched, and it immediately gained attention from all around the IT community. Catching the spirit of the age, the number of users rose to almost 250,000 in a short period of time.

A few months later, in summer 2013, the release of the first Android version coincided with the Snowden revelations about the Prism monitoring program, which gave Threema another boost.



When it was revealed in late 2013 that the National Security Agency (NSA) had been monitoring German Chancellor Angela Merkel's cell phone (among others), and when Facebook, often criticized for its handling of user data, acquired the popular mobile messaging app WhatsApp in February 2014, concerns about data privacy reached a new high,

particularly in Europe. Many people were looking for a trustworthy means of mobile communication and turned to Threema. Within a few weeks, the user base rose from about 400,000 to more than two million.

In spring 2014, the three Swiss software engineers established Threema GmbH. The Switzerland-based company operates from Pfäeffikon (SZ), in the Zurich metropolitan area. A highly motivated team of developers works constantly on improving the Threema app further while staying true to the cause of user privacy. The team consists of about a dozen staff members. The company is independent and self-financed. The three founders form its management board, and since there are no investors, Threema is only accountable to its users.

With the introduction of Threema for Windows Phone in autumn 2014, Threema extended its app line-up to cover all major mobile operating systems.

- 2011: Idea to create a secure mobile messenger
- 2012: Threema for iPhone released
- 2013: Threema for Android phones and tablets released
- 2014: Threema GmbH founded (limited liability company, without external financing)
Threema for Windows Phone released

User base (as of December 2015)

The number of Threema users has been rising constantly since spring 2014, exceeding 3.7 million as exceeding 3.7 million at the end of 2015. With a share of above 85%, the German-speaking countries (Germany, Austria and Switzerland) constitute the main market, followed by the US and Russia.

The second year in a row, Threema was awarded best-selling iPhone app in Germany by Apple in their annual [“Best of 2015”](#) list. Google placed the Android version on its prestigious roster of best Android apps of 2015, and the Windows Phone version enjoys great popularity as well.

- Germany's best-selling iPhone app in 2014 and 2015
- A constant front-runner in app charts since spring 2014
- Named one of the best Android apps of 2015 by Google

Technical development

Of course the Threema app is constantly improved, both visually and feature-wise. It provides all the functionality you would expect from a state-of-the-art instant messenger – and then some.

Threema can be used to send text messages, images, videos, the current location and voice memos. On top of that, any kind of file with a size of up to 20 MB can be transferred on Android and iOS. And with its unique Poll Feature, Threema offers a convenient way of finding agreements among groups of people.

The Android app also supports Android Wear smartwatches and Android Auto.

In spring 2015, Threema Gateway was launched, a product which is primarily aimed at the needs of companies and organizations. With Gateway, a Threema back-end can be integrated into third-party applications, allowing to send and receive end-to-end encrypted messages and files of up to 20 MB to Threema users. For maximum flexibility, the client software was made available as Open Source.

- Continuous development of the app's functionality and design
- Transfer of any kind of file with a size of up to 20 MB
- Threema Gateway, a flexible Open Source solution for organizations to interact with their members

Security

Security and privacy are of utmost importance to us, which is why Threema's code is being reviewed internally with the greatest care on a regular basis. Additionally, the security of the system and the compliance with data protection standards was confirmed by an independent research lab that conducted a comprehensive external audit in summer of 2015. You can read a summary of the audit report [here](#).

We're convinced that Threema is the most secure mobile messaging app available today. Threema uses true end-to-end encryption based on NaCl, an established and renowned cryptographic library. Text messages, group chats and all media files (photos, voice memos, etc.) are encrypted on the sender's device and only decoded once they reach the recipient's device. An additional encryption layer providing Perfect Forward Secrecy (PFS) ensures that the metadata (information regarding who communicates with whom) cannot be intercepted during transport.

Bottom line: Other than the recipient, no one can read messages sent with Threema – not even Threema itself.

Another fundamental difference between Threema and other mobile messengers is that Threema does not collect, mine or sell any data. Threema stores the encrypted data on its server in Switzerland for the shortest interval possible – just until the data is transferred to the recipient. Threema is designed to keep as much information as possible stored and managed on users' devices: from contact and group management to encryption, everything happens on the user's private device. The Threema servers merely exist to transmit encrypted messages and hold them until the receiver's device is online. Unlike common messengers, no data regarding contacts and personal networks is saved.

Since the unique identifier of a Threema user is a randomly generated ID (as opposed to the user's phone number or email address), it is possible to use Threema anonymously. Providing a phone number and/or email address is optional.

To prevent Man-in-the-Middle attacks, Threema users can verify one another's identity by scanning their personal QR code.

All of Threema's software development takes place in Switzerland, and all critical servers are located there, too. The Swiss data protection act, one of the world's strictest privacy laws, applies.

Threema's transparent [privacy policy](#) is concise and fits on a sheet of paper.

Using our [Validation Logging](#) feature, anyone can independently confirm that messages sent via Threema are end-to-end encrypted. Technically inclined readers might also want to consult our [Cryptography Whitepaper](#), which describes in great detail the algorithms and design decisions behind the cryptography in Threema.

- Contact and group management is handled on users' devices
- Renowned end-to-end encryption
- Perfect Forward Secrecy (PFS) on transport layer
- No data is collected, mined or sold
- Anonymous use supported, no disclosure of personal information required
- Identity verification of contacts via QR code
- Development takes place in Switzerland, servers are located there, too
- Transparent and concise privacy policy

Closing remarks

Threema is not just an app, it has become a statement. A statement for those who oppose data collection by companies and surveillance by authorities. Since day one, Threema's aim was to prevent data misuse and mass surveillance, and with this mindset, we will continue to improve Threema further.

Contact

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