



Press release

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Government and private sector produce joint solution

Efficient, broad-based solution for a Swiss digital ID

The people of this country should have a simple, secure and unambiguous way of verifying the identity of whoever they are dealing with in the digital world. Some of Switzerland's leading companies have decided to work together to create a trusted Swiss brand for E-ID, laying the foundations for a solution made by the private sector, but certified by the state. These companies are Swiss Post, SBB, Swisscom, Credit Suisse, Raiffeisen, UBS, Zürcher Kantonalbank, financial services provider SIX and Schweizerische Mobiliar.

They have all signed a memorandum of understanding to establish a joint company that will create and implement a digital ID for the people of Switzerland. This new company, SwissSign Group AG, will integrate the activities of existing firm SwissSign AG from January 2018, and continue to develop the "SwissID" solution. Its aim is to make digital IDs more efficient, more user-friendly and simpler, and to promote their use nationally and internationally.

This division of responsibility between government and the private sector accords with the Federal Council's intentions as set out in the draft Federal Law on Electronic Identification Services.

A "SwissID" will allow Swiss people to navigate safely and securely through an increasingly digital world and to use online services more easily. Data protection is the highest priority: control over the way the data is utilized will always rest with the user, and data protection will be guaranteed at all times.

In Switzerland, people can currently prove their identity with a passport, identity card or driver's license; but these forms of proof are very cumbersome for internet transactions. Hence the need for an electronic proof of identity that allows websites, for example, to identify and authenticate an electronic ID holder unambiguously.

The joint company being announced today will develop an open, non-discriminatory ID system that fully complies with all data protection rules, and that safeguards the privacy of every individual. The founding partners of SwissSign Group AG are a broad-based consortium of sponsor firms, which between them already count much of the Swiss population as their customers. In addition to a total of approximately 6 million users, the partners bring their own existing verification methods to the process of developing a new system. Similar partnership models have already been used in, for example, Sweden, Norway and Denmark.



Joint company to develop an open, transparent system

With the SwissID solution, Swiss Post and Swiss Federal Railways (SBB) are bringing the activities they pursue through SwissSign AG into the new company. They will hold an ownership stake in this company alongside Swisscom, UBS, Credit Suisse, Raiffeisen, Zürcher Kantonalbank, financial service provider SIX and Schweizerische Mobiliar. The new company's management team will be made up of the managers of SwissSign AG. Markus Naef has been appointed CEO.

The new company will continue to develop the existing SwissID solution. It will uphold the acknowledged standards for digital IDs, ensure cross-border interoperability between different E-ID systems and be non-discriminatory, open and transparent in its dealings with new partners, users and other technologies.

No cost for the user, data protection is central

For private individuals, use of the digital ID will be simple, secure and free of charge. The company will be financed through a compensation model funded primarily by online service providers. The current system is expensive because almost every individual provider has its own identification process. Online commercial and administrative processes can be structured and executed much more efficiently if there is a single, widely accepted, widely usable digital identification solution. The organizations involved believe that the new model will not only meet user needs, but will also make online transactions much simpler and cheaper for every business involved in online commerce.

Protecting customer data is central: control of personal data remains exclusively with the user, and data protection will be maintained in full. Discussions with the Federal Data Protection and Information Commissioner (FDPIC) were started at an early stage. He regards the project as a high priority and welcomes the fact that SwissSign will provide his agency with a single point of contact.

Government plays an important role

The state continues to play a central role in the implementation of digital IDs in accordance with the E-ID Law. The federal government sets the legislative framework, as well as certifying and monitoring the E-ID system; and the government alone can define and verify state IDs. In addition, as major service providers the federal government, cantons and municipalities help encourage the use of digital IDs.

For a simple explanation of digital IDs: ((video link))

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Additional information on the development of a Swiss digital identification solution

Essential for a digital society

It is becoming increasingly common for business processes and agreements between individuals to be arranged and executed digitally. If transactions, especially more complex ones, are to take place securely online, it is essential that business partners and individuals are able to trust that the person they are dealing with is who they say they are. This requires a digital identification solution (E-ID) that, like a passport or identity card, unequivocally verifies the identity of the person and the validity of the personal identification data (e.g. first name, surname, date of birth) needed for the process concerned.

The following use-cases show how SwissID supports the digitalization of processes and makes day-to-day digital life easier for users:

- With SwissID, the user only needs one password to log in securely to a variety of online services
- With SwissID, users identify themselves online, confirm their identity and, if necessary, provide further information, such as their age
- With SwissID, users can fill in their tax return, sign it and send it directly to the Tax Administration, all online and all seamlessly
- With SwissID, the user can enter into contracts online using a legally binding signature
- With SwissID, users confirm their creditworthiness while shopping online
- With SwissID, users actively release their data to selected online service providers and manage it centrally in one location

By establishing a joint company, the initiating organizations are fulfilling the aims of the Federal Council, which recently proposed in the draft Federal Law on Electronic Identification Services (E-ID Act) that responsibilities be shared in this way between state and market. The consortium explicitly welcomes the Federal Council's proposal. By sensibly pooling the available expertise and sharing the job between state and private sector, a common digital ID can now be created for Switzerland. This will allow the people of Switzerland to identify themselves safely online, and ensure efficient exchange of the identification attributes (personal data) required to verify their identity. With these foundations in place, users will be able to sign contracts electronically, and complete e-commerce and e-government transactions securely. Use of the E-ID will be free of charge for the end customer.

Efficient implementation

The new company is backed by an experienced group of founding partners that already count much of the Swiss population as their customers and that can leverage their own existing verification methods, putting them in an excellent position to develop an efficient new digital identification system for Switzerland. Bank customers in particular are already issued with authentication tools, and are experienced in using such identification processes for e-banking.



Swiss Post and SBB will now very quickly be able to provide their customers and users with a confirmed identification solution based on SwissID. At the end of October, Swiss Post successfully launched a pilot project with 3,000 customers to integrate a SwissID into their customer login. Around 1,000 had already been migrated within 10 days. Once the pilot is complete, the number of customers that can link their login to a SwissID will be increased in stages. Solutions for providers of online services, such as online shopping and travel facilities, should soon be followed by E-IDs for simple e-government applications and for access to selected bank and insurance company services.

Success factors

The trust and acceptance essential to the success of any digital identification scheme are ensured by two things. Firstly, organizations issuing E-IDs are supervised by the government, as is the way data is used. Secondly, the consortium partners have great experience in processing and storing personal data to the highest security standards.

Private organizations provide the digital IDs, while the government recognizes, regulates, controls and monitors. Sweden, Norway and Denmark have proved the success of this model. It facilitates an efficient division of labor between the market and the state, while simultaneously ensuring that the Identity Providers (IdPs) meet strict standards. This model is broadly in line with the one used by the EU; given the desirability of international interoperability, this is very important.

Currently in the digital world, nearly every single provider has a different procedure for verifying identities – a very costly situation. With a widely accepted, widely usable means of electronic identification (e-ID) in place, commercial and administrative processes can be structured and processed much more efficiently.

High security standards

Security requirements for the issue and use of E-IDs can vary in strictness depending on the type of transaction involved. Consequently, the draft law envisages three different levels: “low”, “substantial” and “high” The operator of an online service should be able to decide which level of security is required for which application.

For e-government services, the level will be defined in the legislation that governs each application. The licensing agency will regularly check to ensure that service providers adhere to the specified processes and technical standards. If the organization passes the checks, a license can be granted or extended.

SwissSign Group AG will now very quickly be able to provide its customers and users with a confirmed identification solution based on SwissID. Solutions for providers of online services will follow soon: E-IDs for e-commerce solutions, simple e-government applications, access to selected bank and insurance company services, etc.

The use of E-IDs for e-health and e-banking is more demanding, and it will probably take longer before reliable solutions are available in these areas.



It should be possible to issue electronic ID, guaranteed by the state, for two categories of people: firstly for Swiss citizens who have a valid Swiss passport at the time the ID is issued; secondly for foreigners with residence permits who also have a valid foreign passport at the time of issue.

However, the new company will also offer individual E-IDs to a third category of person, e.g. those with other forms of identification – cross-border commuters, for example – who want to use their E-ID to make purchases in Swiss e-shops.

Acceptance thanks to government supervision

The state plays a central role in the introduction and operation of the E-ID. As well as defining the legal basis for the E-ID, it remains responsible for identification data, and for certifying and monitoring “Identity Brokers”. It also provides the interfaces to government databases. The federal government, cantons and municipalities are also important service providers, helping to broaden the use of the E-ID.

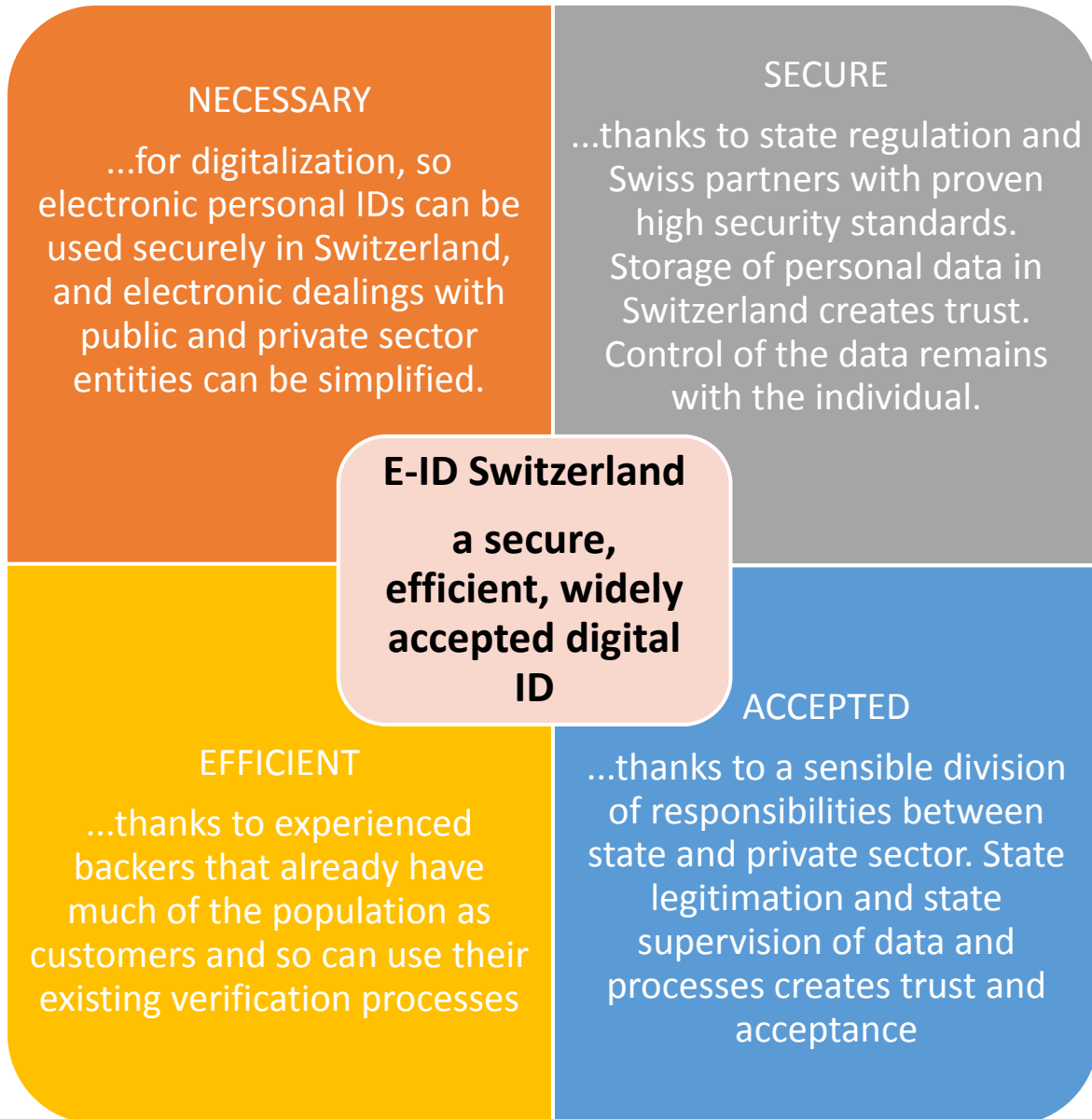
Companies involved in the system don’t take on any of the government’s responsibilities, but they do make their identification and authentication systems available to other private and public-sector bodies.

The scheme will comply in full with the applicable data protection regulations. Discussions with the Federal Data Protection and Information Commissioner (FDPIC) were started at an early stage. He regards the project as a high priority and welcomes the fact that SwissSign will provide his agency with a single point of contact.

The E-ID “ecosystem”

The implementation of a digital ID for Switzerland is based on a system where the **individual person** applies for a personal digital identity (E-ID) from an **Identity Provider** (IdP), which can be a bank, another type of company or a government agency. In order to issue an E-ID, this Identity Provider compares the individual’s data with the identification elements held on public registers. Control of the data always rests with the individual, who decides which identity attributes to disclose. Armed with her or his personal electronic identity, the person can now identify themselves unequivocally in digital transactions with any **service provider (“Relying Party”)**, whether this is a retailer, an e-commerce company or the local municipal authority. The Relying Party verifies the identity of the individual person with an **Identity Broker**, which ensures interoperability, thus enabling a Relying Party to access the E-ID. The broker solution will be based on the new SwissID standard. The simplicity and speed of this verification is the key to guaranteeing a positive customer experience. As the licensing body, the federal government creates confidence in the system by legitimizing Identity Brokers.

Main features of the digital ID:



For a simple explanation of digital IDs: www.swissign.com/en/media