



PRESS RELEASE
3 November 2005

International Porvoo Group's 8th Seminar in Brussels, 13–14 October 2005: ELECTRONIC IDENTITY BEING CONSCIOUSLY PROMOTED BOTH IN EUROPE AND AROUND THE WORLD

Almost 60 representatives from 14 European countries, India, Japan, the USA, the European Commission and the United Nations met in Brussels, Belgium on 13–14 October 2005 to discuss interoperable European electronic identity and electronic services and development projects in the participating countries. Biometrics and their use in electronic identity cards were also highly visible. In addition, EU projects, standardisation, interoperability issues and development work on the European Citizen Card were discussed. This was the seminar of the international Porvoo Group, which was established in conjunction with the EU eEurope 2002 project, and which consists of governmental representatives from European countries. The Federal Public Service Home Affairs of the Belgian Ministry of the Interior and the Finnish Population Register Centre organised the seminar.

Belgium — one of the pioneers in the development of electronic identity

Mr. Luc Vanneste, General Director of the Federal Public Service Home Affairs delivered the Opening Address of the seminar. He explained the introduction, context and status of the Belgian electronic identity card. His speech dealt, among others with the following issues: what an electronic ID card looks like, what consequences a generalised introduction holds for authorities and service providers, how to implement interoperability and the apparent duality between security and privacy. As a lesson learned, Mr. Vanneste sees that the added value of the electronic ID card has to be evaluated for each stakeholder before it is introduced.

In Belgium, the electronic ID card project was launched in 11 pilot municipalities in spring 2003. In 2004, the Belgian government decided to start using the electronic ID card in general and since June 2005, the cards have been issued in all of the country's municipalities. Approximately 1.3 million cards have already been activated. It is estimated that that figure will reach 2 million by the end of the year. Mr. Vanneste thinks that it is important for card readers to be inexpensive and readily available.

In Mr. Vanneste's opinion, privacy protection issues must be taken quite seriously and, where possible, technology and methods that emphasise privacy must be used. He considers it to be a strong indicator of privacy protection when the cardholder has direct on-line access to databases that contain information on that individual. This transparency has materialized in Belgium's national population register and tax information, where citizens can browse their own information.

Mr. Vanneste noted that there is still not any European or world-wide standard on cross-certification, even though this would be a very useful extension to the Digital Signature Directive of 1999.

Mr. Vanneste's answer to the question "What could we do together, what could the Porvoo Group do better?" that he had posed was to develop a general prototype of the electronic identity project that includes the possibility of using cross-certification and biometrics. This proposal will be discussed in the next Porvoo Group seminars.

Mr. Olivier Libon of FedICT (FEDeral Information & Communication Technology public service, F.E.D.I.C.T.) presented the Belgian eGovernment PKI (Public Key Infrastructure) strategy and the PKI status of the electronic identity. He highlighted the need for the availability of secure devices to

enable strong authentication and identification. Similarly, it is important that citizens be educated, without using technical jargon.

Next steps to interoperable electronic identity management in the EU

Mr. Aniyam Varghese, a representative of the European Commission (eGovernment Unit, the Information Society and Media Directorate-General) outlined the Commission's current activities on electronic identity management for secure eGovernment services. In April 2006, the Commission will publish *eGovernment Action Plan in 2010*. During the summer, the Council and other parties will draw conclusions about it. The target of eGovernment is to create better public services, increase democracy and the participation of the citizens, to increase the quality of life, etc. The Porvoo Group stressed the need to agree upon roadmaps in order to address the common requirements in order to make progress in the EU.

A summary of the electronic identity situation in Europe

As in previous seminars, progress reports on the stage of development of electronic identity in participant countries were given. A conscious effort to increase the number of electronic identity cards and electronic services is being carried out in all countries. The United Kingdom, Estonia, Portugal, Germany and Belgium presented their country updates.

In the local elections held in Estonia in October 2005, it was possible to vote in advance over the Internet using an electronic identity card. As far as is known, this was the first time in the world that it was possible to vote over the Internet in elections for an entire country.

A summary of the situation in Asia, Japan and the USA

The Asian IC Card Forum, established in 2004, and its vision "One Card, One Asia — the Silk Road Card" was introduced in the seminar. The goal is that a single card could be used for border control and electronic services. On Jeju Island, part of South Korea, a pilot study is being created for a multi-purpose card to be used for transportation and paying. The founding members of the Asian IC Card Forum are China, Japan, Korea and Singapore. In addition to those countries, electronic identity projects in Malaysia and Thailand were presented.

The next eJapan strategy will be published in January 2006; the current strategy ends in March 2006. The new strategy will focus on utilising IT in the health care and on eGovernment. During 2006, all government employees will receive their electronic identity, which will be used in authentication and logging into systems.

In Japan, approximately 700,000 resident registration cards have been issued by local government; this is less than was expected. The project has been relaunched. Its new goal is that all eGovernment services should be accessible with a single card. The upcoming second version of the card will be prepared by the central government. It will be a resident registration card that makes possible the electronic signature. In addition, the card will act as a passport and it will include the biometric identifiers required by ICAO (the International Civil Aviation Organisation) as is the practice to be complied with in Europe. More services that use the card are needed and the intention is to switch over to a steady operating eGovernment stage by the end of March 2006, i.e., almost all of the central government's services would be available on-line.

For standardisation development of the USA, it was stated that Personal Identity Verification cards (PIV cards) will be implemented on the federal government level in the USA in accordance with the main goals of the Directive on Homeland Security, signed by the President in August 2004. Where possible they will also be implemented for all eligible contractors and thus the total number of cards will reach 30–40 million. In the USA, the main focus is on services and on standardisation related to their interfaces.

Harmonisation and interoperability issues extensively discussed

The question of using open software based solution in electronic identity interoperability issues was discussed in the seminar. It was demonstrated how open software based solution could be used to authenticate a user and to make electronic signature. The electronic identification service

demo is available on the Internet. Finland's, Estonia's, Belgium's and Italy's electronic identity cards work with the demo.

In addition, the idea of an independent, trusted validation authority to enable PKI interoperability was presented. A validation authority is necessary as many different players are involved in producing electronic services and certificates. A validation authority would also enable electronic signatures in the value chain. A technical report has been written on this subject and is available at http://www.dnv.com/binaries/Report-2005-0673_tcm4-159646.pdf. The Porvoo Group monitors developments in this sector.

In addition, a progress report was presented on the activities of the Global Collaboration Forum on interoperable eID/IAS, which deals with the interoperable electronic identity and the standardisation of authentication. The forum has regional operations in Europe, the Far East and the USA. It has, for example, explored the possibilities of achieving a common opinion on the minimum requirements necessary to support global interoperability in electronic identity and in the standardisation of authentication. The next Porvoo Group seminar will discuss the version of the common requirements that has been updated with the Group's comments. The matter of the Porvoo Group working with the Global Collaboration Forum and the Asian IC Card Forum in interoperability issues was brought up.

The international Porvoo Group supports the deployment of electronic identity in Europe

The Porvoo Group is an international cooperative network whose primary goal is to promote a trans-national, interoperable electronic identity, based on PKI technology and electronic ID cards, in order to help ensure secure public and private sector e-transactions in Europe. As its name suggests, the Porvoo Group was established in Porvoo, Finland, in the spring of 2002 in conjunction with the eEurope 2002 programme. The Group consists of governmental representatives from European countries; representatives from the private sector and from the European Commission have also attended the two-day seminars, which are held every 6 months. The number of participating member countries has steadily increased; at present, about 30 countries have representatives in the Group.

The next Porvoo Group seminar will be held in Slovenia in May 2006. The 10th seminar will return to Porvoo, Finland in autumn 2006 during Finland's EU presidency. Portugal, the United Kingdom, etc., have also been nominated to host seminars.

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Seminar presentations, seminar report and resolutions, as well as additional information on the Internet:

www.vaestorekisterikeskus.fi -> Electronic Identity -> Porvoo Group
http://www.fineid.fi/vrk/fineid/home.nsf/pages/index_eng -> What's going on around the world -> Porvoo Group and <http://www.porvoo8.rrn.fgov.be/porvoo8/home.php>

With Best Regards,

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