

Contribution to Porvoo 12 Press Conference by Jan van Arkel, co-chair Porvoo group, co-chair Global Collaboration Forum on eID, chair World eID conference.

Nowadays information and communication technology is an integral part of society and therefore by definition of government service providing. In essence government service providing is a form of customer relationship where the citizen is the customer. To make customer relationship work one needs to know his customers and be able to identify them. Hence electronic identity providing is a 'conditio sine qua non' for Government electronic service providing. The basis functionalities for electronic ID management are the identity or personal data, the authentication function to prove that one is, who he claims to be (usually by a PIN code or biometric verification) and a signature function as a proof of consent, just like the written signature.

So far implementations of electronic ID management have been conducted by European member states on a national scale, on the basis of national costs and benefits analysis. So at present 88 % of all EU members states issue one or other form of ID card, 8 Member States already issue a form of electronic ID and many countries are in a preparation phase.

However national needs and national solutions is not all there is.

There is this vision that Europe needs the establishment of an electronic proof of eIdentity in Europe that allows citizens to be recognised and treated all across the EU, as if they were in their home country interacting with national public and private institutions. This in order to realise a more "inclusive" European society. In other words, to put beside the Euro coins another piece of Europe in the pocket of the European citizen.

So what's needed is a cooperation mode between Member States as far as the mutual recognition of the respective electronic ID's is concerned. The good news it that there is a political consent to realise such a situation.

In November 2005 the European Council of Ministers has endorsed a declaration stating that: *'By 2010 European citizens and businesses shall be able to benefit from secure means of electronic identification that maximise user convenience while respecting data protection regulations. Such means shall be made available under the responsibility of the Member States but recognised across the EU.'*

Following this declaration a Roadmap for EU eID Management has been designed and approved by the Member States. A number of reports and studies have been performed and now is the time to bring this all to a test. For this purposed a Large Scale eID interoperability test project is envisioned in which 15 EU Member States will participate. If the funding is approved by the EC this project will start early 2008. Porvoo group members are envisioned to participate in this project and help in disseminating the results. This is one of the issues we discuss these days.

All this is not in time to make Europe the world leader in electronic ID deployment, many national projects world wide being already operational. But it is well in time to contribute to seamless eGovernment services providing in Europe. Coming to you soon.