

Proposal for a Workshop
Introducing eID as a Multi-Facet Innovation
Lessons from and for Comparative E-Government Research

by

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Abstract

E-government needs secure authentication by eIDs. Within the European Union the eID systems including the attributes defining the identity, the token or card and the processes for producing and distributing cards show a great degree of variance. In a comparative study the eID systems in Austria, Belgium, Germany and Spain have been analyzed. In the workshop the introduction of the new systems will be described in four country-related presentations and an attempt will be made to explain differences by the concept of path dependency. The theoretical and methodological approach of this research will finally be reviewed by invited reviewers, before the lessons learnt for comparative e-government research will be discussed with all workshop participants.

Subject

In many cases, e-government needs a secure authentication of the citizens or business requesting a service proving the identity of the customer. In most cases the electronic identity (eID attributes) is the same as the identity used in face-to-face contacts with government agencies, i.e. a national identity card but using new machine-readable technology, most frequently a chip card. However, the technology and the attributes employed for eID vary greatly between member states of the European Union. In a comparative research project the eID systems in Austria, Belgium, Germany and Spain have been compared. Differences concern the use of national ID numbers as attributes, digital fingerprints or the kind of chip employed. The differences can only be partly explained by different legal and cultural provisions. The central hypothesis for comparative analyses is the path dependency of the new system in relation to its predecessors. In a first attempt for each country the technological and institutional paths of eID will be analyzed and the degree of path continuity or discontinuity will be discussed. In the first half of the workshop the introduction of eID in the four countries will be presented by the respective national member of the research team. Besides the description of the eID system, the main actors involved and the stages of the innovation process each country presentation will highlight one particular aspect, which differed significantly from the other countries;

- Austria was the first country to implement a national eID system in e-government by law. It is one of the few countries, which did not choose the national ID card as token. Rather the so-called "Bürgerkarte" is a virtual software-based construct, which can

be implemented on different cards. Originally, the social security card (eCard) had been envisaged as an important carrier. For reasons to be explained this did not happen immediately. Rather bankcards and other tokens took over these functions. However, over time the eCard turned out to be the most important carrier of the Bürgerkarte.

In Germany the eID card and the health card are two distinct systems. In Belgium, there are plans to give up the health card and use the national ID card as access to health files.

- In Belgium the eID is placed on the national ID card, which serves for visual authentication as well. Belgium is the only country where the eID card includes a digital signature by default and where citizens have to opt out, while in Germany citizens have to apply for a digital signature as an additional feature of their eID card. This raises the question whether and why the provision of eSignatures are considered as a service of public interest to be provided by the state or a commercial good.
- Germany is the only country in this sample, which stores digital fingerprints on the chip of the eID card. After a political dispute this is not mandatory but optional. In contrast, Belgium did not plan for digital fingerprints because of privacy concerns, while in Spain the storage of fingerprints was accepted without any debate.
- In Spain, as in Belgium, the national ID number is the most important attribute of citizens' identity. While in Belgium the law forbids the use of the personal identity number in e-commerce, in Spain it is used for many purposes in everyday life, online and offline.

In the second part of the workshop these and other differences will be explained. In a first attempt, an explanation by cross analysis of certain context factors will be tried. Problems like comparing the privacy culture or legislation and linking it to these differences will be discussed. As an alternative the concept of path dependencies will be employed and lead to more meaningful explanations.

The methodological and conceptual approach of this research shall finally be subject of a critical peer review from different disciplines in the e-government research area, in particular political science and computer science as well as comparative political studies.

Workshop Programme

Part 1 (9.30 – 11.00)

Introducing the research questions and design (Herbert Kubicek)

The Austrian Case (How many cards? The relationship between citizen ID and social security cards) (Georg Aichholzer and Stefan Strauß))

The Belgian Case (Identity of persons and documents - the role of governments in providing eSignatures) (Leo van Audenhove and Ilse Marien)

The Spanish Case (eID in everyday life) (Alexander Heichlinger)

The German Case (eID and biometrics) (Torsten Noack)

Part 2 (13,30 – 15.30)

1. Comparative Analysis: context factors ad/or path dependencies (Herbert Kubicek)

2. Review of methods, concepts employed and lessons to be learned

Prof. Andreas Busch, University of Göttingen, Germany

Prof. Maria A. Wimmer, University of Koblenz-Landau, Germany

3. Plenary Debate

The workshop addresses participants interested in technical and political aspects of electronic identities, electronic signatures as well as people who are interested in methods and concepts of comparative e-government research.

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