The Future of Identity in the Information Society

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Editors

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Challenges and Opportunities

Springer

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ISBN 978-3-540-88480-4
Springer Dordrecht Heidelberg London New York

Library of Congress Control Number: "PCN applied for"

Cover design: WMXDesign GmbH

Printed on acid-free paper

Springer is part of Springer Science+Business Media (www.springer.com)

Foreword

During the past decade the Information Society has firmly established itself in Europe and elsewhere, and ICT has deeply and irreversibly dyed the economic and social fabric of society. A stage of development has been reached that is characterised by massive amounts of personal data being generated, collected, analysed and processed, exchanged, recombined, and stored sometimes for a life-time or more. The contours of the digital age have rapidly taken shape and with this, the creation and management of individual identity has emerged as one of the central challenges in digital life. Citizens look for value in the activities they do on the Internet. Therefore they want to be able to trust the technology and services provided and the actors behind it. For that trusted electronic identity management is crucial.

On-line services can provide a lot of benefits and convenience to citizens and huge competitive advantages to European industry. Yet for such services to enjoy large-scale growth, people and organisations must have sufficient confidence that their personal dignity and legitimate business interests are properly safeguarded. It goes without saying that Europe needs an innovative and competitive ICT services sector to meet the challenges of the digital economy, to remain competitive and to foster investment, growth and jobs. This can only be successful if it is based on a privacy protecting ID management framework providing authentication mechanisms that protect human dignity, ensure protection against malicious behaviour and deceit, and allow for accountability and liability, and hence the rule of law in digital space. Europe's strong social values must be transferred to future digital life.

Trust in the use of eServices, in digital communications and applications, in eCommerce, eHealth, eGovernment, and ensuring the free movement of knowledge – the so-called "Fifth Freedom" – and open collaboration is evolving with society. There is no single 'silver bullet' solution to information identity risks. To achieve a true European culture of trust and security in digital life, decision-makers in business and government, regulators and technology developers must work together in a multi-stakeholder dialogue to find the right mix of methods, technology and regulation. In this respect, I would like to point to the Commission's policy initiative "i2010 – A European Information Society for growth and employment". i2010 identifies security, in a broad sense including trust and privacy, as one of the four main challenges posed by digital convergence, which is at the heart of the creation of the single European Information Space. Furthermore trust, identity management and privacy protection are strong elements in European supported research, organised within the broader Framework Programme for Research and Development of the European Union.

Our society calls for diversity, openness, interoperability, usability and competition as key drivers for trust and security. Diversity reduces the risk stemming from the dependence on one type of technology and introduces natural safeguards. Open standards and interoperability are key to competition and for empowering users to freely choose products and services that they find useful, and for creating business opportunities for small, medium and large companies alike.

FIDIS has put Europe on the global map as a place for high quality identity management research. It has, together with several other EU supported activities, effectively contributed to creating the conditions for a flourishing digital economy and digital life, which are key aims of the Commission's regulatory and research policy.

I would like to thank the FIDIS project and all contributors to this "FIDIS Summit Book" for the opportunity to draw attention to the European Commission's efforts in this domain, and for putting Europe on the map as a global thought leader in privacy protective digital identity management. The fact that the Summit Event takes place in Cyprus – one of the recent EU Member States – is to be seen as a tribute to the shared European values of democracy, freedom and civil liberties.

Brussels, March 2009

Viviane Reding
Member of the European Commission,
Responsible for Information Society and Media

Acknowledgements

Editing and writing a multidisciplinary book like the one at hand is not something that is possible without 'an army' of helping hands that dedicated their knowledge, expertise, and time to make the work a success. Among the countless people that worked on this FIDIS volume, we would like to give a special thanks to:

- The partners, chapter editors, and researchers in the NoE FIDIS that contributed to this book and the deliverables (cf. Annex A) this book is based on.
- The reviewers of the chapter that dedicated their time to improve and streamline the different chapters.
- The people that helped to create this book:
  - Birgit Leick and later Christian Rauscher at Springer for helping us publish this piece of work.
  - George Scott for transforming much of the Englishish in the draft versions of this book into English.
  - Markus Richter for making this book agreeable to the eye.
  - Frieder Vogelmann for all sorts of trouble-shooting.
  - Our colleagues at the Chair of Mobile Business and Multilateral Security at Goethe University Frankfurt for keeping our backs covered when producing this book.
- The European Commission for funding FIDIS, as well as its Project Officers (Dirk van Rooy, Günter Schumacher, Richard Sonnenschein, Alain Jaume) and their management (Jacques Bus, Gerald Santucci, Andrea Servida), who kept up with whatever developments and challenges such a large and lively network is putting up.
- Last but not least Stefan Figge, without whom the successful FIDIS proposal would have never come into existence.

Frankfurt am Main, February 2009

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