Q&A Digital Identity

EU Digital Identity Wallet

What is digital identification?

Identification allows us to prove who we are and can take the form of passports and identity cards. Digital identification helps us save time and simplify interactions. Various private and public providers are currently offering digital identification means, allowing users to access different public services online or to make use of online banking, for example. Digital identities offer varying degrees of trustworthiness and security. EU Digital Identity Wallets will be recognised across the EU and will enable users to digitally prove who they are, while giving them full control on what data they share to identify themselves with online services.

What are digital credentials?

Credentials are pieces of information containing claims about a person, in a digital format, which allow an individual's identity, qualities and skills to be verified quickly, securely, and reliably, enabling the verifier to trust in the veracity of the claim. Issuers of credentials are third parties (mostly organisations) which the verifier trusts. Thus, credentials can help the subject of the claim to participate fully in society and the economy.

Credentials include a variety of information, such as first name, surname, date of birth, educational qualification, professional qualifications, work experience and so on. Unlike traditional credentials digital credentials are presented in a digital format, using technologies such as cryptography, in order to ensure security, validity and authenticity of the information.

As part of the European Digital Identity Regulation (https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/eidas-regulation), digital credentials are introduced in a way that allow people to prove statements about themselves and their relationships with anonymity (i.e. without revealing identifying data). Due to their ability to provide verified information in a secure and private manner, verifiable credentials are becoming increasingly popular as a reliable and secure digital authentication tool.

What are EU Digital Identity Wallets?

Digital wallets are applications that store digital objects in the same way as physical wallets do. Many of us are already using digital wallets on our smartphones to store our boarding passes or to keep our virtual bank cards.

The European Digital Identity Regulation introduces the concepts of EU Digital Identity Wallets. They are personal digital wallets that allow citizens to digitally identify themselves, store and manage identity data and official documents in electronic format. These documents may include a driving licence, medical prescriptions or education qualifications. Thanks to the wallet, all citizens will be able to prove their identity where necessary to access services online, to share digital documents, or simply to prove a specific personal attribute, such as age, without revealing their identity or other personal details. citizens will have full control of the data they share at all times.

EU Digital Identity Wallets issued by Member States in accordance with the European Digital Identity Regulation will play a key role in enabling us to take our digital identity and associated digital credentials from one place to another in the digital world.

What will change for Europeans?

The main novelty introduced by the new rules is that everyone will be entitled to an EU Digital Identity Wallet recognised in all Member States. Yet, there will be no obligation to use a EU Digital Identity Wallet. Users will be able to control what personal data they want to share with online services. While public services and certain private services will be obliged to

recognise a EU Digital Identity Wallet. Its security features make it attractive for all private service providers to recognise it for services that require strong authentication, creating new business opportunities.

What can I do with the new EU Digital Identity wallet?

You will be able to use it to access both public and private online services in the EU, in particular those requiring strong user authentication. Examples of these could be accessing a bank account or applying for a loan, submitting tax declarations, enrolling in a university in your home country or abroad and many other things that you do with your existing, physical means of identification.

For what purpose can I use my EU Digital Identity Wallet?

EU Digital Identity Wallets can be used in many ways such as to prove your age, share credentials, for rental or banking purposes, travelling, applying for a job and many more digital services. Some examples are:

- **Receiving, storing and sharing credentials:** Peter has installed a personal digital wallet on his mobile phone. It has been provided by his home country, ensuring that the wallet has been issued to him personally. Peter's digital wallet allows him to download, store and use his basic personal data, a driving licence, a diploma, and a bank card he used to carry around as physical cards in his physical wallet.

- **Renting an apartment**: Yavor is preparing to move to another Member State to take up a new position. He can use his EU Digital Identity Wallet to show his rental history, employment information, and credit score when applying for an apartment lease (revealing their identity only upon signature of the contract).

- **Signing contracts**: Kjerstin uses her EU Digital Identity Wallet when signing contracts online, as it provides a secure digital signature, eliminating the need for paper documents and physical signatures.

- **Initiating Payments**: Danika holds business banking accounts at financial institutions in several Member States. Previously, to authorise transactions when banking electronically, she had to use different means (e.g. a fingerprint, a one-time passcode, or affirmation to transaction approval queries send to her personal device). Now all banks use her EU Digital Identity Wallet for this purpose.

What is the added value compared to the current system?

EU Digital Identity Wallets will be built on the basis of trusted digital identities provided by Member States, improving their effectiveness, extending their benefits to the private sector and offering personal digital wallets that are safe, free, convenient to use, and protect personal data.

This will support the Digital Decade goal for 2030 of ensuring that EU citizens have online access to key public services in the EU and that nobody is asked to provide more data than is necessary when accessing and using public services. 100% of EU citizens by 2030 should be offered the possibility to use an accessible, voluntary, secure and trusted digital identity.

For this initiative, the Commission builds on the existing cross-border legal framework for trusted digital identities, the European electronic identification and trust services initiative (eIDAS Regulation).

Adopted in 2014, it provides the basis for cross-border electronic identification, authentication and website certification within the EU. However, it does not contain any obligation for Member States to provide their citizens and businesses with a digital identification system enabling secure access to public services or to ensure their use across EU borders. Nor does it contain provisions regarding use of such identification for private services, or with mobile devices. This leads to discrepancies between countries.

Some countries offer identification system to their citizens while others do not and, when they do, not all these systems can be used cross-border (for details see our overview of pre-notified and notified eID schemes under eIDAS (https://ec.europa.eu/digital-building-blocks/wikis/display/EIDCOMMUNITY/Overview+of+pre-notified+and+notified+eID+schemes+under+eIDAS).)

Will the Commission provide for a unique European Digital Identity to replace national digital identities?

No. That is not the aim of the regulation. Digital identities will continue to be provided by Member States. The European Digital Identity Wallet builds on this basis, and extends the functionalities and usability of national eIDs by means of a personal digital wallet.

How will the EU ensure the interoperability of the systems (ie. making sure the systems work across different Member States)?

The Commission will propose and agree with Member States standards, technical specifications and operational aspects through implementing acts.

What happens to my existing eID? Do I need to go through another registration process?

No. EU Digital Identity Wallets will build on national systems that already exist in some Member States. Today, not every person living in the EU has access to a means of digital identification.

How can I obtain an European Digital Identity Wallet?

Member States will offer the wallets to their citizens and residents at the national level. Everyone will be able to download, install and use an EU Digital Identity Wallet on their personal smartphone or device.

How will the security, privacy and personal data protection be ensured?

The proposal provides for a high level of security. The Commission will propose and agree with Member States on standards, technical specifications and operational aspects to ensure the Member States' Digital Identity Wallets have the highest security levels. Member States will certify their wallets to ensure they comply with these requirements. Any personal data will be shared online only if the citizen chooses to share that information.

When can I use this personal digital wallet?

Member States should issue new EU Digital Identity Wallets within 24 months of the date of entry into force of the implementing acts referred to in Article 5a(1) and in Article 5c(6) of the European Digital Identity Regulation. Each member state should issue a EU Digital Identity Wallet by end of 2026.

What are the challenges that the European Digital Identity Wallet has to overcome?

The digital identity wallet presents various challenges that must be addressed in order to ensure its successful adoption and use by citizens. One of the most important challenges is providing a simple and intuitive user experience that is designed with the user's needs in mind and pays particular attention to accessibility aspects. Citizens must be able to easily navigate the system and access the services they need without encountering barriers or difficulties that may discourage them from using it.

Another critical challenge is ensuring a high level of security and reliability of the technological component. The digital identity wallet must be designed with robust security features that prevent unauthorised access and protect the user's personal information. Additionally, it must be able to provide all the guarantees necessary to ensure citizens' privacy while providing an intuitive system to track and control the information that will be shared with third parties.

A third challenge is how to manage the permissions for access to personal information that users grant to trusted third parties, such as banks, government agencies, or healthcare providers. The wallet must be able to manage these authorisations in a secure and transparent manner, giving users full control over who can access their information and for

what purposes.

Finally, the digital identity wallet must provide a reliable system capable of managing the information of minors and family members for whom there is a delegation. This means providing robust identity verification mechanisms that prevent unauthorised access and ensuring that access is granted only to authorised individuals.

Addressing these challenges will be essential for the successful implementation and adoption of digital identity wallets. By providing a user-friendly and secure system that meets citizens' needs and expectations, the digital identity wallet has the potential to revolutionise the way we interact with government services, financial institutions, and other organisations that require identity verification.

Common toolbox

What is the purpose of the common Toolbox?

To make EU Digital Identity Wallets a reality as soon as possible, the Commission adopted a Recommendation calling for Member States to work together to develop a common Toolbox to build such wallets. This includes the development of an Architecture and Reference Framework, a set of common standards and technical specifications, common guidelines, and best practices.

What is the timeline to develop, adopt and implement the toolbox?

The Commission has published the Architecture and Reference Framework at GitHub. (https://eu-digital-identity-wallet.github.io/eudi-doc-architecture-and-reference-framework) This is a live document that will be updated as the work progresses. It serves as the technical backbone of all future EU Digital Identity Wallets, ensuring their safety, interoperability, and user friendliness. Large scale pilot projects are testing the technical specifications for EU Digital Identity Wallets and are piloting the use of the Wallets around a range of priority. The Commission will provide a prototype implementation of EU Digital Identity Wallets including software libraries and modular components.

Find more information on the EU Digital Identity Wallet pilot projects (https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/eudi-wallet-implementation).

Why do EU Digital Identity Wallets need an ecosystem of open source solutions based on common standards?

Building an ecosystem based on open source solutions and common standards for the European digital identity portfolio is important for several reasons.

First, the use of open source solutions allows for greater transparency and collaboration among developers, ensuring that the technology is reliable and secure.

Second, the adoption of common standards enables greater interoperability between different digital identity platforms and solutions, simplifying identity verification processes and increasing the efficiency of digital transactions.

Thirdly, an ecosystem based on open source solutions and common standards for digital identity could foster the widespread adoption of this type of technology, enabling European citizens to securely and reliably access digital services across the EU.

Furthermore, an open and standardised ecosystem can foster interoperability between different solutions, reduce development costs, and facilitate adoption by a broad spectrum of market players, thus fostering the diffusion of digital identity as a reliable and secure electronic authentication tool.

Finally, the adoption of open standards and open source solutions can stimulate innovation, allowing new players to enter the market and offer new services and functionalities.