

Contribution to Porvoo 12 Press Conference by Tuire Saaripuu, Chair of the Porvoo Group Head of Registration, Certification Authority Services, Population Register Centre, Finland

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 (Public Key Infrastructure) and smart cards and chip ID cards, in order to help ensure secure public and private sector e-transactions in Europe. The Group also promotes the introduction of interoperable certificates and technical specifications, the mutual, cross-border acceptance of identification and authentication mechanisms, as well as cross-border, online access to administrative services.

As its name suggests, the Porvoo Group was established in the Finnish city of Porvoo in April 2002. The Group consists of governmental representatives from European countries; representatives from the private sector, the European Commission and the UN have also attended the conferences. The number of participating member countries has steadily increased and even countries outside Europe have joined the Group.

The Porvoo Group meets twice a year

The Porvoo Group's two-day conferences are held every six months. The conferences always include a comprehensive presentation by the hosting country on the situation of the Information Society and the electronic identity in the said hosting country. In addition, the participating countries present their country updates. The primary objective of the conferences is to bring under discussion "Best practices" in the PKI technology, present on-going PKI projects, follow the progress of standardisation and biometrics in the field of electronic identity, discuss various studies concerning the EU Directive governing electronic signatures and draft statements and proposals to the European Commission when deemed necessary.

The Group is pro-active

Amongst its other activities, the Group has issued or initiated the following recommendations:

- 1) A letter of request sent to the European Commission in order to update the Driving License Directive to allow an electronic identity chip to be included on driving licenses.
- 2) Has started discussions concerning the legal aspects of electronic identity and identification and authentication functions carrying out a study on the European Cross-Border Authentication Legislative Environment and the need, if any, for the EU to regulate the interoperable European electronic identity. The study recommends using the Directive governing electronic signatures as a common legislative solution.
- 3) Has recognised the important developments underway in the field "Biometrics in Passports and in the future also in ID cards" and has expressed its immediate need from the electronic ID card perspective for an international standard template for fingerprint minutiae. This position has been communicated to the CEN/ISSS (European Committee for Standardization/ Information Society Standardization System) Biometric Focus Group.

The permanent secretariat coordinates the function of the Group

The joint Chairs of the Porvoo Group and the secretariat manages communications between conferences and jointly organises conferences together with the hosting country organisation. The secretariat also handles media relations pertaining to the conferences together with the hosting country organisation.

Additional information is available on the Internet: www.fineid.fi -> What's going around the world
-> Porvoo Group