Statewatch Briefing

ID Cards in the EU: Current state of play

Introduction

In March 2010, the Council Presidency sent out a questionnaire to EU Member States and countries that are members of the so-called "Mixed Committee" that is part of Schengen (Iceland, Lichtenstein, Norway and Switzerland) to establish the "state of play concerning electronic identity cards" (see EU doc no: 5299/1/10 [1]). The 23 replies to the questionnaire are contained in EU doc no: 9949/10 [2] and are analysed below.

The objective is said to be the "full and effective incorporation into their passports of primary and secondary biometrics" followed by electronic resident permits and electronic identity cards. The first step to the introduction of biometrics (photographs and fingerprints) in the EU was for visas, then resident third country nationals followed by EU passports. Attention is now turning to national ID cards which are also used as travel documents in the Schengen area. This questionnaire is likely to lead to a proposal to "harmonise" the content of national ID cards (biometrics) and their use (e.g. e-government services like social benefits and health).

This questionnaire is the start of a process of "soft-law making" by the Council of the European Union which may lead to it adopting a set of "Conclusions" on national ID cards (ie: not binding on EU Member States but enabling them to take joint common actions). The European and national parliaments have no say over the content of Council "Conclusions".

Note 1: It should be noted that some countries have misleadingly categorised "photos" as biometrics in their answers to the questionnaire, even though they are based on the standard passport picture taken in photo-booths (not a "facial scan" which is a biometric comprised of 1,840 features of a person's face). These "photos" are digitised and placed on a chip in passports, ID cards etc.

Note 2: The questionnaire did not ask what national laws are on the requirement to carry or produce ID cards.

Key findings

- 17 countries make it mandatory for their citizens to have an ID card, four do not.

- 13 countries issue traditional ID cards, eight issue cards containing contact and/or RFID chips, two countries do not currently issue ID cards (Norway, UK)

- Of the eight countries that issue electronic ID cards with the capacity to store biometric data, six have chosen to do so (Belgium, Italy, Lithuania, Portugal, Spain and Sweden)

General Points

- EU member states that did not contribute to the questionnaire: Denmark, Finland, France, Greece, Ireland, Latvia, Netherlands

- The United Kingdom's answers have not been included because in June 2010 its new government decided to scrap the country's ID card scheme.

ID cards – basic details

	Issue ID cards?	From what age is it mandatory to own an ID card?	What is the validity period of the card?
Austria	Yes	Not mandatory	10 years
Belgium	Yes	12	5 years
Bulgaria	Yes	14	4 years for 14-58 year-olds, indefinite for those over 58
Cyprus	Yes	12	5 years for those under 18, 10 years for those over 18

Czech Republic	Yes	15	5 years for 15-20 year-olds, 10 years for those over 20
Estonia	Yes	15	10 years for cards issued before 1 Jan 2007, 5 years for those issued after
Germany	Yes	16	6 years for those under 24, 10 years for those over 24
Hungary	Yes	From birth	Issued at birth then renewed at the ages of 3, 6 and 14. Valid for 8 years for 14-20 year olds, 10 years for 20-70 year olds and issued indefinitely to those over 70
Italy	Yes	18	10 years
Liechtenstein	Yes	Not mandatory	3 years for those under 15, 10 years for those over 15
Lithuania	Yes	16	5 years for those under 16, 10 years for those over 16
Luxembourg	Yes	15	10 years
Malta	Yes	14	Expiry dates are set by local councils. Cards must be renewed when individuals turn 16 and 18.
Norway	No	N/A	N/A
Poland	Yes	18	5 years for those under 18, 10 years for 18-65 year-olds and indefinite for those over 65
Portugal	Yes	6	5 years
Romania	Yes	14	4 years for 14-18 year-olds, 7 years for 18-25 year-olds, 10 years for 25-55 year-olds, indefinite for those over 55
Slovakia	Yes	15	10 years for those under 60, indefinite for those over 60
Slovenia	Yes	18 if they do not possess an alternative "valid official document with a photograph"	3 years for children under the age of 3, 5 years for those aged 3-18, 10 years for those over 18
Spain	Yes	14	5 years for those under 30, 10 years for 30-70 year-olds, indefinite for those over 70
Sweden	Yes	Not mandatory	5 years
Switzerland	Yes	Not mandatory	5 years for those over 18, 10 years for those over 18

- 17 countries make it mandatory for their citizens to own an ID card, four do not.

- For those countries in which it is mandatory, the average age at which an individual must own an ID card is 13 years, seven months and three weeks.

What type of ID card is issued and what data is stored on it?

	What kind of ID card do you issue? (traditional or electronic ID, radiofrequency chip or contact chip etc.)	What biometric data is electronically stored on the ID card and by which authorities?	Is any other information electronically stored on the ID card?
Austria	Traditional	N/A	N/A
Belgium	Electronic with contact chips and 32kb memory capacity	"Only the National Registry Authority is allowed to store the photograph as biometric data on the card"	"The identity file, the address file and the 2 certificates are also stored on the memory chip"
Bulgaria	Traditional	N/A	N/A
Cyprus	Traditional	"No biometric elements"	N/A
Czech Republic	Traditional - electronic cards will be issued from 1 January 2012	N/A - biometric data will not be stored on the new electronic ID cards	N/A
Estonia	Electronic with contact chip	None	Authentication and signing certificates
Germany	Traditional – "TD1 contact less smartcard (RFID, ISO 14443) planned for 1 November 2010 including biometrics and citizen card functions"	Cards issued from 1 November 2010 will have "Face (mandatory), fingerprints (optional), application with printed photograph mainly (some with completely digitized appl. process) and life enrolment of fingerprints at the local ID card office, central production and personalisation"	The card will also have a Qualified Electronic Signature which "can be used to electronically sign data whereby the signature has the same legal quality as a handwritten one"
Hungary	Traditional	N/A	N/A
Italy	Both traditional and electronic ID cards with a 32kb contact chip are	Photo and fingerprint template stored by Municipalities on behalf of Interior	See original document for a thorough list of all information held on the card

	issued	Ministry	
Liechtenstein	Traditional with a contact chip used for digital signature purposes (no personal data is stored)	None	Certificates for digital signature purposes
Lithuania	Electronic with a contact chip (for digital signature and electronic authentication) and a contactless radiofrequency chip (for biometric travel document applications)	"Facial image and two fingerprints are written into the contact less chip by the Personalization of Identity Documents Centre under the Ministry of Interior."	Certificates for digital signature and electronic authentication
Luxembourg	Traditional - electronic cards will be issued in 2011	N/A	N/A
Malta	Traditional - but there are plans to replace them with electronic cards	N/A	N/A
Norway	N/A	N/A	N/A
Poland	Traditional	N/A	N/A
Portugal	Electronic with contact chip	"The photograph of the holder and the minutia of two fingerprints (only for law enforcement)"	The holder's address and two digital signatures that allow them to be securely identified, the authentication of his/her transactions and the qualified electronic signature of documents
Romania	Traditional	N/A	N/A
Slovakia	Traditional	N/A	N/A
Slovenia	Traditional	N/A	N/A
Spain	Electronic with 64kb contact chip	Face image and fingerprints	Authentication and signing certificates
Sweden	Electronic with a contact chip for "e-services" and a radiofrequency chip for biometric data	"ICAO compliant (Doc 9303 part 3). The data is captured by the local police department, which is the issuing authority."	No
Switzerland	Traditional	N/A	N/A

- "Traditional" ID cards can be made of paper card or plastic but do not contain a chip – there is no hidden data.

- 13 countries only issue traditional ID cards, eight issue cards containing contact and/or RFID chips, two countries do not currently issue ID cards (Norway, UK)

- Of the eight countries that issue electronic ID cards with the capacity to store biometric data, six have chosen to do so (Belgium, Italy, Lithuania, Portugal, Spain and Sweden)

Does the country have a centralised or decentralised system for issuing ID cards and storing biometric/biographic data?

	Does your country have a centralised or decentralised system for the issuance of identity cards?	Does your country have a centralised or decentralised system for the storage of biographic or biometric data?
Austria	Centralised	-
Belgium	Decentralised	-
Bulgaria	Decentralised	"Centralised database and information system"
Cyprus	-	Centralised system for storing biographical data
Czech Republic	Centralised	"Information about bearers of the documents and respective documents itself have been kept in the information systems."
Estonia	Centralised	Centralised
Germany	"Decentralised application procedure, centralised system for production and personalisation"	-
Hungary	Centralised	-
Italy	Decentralised	Decentralised – "stored by Municipalities on behalf Interior Ministry"
Liechtenstein	Centralised	-
Lithuania	Centralised	Centralised
Luxembourg	"Identity cards are produced by a specialist firm and issued by local authorities"	-
Malta	Centralised	-
Norway	N/A	N/A
Poland	Centralised	"Personal data of identity documents possessors are being stored both locally, and centrally"

Portugal	Centralised	Centralised
Romania	Decentralised	-
Slovakia	Application is decentralised, "personalisation" is centralised	-
Slovenia	Centralised	-
Spain	Centralised	Centralised
Sweden	Decentralised for application, centralised for production	-
Switzerland	-	-

- Many countries did not answer these questions in full.

- Of the five countries that currently store biometric data, Lithuania, Portugal and Spain do so centrally, Italy has a decentralised system and Belgium did not address the question.

Is there a need for the harmonisation of security features and standards beyond the voluntary minimum security standards already agreed?

	Does your country see the need for a harmonization of these security features and standards of identity cards beyond the voluntary minimum security standards already agreed?
Austria	No
Belgium	"The content of the question is not clear. The security features of the Belgian ID card is far beyond the standards used for BAC and EAC."
Bulgaria	Yes
Cyprus	Yes
Czech Republic	Yes - "Regarding electronic part of the described documents (chip), it would be helpful to harmonize it in 2 directions: - interoperability, - security of the data stored in the chip."
Estonia	"The list should not be limited as it is done in the case of the EU residence card. The reason is to prevent the loss of security level that has been achieved."
Germany	Yes - "because there is no legal harmonization of ID cards yet. ID cards are excluded from the EU Regulation 2252/2004. Only a JHA Council recommendation exists from 1-2 December 2005. Competency (Lisbon treaty) is now with the EU. Discussions should start within the Art. 6 Committee."
Hungary	Yes
Italy	"A new CIE adopting last updates in the ICAO international standards (i.e: e-passport) and in the European citizens card, has been proposed."

Liechtenstein	No
Lithuania	"Contact less part is harmonised by ICAO and EU Commission in conjunction with Art.6 committee. Contact part is being harmonised within the framework of European Citizen Card (ECC)."
Luxembourg	No
Malta	Yes
Norway	N/A
Poland	"Office for Foreigners sees the need of harmonization of special protections and standards of travel documents… Ministry of the Interior and Administration - The standardization is always useful and desired, however remains an open question, what members and what time would agree this kind of recommendations and what practical effects would they have, that is a binding force."
Portugal	Yes - "Portugal strongly supports the idea of having a higher degree of harmonization beyond the voluntary minimum security standards already agreed, namely in regards to the logical security, where contact less chips are recommended practice applicable to travel documents as the ID cards are."
Romania	Yes - "Romania considers it necessary to establish a standard format and minimum-security features for identity cards in all Member States, and to implement electronic identity cards in all countries in order to prevent forgery and identity theft"
Slovakia	Yes
Slovenia	No
Spain	Yes
Sweden	Yes
Switzerland	-

- 12 countries support greater harmonisation and four oppose it.

- Five countries did not answer the question clearly.

NOTE

Only Italy provided details on what is contained on its ID Card chip:

"Information shown on National ID Card:

Front:

- Municipality which issue the ID card
- Last name
- First name
- Municipality *of* birth
- Date of birth
- Gender
- Certificate of birth (Voluntary)
- Height
- Picture
- ID card number
- ICAO 9303 part 3 machine readable zone

Back:
- Municipality of residence
- Address
- Issue date
- Expire date
- Citizenship
- ID fiscal
- Signature image
- Note about permission for foreign travel
- ID card number"

Sources

[1] EU doc no: 5299/1/10: http://www.statewatch.org/news/2010/jun/eu-council-ID-cards-5299-1-10.pdf

[2] EU doc no: 9949/10: http://www.statewatch.org/news/2010/jun/eu-council-ID-cards-9949-10.pdf