

## Trusted Digital Identity for a Secure Society

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# Our Team



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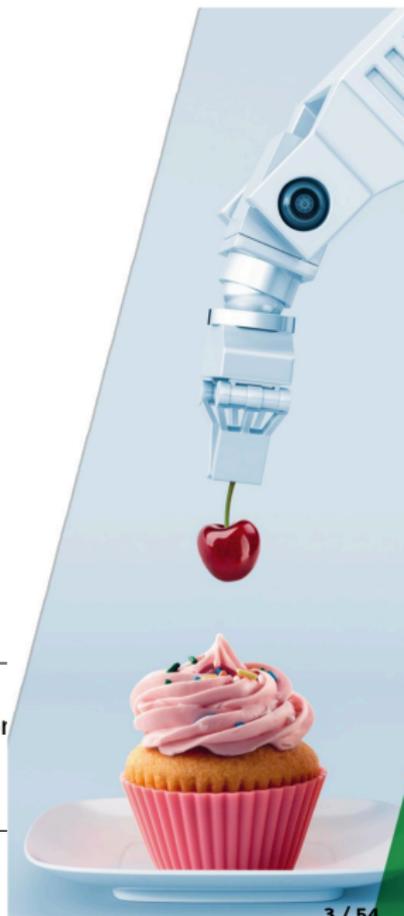
*Doctoral Researcher*

# School of Computer Science, Univ. of St. Gallen

- ▶ Established in **Aug. 2020!**
- ▶ ~ 140 students across BCS & MCS
- ▶ ~ 65 PhDs & postdocs
- ▶ 14 faculty members
- ▶ 2 Research Institutes (ICS-HSG, ICV-HSG)
- ▶ **Research** focusing on:

- AI & Machine Learning
- **Cybersecurity & Applied Crypto**
- Data Science & NLP
- Foundations of Computation

- HCI
- Interactions & Communication
- Programming Languages
- Software Systems



- ▶ Bachelor of Computer Science
- ▶ Master of Computer Science
  
- ▶ Specialisations in:
  - ▶ Data Science
  - ▶ Software Engineering
  - ▶ **New: Cybersecurity**



# Main Research Areas

- ▶ Secure & privacy-preserving authentication
- ▶ Secure outsourcing of **computations** to untrusted cloud
- ▶ Fine-grained **access control** to sensitive data
- ▶ **Privacy-preservation** guarantees



## Expertise

- ▶ Design **provably secure** protocols/primitives
- ▶ **Efficiency** guarantees
- ▶ Suitable for **real-world** settings



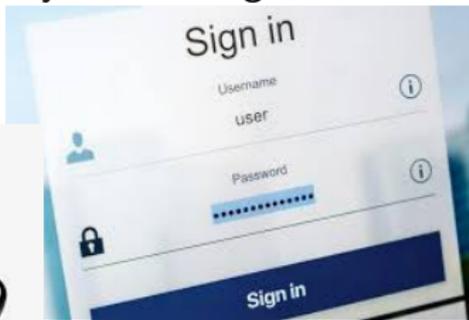
HASLERSTIFTUNG



# Why the Digital Identity Matters?

# Every day, we generate so much data ...

every piece of it says something **about who you are!**



**Total  
Population**



**7.83  
BILLION**

**Internet  
Users**



**4.66  
BILLION**

**Active Social  
Media Users**



**4.20  
BILLION**

**Unique Mobile  
Phone Users**



**5.22  
BILLION**

**Source: HootSuite**



Healthcare Data



Physical Activity Data



Environmental Data

# Data Driven World



Identity is no longer just a login  
it's a behavioral profile!

Identity is no longer just a login  
it's a behavioral profile!



Digital Identity is becoming a Battlefield!

## Main requirements



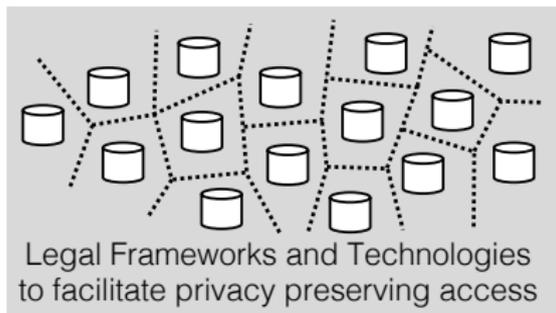
Privacy



Robustness



Efficiency



### Data Silos

- Privacy Laws
- Competition

- ▶ EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (effective from 2018)
- ▶ EU Data Governance ACT (DGA) (effective from 2023)
- ▶ Switzerland: New Federal Act on Data Protection (nFADP) (Sept. 2023)

## The influence of Political Factors on Digital Identity



EU Chat Control



UN Cybercrime Convention



Digital Identity Wallet



Cyber War: Ukraine Russia

## EU Chat Control

- ▶ The EU dropped its June 20, 2024 vote on "chat control" after failing to secure a majority.
- ▶ **Chat control** ⇒ monitor all messaging apps that provide end-to-end encryption (what's up, Signal, ...)
- ▶ **Main Goal:** "Combat child abuse"
- ▶ Final vote is expected in **Spring 2026!**



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### Concerns

- ▶ Fundamental Privacy Violation
- ▶ **Public distrust:** Surveillance of governments
- ▶ **Weakens** Cybersecurity
- ▶ **Ineffective** against Cyber Criminals



## United Nations Cybercrime Convention

- ▶ On 24 Dec. 2024, the UN General Assembly adopted a treaty to boost **global cooperation against cybercrime**.
- ▶ Into force in 2026! (currently in signature phase)



**United  
Nations**



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### Main measures-Concerns:

- ▶ **Access** to electronic data (stored/transmitted metadata)
- ▶ **Order to disclose** data in the "possession" or "control" of the person/provider



**United  
Nations**



# European Digital Identity Wallet

- ▶ eIDAS 2.0 entered in force in May'24
- ▶ All EU member states must provide a European Digital Identity Wallet (EUDI) by **the end of 2026**
- ▶ **Fully mobile, secure & user-friendly:** Enabling users to identify themselves to public & private **online services**



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## Concerns

- ▶ Security & Privacy Concerns
- ▶ Identity Theft & Fraud
- ▶ Profiling/Tracking Individuals



## European Digital Identity Wallet

- ▶ eIDAS 2.0 published in December 2023:

§7: The technical framework of the European Digital Identity

(a) not allow providers of electronic attestations of attributes or any other party, after the issuance of the attestation of attributes, to obtain data that allows for **tracking, linking, correlating or otherwise obtain knowledge of transactions or user behaviour** unless explicitly authorised by the user.

(b) **enable privacy preserving techniques** which ensure **unlinkability**, ....

Annex 11(c) **The use of the wallet [...] should not result in the processing of data beyond what is necessary for the provision of wallet services.** To ensure privacy, EDIW providers should ensure **unobservability** by not collecting data and not having insight into the transactions of the users of the Wallet.

§8: [...], relying parties should provide the information necessary to allow for their identification and authentication towards the European Digital Identity Wallets

Not ideal though, **privacy is recommended but not required!**



## Elektronische Identität und Vertrauensinfrastruktur



Are we ready for this?

## Coordinated Russian cyber and military operations in Ukraine

Incidents refer to 2022



**April 19**

IRIDIUM launches destructive attack on Lviv-based logistics provider



**April 29**

IRIDIUM conducts reconnaissance against transportation sector network in Lviv



**May 3**

Russian missiles strike railway substations, disrupting transport service



**March 4**

STRONTIUM targets government network in Vinnytsia



**March 6**

Russian forces launch eight missiles at Vinnytsia airport<sup>3</sup>



**March 16**

Russian rockets strike TV tower in Vinnytsia



**February 14**

Odessa-based critical infrastructure compromised by likely Russian actors



**April 3**

Russian airstrikes hit fuel depots and processing plants around Odessa



**February 28**

Threat actor compromises a Kyiv-based media company



**March 1**

Missile strikes Kyiv TV tower



**March 1**

Kyiv-based media companies face destructive attacks and data exfiltration



**March 11**

Dnipro government agency targeted with destructive implant



**March 11**

First direct Russian strikes hit Dnipro government buildings, among others



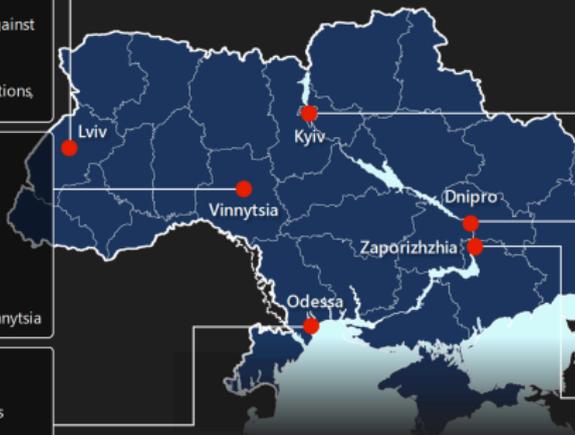
**March 2**

Russian group moves laterally on network of Ukrainian nuclear power company



**March 3**

Russia's military occupies Ukraine's largest nuclear power station



LEGEND



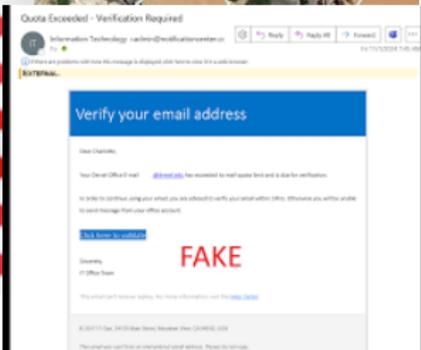
Cyber



Kinetic



## Identity Manipulation in Cyberwarfare: Iran



### Key Tactics

- ▶ Fake journalist or activist profiles
- ▶ **Phishing** targeting diaspora communities
- ▶ **Spofed government** announcements
- ▶ Coordinated **fake accounts** boosting regime messages

## Connectivity empowers identity, but also endangers ...



- ▶ Satellite internet used to bypass **state blackouts**
- ▶ Citizens shared information **beyond censorship**
- ▶ Government attempted jamming & **severe penalties**
- ▶ **Identity Risks:** Device use could expose **user identity**

What about Security in Switzerland?

# Switzerland & IT Security

## Key recent findings (2024-2026)

### Volume of incidents

- ▶ Switzerland had **65,000 cyber incidents** in 2025, about the same number as before, but more advanced attacks.
- ▶ The NCSC logged 63,000 incidents in 2024, almost twice as many as in 2023. [
- ▶ In just the first half of 2025, there were already 35,727 reports.

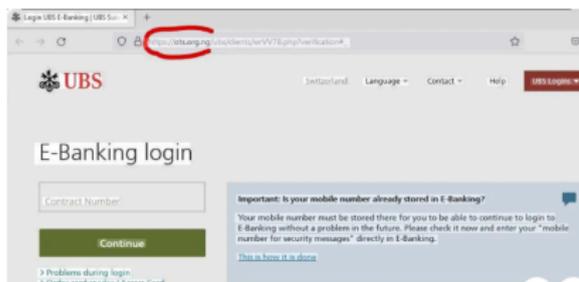


Semi-Annual Report 2025/1

<https://www.ncsc.admin.ch/ncsc/en/home/dokumentation/berichte/lageberichte/halbjahresbericht-2025-1.html>

# Attack Types Dominating Switzerland

- ▶ **Fraud & phishing** remain the most reported categories (~ 58% fraud).
- ▶ **Phishing attacks** surged from <500k in 2023 to **975,000+** messages in 2024.
- ▶ **AI-enhanced phishing & scam calls** (e.g., police impersonation scams).
- ▶ **Ransomware** remains a **major threat**, with:
  - ▶ **104 ransomware cases** reported in 2025 (up from 92 in 2024).
  - ▶ Groups like **Akira & LockBit** active in Switzerland.

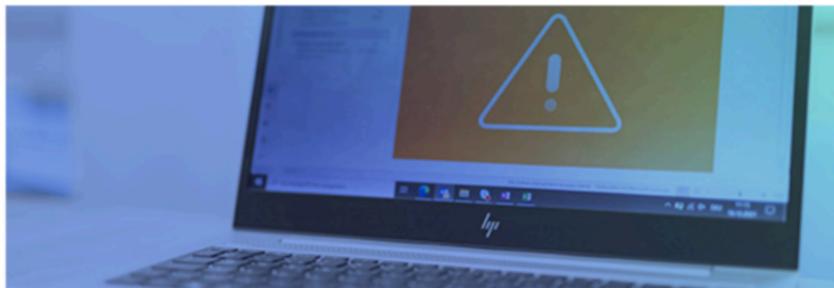


## Ransomware: The AKIRA group

# Cybercrime: The AKIRA group steps up its activities

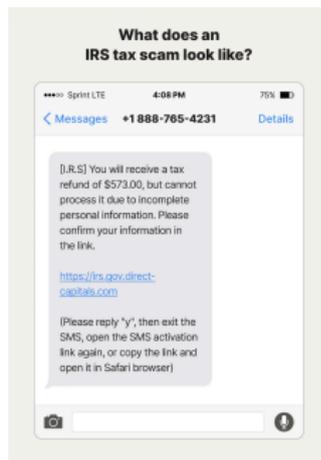
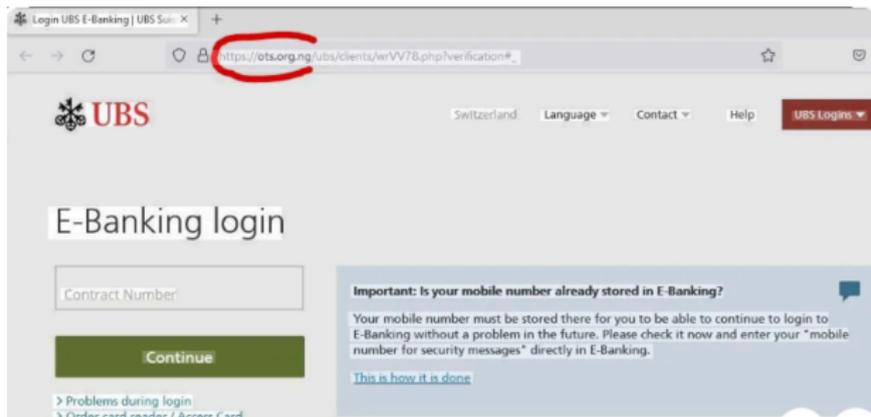


16.10.2025 - In recent months, the hacker group AKIRA has stepped up its activities in Switzerland. Around two hundred companies have been victims of ransomware attacks, with damages currently amounting to several millions of Swiss francs, and to several hundreds of millions of dollars worldwide. Since April 2024, the Office of the Attorney General of Switzerland (OAG) has been conducting criminal proceedings. The investigation is being coordinated by the Federal Office of Police (fedpol), in close cooperation with the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) and the authorities in several other countries that are affected. The Swiss authorities stress the importance of contacting them before taking any action and of the need to file a criminal complaint.



# Examples

## Phishing & Smishing



Quiz!! Lets see phishing examples!

<https://www.propharma.ch/de/phishing-test-formular/>

How does the Digital Identity really work?

# Biometric authentication

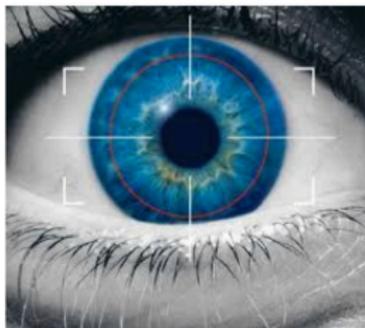
- ▶ Quick, accurate & user friendly authentication
- ▶ Used widely in various access control systems



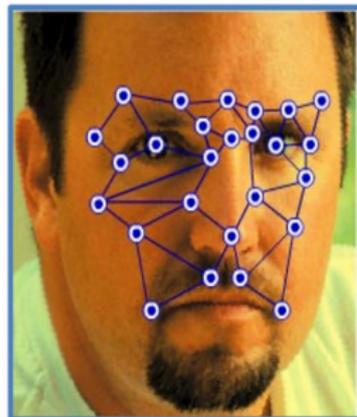
# Common Biometric Traits



fingerprint



iris



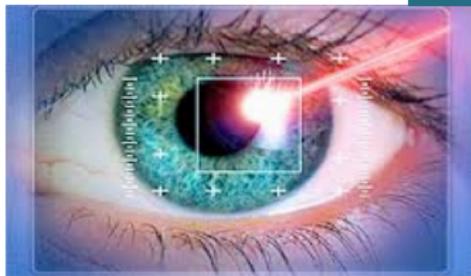
face

voice



# Biometric authentication for Access Control

- Passport control via Iris recognition
- For frequent travellers

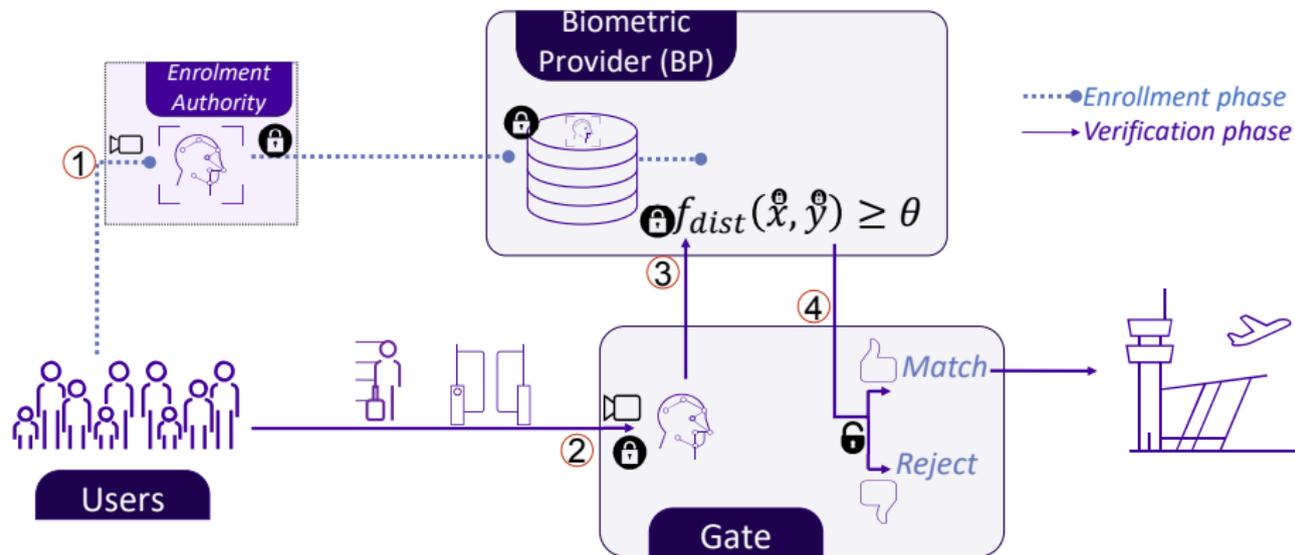


# Need for Privacy-preserving Biometric Authentication

- ▶ Biometric **cannot be revoked**
- ▶ Stolen Biometrics may lead to:
  - ▶ Identity theft
  - ▶ Tracking individuals
  - ▶ Profiling
  - ▶ Reveal sensitive information (race, diseases)



## A Use Case: Flight Boarding Control



## Simpler Authentication? Single Sign On



# Welcome back

Email or username

**Continue**

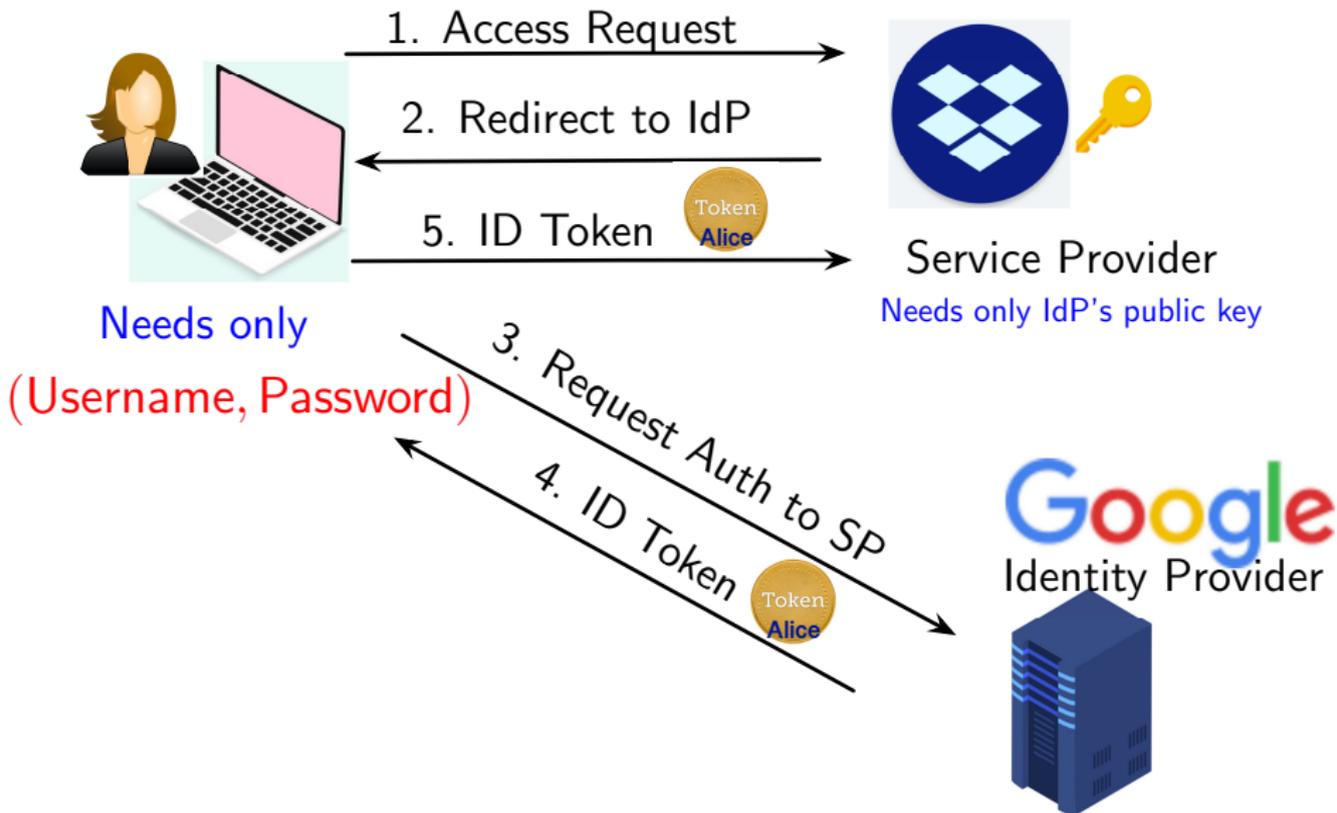
or

 **Continue with Google**

 **Continue with Facebook**

 **Continue with Apple**

## OAuth what is it?



**Major Risks:** Tracking/Profiling Identity Theft

Why the Digital Identity fails?

# Data Breaches!! Need for Robust Solutions!



A collage of text snippets from various sources, including news articles and social media. The central focus is a white tag with the text 'YOUR DATA FOR SALE' in large, bold, black letters. Below the tag, it says 'Everything about you is being tracked... get over it' and 'BY JOEL STEIN'. The background consists of various text snippets, such as 'Household income: \$10,000', 'Age: 38-39', 'Likes: online news', 'Likes: Asian cuisine', 'Dislikes: cats', 'Favorite celebrities: Pe', 'Zip code: 10709', 'Wi-fi warrior', 'Sister is a fa', 'Spent \$180 on into', 'Likes: hiking', 'Dislikes: autos & vehicles', 'Owns a laptop', 'Likes: fashion', 'Likes: cooking & recipes', 'Lives in New York City', 'Likes: networks', '& actresses', 'Robert Goulet', 'Politically active', 'House value: \$100 - \$150', 'hockey', 'Married', and 'Source (time.com)'.

# 533 million Facebook users' phone numbers and personal data have been leaked online

Aaron Holmes Apr 3, 2021, 4:41 PM



UPDATED 21:58 EDT / MAY 26 2019



## Insurance firm First American Financial exposes 885M customer records

BY DUNCAN RILEY



A security flaw in the website of First American Financial Corp., the large real estate title company, exposed over 885 million private and confidential customer records dating

### Online counter EasyGov hacked

Criminal hackers have allegedly succeeded in stealing a list containing the names of up to 130,000 companies that applied for Covid 19 credit via the EasyGov platform in 2020. According to current knowledge, no other data apart from the company names was stolen, as Seco emphasises. As the operator of Easy-Gov, immediate measures were taken and an investigation initiated.

Editorial office - 21 October 2021



## When Identity Checks Become Surveillance

### The Persona Leak

- ▶ An ID-checking company **accidentally exposed** its internal code.
- ▶ It revealed **hundreds of hidden automated** checks.
- ▶ These included watchlists, face-matching, and risk scores.
- ▶ Data from simple ID checks was fed into **larger surveillance** systems.

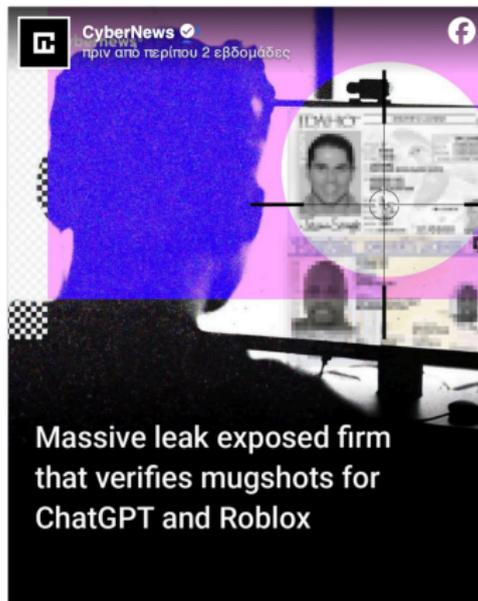


Every selfie or ID you upload to ChatGPT, Roblox, LinkedIn, and many other sites for verification is handled by a San Francisco firm called Persona.

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**Lesson:** Convenience ID checks can turn into **monitoring** when transparency is missing.



Repair

Attack



## Relay Attacks - Playing against two Chess Grandmasters

chess grandmaster #1



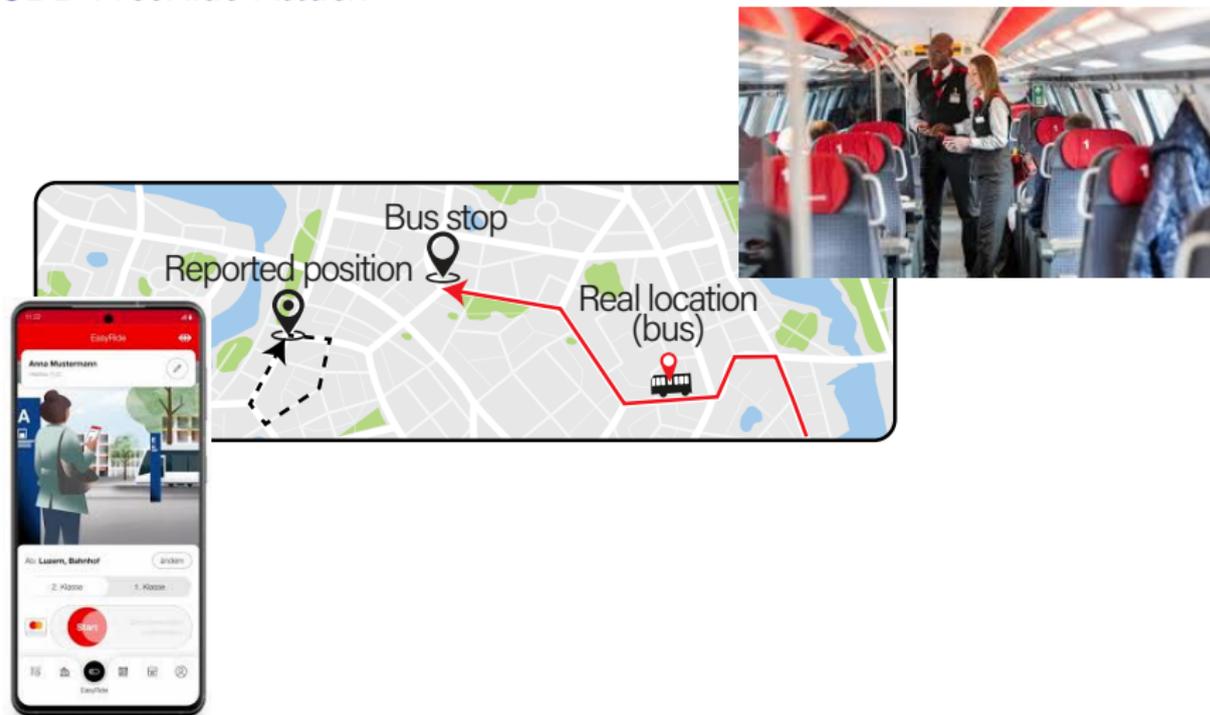
little girl

little girl



chess grandmaster #2

## SBB FreeRide Attack



- ▶ **FreeRide** exploits **fake GPS data**
- ▶ Tricks SBB easy ride into thinking a user is “walking”, enables **free rides**
- ▶ Trust unverified **device-reported proximity**
- ▶ PayRide fixes this by linking user location to **train’s actual position**.

# Cyberattacks - Locally



## CYBERCRIME

### Hacker attack on the cantonal administration of Appenzell Innerrhoden - email account of treasurer Ruedi Eberle affected

Unknown individuals hacked the email account of Treasurer Ruedi Eberle and sent a message to 200 people. As of now, no data has been lost, nor have any other cantonal administration accounts been affected. However, investigations are currently ongoing.

February 28, 2025



## BATHE

### Hacker attack on RVBW: Cybercriminals demand ransom - what happens if you don't pay

The Baden-Wettingen Regional Transport Authority is being blackmailed by the "Play" ransomware gang. System restrictions have occurred in the control center. The Aargau-based company is issuing a statement.

03.04.2025



## INTERVIEW

### "Never experienced such a dimension": After cyberattack, Backslash boss from Frauenfeld speaks about the motive of the pro-Russian attackers and connections to the WEF

This week, a pro-Russian group attacked and paralyzed the websites of several Swiss companies and government agencies. The service provider also includes the Frauenfeld-based company Backslash, which was also affected in the fall. Managing Director Mjscha Sameli compares the two attacks and explains whether and how you can protect yourself.

January 21, 2025

AI makes things harder?

Phishing is done easier!



LILY HAY NEWMAN

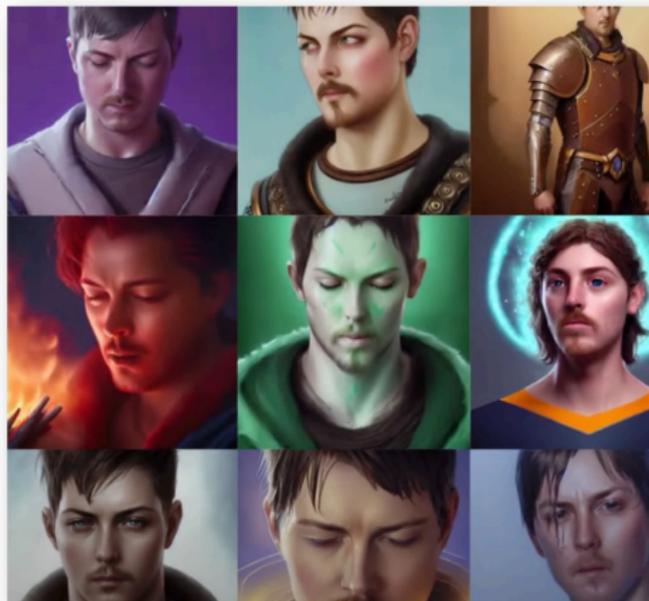
SECURITY AUG 7, 2021 7:00 AM

## AI Wrote Better Phishing Emails Than Humans in a Recent Test

Researchers found that tools like OpenAI's GPT-3 helped craft devilishly effective spearphishing messages.

## AI makes things harder?

Deep fakes for **everyone!**



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FaLTztGGueQ>, James Cunliffe

# When AI Assistants Become a Threat

## Risk Pattern

- ▶ Installed as apps, extensions, or system helpers.
- ▶ Operate continuously & invisibly once trusted.
- ▶ Accesses **sensitive data** (tokens, cookies, identity info).
- ▶ Sends data externally **without visibility**.



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## Identity Consequences

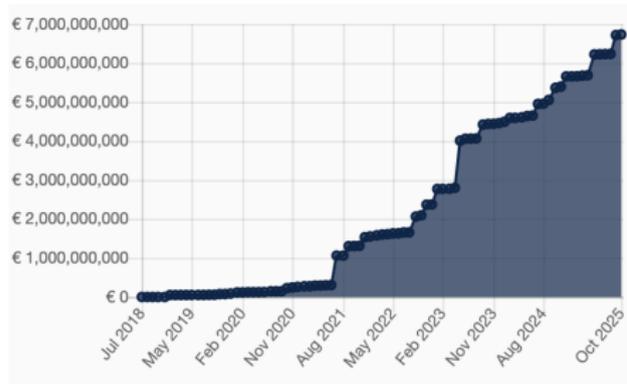
- ▶ **Loss of control** over personal or organizational accounts.
- ▶ **Unauthorized actions** performed under the user's identity.

# Do Regulations Help?

## Do Regulations Help?

### Total GDPR Fines (2018–2025)

- ▶ **Cumulative fines:** Over €6.22 billion as of May 2025.
- ▶ **Number of fines:** More than 2,500 fines issued across Europe.
- ▶ **Average fine:** Approximately €2.36 million

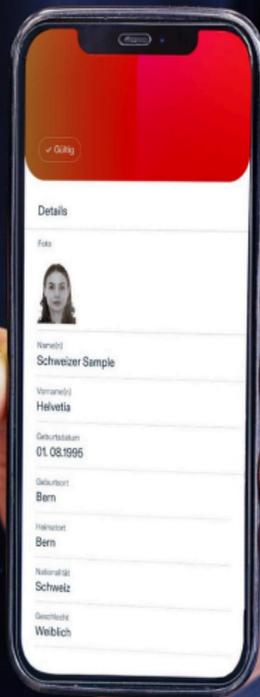


Company	Fine Amount (€)	Year
Meta (Facebook)	1.2 billion	2023
Amazon	746 million	2021
TikTok	530 million	2025
LinkedIn	310 million	2024
Uber	290 million	2024
WhatsApp (Meta)	225 million	2021

Table: Top Companies Fined Under GDPR

What about the Swiss e-ID?

# The e-ID is a Digital Identity Card



## The Swiss e-ID

- ▶ **Stored** on smart phone
- ▶ Bound on device (keys stored in secure enclave)
- ▶ **Holder binding** (device + picture)
- ▶ **Privacy**: unlinkability of presentations (using batch issuance)
- ▶ Open Source Software
- ▶ **External tests**: pentests, bug bounties
- ▶ Use static ECDSA signature & hash functions

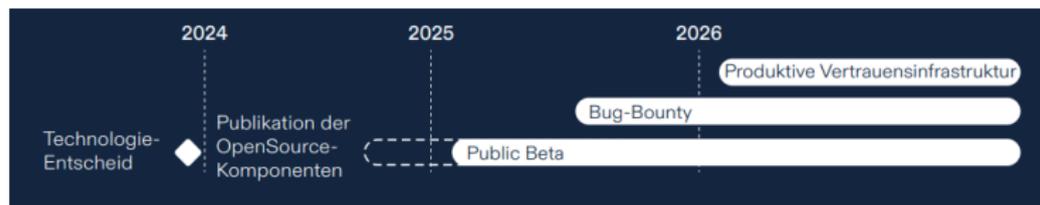


I own an e-ID, it's valid today.

e-ID is not revoked.

I am of legal age.

# Swiss e-ID Roadmap



## 2024

- Technology decision
- Electronic driving learner's permit (eLFA) built using the future E-ID technology stack

## 2025

- Public beta of tech stack, incl. SWIYU Wallet
- **Vote on referendum (Sept. 28)**

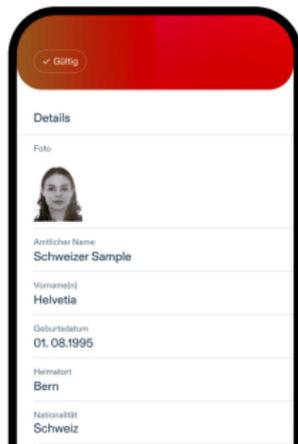
## 2026 Q3/Q4

- Earliest possible launch date for E-ID

## 2027+

- Improved unlinkability (issuer and verifier collusion)
- PQC
- Accountability?

# Goal Unlinkability of Presentations



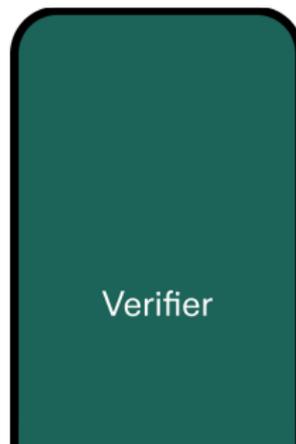
## Presented Content

- Swiss
- Older than 18

## Technical Data (not directly visible)

- Issuer signature of VC
- Disclosures (salted/hashed claims)
- Public key of holders
- Revocation Information

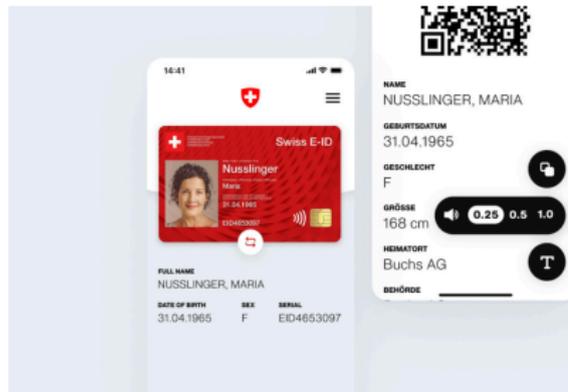
In addition, network connection data (e.g. IP address) could be used to correlate



# Issuance: How the e-ID Is Created

## What the issuer does

- ▶ Turns each piece of information into a **salted hash**
- ▶ Puts all these digital fingerprints into a **digital signature**



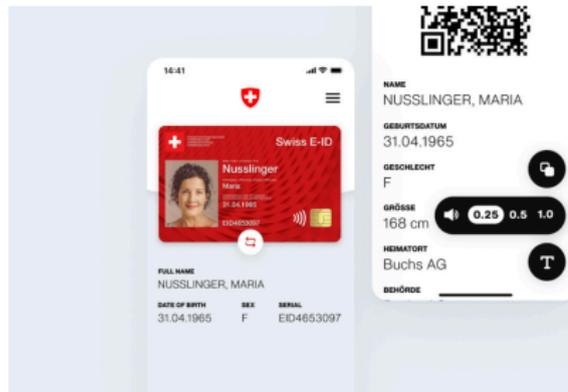
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## What the user receives

- ▶ **Digital signature** (contains only hashes, not the real data)
- ▶ **Disclosure objects** (the real information + the random noise, kept private until needed)



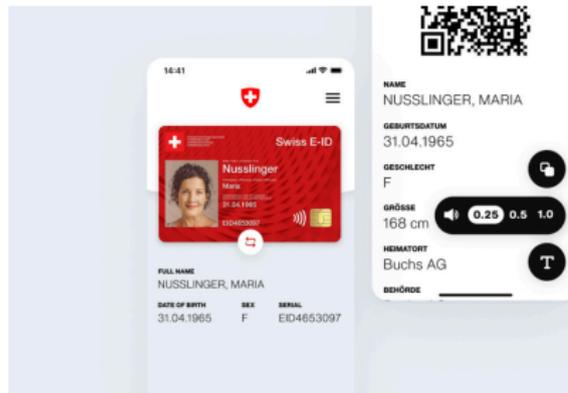
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## Key idea

- ▶ The issuer signs the hashes; **the user controls the real data**

# Why Secure and Private Identity Matters

## Identity is now everywhere

- ▶ We use it to log in, travel, pay, vote, communicate.
- ▶ **Attacks are rising**: phishing, deepfakes, stolen biometrics.
- ▶ Companies & governments **collect more data** than people realize.



## Real-world risks

- ▶ **Persona scandal**: selfies sent into hidden surveillance systems.
- ▶ Internet shutdowns (e.g., Iran) show how identity **can be controlled**.
- ▶ **Biometric leaks cannot be undone**, you cannot change your face.



# Our Work: Building Trustworthy Digital Identity

## What we aim for

- ▶ Identity that **protects** people, not exposes them.
- ▶ Systems where **users choose** what they reveal.

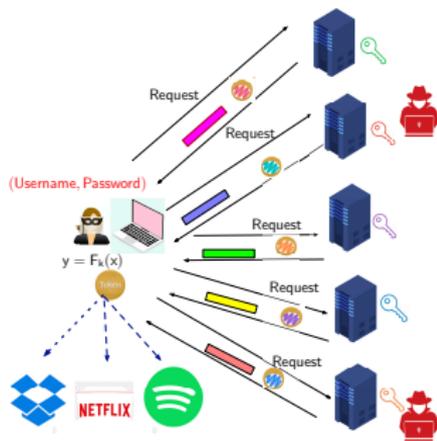
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## What we build

- ▶ **Privacy-preserving** identity primitives.
- ▶ Cryptographic tools that **prevent tracking & profiling**.
- ▶ Foundations used in systems like the **Swiss e-ID**.



Decentralised, Private & Secure Authentication

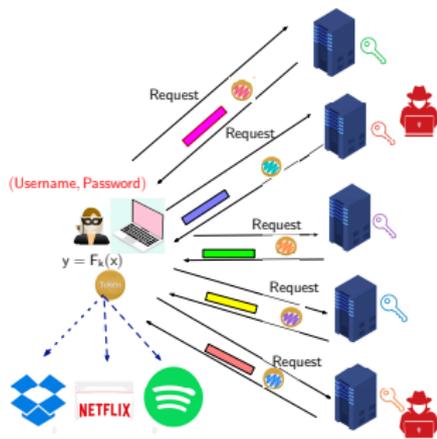
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## What we aim for

- ▶ Identity that **protects** people, not exposes them.
- ▶ Systems where **users choose** what they reveal.

## What we build

- ▶ **Privacy-preserving** identity primitives.
- ▶ Cryptographic tools that **prevent tracking & profiling**.
- ▶ Foundations used in systems like the **Swiss e-ID**.



Decentralised, Private & Secure Authentication

## Our goal:

Give people digital identity **they can trust**, even when the world around them is **not trustworthy**.

## Closing Remarks

- ▶ **Cybersecurity:** a challenging & multidimensional
- ▶ **Privacy:** A right for every individual!
- ▶ **New Technologies:** High Capacity for **Abuse** & **Attacks!**
- ▶ We can provide practical solutions to **overcome** many existing problems!

Thank you for your Attention!

Contact: <https://cybersecurity.unisg.ch>