Digital government toolkit

Digital Government Strategies: Good Practices

Austria: Mobile Phone Signature

The OECD Council adopted on 15 July 2014 the Recommendation on Digital Government Strategies. The Recommendation provides a set of 12 principles structured around 3 pillars. The OECD Secretariat is developing a Digital Government Policy Toolkit to support OECD member countries and non-member adhering countries with the implementation of the Recommendation. This practice was submitted by the government of Austria to be considered as a good practice in the implementation of one or more of the principles contained in the Recommendation.

Description of the practice:

Organisation: Federal Chancellery of Austria

Name of the practice: Mobile Phone Signature

Principles implemented: Principle 6 – Ensure coherent use of digital technologies across policy areas and levels of government

Description: The components knowledge and possession are at the heart of the citizen card security concept which is the foundation for the Mobile Phone Signature. Most other processes are based either only on knowledge (e.g. username & password) or on possession (e.g. an access card). The problem with this approach is that an attacker only needs to obtain your password (e.g, by spying or steal your access card).

It is therefore state of the art in security technology to use two-factor authentication systems, such as the citizen card concept. An attacker would have to steal not only your e-card (or mobile phone), but the password for it as well (A-SIT).

Project management: Federal Chancellery of Austria.

Project team: Federal Ministries, Regional and Local Governments (http://www.buergerkarte.at/en).

Results

The citizen card concept (Mobile Phone Signature on mobile phone or activated smartcard) is one of the most secure methods available for identifying yourself over the Internet (login).

Evaluation and monitoring is being performed continuously. As E-Government, but also eServices in the business sector heavily base on eSignatures, it is necessary to continuously monitor the security aspects, the technological development as well as the uptake, the performance etc.

One example for the monitoring of the operation and the uptake is e.g. www.atrust.at/handystat where a real-time monitoring on the activations and usage of the Mobile Phone Signature is displayed.

Formal evaluations of the security side is being done by the AT designated body in accordance with the Signature Law (www.a-sit.at) and the signature authority RTR.

Development

Design: 2007/2008 (as part of the EU Large Scale Pilot "STORK").

Besides the Austrian Federal Chancellery the development of prototypes and demonstrators were done by the EGIZ (E-Government Innovationszentrum). The EGIZ is also responsible for the maintenance and further development of eGovernment key components.

Testing: 2009 (as part of the EU Large Scale Pilot "STORK"), gathering user feedback and continuous improvement is still ongoing.

IT security plays in important role in the trust in eGovernment. Both citizens as well as administration are therefore often confronted with new IT security technologies. A prominent example of this is the Austrian Citizen Card. Since the use of these technologies in real administration processes triggers underlying processes, the EGIZ uses demonstrators to facilitate risk-free testing of different IT security technologies in the eGovernment sector (see http://www.egiz.gv.at/en/testportal).

Implementation: 2009/2012

The key elements to implement the Mobile Phone Signature are Open Source products which can be found easily online by developers, system integrators, application operators and also to decision-makers (see http://www.egiz.gv.at/en/schwerpunkte).

Resources: Due to the variety of partners and complexity of the Mobile Phone Signature, exact numbers can't be stated.

Diffusion and scaling: 2009

The Austrian Federal Chancellery generally supports initiatives to raise digital expertise within the population and improve accessibility. The Federal Chancellery mainly supports with know-how. There are programmes for raising the digital skills and for including eGovernment in the school agenda such as "www.edugov.gv.at" as well as for transferring knowledge via the civil servants training programmes (see for instance https://www.oeffentlicherdienst.gv.at/vab/seminarprogramm/in_verwaltung_arbeiten/egovernment_2016.html) or "road-shows" together with stakeholders from the business sector.

One example for an initiative with the private sector has been launched by the Telekom Austria Group with "A1 Internet for All". The initiative is aimed at developing a modern information, knowledge and network society. All citizens should have equal access to knowledge and education. Together with numerous partners, IT workshops are conceived and offered free of charge in the A1 Campus Vienna which is a training centre of the Telekom Austria Group. The A1 staff plays an essential role in the overall initiative. They support and accompany the participants within the numerous internet workshops.

As one of the partners the Austrian Federal Chancellery is supporting and training the A1 staff especially in the field of electronic identities and electronic signatures. Though six times a year citizens have the opportunity to learn more about electronic identities (especially the Austrian mobile phone signature) and e-signatures and how or where to use them (official channels, signing contracts, etc.).

Federal Ministries, Regional and Local Governments have supported and added the Mobile Phone Signature. The numerous places to activate the Mobile Phone Signature show this development clearly (see http://www.buergerkarte.at/en/activate-mobile.html).

Electronic signatures are an important tool and key component of numerous e-Government solutions. Assuring data integrity and non-repudiation of origin, electronic signatures are the tool of choice to meet security requirements of e-Government applications. Similar to other European countries, also Austrian e-Government solutions heavily rely on electronic signatures. Within e-Government processes, Austrian citizens use national eID tokens such as personalized smart cards or mobile phones to create qualified electronic signatures according to the EU Signature Directive [1]. Therefore Federal Ministries, Regional and Local Governments have supported and added the Mobile Phone Signature. The numerous places to activate the Mobile Phone Signature show this development clearly (see http://www.buergerkarte.at/en/activate-mobile.html).

Partnerships: E-Government Innovationszentrum (EGIZ). Since 2005, the EGIZ has supported the Federal Chancellery in further development of the ICT strategy of the federal government, and it conducts research in the area of technical innovations in the eGovernment environment.

Nature of the partnership: Academics and Research Bodies.

Lessons learned

The growing popularity of smartphones raises the demand for mobile eGovernment services. The user's demands in user friendly solutions and the vital cooperation within the Austrian Administration helped fundamentally to activate more than 650.000 Mobile Phone Signatures.

Conditions required: It is crucial to bring an innovative team with a variety of skills together. The Platform Digital Austria is the strategic place to do that and to keep the level of innovation up.

Additional information: The latest innovation is the Mobile Phone Signature App (Handy-Signatur App). Thanks to sophisticated security mechanism the Mobile Phone Signature App is an even easier way to use the Mobile Phone Signature. It is an option to the SMS TAN method (see https://www.handy-signatur.at/hs2/?site=infos/app). Just like the familiar Mobile Phone Signature, the usage of the Mobile Phone Signature App is free of charge as well.