Declaration for a European cooperation on self-sovereign identity

Digital identity is a pillar of our society. It is a fundamental layer on which public and private digital services are provided to French citizens. With the proposed revision of the eIDAS[1] (Electronic Identification Authentication and Trust Services) regulation establishing a framework for a European Digital Identity, new opportunities and challenges arise in the management of the digital identity of European citizens.

All of our citizens' online interactions require that individuals be able to identify and authenticate themselves with the utmost confidence while maintaining control over their personal data. Some solutions currently proposed by the private sector, whether centralized or federated, could be developed at the expense of user privacy and of our digital sovereignty. In this context, it is essential that we embrace the forthcoming European initiatives, to ensure that all solutions and components of the French digital identity reflect our core European values.

Self-sovereign identity (SSI) places the individual at the center of each of his or her digital interactions. thus initiating a fundamental transformation in the way people and organizations prove their identity online. It marks a major turning point in terms of cybersecurity and digital trust, notably using architectures based on electronic ledgers.

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[1] *Proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation EU 910/2014 (eIDAS) as regards establishing a framework for a European Digital Identity*

This new paradigm is strongly supported outside our borders, as evidenced by the multiplication of international standards, establishing tomorrow's Internet of Trust. Germany and Spain have already signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), demonstrating their common desire to exchange views on the field of SSI from a technical, regulatory and operational perspective[2]. Two similar bilateral declarations have recently been signed between Germany and Finland[3] and between Germany and the Netherlands[4]. This collaboration is open to other European member states committed to developing trusted digital identity solutions for their citizens. As a collective of French industrial and institutional actors, we seek to encourage the French government to join these collaborations.

The French Ministry of the Interior has already shown interest in the subject of self-sovereign identity, as demonstrated by a dedicated White Paper published in May 2021[5].The architecture described allows for the combination of infrastructures connecting private and public actors, individuals, and IT devices. All can be authenticated with a legally recognized identity, thanks to a shared electronic ledger. This guarantees integrity and control over the data exchanged between these actors. The described ecosystem allows the infrastructure costs to be shared thus spreading these technologies to smaller shareholders. This open environment naturally creates value through network effect, all in an already standardized and tested environment.

We can only support this vision which, thanks to increased security of exchanges, will allow citizens to regain control over their personal data, industrial actors to achieve productivity gains in their exchanges, and public administrations to accelerate their digital transformation. Self-sovereign identity will thus support economic growth and reinforce the European single market. As industrial and institutional stakeholders, we are readily able to materialize this vision. However, as we have seen internationally, political impetus and synergies between Member States are key to the adoption of this virtuous model.

French collaborations between the private and public sectors needs to be strengthened, with the private sector providing technology and infrastructure, and the public sector promoting research and making available certain key information to build trust between all stakeholders. Leveraging our expertise in digital identity and electronic ledgers, we are available to discuss the decentralized identity model, its technological advantages and industrial opportunities.

At a time when foreign initiatives are multiplying, our collaboration is more vital and pressing than ever. Only by working together will we be able to develop a new core scheme that better secures citizens, communities and businesses' identities, all the while affirming French and EU digital sovereignty.

We remain at the disposal of the public authorities to advance these important discussions.

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[2] *Joint Declaration on cooperation and exchange of best practices in the field of self-sovereign identity between the Federal Republic of Germany and the Kingdom of Spain. July 29, 2021*

[3] *Declaration for cooperation and exchange of best practices in the field of Self Sovereign Identity between the Federal Republic of Germany and the Republic of Finland. September 22, 2021*

[4] *Nederland gaat met Duitsland werken aan digitale identiteit, ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties. September 23, 2021*

[5] *French Ministry of the Interior, Blockchain and Digital Identification white paper: restitution of the workshops of the "blockchain and identity (BCID)" working group, May 2021*