

Procivis – a pioneer for digital identity solutions

Interview with Daniel Gasteiger, CEO Procivis AG

Daniel Gasteiger, inspired by the digital society in Estonia, you founded Procivis AG in Switzerland in 2016. What have we learned from Estonia?

In Estonia, contracts are no longer signed by hand because digital signatures have become established in the Baltic country. This in turn is based on the national digital identity that every Estonian receives automatically at birth. But in order for the social use of digital services to function, there has to be a uniform infrastructure, a resolute government, collaboration between the state and private companies – a “public-private partnership” – and consistent promotion of the use of digital communication and work tools.

“A government-issued electronic ID makes numerous practical applications possible.”

You assume that public services will be accessed primarily via mobile phone in the future?

Correct. Mobile phones are becoming increasingly important in our lives. Most young people access the internet and communicate with one another almost exclusively via mobile, and even my mother now talks with family using the chat function on her phone. That is why the user-friendliness and accessibility of the app is a key concern for Procivis. The user interface is polished and ergonomically tested.

What about security?

We view data security and the ability of individuals to manage their own data as a decisive criterion for the broad acceptance of an eID solution by the population. With our app, personal data is as secure as the data on the identity card in your wallet. And you alone decide with whom and when you exchange which data. The data on your mobile cannot be hacked since it is accessed decentrally on your smartphone using a digital key. In other words, the data cannot be accessed centrally via a website using a login with a password. When the eID data is issued, its accuracy is confirmed by a trusted organisation; for example, by a resident registration office or the road traffic authority. When and where this data is subsequently presented remains confidential and cannot be traced.

Swiss voters rejected an e-ID law in 2021. Will an eID be introduced one day anyway?

Absolutely. The Swiss population wants an eID issued by the authorities. Our clients, such as the canton of Schaffhausen and the city of Zug, already provide their citizens with an e-ID. And in December 2021, the Federal Council published a policy decision on a potential national eID. We are also monitoring various international initiatives that aim to create the necessary eID infrastructure and standards on the basis of the “Self-Sovereign Identity (SSI)” approach. This concept meets the criteria defined by the Federal Council for the design of a future state eID and according to which our software architecture is structured. A state-issued electronic ID based on the SSI approach opens up a number of useful applications when dealing with both government agencies and businesses, such as age verification in supermarkets or casinos.



Daniel Gasteiger

In addition to the "eID+" solution, Procivis has also offered "mDL+", a mobile driving licence solution, since 2021. What makes this unique?

Our digital driving licence meets the standard developed by the International Organization

for Standardization (ISO/IEC 18013), which was issued for driving licences on smartphones or tablets for the first time in September 2021. Our "mDL+" app, and the associated software for managing digital driving licences, is a pioneering product worldwide. Furthermore, the technical interfaces of "mDL+" are open for future applications in the mobility sector – whether for car rental, car sharing or other mobility services.

Why did Procivis join forces with Orell Füssli?

The trust that Orell Füssli enjoys worldwide as a provider of high-quality security solutions for governments and private individuals was a crucial factor. Another key element is the common mindset we have as security companies. In order to develop a government eID structure, people must be provided with comprehensive information and made aware of security issues in a digital society. Orell Füssli can make a contribution to this. And it also benefits from the strengthening of its own position in its core business with government security documents, which we can digitalise together. Furthermore, new business potential for the Group is opened up, such as digital verification for the private sector.

Procivis AG

As part of the strategic development of new business areas and the expansion of its business portfolio, Orell Füssli took a stake in Procivis in spring 2020 and acquired a majority share in autumn 2021. The acquisition of Procivis enables Orell Füssli to strengthen its position in the area of ID solutions and tap into the growth market for digital IDs. The Swiss company Procivis is the creator of forward-looking solutions for digital identities and e-government. Procivis's smartphone-based identity solution has been introduced successfully in the canton of Schaffhausen and the city of Zug, enabling users to handle their data autonomously.