

# SWITCH EDU-ID IN THE DIGITAL IDENTITY LANDSCAPE

Digital identities are tools that help users to access services. Why are SWITCH and the SWITCH edu-ID the right choice for the Swiss academic research and education sector? And how does it fit into the digital identity landscape, which has many other similar services – nationally and internationally?

Digital identities greatly simplify our digital lives. A single registration with new credentials is all it takes to access many services– no need to register again.

A word of caution: since these digital identities transport user information between data suppliers and services, they inevitably create profiling information as a by-product, e.g. which users accessed which services and at which time. This requires care when selecting a service partner. ‘Free’ services, where you ‘pay with your data’, might not be the best choice. The governance structure of the SWITCH foundation guarantees that it is and will stay bound

to the rules set by the Swiss universities themselves.

An interuniversity working group defined new identity management principles to address important trends in the academic community: life-long learning, increasing mobility and collaboration. The service SWITCH edu-ID is implementing this concept on top of the successful SWITCHai platform to form the core of the identity management solution for Switzerland’s academic sector.

The key benefit is a single persistent identity that allows users to access services relevant to Swiss higher

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**Picture**  
Regardless of  
whether you  
share your data  
among Swiss  
universities or  
with a worldwide  
community, the  
SWITCH edu-ID  
is internationally  
compatible thanks  
to a collaboration  
with GÉANT.

education organisations. When returning to the university for continuing education, the existing SWITCH edu-ID will speed up the sign-up process. Universities themselves also benefit with the ability to simplify their administrative processes. Furthermore, new service elements added to the centrally provided SWITCH edu-ID identity platform immediately become available to universities, which require minimal effort to implement and offer further advantages over time.

To take full advantage of the SWITCH edu-ID, universities need to undertake adoption planning and implementation with the help of SWITCH. This links the university identity

management system to the centrally hosted SWITCH edu-ID and ensures that all users can access a SWITCH edu-ID identity. This adoption takes place on a university by university basis for which SWITCH secured grants from swissuniversities<sup>1</sup> until 2020. Universities may define the timing individually to align with other projects.

Research does not stop at national borders; for many years already, the ‘interfederation’ service of GÉANT, eduGAIN, has been supporting international research and education collaboration on a global scale. SWITCH edu-ID is fully compatible with this service.

An active identity management ecosystem also exists outside of academia in Switzerland, and SWITCH is exploring opportunities to collaborate with other emerging services, of which the national E-ID is a prominent one. It is foreseen that private sector players get the option to issue officially recognised E-IDs, and SWITCH is considering to participate. To settle open issues and to promote the establishment of a national E-ID, SWITCH participates in a working group of government authorities and other potential issuers of E-IDs from the private sector.

Another important project is one led by educa.ch with the goal of building an identity federation for Swiss schools. SWITCH is represented on the project board and collaborates on a technical level to coordinate the two identity federations as closely as possible.

SWITCH edu-ID, the identity solution for Switzerland’s research and education sector, enabled by eduGAIN of GÉANT for global collaboration.



<sup>1</sup>See: <https://www.swissuniversities.ch/en/organisation/>