

Estonia blocks electronic ID cards over identity-theft risk

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Estonia's Prime Minister Juri Ratas announced the decision to suspend security certificates for state-issued ID cards until their owners download an update to patch a flaw

Cyber-savvy Estonia said on Thursday it would suspend security certificates for up to 760,000 state-issued electronic ID-cards with faulty chips as of Friday midnight to mitigate the risk of identity theft.

Dubbed E-stonia for being one of the world's most wired nations, the

Baltic eurozone state of 1.3 million people issues electronic ID cards giving citizens online access to virtually all public services at a special "e-government" state portal.

IT security experts recently discovered a flaw in the Swiss-made chips used in the cards that makes them vulnerable to malware.

"The functioning of an e-state is based on trust and the state cannot afford identity theft happening to the owner of an Estonian ID card," Prime Minister Juri Ratas said Thursday as he announced the decision to suspend [security](#) certificates for cards until their owners download an update to patch the flaw.

"By blocking the certificates of the ID cards at risk, the state is ensuring the safety of the ID card," Ratas said.

"As far as we currently know, there has been no instances of e-[identity theft](#), but the threat assessment of the Police and Border Guard Board and the Information System Authority indicates that this threat has become real," he added.

Estonia has made a name for itself for being a trailblazer in technology, notably pioneered e-voting in 2005 and playing host to NATO's cyber defence centre.

Estonian authorities also warned that other cards and computer systems using the chips produced by the same manufacturer were also at risk.

Since 2001 Estonian electronic ID cards have been manufactured by the Swiss company Trub AG and its successor Gemalto AG.

In September, Trub Baltic AS that belongs to the Gemalto group, announced they were cooperating with the Estonian government on

solving the problem.

As of October 31, all users of faulty ID cards can update their [security certificates](#) remotely and at Estonian police and border guard service points.

As of Thursday night around 40,000 users had already done so.

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