

Japan's Journey Toward Cross-Border Digital Identity Interoperability



*Session 2: Towards cross-border interoperability
for digital identity and credentials*

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Industry perspective on Japan's digital identity landscape

Japan's Digital Identity Foundation: My Number Card

80%+

Penetration rate
(100M+ cards)

IAL3

Identity assurance
(NIST equiv.)

2003

JPKI established
(crypto base)

My Number Card is the core of Japan's digital identity ecosystem. Issued through rigorous in-person identity verification against the **Basic Resident Register (Jūmin Kihon Daichō)**, the card embeds **JPKI** — a cryptographic certificate in a tamper-resistant IC chip — enabling identity proofing equivalent to NIST IAL3.

Expanding ecosystem built on My Number Card

- Health insurance (Myna-Hokenshō): real-time DB lookup
- Driver's license (Myna-Menkyo): integration underway
- Apple Wallet — June 2025, first outside US



My Number Card (個人番号カード)

IC chip

Contains JPKI electronic certificate
(Signature cert + User auth cert)

Validity

Card: 10 years | Cert: 5 years

Japan's Current Position & Approach

Strengths

- My Number Card + JPKI: robust, legally-grounded trust anchor
- 80%+ penetration — 100M+ cards issued
- Apple Wallet integration (2025) — first outside US
- Active VC/DIW governance study (Digital Agency)
- Japan–EU Digital Identity MoC signed (April 2024)

Challenges

- No comprehensive Trust Services Act (unlike EU eIDAS)
- VC format: SD-JWT & mdoc both under study — no single format committed yet
- Trust registry for cross-border recognition: absent
- Each ministry has separate jurisdiction: Digital Agency / MIC (Internal Affairs & Communications) / METI
- Cross-context VC presentation: not yet implemented

Japan's Approach: Risk-Based, Bottom-Up — Not Top-Down Obligation

Unlike EU's top-down eIDAS mandate, Japan clarifies legal alignment and risk at each step before scaling. **The Digital Agency launched a VC governance expert panel (March 2025)** to map legal considerations and start with lower-risk use cases first. **Japan–EU MoC (April 2024)** provides a bilateral framework for future interoperability work.

The Role of Technical Standards & Japan's Contribution

What ITU-T provides

- Technical standards for interoperability
- Common credential formats & protocols
- Prerequisite for each nation's legal/governance work
- Neutral multilateral forum

Remaining challenges

- VC format convergence (SD-JWT / mdoc)
- Cross-border trust registry recognition
- Legal equivalence agreements between jurisdictions
- Multi-context VC presentation implementation

Japan's contribution

ITU-T SG17 Q10 Co-Rapporteur

- Q10: Identity management standards
- Not aligned with any single standards camp
- Neutral bridge-builder — committed to dialogue

Technical standards are the prerequisite. Only when standards are clear can each nation build the legal and governance frameworks that enable cross-border trust.