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Fedvis SAML Technical Profile

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Abstract

This document defines the technical profile for SAML 2.0 within the Fedvis federation.

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1 Terminology and Typographical Conventions

The key words “MUST”, “MUST NOT”, “REQUIRED”, “SHALL”, “SHALL NOT”, “SHOULD”, “SHOULD NOT”, “RECOMMENDED”, “MAY”, and “OPTIONAL” in this document are to be interpreted as described in RFC2119 [1]

Text in Italics is non-normative. All other text is normative unless otherwise stated.

1.1 Definition of Terminology

Credential: A combination of information, cryptographic software and/or cryptographic hardware which a Subject proves possession of in order to authenticate itself in the Member Organization’s Identity Provider. This can be for example the combination of a username and password or a username and cryptographic device.

Identity Provider: The system component that issues attribute assertions on behalf of Subjects who use them to access the services of the Relying Party.

Member Organization: An organization that either is the owner of an Identity Provider or a Relying Party registered in one of the federations of The Swedish Internet Foundation.

Relying Party: A Service that relies upon a Subject’s credentials, typically to process a transaction or grant access to information on a system. Also known as Service Provider (SP). The Relying Party is owned by a Service Owner.

Service Provider: See Relying Party.

Service Owner: A Member Organization that is responsible and liable for operating a service registered in the federation. The Service Owner may delegate the technical operation of the Relying Party to another organization.

Shared secret: A piece of information that is shared exclusively between the parties involved in a secure communication.

Subject: Any natural person affiliated with a User Organization.

User Organization: A Member Organization with which a Subject is affiliated, operating the Identity Provider by itself or through a third party.

2 Operational Requirements for Identity Providers

The purpose of this section is to define requirements of Identity Providers in the federation.

2.1 Metadata registration

The purpose of this subsection is to define requirements regarding metadata registration of Identity Providers in the federation.

2.1.1 Language attributes (**lang**)

All metadata elements where language is relevant, i.e., MDUI/UIInfo and organizational elements, should include languages useful for the Identity Provider's users.

Metadata elements supporting the **lang** attribute MUST have a **lang** attribute with a value from "ISO 639-1".

For each metadata element supporting the **lang** attribute, there MUST NOT be more than one instance of each **lang** value for the element in question, except for the Logo MDUI element.

A **lang** attribute value used in one metadata element MUST be represented for all metadata elements supporting the **lang** attribute, except for the RegistrationPolicy element.

Metadata elements supporting the **lang** attribute MUST have a definition in English (en).

Metadata elements supporting the **lang** attribute MUST have a definition in Swedish (sv).

2.1.2 **entityID**

The **entityID** of an Identity Provider is its unique identifier in the federation.

The **entityID** MUST be globally unique.

The **entityID** attribute is a URI that MUST start with either **https://**, **http://** or **urn:**. The **urn:** form is a legacy format and SHOULD NOT be used when registering a new entity.

Guidance: The **https://** format is preferred.

The **entityID** attribute MUST NOT exceed 256 characters in length.

2.1.3 SAML certificates

For an Identity Provider there MUST be at least one signing certificate present in the metadata (i.e., a **KeyDescriptor** element with no **use** attribute or one set to **signing**).

2.1.4 Organization

The organization elements relate to the official name of the organization that the Identity Provider is operated for.

An Identity Provider MUST have the following **Organization** elements with **lang** attributes:

- **OrganizationName**
The **OrganizationName** MUST be the same for all Identity Providers and Relying Parties owned by the organization, i.e., the legal name of the organization.
- **OrganizationDisplayName**
The well-known name of the organization, e.g., if the organization is more known by its abbreviation than its full name.
- **OrganizationURL**
The official web address of the organization.

2.1.5 ContactPerson

Contact information for the Identity Provider. Due to personal data protection legislation, contact information MUST NOT refer to a natural person.

ContactPerson elements MUST have an **EmailAddress** element starting with mailto:.

Guidance: The e-mail address MUST be a functional mailbox where the address does not refer to a natural person.

There MUST NOT be more than one **ContactPerson** element of each type.

An Identity Provider MUST have one **ContactPerson** element of type **administrative** registered in metadata.

Guidance: The administrative ContactPerson is the contact point for governance of the Identity Provider.

An Identity Provider MUST have one **ContactPerson** element of type **technical** registered in metadata.

Guidance: The technical ContactPerson is the contact point for technical questions and issues regarding the use of the Identity Provider.

An Identity Provider MUST have one **ContactPerson** element of type **support** registered in metadata.

Guidance: The support ContactPerson is the contact point for end users and non-technical questions and issues regarding the use of the Identity Provider.

2.1.6 Non-secure cryptographic algorithms

The metadata of an Identity Provider MUST only include **DigestMethod**, **SigningMethod** and **EncryptionMethod** elements containing algorithms defined in the latest published version of W3C Recommendations xmldsig-core and xmlenc-core respectively. Algorithms discouraged in the latest published version of xmldsig-core and xmlenc-core respectively SHOULD NOT be included.

Guidance: At the time of writing, MD5 is obsolete and RSA v1.5 is not recommended in the latest published version.

2.1.7 Unnecessary, large metadata

The metadata of an Identity Provider MUST NOT include **RoleDescriptor** elements.

Guidance: RoleDescriptor elements are large and are unnecessary in the federation.

2.2 SAML Keys and Certificates

The purpose of this subsection is to define the requirements of the SAML keys and certificates of Identity Providers. To minimize interoperability issues, certificates should be long-lived and self-signed. Note that the security of the federation is based on the signing of the metadata and not on the certificate verification chain or the lifespan of the entity certificates.

Identity Provider credentials (i.e., entity keys) MUST NOT use shorter comparable key strength (in the sense of NIST SP 800-57) than 2048-bit RSA/DSA keys or 256-bit ECC keys. 4096-bit RSA/DSA keys or 384-bit ECC keys are RECOMMENDED.

Guidance: To minimize the administrative burden, keys should not be replaced unless they are at risk. Keys should be replaced when doing a major software upgrade or a hardware replacement. New keys should not use shorter comparable key strength than 4096-bit RSA/DSA keys or 384-bit ECC keys.

Signing and encryption certificates MUST NOT be expired.

Guidance: To minimize the administrative burden, certificates should not be replaced unless they are at risk. Certificates should have a lifespan of 10 years.

Signing and encryption certificates SHOULD be self-signed.

Guidance: To be able to use long-lived certificates, certificates should not be signed by well-known Certificate Authorities. Note that the signature of SAML certificates is not verified by Relying Parties.

Keys known to be compromised or weak MUST be replaced in a timely manner.

An Identity Provider MUST support multiple signing certificates in the metadata of a Relying Party and MUST support validation of signatures using any of them.

Guidance: This is used during key roll-over of a Relying Party.

An Identity Provider SHOULD support multiple encryption certificates in the metadata of a Relying Party and SHOULD support encryption using one of them.

Guidance: This is used during key roll-over of a Relying Party.

2.3 Endpoint security

An Identity Provider MUST NOT support deprecated SSL/TLS protocols.

Guidance: At the time of writing, SSLv2 was deprecated by RFC6176 in 2011, SSLv3 was deprecated by RFC7568 in 2015, TLS1.0 and TLS1.1 was deprecated by RFC8996 in March 2021.

All Member Organizations operating an Identity Provider MUST consider applicable web protocol threats and apply appropriate controls to all relevant endpoints.

Guidance: sslabs.com and similar services provide tools to detect known web protocol security issues. It is recommended to be continuously graded level A or higher at [SSL Labs](#).

2.4 Identity Provider software requirements

2.4.1 Metadata consumption and validation

An Identity Provider SHOULD refresh the metadata at least once every one (1) hour.

To ensure the validity of the federation metadata, the refresh process MUST verify the signature on every federation metadata fetch. The federation's signing certificate authenticity must be assured and verified in a secure way.

Guidance: If the metadata is compromised, the bundled certificate in the metadata may also be compromised. Make sure to use the signing certificate of the federation that are distributed out of band.

Federation metadata without a validUntil attribute or with a passed validUntil MUST not be trusted and MUST be discarded.

2.4.2 Authentication Context

An Identity Provider MUST support the release of Identity Assurance of Subjects as defined in the federation's Trust Framework [2], using the Identifiers of the respective Identity Assurance Level.

The management of Identity Assurance Levels in Authentication Requests and Responses is handled through the AuthnContextClassRef as defined in SAML-Core-2.0 [3]

A saml:assertion MUST signal the Identity Assurance Level that the User has been authenticated with.

2.4.3 Authentication response

An Identity Provider MUST set the value of the **AuthnInstant** attribute in an authentication response to a current timestamp when and only when the Subject has performed a new authentication.

2.4.4 Clock skew

An Identity Provider MUST allow between three (3) and five (5) minutes of clock skew, in either direction, when verifying the validity of an authentication request.

2.4.5 Operational security

An Identity Provider and their supporting infrastructure MUST NOT use software that is no longer maintained or software configurations with known security issues.

2.5 Attribute Release

Each value of released attributes MUST NOT exceed 256 characters.

Guidance: For multivalued attributes, the separate values of each attribute must not exceed 256 characters. The complete value set of a specific attribute may be longer.

2.5.1 Subject identifiers

The purpose of this subsection is to define requirements regarding identifiers of Subjects.

An Identity Provider MUST support release of a **NameID** with **nameid-format:transient** format.

Guidance: The NameID element is primarily used for single logout purposes.

Attributes used to identify a subject are defined in the Attribute Profile of the federation.

Attributes released from an Identity Provider MUST be kept up to date in accordance with administrative processes.

If a Subject or organization's information changes, it MUST be reflected in released attributes within one workweek.

3 Operational Requirements for Relying Parties

The purpose of this section is to define requirements of Relying Parties in the federation.

3.1 Metadata registration

The purpose of this subsection is to define requirements regarding metadata registration of Relying Parties in the federation.

3.1.1 Language attributes (lang)

All metadata elements where language is relevant, i.e., MDUI/UIInfo and organizational elements, should include languages useful for the Relying Party's users.

Metadata elements supporting the **lang** attribute MUST have a **lang** attribute with a value from "ISO 639-1".

For each metadata element supporting the **lang** attribute, there MUST NOT be more than one instance of each **lang** value for the element in question, except for the Logo MDUI element.

A **lang** attribute value used in one metadata element MUST be represented for all metadata elements supporting the **lang** attribute, except for the RegistrationPolicy element.

Metadata elements supporting the **lang** attribute MUST have a definition in English (en).

Metadata elements supporting the **lang** attribute MUST have a definition in Swedish (sv).

3.1.2 entityID

The entityID of a Relying Party is its unique identifier in the federation.

The entityID MUST be globally unique.

The entityID attribute is a URI that MUST start with either **https://**, **http://** or **urn:**. The **urn:** form is a legacy format and SHOULD NOT be used when registering a new entity.

Guidance: The https:// format is preferred.

The entityID attribute MUST NOT exceed 256 characters in length.

3.1.3 SAML certificates

For a Relying Party there MUST be at least one encryption certificate registered in the metadata (i.e., a **KeyDescriptor** element with no **use** attribute or one set to **encryption**).

3.1.4 SAML endpoints

SAML endpoints are the receivers of SAML responses and similar SAML messages.

All SAML endpoints of a Relying Party MUST start with https://.

A Relying Party MUST NOT have AssertionConsumerService elements where the attribute Binding value is urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:2.0:bindings:HTTP-Redirect.

3.1.5 Requested attributes

A Relaying Party MUST define requested attributes in metadata. A Relaying Party MUST have at least one **AttributeConsumingService** element.

The **AttributeConsumingService** element defines a particular service offered by the Service Provider. Adding requested attributes to the metadata of a Relying Party does not imply that any Identity Provider releases the requested attributes.

AttributeConsumingService element(s) of a Relying Party MUST have the following elements:

- **ServiceName**
The lang attribute MUST be present (see Section 3.1.1).
- **ServiceDescription**
The lang attribute MUST be present (see Section 3.1.1).
- **RequestedAttribute**
At least one.

A **RequestedAttribute** element of a Relying Party MUST have the following attributes:

- **Name**
The value MUST be an attribute name from the attribute profile of the federation.
- **FriendlyName**
The value MUST match the FriendlyName value from the attribute profile of the federation of the Name attribute value.
- **NameFormat**
The value MUST be "urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:2.0:attrname-format:uri"

A **RequestedAttribute** element MAY have one or more **AttributeValue** elements.

3.1.6 Organization

The organization elements relate to the official name of the organization that the Relying Party is operated for.

A Relying Party MUST have the following **Organization** elements with **lang** attributes:

- **OrganizationName** The OrganizationName MUST be the same for all Identity Providers and Relying Parties owned by the organization, i.e., the legal name of the organization.
- **OrganizationDisplayName** The well-known name of the organization responsible for the service, e.g., if the organization is more known by its abbreviation than its full name.

- **OrganizationURL** The official web address of the organization.

3.1.7 ContactPerson

Contact information for the Relying Party. Due to personal data protection legislation, contact information MUST NOT refer to a natural person.

ContactPerson elements MUST have an **EmailAddress** element starting with mailto:.

Guidance: The e-mail address MUST be a functional mailbox where the address does not refer to a natural person.

There MUST NOT be more than one **ContactPerson** element of each type.

A Relying Party MUST have one **ContactPerson** element of type **administrative** registered in metadata.

Guidance: The administrative ContactPerson is the contact point for governance of the Relying Party.

A Relying Party MUST have one **ContactPerson** element of type **technical** registered in metadata.

Guidance: The technical ContactPerson is the contact point for technical questions and issues regarding the use of the Relying Party.

A Relying Party MUST have one **ContactPerson** element of type **support** registered in metadata.

Guidance: The support ContactPerson is the contact point for end users and non- technical questions and issues regarding the use of the Relying Party.

3.1.8 Non-secure cryptographic algorithms

The metadata of a Relying Party MUST only include **DigestMethod**, **SigningMethod** and **EncryptionMethod** elements containing algorithms defined in the latest published version of W3C Recommendations xmldsig-core and xmlenc-core respectively. Algorithms discouraged in the latest published version of xmldsig-core and xmlenc-core respectively SHOULD NOT be included.

Guidance: At the time of writing MD5 is obsolete and RSA v1.5 is not recommended in the latest published version.

3.1.9 Unnecessary, large metadata

The metadata for a Relying Party MUST NOT include RoleDescriptor elements.

Guidance: RoleDescriptor elements are large and are unnecessary in the federation

3.2 SAML Keys and Certificates

The purpose of this subsection is to define the requirements of the SAML keys and certificates of Relying Parties. To minimize interoperability issues certificates should be long-lived and self-signed. Note that the security of the federation is based on the signing of the metadata and not on the certificate verification chain or the lifespan of the entity certificates.

Relying Party credentials (i.e., entity keys) MUST NOT use shorter comparable key strength (in the sense of NIST SP 800-57) than 2048-bit RSA/DSA keys or 256-bit ECC keys. 4096-bit RSA/DSA keys or 384-bit ECC keys are RECOMMENDED.

Guidance: To minimize the administrative burden, keys should not be replaced unless they are at risk. Keys should be replaced when doing a major software upgrade or a hardware replacement. New keys should not use shorter comparable key strength than 4096-bit RSA/DSA keys or 384-bit ECC keys.

Signing and encryption certificates MUST NOT be expired.

Guidance: To minimize the administrative burden, certificates should not be replaced unless they are at risk. Certificates should have a lifespan of 10 years.

Signing and encryption certificates SHOULD be self-signed.

Guidance: To be able to use long-lived certificates, certificates should not be signed by well-known certificate authorities. Note that the signature of SAML certificates is not verified by Identity Providers.

Keys known to be compromised or weak MUST be replaced in a timely manner.

A Relying Party MUST support multiple signing certificates registered in the metadata of an Identity Provider and MUST support validation of signatures using any of them.

Guidance: This is used during key roll-over of an Identity Provider.

A Relying Party MUST support multiple encryption certificates registered in the metadata of an Identity Provider and SHOULD support encryption using one of them.

Guidance: This is used during key roll-over of an Identity Provider.

3.3 Endpoint security

A Relying Party MUST NOT support deprecated SSL/TLS protocols.

Guidance: At the time of writing, SSLv2 was deprecated by RFC6176 in 2011, SSLv3 was deprecated by RFC7568 in 2015, TLS1.0 and TLS1.1 was deprecated by RFC8996 in March 2021.

The Service Owner operating a Relying Party MUST consider applicable web protocol threats and apply appropriate controls to all relevant endpoints.

Guidance: sslabs.com and similar services provide tools to detect known web protocol security issues. It is recommended to be continuously graded level A or higher at sslabs.com.

3.4 Relying Party software requirements

3.4.1 Metadata consumption and validation

A Relying Party SHOULD refresh the metadata at least once every one (1) hour.

To ensure the validity of the federation metadata the refresh process MUST verify the signature on every federation metadata fetch. The federation's signing certificate authenticity must be assured and verified in a secure way.

Federation metadata without a validUntil attribute or with a passed validUntil MUST not be trusted and MUST be discarded.

3.4.2 Clock skew

A Relying Party MUST allow between three (3) and five (5) minutes of clock skew, in either direction, when verifying the validity of an authentication response.

3.4.3 Operational security

A Relying Party and their supporting infrastructure MUST NOT use software that is no longer maintained or software configurations with known security issues.

3.5 Attribute Release

A Relying Party MUST support attribute values up to 256 characters long.

Guidance: For multivalued attributes the separate values of each attribute may each be up to 256 characters long. The complete value set of a specific attribute may be longer.

3.5.1 Subject identifiers

The purpose of this subsection is to define requirements regarding identifiers of Subjects.

A Relying Party **MUST NOT** require the presence of a NameID element.

Guidance: The NameID element should not be used for anything else than single logout purposes. Note that SAML Single Logout terminates the single sign-on session at the Identity Provider, it does not guarantee that the user is logged out from other Relying Parties with active sessions.

If a Relying Party requires identifiers of Subjects, the Relying Party **MUST** require one of the identity attributes from the attribute profile of the Federation.

4 Operational Requirements for Federation Operator

4.1 Metadata management

4.1.1 Metadata registration practice

Language attributes (lang)

Metadata elements that support the lang attribute **MUST** have a lang attribute with a value from "ISO 639-1".

Metadata elements that support the lang attribute **MUST** have a definition with language English (en).

Metadata elements that support the lang attribute **MUST** have a definition with language Swedish (sv).

4.2 SAML Federation Metadata signing

Metadata **MUST NOT** be signed unless approved by Federation Operator.

Signed metadata or signed aggregates of metadata **MUST** have a validUntil attribute in its root element.

Guidance: The root element of metadata aggregates is the EntitiesDescriptor element.

The root element of individual metadata entity publications is the EntityDescriptor element.

Signing keys **MUST NOT** use shorter comparable key strength (in the sense of NIST SP 800-57) than a 4096-bit RSA/DSA key or a 384 - bit ECC key.

The signature's digest algorithm **MUST** be at least as strong as SHA- 256 and **MUST NOT** use MD5 or SHA-1.

The signature's signature method **MUST** be RSA with an associated digest at least as strong as SHA-256 and **MUST NOT** use MD5 or SHA-1.

Signing certificates **MUST** be self-signed.

Signing certificates **MUST NOT** be expired.

Signing keys **MUST** be protected from unauthorized usage.

Signing keys known to be compromised or weak **MUST** be replaced in a timely manner.

The Federation Operator **MUST** have documented procedures for key rollover of signing keys.

4.3 Metadata publishing

Metadata **MUST NOT** be published unless signed.

5 Acknowledgements

A greater part of the content in this document has been retrieved from [SWAMID SAML WebSSO Technology Profile](#) (c) by Sunet licensed under [CC BY-SA 3.0](#)

6 References

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