

**DIGITAL GOVERNANCE COUNCIL**

# Digital Trust and Interoperability Standards and Approaches in Canada

Keith Jansa, Chief Executive Officer, Digital Governance Council

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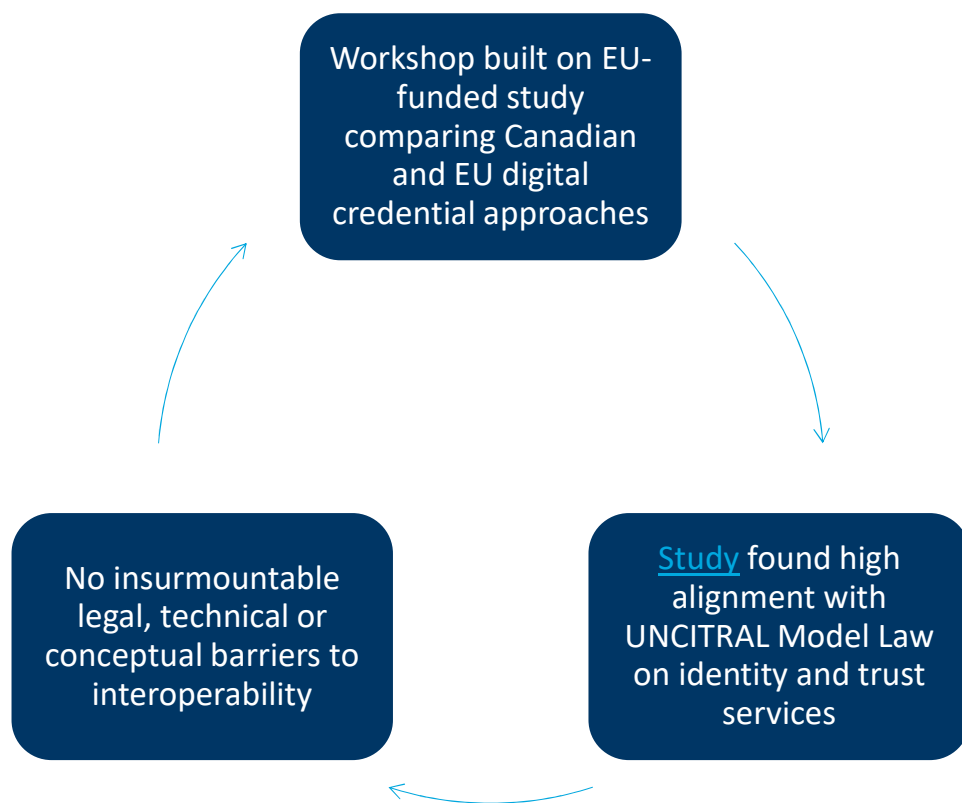
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# Setting the Stage

- [Workshop](#) convened policymakers, experts and industry leaders from Canada and the EU.
- Purpose: advance digital cooperation and mutual recognition following the 2025 EU-Canada Summit.
- Shared belief: secure, privacy-preserving, user-centric digital credentials is key to prosperity and democratic resilience.



# Study Foundations & Strategic Alignment



# Interoperability as a Strategic Imperative



Digital interoperability is not only technical; it shapes sovereignty, economics and rights.



‘Empires once built railways; today they build algorithms’, highlighting geopolitical stakes.



Key question: not whether systems can interoperate, but under whose laws, values and governance.

## EU & Canadian Governance Models



EU: structured regulatory environment (eIDAS, AI Act, Digital Services Act).



Canada: decentralized, consensus-driven approach rooted in federation and collaboration.



Workshop emphasized reciprocity, transparency and domestic accountability as foundational.

# Use-Case-Driven Interoperability Pilots



Participants endorsed pilots as 'living laboratories' for interoperability.



High-value pilot areas: MDLs, travel credentials, educational/professional qualifications.



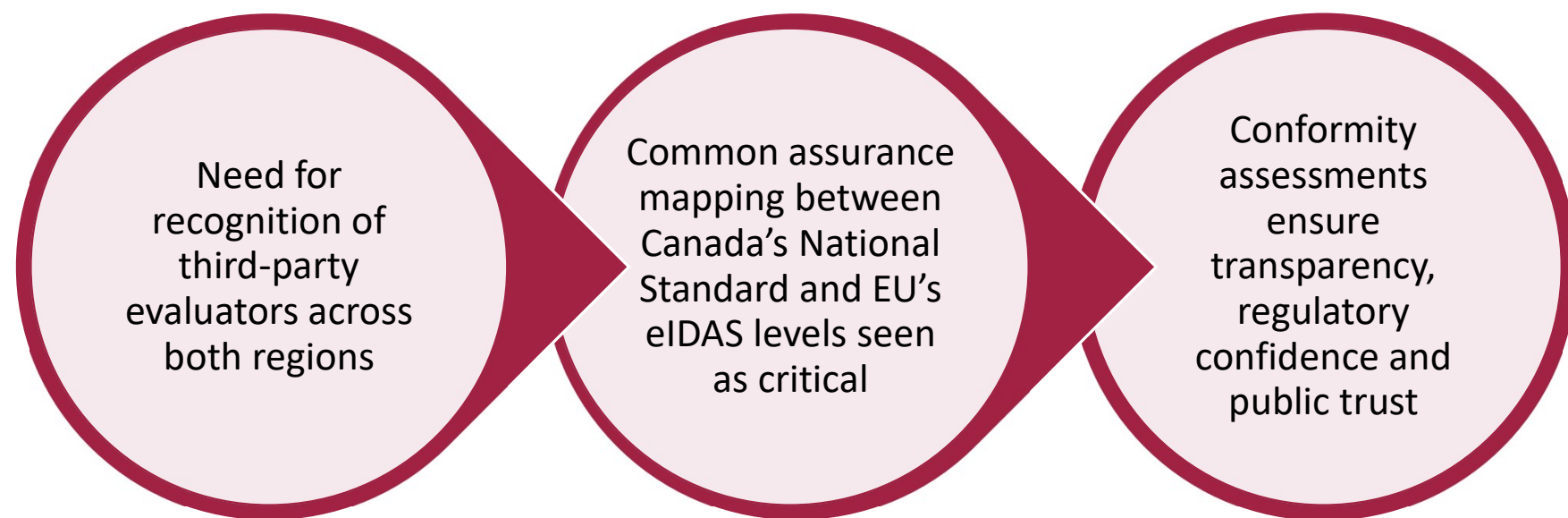
B2B and workplace applications seen as least contentious and most impactful early pilots.

# Mutual Recognition & Legal Pathways

- Call for a formal EU-Canada mutual recognition agreement grounded in UNCITRAL Model Law.
- Aim: ensure legal effect of identity systems and trust services across jurisdictions.
- Legal certainty enables credential acceptance and trusted electronic signatures cross-border.



# Conformity Assessment & Assurance Mapping





## Functional Equivalence: A Core Principle

- Mutual recognition does not require identical systems; only equivalent assurance and reliability.
- Functional equivalence seen as practical alternative to regulatory harmonization.
- This principle underpins feasibility of EU-Canada mutual trust arrangements.

# Trust, Sovereignty & Public Mandate



Technical trust is insufficient; social trust is essential.



Concerns: misinformation, narratives framing digital identity as a threat.



Success requires voluntary participation, transparency, auditability and meaningful consent.

## International Lessons & Risks

Kenya's Huduma Namba collapse used as an example of failed governance despite technology.

Emphasized necessity of public engagement and democratic legitimacy for digital credentials.

Canada's federated, standards-based model seen as inclusive and resilient.

# Policy, Technical & Legal Alignment



Interoperability requires simultaneous progress in policy, legislation, standards and engagement.



Proposed creation of joint EU-Canada working groups for legal and technical alignment.



Shared 'middleware' layer proposed to ensure functional equivalence of processes and assurance.

# CETA & Trade Integration Opportunities

- Proposal to include digital credential and trust services in CETA Conformity Assessment Protocol.
- Would ground digital trust frameworks in trade architecture, reduce compliance costs.
- Extends logic of product equivalence into digital services domain.

## Technical Collaboration Priorities



Mapping of assurance levels between EU and Canada.



Continuous updates to reflect evolving technologies and risk landscape.



Shared operational pathways for validation, credential exchange and assurance verification based on ISO/IEC 17029 methodology

## Next Steps – Immediate Opportunities

- Shared communication framework recommended using clear, neutral language.
- Ensures engagement remains voluntary, transparent and privacy-protective.
- Political dialogue encouraged through G7 Digital Ministerial and future EU–Canada agreements.



B2B and workplace use cases identified as fastest path to value.



Pilot areas: professional certification verification, corporate digital credentials, secure document exchange.



Joint task forces to define equivalence criteria and assurance mapping.