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Using the Elliptic Curve Signature Algorithm (ECDSA) for XML Digital Signatures

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Abstract

This document specifies how to use Elliptic Curve Digital Signature Algorithm (ECDSA) with XML Signatures. The mechanism specified provides integrity, message authentication, and/or signer authentication services for data of any type, whether located within the XML that includes the signature or included by reference.

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1. Introduction

This document specifies how to use the Elliptic Curve Digital Signature Algorithm (ECDSA) with XML signatures, as specified in [XMLDSIG]. [XMLDSIG] defines only two digital signature methods: RSA and DSA (DSS) signatures. This document introduces ECDSA signatures as an additional method.

This document uses both XML Schemas [XML-schema] (normative) and DTDs [XML] (informational) to specify the corresponding XML structures.

2. ECDSA

The Elliptic Curve Digital Signature Algorithm (ECDSA) is the elliptic curve analogue of the DSA (DSS) signature method [FIPS-186-2]. It is defined in the ANSI X9.62 standard [X9.62]. Other compatible specifications include FIPS 186-2 [FIPS-186-2], IEEE 1363 [IEEE1363], IEEE 1363a [IEEE1363a], and SEC1 [SEC1]. [RFC3279] describes ways to carry ECDSA keys in X.509 certificates. [FIPS-186-2], [SEC2], and [X9.62] provide recommended elliptic curve domain parameters for use with ECDSA.

Like DSA, ECDSA incorporates the use of a hash function. Currently, the only hash function defined for use with ECDSA is the SHA-1 message digest algorithm [FIPS-180-1].

ECDSA signatures are smaller than RSA signatures of similar cryptographic strength. ECDSA public keys (and certificates) are smaller than similar strength DSA keys and result in improved communication efficiency. On many platforms, ECDSA operations can be computed faster than similar strength RSA or DSA operations (see [KEYS] for a security analysis of key sizes across public key algorithms). These advantages of signature size, bandwidth, and computational efficiency may make ECDSA an attractive choice for XMLDSIG implementations.

3. Specifying ECDSA within XMLDSIG

This section specifies how to use ECDSA with XML Signature Syntax and Processing [XMLDSIG]. It relies heavily on the syntax and namespace defined in [XMLDSIG].

3.1. Version, Namespaces, and Identifiers

This specification makes no provision for an explicit version number in the syntax. If a future version is needed, it will use a different namespace.

The XML namespace [XML-ns] URI that MUST be used by implementations of this (dated) specification is:

<http://www.w3.org/2001/04/xmlsig-more#>

Elements in the namespace of the [XMLDSIG] specification are marked by using the namespace prefix "dsig" in the remaining sections of this document.

The identifier for the ECDSA signature algorithm as defined in [Eastlake] is:

<http://www.w3.org/2001/04/xmlsig-more#ecdsa-sha1>

3.2. XML Schema Preamble and DTD Replacement

3.2.1. XML Schema Preamble

The subsequent preamble is to be used with the XML Schema definitions given in the remaining sections of this document.

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="UTF-8"?>
<xs:schema
  targetNamespace="http://www.w3.org/2001/04/xmldsig-more#"
  xmlns:ecdsa="http://www.w3.org/2001/04/xmldsig-more#"
  xmlns:xs="http://www.w3.org/2001/XMLSchema"
  elementFormDefault="qualified" attributeFormDefault="unqualified"
  version="0.2">
```

3.2.2. DTD Replacement

To include ECDSA in XML-signature syntax, the following definition of the entity Key.ANY SHOULD replace the one in [XMLDSIG]:

```
<!ENTITY % KeyValue.ANY ' | ecdsa:ECDSAKeyValue '>
```

3.3. ECDSA Signatures

The input to the ECDSA algorithm is the canonicalized representation of the dsig:SignedInfo element as specified in Section 3 of [XMLDSIG].

The output of the ECDSA algorithm consists of a pair of integers usually referred by the pair (r, s). The signature value (text value of element dsig:SignatureValue - see section 4.2 of [XMLDSIG]) consists of the base64 encoding of the concatenation of two octet-streams that respectively result from the octet-encoding of the values r and s. This concatenation is described in section E3.1 of [IEEE1363].

3.4. ECDSA Key Values

The syntax used for ECDSA key values closely follows the ASN.1 syntax defined in ANSI X9.62 [X9.62].

3.4.1. Key Value Root Element

The element ECDSAKeyValue is used for encoding ECDSA public keys. For use with XMLDSIG, simply use this element inside dsig:KeyValue (such as the predefined elements dsig:RSAKeyValue or dsig:DSAKeyValue).

The element consists of an optional subelement `DomainParameters` and the mandatory subelement `PublicKey`. If `DomainParameters` is missing, the application implicitly knows about it from other means.

Schema Definition:

```
<xs:element name="ECDSAKeyValue" type="ecdsa:ECDSAKeyValue" type="ecdsa:ECDSAKeyValueType"/>
<xs:complexType name="ECDSAKeyValue" type="ecdsa:ECDSAKeyValueType">
  <xs:sequence>
    <xs:element name="DomainParameters" type="ecdsa:DomainParamsType"
      minOccurs="0"/>
    <xs:element name="PublicKey" type="ecdsa:ECPointType"/>
  </xs:sequence>
</xs:complexType>
```

DTD Definition:

```
<!ELEMENT ECDSAKeyValue (DomainParameters?, PublicKey)>
<!ELEMENT PublicKey (X, Y)?>
<!ELEMENT X EMPTY>
<!ATTLIST X Value CDATA #REQUIRED>
<!ELEMENT Y EMPTY>
<!ATTLIST Y Value CDATA #REQUIRED>
```

3.4.2. EC Domain Parameters

Domain parameters can be encoded either explicitly using element `ExplicitParams`, or by reference using element `NamedCurve`. The latter simply consists of an attribute named `URN`, which bears a uniform resource name as its value. For the named curves of standards like [X9.62], [FIPS-186-2], or [SEC2], the OIDs of these curves SHOULD be used in this attribute, e.g., `URN="urn:oid:1.2.840.10045.3.1.1"`. The mechanism for encoding OIDs in URNs is shown in [RFC3061].

Schema Definition:

```
<xs:complexType name="DomainParamsType">
  <xs:choice>
    <xs:element name="ExplicitParams"
      type="ecdsa:ExplicitParamsType"/>
    <xs:element name="NamedCurve">
      <xs:complexType>
        <xs:attribute name="URN" type="xs:anyURI" use="required"/>
      </xs:complexType>
    </xs:element>
  </xs:choice>
</xs:complexType>
```

DTD Definition:

```
<!ELEMENT DomainParameters (ExplicitParams | NamedCurve)>
<!ELEMENT NamedCurve EMPTY>
<!ATTLIST NamedCurve URN CDATA #REQUIRED>
```

The element `ExplicitParams` is used for explicit encoding of domain parameters. It contains three subelements: `FieldParams` describes the underlying field, `CurveParams` describes the elliptic curve, and `BasePointParams` describes the base point of the elliptic curve.

Schema Definition:

```
<xs:complexType name="ExplicitParamsType">
  <xs:sequence>
    <xs:element name="FieldParams" type="ecdsa:FieldParamsType"/>
    <xs:element name="CurveParams" type="ecdsa:CurveParamsType"/>
    <xs:element name="BasePointParams"
      type="ecdsa:BasePointParamsType"/>
  </xs:sequence>
</xs:complexType>
```

DTD Definition:

```
<!ELEMENT ExplicitParams (FieldParams, CurveParams, BasePointParams)>
```

3.4.2.1. Field Parameters

The element `FieldParams` is used for encoding field parameters. The corresponding XML Schema type `FieldParamsType` is declared abstract and will be extended by specialized types for prime field, characteristic two field, and odd characteristic extension fields parameters.

The XML Schema type `PrimeFieldParamsType` is derived from the `FieldParamsType` and is used for encoding prime field parameters. The type contains the order of the prime field as its single subelement `P`.

The XML Schema type `CharTwoFieldParamsType` is derived from `FieldParamsType` and is used for encoding parameters of a characteristic two field. It is again an abstract type and will be extended by specialized types for trinomial and pentanomial base fields. F2m Gaussian Normal Base fields are not supported by this specification to relieve interoperability. Common to both specialized types is the element `M`, the extension degree of the field.

The XML Schema type `TnBFieldParamsType` is derived from the `CharTwoFieldParamsType` and is used for encoding trinomial base fields. It adds the single element `K`, which represents the integer `k`, where $x^m + x^k + 1$ is the reduction polynomial.

The XML Schema type `PnBFieldParamsType` is derived from the `CharTwoFieldParamsType` and is used for encoding pentanomial base fields. It adds the three elements `K1`, `K2` and `K3`, which represent the integers `k1`, `k2` and `k3` respectively, where $x^m + x^{k3} + x^{k2} + x^{k1} + 1$ is the reduction polynomial.

The XML Schema type `OddCharExtensionFieldParamsType` is derived from the `FieldParamsType` and is used for encoding parameters of an odd characteristic extension field. This type contains two elements: `M`, which represents the extension degree of the field `m`, and `W`, which represents the integer `w`, where $x^m - w$ is the reduction polynomial.

Schema Definition:

```
<xs:complexType name="FieldParamsType" abstract="true"/>

<xs:complexType name="PrimeFieldParamsType">
  <xs:complexContent>
    <xs:extension base="ecdsa:FieldParamsType">
      <xs:sequence>
        <xs:element name="P" type="xs:positiveInteger"/>
      </xs:sequence>
    </xs:extension>
  </xs:complexContent>
</xs:complexType>

<xs:complexType name="CharTwoFieldParamsType" abstract="true">
  <xs:complexContent>
    <xs:extension base="ecdsa:FieldParamsType">
      <xs:sequence>
        <xs:element name="M" type="xs:positiveInteger"/>
      </xs:sequence>
    </xs:extension>
  </xs:complexContent>
</xs:complexType>

<xs:complexType name="OddCharExtensionFieldParamsType">
  <xs:complexContent>
    <xs:extension base="ecdsa:FieldParamsType">
      <xs:sequence>
        <xs:element name="M" type="xs:positiveInteger"/>
        <xs:element name="W" type="xs:positiveInteger"/>
      </xs:sequence>
    </xs:extension>
  </xs:complexContent>
</xs:complexType>
```

```

        </xs:extension>
      </xs:complexContent>
    </xs:complexType>

    <xs:complexType name="TnBFieldParamsType">
      <xs:complexContent>
        <xs:extension base="ecdsa:CharTwoFieldParamsType">
          <xs:sequence>
            <xs:element name="K" type="xs:positiveInteger"/>
          </xs:sequence>
        </xs:extension>
      </xs:complexContent>
    </xs:complexType>

    <xs:complexType name="PnBFieldParamsType">
      <xs:complexContent>
        <xs:extension base="ecdsa:CharTwoFieldParamsType">
          <xs:sequence>
            <xs:element name="K1" type="xs:positiveInteger"/>
            <xs:element name="K2" type="xs:positiveInteger"/>
            <xs:element name="K3" type="xs:positiveInteger"/>
          </xs:sequence>
        </xs:extension>
      </xs:complexContent>
    </xs:complexType>

```

DTD Definition:

```

<!ELEMENT FieldParams (P | (M, K) | (M, K1, K2, K3) | (M, W))>
<!ELEMENT P (#PCDATA)>
<!ELEMENT M (#PCDATA)>
<!ELEMENT K (#PCDATA)>
<!ELEMENT K1 (#PCDATA)>
<!ELEMENT K2 (#PCDATA)>
<!ELEMENT K3 (#PCDATA)>
<!ELEMENT W (#PCDATA)>

```

3.4.2.2. Curve Parameters

The element `CurveParams` is used for encoding parameters of the elliptic curve. The corresponding XML Schema type `CurveParamsType` bears the elements `A` and `B` representing the coefficients `a` and `b` of the elliptic curve. According to the algorithm specified in annex A3.3 of [X9.62], the optional element `Seed` contains the value used to derive the coefficients of a randomly generated elliptic curve.

Schema Definition:

```
<xs:complexType name="CurveParamsType">
  <xs:sequence>
    <xs:element name="A" type="ecdsa:FieldElemType"/>
    <xs:element name="B" type="ecdsa:FieldElemType"/>
    <xs:element name="Seed" type="xs:hexBinary" minOccurs="0"/>
  </xs:sequence>
</xs:complexType>
```

DTD Definition:

```
<!ELEMENT CurveParams (A, B, Seed?)>
<!ELEMENT A EMPTY>
<!ATTLIST A Value CDATA #REQUIRED>
<!ELEMENT B EMPTY>
<!ATTLIST B Value CDATA #REQUIRED>
<!ELEMENT Seed (#PCDATA)>
```

3.4.2.3. Base Point Parameters

The element `BasePointParams` is used for encoding parameters regarding the base point of the elliptic curve. `BasePoint` represents the base point itself, `Order` provides the order of the base point, and `Cofactor` optionally provides the cofactor of the base point.

Schema Definition:

```
<xs:complexType name="BasePointParamsType">
  <xs:sequence>
    <xs:element name="BasePoint" type="ecdsa:ECPointType"/>
    <xs:element name="Order" type="xs:positiveInteger"/>
    <xs:element name="Cofactor" type="xs:positiveInteger"
      minOccurs="0"/>
  </xs:sequence>
</xs:complexType>
```

DTD Definition:

```
<!ELEMENT BasePointParams (BasePoint, Order, Cofactor?)>
<!ELEMENT BasePoint (X, Y)?>
<!ELEMENT Order (#PCDATA)>
<!ELEMENT Cofactor (#PCDATA)>
```

3.4.3. EC Points

The XML Schema type `ECPointType` is used for encoding a point on the elliptic curve. It consists of the subelements `X` and `Y`, providing the `x` and `y` coordinates of the point. Point compression representation is not supported by this specification for the sake of simple design.

The point at infinity is encoded by omitting both elements `X` and `Y`.

The subelements `X` and `Y` are of type `FieldElemType`. This is an abstract type for encoding elements of the elliptic curves underlying field and is extended by specialized types for prime field elements and characteristic two field elements.

The XML Schema type `PrimeFieldElemType` is used for encoding prime field elements. It contains a single attribute named `Value` whose value represents the field element as an integer.

The XML Schema type `CharTwoFieldElemType` is used for encoding characteristic two field elements. It contains a single attribute named `Value` whose value represents the field element as an octet string. The octet string must be composed as shown in paragraph 2 of section 4.3.3 of [X9.62].

The XML Schema type `OddCharExtensionFieldElemType` is used for encoding odd characteristic extension field elements. It contains a single attribute named `Value` whose value represents the field element as an integer. The integer must be composed as shown in section 5.3.3 of [IEEE1363a].

Schema Definition:

```
<xs:complexType name="ECPointType">
  <xs:sequence minOccurs="0">
    <xs:element name="X" type="ecdsa:FieldElemType"/>
    <xs:element name="Y" type="ecdsa:FieldElemType"/>
  </xs:sequence>
</xs:complexType>
<xs:complexType name="FieldElemType" abstract="true"/>
```

```
<xs:complexType name="PrimeFieldElemType">
  <xs:complexContent>
    <xs:extension base="ecdsa:FieldElemType">
      <xs:attribute name="Value" type="xs:nonNegativeInteger"
        use="required"/>
    </xs:extension>
  </xs:complexContent>
</xs:complexType>

<xs:complexType name="CharTwoFieldElemType">
  <xs:complexContent>
    <xs:extension base="ecdsa:FieldElemType">
      <xs:attribute name="Value" type="xs:hexBinary"
        use="required"/>
    </xs:extension>
  </xs:complexContent>
</xs:complexType>

<xs:complexType name="OddCharExtensionFieldElemType">
  <xs:complexContent>
    <xs:extension base="ecdsa:FieldElemType">
      <xs:attribute name="Value" type="xs:nonNegativeInteger"
        use="required"/>
    </xs:extension>
  </xs:complexContent>
</xs:complexType>
```

4. Security Considerations

Implementers should ensure that appropriate security measures are in place when they deploy ECDSA within XMLDSIG. In particular, the security of ECDSA requires careful selection of both key sizes and elliptic curve domain parameters. Selection guidelines for these parameters and some specific recommended curves that are considered safe are provided in [X9.62], [FIPS-186-2], and [SEC2]. For further security discussion, see [XMLDSIG].

5. Normative References

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6. Informative References

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- [FIPS-186-2] Federal Information Processing Standards Publication (FIPS PUB) 186-2, Digital Signature Standard, January 2000.
- [IEEE1363] Institute for Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) Standard 1363-2000, Standard Specifications for Public Key Cryptography, January 2000.
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- [XML-ns] Bray, T., Hollander, D., and Layman, A., Namespaces in XML, W3C Recommendation, January 1999. <http://www.w3.org/TR/1999/REC-xml-names-19990114/>

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Appendix A. Aggregate XML Schema

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="UTF-8"?>
<xs:schema
  targetNamespace="http://www.w3.org/2001/04/xmldsig-more#"
  xmlns:ecdsa="http://www.w3.org/2001/04/xmldsig-more#"
  xmlns:xs="http://www.w3.org/2001/XMLSchema"
  elementFormDefault="qualified"
  attributeFormDefault="unqualified"
  version="0.2">

  <!--ECDSA key value root element-->

  <xs:element name="ECDSAKeyValue" type="ecdsa:ECDSAKeyValueType"/>
  <xs:complexType name="ECDSAKeyValueType">
    <xs:sequence>
      <xs:element name="DomainParameters"
        type="ecdsa:DomainParamsType" minOccurs="0"/>
      <xs:element name="PublicKey" type="ecdsa:ECPointType"/>
    </xs:sequence>
  </xs:complexType>

  <!--EC domain parameters-->

  <xs:complexType name="DomainParamsType">
    <xs:choice>
      <xs:element name="ExplicitParams"
        type="ecdsa:ExplicitParamsType"/>
      <xs:element name="NamedCurve">
        <xs:complexType>
          <xs:attribute name="URN" type="xs:anyURI" use="required"/>
        </xs:complexType>
      </xs:element>
    </xs:choice>
  </xs:complexType>
  <xs:complexType name="FieldParamsType" abstract="true"/>

  <xs:complexType name="PrimeFieldParamsType">
    <xs:complexContent>
      <xs:extension base="ecdsa:FieldParamsType">
        <xs:sequence>
          <xs:element name="P" type="xs:positiveInteger"/>
        </xs:sequence>
      </xs:extension>
    </xs:complexContent>
  </xs:complexType>
  <xs:complexType name="CharTwoFieldParamsType" abstract="true">
    <xs:complexContent>
```

```

    <xs:extension base="ecdsa:FieldParamsType">
      <xs:sequence>
        <xs:element name="M" type="xs:positiveInteger"/>
      </xs:sequence>
    </xs:extension>
  </xs:complexContent>
</xs:complexType>
<xs:complexType name="OddCharExtensionFieldParamsType">
  <xs:complexContent>
    <xs:extension base="ecdsa:FieldParamsType">
      <xs:sequence>
        <xs:element name="M" type="xs:positiveInteger"/>
        <xs:element name="W" type="xs:positiveInteger"/>
      </xs:sequence>
    </xs:extension>
  </xs:complexContent>
</xs:complexType>
<xs:complexType name="TnBFieldParamsType">
  <xs:complexContent>
    <xs:extension base="ecdsa:CharTwoFieldParamsType">
      <xs:sequence>
        <xs:element name="K" type="xs:positiveInteger"/>
      </xs:sequence>
    </xs:extension>
  </xs:complexContent>
</xs:complexType>
<xs:complexType name="PnBFieldParamsType">
  <xs:complexContent>
    <xs:extension base="ecdsa:CharTwoFieldParamsType">
      <xs:sequence>
        <xs:element name="K1" type="xs:positiveInteger"/>
        <xs:element name="K2" type="xs:positiveInteger"/>
        <xs:element name="K3" type="xs:positiveInteger"/>
      </xs:sequence>
    </xs:extension>
  </xs:complexContent>
</xs:complexType>
<xs:complexType name="ExplicitParamsType">
  <xs:sequence>
    <xs:element name="FieldParams" type="ecdsa:FieldParamsType"/>
    <xs:element name="CurveParams" type="ecdsa:CurveParamsType"/>
    <xs:element name="BasePointParams"
      type="ecdsa:BasePointParamsType"/>
  </xs:sequence>
</xs:complexType>
<xs:complexType name="CurveParamsType">
  <xs:sequence>
    <xs:element name="A" type="ecdsa:FieldElemType"/>

```

```
<xs:element name="B" type="ecdsa:FieldElemType"/>
<xs:element name="Seed" type="xs:hexBinary" minOccurs="0"/>
</xs:sequence>
</xs:complexType>
<xs:complexType name="BasePointParamsType">
  <xs:sequence>
    <xs:element name="BasePoint" type="ecdsa:ECPointType"/>
    <xs:element name="Order" type="xs:positiveInteger"/>
    <xs:element name="Cofactor" type="xs:positiveInteger"
      minOccurs="0"/>
  </xs:sequence>
</xs:complexType>

<!--EC point-->

<xs:complexType name="ECPointType">
  <xs:sequence minOccurs="0">
    <xs:element name="X" type="ecdsa:FieldElemType"/>
    <xs:element name="Y" type="ecdsa:FieldElemType"/>
  </xs:sequence>
</xs:complexType>

<!--Field element-->

<xs:complexType name="FieldElemType" abstract="true"/>
<xs:complexType name="PrimeFieldElemType">
  <xs:complexContent>
    <xs:extension base="ecdsa:FieldElemType">
      <xs:attribute name="Value" type="xs:nonNegativeInteger"
        use="required"/>
    </xs:extension>
  </xs:complexContent>
</xs:complexType>
<xs:complexType name="CharTwoFieldElemType">
  <xs:complexContent>
    <xs:extension base="ecdsa:FieldElemType">
      <xs:attribute name="Value" type="xs:hexBinary"
        use="required"/>
    </xs:extension>
  </xs:complexContent>
</xs:complexType>
<xs:complexType name="OddCharExtensionFieldElemType">
  <xs:complexContent>
    <xs:extension base="ecdsa:FieldElemType">
      <xs:attribute name="Value" type="xs:nonNegativeInteger"
        use="required"/>
    </xs:extension>
  </xs:complexContent>
</xs:complexType>
```



```
</xs:complexType>
</xs:schema>
```

Appendix B. Aggregate DTD

```
<!ELEMENT ECDSAKeyValue (DomainParameters?, PublicKey)>
<!ELEMENT PublicKey (X, Y)?>
<!ELEMENT X EMPTY>
<!ATTLIST X Value CDATA #REQUIRED>
<!ELEMENT Y EMPTY>
<!ATTLIST Y Value CDATA #REQUIRED>
<!ELEMENT DomainParameters (ExplicitParams | NamedCurve)>
<!ELEMENT NamedCurve EMPTY>
<!ATTLIST NamedCurve URN CDATA #REQUIRED>
<!ELEMENT ExplicitParams (FieldParams, CurveParams, BasePointParams)>
<!ELEMENT FieldParams (P | (M, K) | (M, K1, K2, K3) | (M, W))>
<!ELEMENT P (#PCDATA)>
<!ELEMENT M (#PCDATA)>
<!ELEMENT W (#PCDATA)>
<!ELEMENT K (#PCDATA)>
<!ELEMENT K1 (#PCDATA)>
<!ELEMENT K2 (#PCDATA)>
<!ELEMENT K3 (#PCDATA)>
<!ELEMENT CurveParams (A, B, Seed?)>
<!ELEMENT A EMPTY>
<!ATTLIST A Value CDATA #REQUIRED>
<!ELEMENT B EMPTY>
<!ATTLIST B Value CDATA #REQUIRED>
<!ELEMENT Seed (#PCDATA)>
<!ELEMENT BasePointParams (BasePoint, Order, Cofactor?)>
<!ELEMENT BasePoint (X, Y)?>
<!ELEMENT Order (#PCDATA)>
<!ELEMENT Cofactor (#PCDATA)>
```

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