

Re-use of E-mail Addresses: How to Prevent Impact on edu-ID Accounts

The logo for SWITCH, featuring the word "SWITCH" in a bold, blue, sans-serif font. The letter "W" is stylized with a yellow-to-orange gradient.

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E-Mail address in edu-ID

- Used as login name (like for many cloud services today)
- Any e-mail address associated to account can be used to login or for password reset!

Risk:

User loses e-mail address, another user inherits it and takes over original owner's edu-ID account

E-Mail Address Recycling

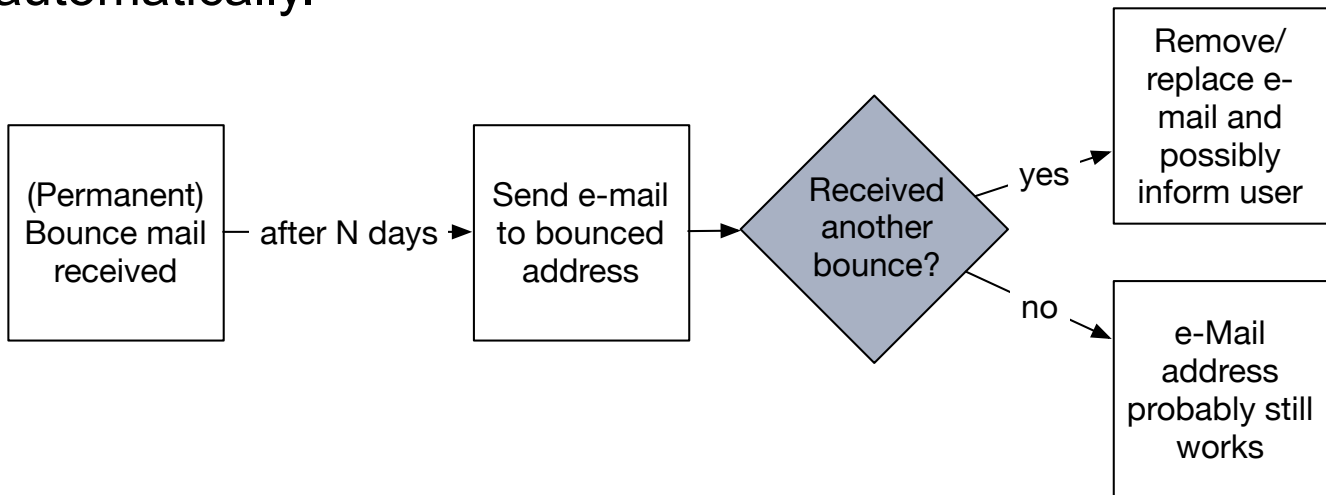
- **Every e-mail provider has own policy regarding address recycling:**
 - Gmail never recycles
 - Most e-mail providers recycle addresses after some grace period (e.g. 1 year for Hotmail, 6 months for Yahoo, GMX deletes account after 6 months inactivity and may recycle after 12 months)
- **What about universities? Schools? Companies?**
 - Example: Staff member with same name inherited address of student after just a few days of grace period

Counter-Measures by edu-ID I

- If user loses university affiliation **edu-ID automatically removes e-mail addresses**
 - If no other address is available, “.inactive” is appended to address.
 - User can regain account on his own if password still known
 - Reserved domain .inactive prevents password reset
- **Remind inactive users** of their account
- Remind users to **add long-term non-organisation address**

Counter-Measures by edu-ID II

- Starting in May/June 2020: **Bounce Mail Processing**
 - Bounce mail processing will recognize inactive addresses and remove them automatically.



Limitations of Bounce-Mail Processing

- Only works if we ever **receive a bounce-mail** or trigger one
 - edu-ID users don't receive regular e-mails to their contact address
 - Additional/linked identities e-mail address are currently not checked regularly
- Does not work if e-mail **address is recycled in less than N**
- **Future extension:**
Check e-mail addresses actively (by sending an e-mail) or via commercial service. But how often?

Counter Measures for End-User

- Keep e-mail addresses of edu-ID account **up-to-date**
- Enable Two-Step login (**multi-factor authentication**)
- Ideally add your (**privately**) **owned long-term e-mail address** as contact address