


CASE STUDY

# Nextcloud enables secure, sovereign collaboration for Austria's Federal Ministry

Modernized collaboration with ensured digital sovereignty



 Federal Ministry  
Economy, Energy  
and Tourism  
Republic of Austria

## Executive summary

The Federal Ministry for Economy, Energy and Tourism (BMWET) has around 1200 employees across its headquarters in Vienna and four external European locations. Their goal is to further improve Austrian business opportunities, promote growth and ensure a sustainable economic recovery. This, of course, means that they handle personal data for its employees, but also from Austrian companies and citizens.

In 2024, the Austrian Federal Ministry for Economy, Energy and Tourism (BMWET) faced the urgent need to modernize its collaboration tools, after Skype for Business was phased out. On top of that, they needed to remain compliant with strict GDPR and NIS2 regulations. Although both management and users initially pushed for Microsoft Teams, a legal risk assessment revealed major concerns around cloud data handling. To avoid workflow disruption, the ministry adopted a hybrid approach: deploying Nextcloud on-premises for secure file sharing and communication, while activating Sendent to integrate it with Outlook workflows and Teams for external meetings. The result was a significant step toward digital sovereignty. The new user-friendly platform, improved compliance, reduced vendor lock-in, and won over even the users who were initially skeptical.



### The main challenge

Ensuring compliance while mitigating legal risks of cloud data handling, preserving user workflows, enabling secure collaboration, and reducing dependence on foreign cloud providers.



### Nextcloud solution

On-premise Nextcloud Hub implementation for secure collaboration, with Sendent enabling Outlook, Teams meetings, calendar sync and, and file redirection to Nextcloud.

## Project overview

### Customer name

Federal Ministry of Economy, Energy and Tourism (BMWET)

### Industry

Public sector

### Country

Austria

### Solution

Nextcloud Hub (w/o Groupware)

### Deployment type

On-premise

### Key integrations

Outlook workflows and Teams for external meetings



## Metrics highlight



**1200+**  
Users



**4 months**  
from POC to Go-Live

# Ensuring compliance while modernizing the IT infrastructure

In 2024, the BMWET faced the challenge of modernizing their collaboration tools while keeping in line with strict Austrian digital sovereignty requirements. On top of this challenge, support for Skype for Business (the tool they were using) approached its end.

Microsoft Teams, seemed the default solution, but a detailed Data Protection Impact Assessment revealed some serious legal and compliance risks with storing sensitive data in Microsoft's cloud. Specifically, Austrian law and EU regulations (GDPR and the upcoming NIS2 directive), required full control over data. There was no compromise to be made when it came to data protection and data sovereignty.

In a nutshell, they were looking for a solution to these challenges:

- Mandate to align with GDPR and NIS2 requirements
- Legal risks from cloud-based data handling
- User expectations to preserve workflows
- Need for secure external collaboration with EU partners
- Increased independence from foreign cloud providers



*We have major concerns with the pressure of nearly all Non-European Tech concerns to move all customer data to their cloud infrastructure.*

**Florian Zinnagl**

Chief Information Security Officer at BMWET



# Nextcloud lays the foundation for sovereign collaboration

In order to successfully solve their challenges, the ministry took a hybrid approach, with a custom system architecture. They implemented Nextcloud Hub, with the exception of Nextcloud Groupware, for secure collaboration, hosted on their premises. Additionally, with support from Nextcloud partner Sendent a Microsoft integration was implemented, allowing users to continue using Outlook, synchronize their calendars with the Nextcloud environment, hold external meetings via Microsoft Teams, and redirect all file transfers from Teams to Nextcloud. Internal collaboration and meetings take place in Nextcloud Talk, ensuring full data control and secure communication.

The open-source nature of Nextcloud allowed for full customization, compliance with laws and regulations, and seamless integration with the existing systems.

This approach ensured:

- A major step toward digital sovereignty by strengthening control over the infrastructure and sensitive data
- Compliance assurance with full audit trails and compliant data processing
- User familiarity by preserving Outlook workflows
- External collaboration with Teams as tool for external meetings
- Future-proof flexibility based on the created foundation for further independence from Microsoft



*Based on our requirements analysis, we came to the conclusion that Nextcloud fits best for our demands and in alignment with our digitalization strategy.*

**Florian Zinnagl**

Chief Information Security Officer at BMWET



# Implementation process

The successful implementation wasn't only due to the software chosen, but also based on careful planning and strong collaboration. The project moved fast, from evaluation to full production, supported by Nextcloud implementation partner Atos Technologies Austria GmbH, together with the Nextcloud team and our integration partner Sendent.

The development included several key:

## 1. Policy and legal groundwork

The ministry reviewed and updated internal policies to support modern collaboration tools while staying compliant with GDPR and other regulations.

## 2. Technical research

A detailed comparison was conducted between Microsoft Teams and Nextcloud. They identified technical requirements and potential integrations needed for a successful setup.

## 3. Legal review

Legal experts confirmed that the hybrid setup — using Nextcloud Talk and Nextcloud Files for all secure communication and file sharing, while keeping Microsoft Teams strictly for external meetings — meets data protection and sovereignty requirements. All shared documents in Teams are stored and managed through Nextcloud Files, ensuring data remains under full organizational control.

## 4. Proof of Concept

Nextcloud was tested alongside the Teams integration in a trial phase. The ministry gathered feedback from users and evaluated how the tools worked together in real-world scenarios.

## 5. Production deployment

The full Nextcloud environment was installed and configured

## 6. Organization-wide roll-out

All staff (1200 users) transitioned to the new platform in a single day. Training materials, internal support, and clear communication ensured a smooth and successful launch.

# Secure, flexible collaboration under full data control

Thanks to Nextcloud, all sensitive government data now resides securely within Austria's national infrastructure. With a smooth technical implementation, the results and impact were observed right away.

## Adoption

The adoption of the new system was aided by a couple of things. Firstly, the platform was branded internally as "ConnectX" to foster user trust and distinguish it from public cloud offerings. Short focused tutorials were published weekly on the intranet prior to the roll-out to prepare the transition and, during the transition period, IT teams provided hands-on support. Lastly, users were informed and engaged with regular updates and feedback channels.

## Compliance and vendor risk

The integrated solution strengthened GDPR and NIS2 compliance through detailed audit trails and transparency in data processing. The ministry also reduced its reliance on a single vendor, gaining more flexibility and negotiation power.



*We are responsible for a large amount of sensitive data - from employees, companies, and citizens alike. As a public institution, we take this responsibility very seriously. That's why we view it critically to rely on cloud solutions from non-European corporations for processing this information.*



**Florian Zinnagl**

Chief Information Security Officer at BMWET

### Productivity and cost savings

With Nextcloud, government staff can securely collaborate on internal documents and share files with external partners while keeping full control over data. Employees now have secure access to systems from mobile devices and personal computers, boosting flexibility without compromising security. Tools like collaborative editing, task tracking with Nextcloud Deck, and password management have improved daily workflows, while automated policy enforcement has reduced the need for manual IT oversight, saving time and lowering operational costs.

### Impact and recognition

BMWET's approach and implementation has made its rounds across Austria's public sector and beyond. Two other ministries have begun looking into the solution, with one of them already in the evaluation phase.

There was also a strong management endorsement from leaders who initially favored Teams. However, as a result of the outstanding performance, their original preference was transformed into strong advocacy implementation.

At the end of the day, this project has positioned Austria as a leader in sovereignty implementation, being in strong alignment with EU initiatives on digital sovereignty and reduced dependency on non-EU tech providers.

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*In Europe, we should place greater trust in the technologies we develop ourselves, Digital sovereignty is not just a buzzword; it's a serious responsibility, especially when processing sensible information and critical services could be disrupted for days.*

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**Florian Zinnagl**

Chief Information Security Officer at BMWET

## Expanding Nextcloud benefits

In the near future the ministry plans to extend its use of Nextcloud. They intend to activate Nextcloud AI features, including deploying language models. As next step, they consider syncing Exchange with Nextcloud Groupware with the goal of improved usability for scheduling and reduced reliance on Microsoft Outlook. Finally, they are taking security enhancement measures.

The Austrian Ministry's experience shows that government organizations can achieve digital sovereignty without sacrificing functionality or user experience.

**Talk to us about building a secure, sovereign digital workspace for your government organization.**

[Request a Demo >](#)



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## About us

Nextcloud Hub is the industry-leading, fully open-source, on premise content collaboration platform. Teams access, share and edit their documents, chat and participate in video calls and manage their mail and calendar and projects across mobile, desktop and web interfaces.

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