Nextcloud

SUCCESS STORY

From dependency to sovereignty

How Schleswig-Holstein moved 30,000 public servants off Microsoft 365



SH Schleswig-Holstein
Der echte Norden

Schleswig-Holstein, Germany's northernmost state replaced Microsoft Office, exchange, SharePoint and Teams with an open-source digital workplace. Its experience shows that digital sovereignty can work at the scale of an entire public administration.

At a glance

~30,000
Employees in scope

44,000
Mailboxes migrated

Over 80%
Without Microsoft Office

Over 20,000 & rising
Nextcloud users

On-premises at Dataport
(collectively owned by 5 German states)
Hosting

€15 million
Saved in licence fees in 2025

Unanimous, cross-party;
open source required by state law
Political backing

The case for digital sovereignty

Control and resilience

For Schleswig-Holstein, the move to open source started with a clear economic concern: rising and difficult-to-predict software license costs. But the case quickly became bigger than cost. The state wanted greater control over its data and infrastructure, less dependency on individual technology providers, and more freedom to shape its digital workplace according to its own needs.



We cannot rule out unwanted data outflows. Access from the USA is possible at any time — the CLOUD Act permits it.

Dirk Schrödter
Minister for Digitalisation at Schleswig-Holstein

Predictable costs and competition

By migrating away from the US hyperscaler, the administration saved €15 million, which was invested in its own digital infrastructure, development, and contracts with European companies.



We want to have control ourselves, be flexible, and spend our money on care, education or childcare rather than on licences from big companies.

Jan Philipp Albrecht
former Digitalisation Minister

Migration step-by-step

A large-scale migration from proprietary platforms does not happen overnight. The state adopted the open-source strategy, as early as 2015, with its data centers. This move predated the state parliament decision to opt for open-source when replacing or modernizing IT systems, which started in 2018. In 2023, the Nextcloud infrastructure was built, and migration progressed workload by workload.

2024

Cabinet decides on sovereign IT workplace, Nextcloud enters production and ODF becomes the binding document standard.

2025

Mail migration progresses ministry by ministry. All 44,000 mailboxes are migrated by October.

2026

Specialist applications are being built with Nextcloud Tables and Flow, an AI assistant is being piloted, and the Linux desktop rollout continues (750 workstations planned, 2,500 in 2027).

This phased approach allowed the administration to keep operating while progressively decreasing its technological dependence.

Nextcloud: from file share to the center of the administration

Nextcloud was already being used by individual IT departments for cross-organizational file sharing before it became part of Schleswig-Holstein's open-source strategy. This allowed teams to test the platform in practice without committing to a large-scale migration.



It wasn't just a little file-sharing solution, it became the central hub for collaboration in our federal state.

Sven Thomsen
CIO Schleswig-Holstein

Today, more than 20,000 users work with Nextcloud. The deployment has expanded to include Files, Office, Talk, Groupware, Deck, Collectives, Forms, Polls, Tables, Flow and AI, with more than one million files across over 650 group folders.

Tables and Flow provide a platform for digitalizing administrative processes, including use cases for which developing a dedicated application would not be practical. AI capabilities can run within the public data center.

Since May 2026, Dataport engineers have also been working directly with Nextcloud on team- and project-based workflows.

How it went

Results

- European recognition
- Core migration completed in 2 years
- First regional government to endorse the UN Open Source Principles

Lessons learned

- Treat migration as organizational change and invest accordingly
- Start small, then scale
- Secure long-term political and legislative backing

Who is following

- Mecklenburg-Vorpommern: Nextcloud rollout planned for ~50,000 employees; 5,000 already migrated.
- International interest from Denmark, the Netherlands, Austria and Switzerland
- Enterprise interest from several DAX-listed companies

Schleswig-Holstein shows that a public administration can leave the US cloud without leaving its users behind. The technology is mature. What it takes is a decision, support from lawmakers and the patience to bring people along.



Plan the project and just start. Einfach machen!

Dirk Schrödter
Minister for Digitalisation at Schleswig-Holstein

nextcloud.com

sales@nextcloud.com

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