



Case Study

Keeping data secure for a globally distributed organization working with politically sensitive data

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The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) is the most influential political think-tank in Germany. At home as well as abroad, its civic education programs aim at promoting freedom and liberty, peace, and justice. They focus on consolidating democracy, the unification of Europe and the strengthening of transatlantic relations, as well as on development cooperation. As a think-tank and consulting agency, their soundly researched scientific fundamental concepts and current analyses are meant to offer a basis for possible political action. The Berlin Academy is the national forum of dialogue between the spheres of politics, economy, science, and society.

The organization has 16 offices in Germany and a further 107 abroad. They have more than 1.000 employees around the world. All of them have access to their private cloud solution. The servers, however, are based in Germany. Since the foundation runs most of their offices in countries with weak data protection and security standards, they need a proper solution for their data.

“In the last five years, I was heading the regional KAS Media Program Asia. While I was based in Singapore, I had projects from Kazakhstan to New Zealand, from Japan to Sri Lanka. During my 120 business trips I used Nextcloud to work remotely from any hotel or conference room with my team in Singapore. This worked very well on mobile as well as on my Linux laptop.”

– Torben Stephan, former Director Media Program Asia

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“Thanks to Nextcloud, working remotely and secure is not a problem anymore.”

Introduction of Nextcloud

In the past, users at the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung regularly uploaded files to public cloud services like Dropbox or Google Drive. This left the IT department with open questions regarding to data integrity and Data Protection Act (DPA) compliance. The social and politically sensitive work done by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung created a strong motivation to look for a file sharing solution that IT could control.

KAS started their own cloud project named ‘the KASCloud’ in 2015, building on ownCloud 7. In 2017, they decided to migrate to Nextcloud.

According to Daniel Kempkens, system administrator at KAS: “The main focus was to keep our users’ uploads in a controlled environment.”

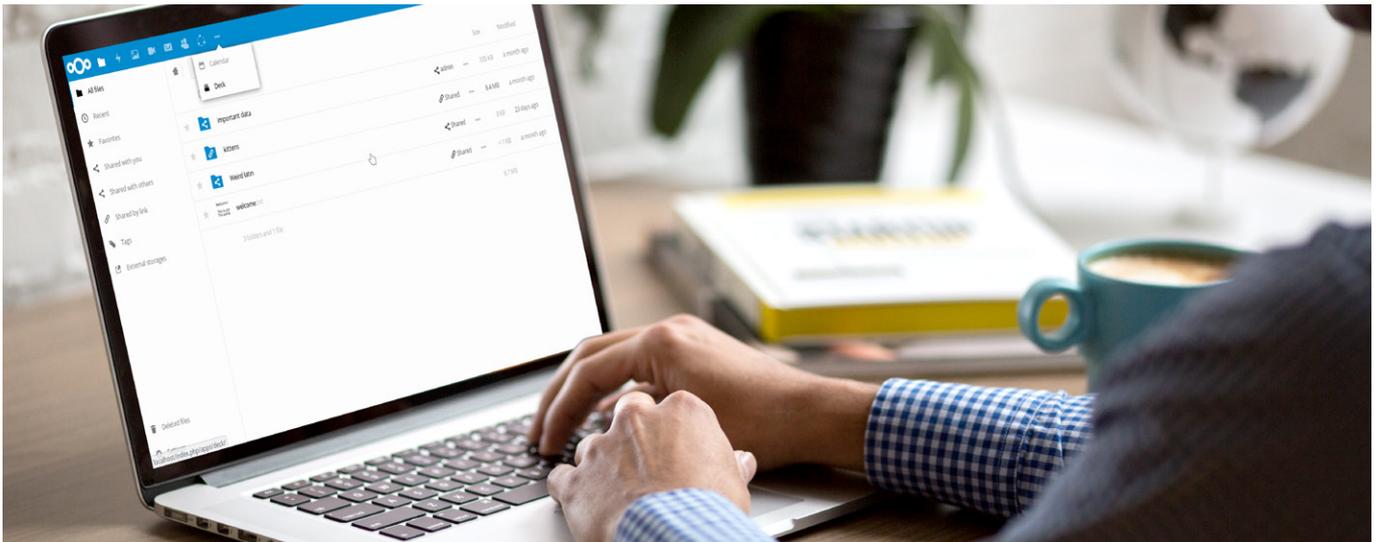
He continues: “The main reasons to chose Nextcloud were its capabilities to authenticate users against our LDAP directory in combination with the open source strategy. We do not just have our hands on our data but also on the whole software itself, and can therefore decide which parts of the Nextcloud system we will enable or disable.”



Infrastructure

The Nextcloud instance of KAS is hosted on one dedicated on-premise server located in the IT headquarter in Sankt Augustin near Bonn in Germany.

Today KAS has approximately 400 active users with more than 180.000 hosted files and almost 300 created shares. Every user has a personal storage capacity of 35 GB, which is located on one of their two “KASCloud exclusive” network attached storage systems.



Conclusion and outlook

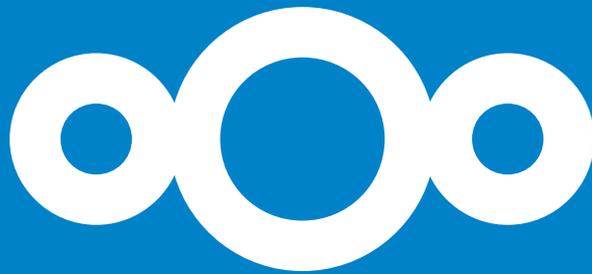
Daniel noted that Nextcloud has been a very satisfactory solution: “We use Nextcloud primary as a file sharing platform. Our users are satisfied with the software solution, as it is easy to use, and they now have one single sharing platform which is also supported by the IT department. In return, the IT department has now one file sharing platform which is easy to maintain and DPA compliant.”

In addition to the Nextcloud web interface, the users make heavy use of the Nextcloud apps on their smartphones as well as a WebDAV-folder connection within the internal KAS network.

And this is all working smoothly, no small part thanks to the services provided by Nextcloud GmbH. Daniel: “Since July 2017 we have an Enterprise Subscription and are therefore able to get in contact directly with the developers in case of problems of any kind. Until now, we have opened several requests which were all solved to our satisfaction.”

Thinking, right now, is to expand their Nextcloud instance to a high availability clustered system and the team is in conversation to upgrade their subscription to premium, which includes clustering support from Nextcloud. Timeline is until the end of 2018.

Next would then be to tackle Nextcloud Talk, as the team sees benefits in the self-hosted communication platform and its deep integration with Nextcloud Files. Online office in the form of OnlyOffice is also in the process of getting deployed.



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