

Sovereign digitalization for government administration

Kirchheim unter Teck uses the BundesMessenger from the Open Telekom Cloud



Reference project:



“The Managed BundesMessenger satisfies all the requirements that we have of a digital solution: it is modern, sovereign, and offers an excellent user experience”

Björn Eitelbuss, Deputy Area Director for Information and Communication Technology, City of Kirchheim unter Teck

Kirchheim unter Teck, a county seat in the foothills of the Swabian Mountains, is part of the greater Stuttgart region. The city is home to more than 40,000 residents. It serves as a middle center to the surrounding communities. Kirchheim has recognized the value of digitalization when it comes to mastering the challenges the city faces. It has adopted a digitalization strategy that is being implemented successively. This strategy focuses on three action areas: Smart City, digital government, and digital education.

In the “digital government” action area, the city wants to leverage the digital opportunities to get its government administration in shape for the future, along with the city as a whole. First and foremost, this means rolling out the technical infrastructure required to make municipal offerings and services available online (E-government). This action area is also responsible for technical internal administrative structures, municipal tasks, services, processes, and the programs used. The aspect of digital sovereignty, as prescribed by the central IT strategy for the public sector, also plays an important role here. With its vision of digital sovereignty in the public sector, Germany is a global leader. Digital sovereignty gives public sector institutions scope for digital action and minimizes dependency on IT providers. Digital sovereignty aims to exercise maximum control over data and infrastructures, without dependence on big tech. Ideally, government administration will be able to fulfill its duties in a digital world independently, autonomously, and securely.

With its strong focus on sovereign IT solutions, Deutsche Telekom proved to be the right partner for driving the digitalization of government administration forward in Kirchheim unter Teck.

At a glance

- The City of Kirchheim unter Teck wants to capture digitalization potential
- Sought a messenger solution for government administration employees
- Requirement: modern, sovereign solution
- BundesMessenger open-source software from BWI (device agnostic app, exclusively for public sector institutions)
- Secure encrypted communications
- Provided as SaaS from the Open Telekom Cloud
- Managed services (including updates and new releases)
- Additional option to integrate internal IAM systems
- Modern, real-time communication with an enhanced user experience
- Maximum sovereignty and data security
- Transparent, usage-based costs

Reference in detail

The challenge

“Our first specific project involved rolling out a messenger service for government employees,” explains Björn Eitelbuss, Deputy Area Director for Information and Communication Technology. “Messengers like WhatsApp have become commonplace in our personal lives. Their benefits are undisputed.” Emergency personnel in fire departments, police departments, and disaster preparedness can benefit greatly from fast communication. At the same time, however, any deployed messenger system has to satisfy the strict requirements for security and sovereignty in government administration. “We needed a solution that offered the ease of use and performance of modern digitalization, yet gave us full digital sovereignty at the same time.”

The solution

With its managed service for the BundesMessenger, T-Systems had the right solution for Kirchheim. This solution is based on open-source software from element and uses the secure matrix communication protocol, an open standard for decentralized, secure, sovereign real-time communication that is already used by over 100 million people worldwide.

element was also the foundation for BWI, the IT service provider to the German Armed Forces, to create the “Bundeswehr-Messenger”. The development team hardened the applications and increased security, and ultimately created the BundesMessenger. At the end of 2023, BWI posted the open code via Gitlab in a community approach for other public sector institutions and has been taking care of ongoing further development since then. The app is device agnostic (smartphones, tablet PCs).

T-Systems runs the sovereign open-source software in a sovereign German cloud, the Open Telekom Cloud. Public sector institutions can use it there under a software-as-a-service model – simple, scalable, and inexpensive. T-Systems provides additional managed services to ensure that updates and new releases become available quickly. In addition, the service is enriched with integration solutions – enabling public sector institutions to manage their users with an existing IAM (identity and access management) system, for instance.

In addition to fast real-time communication, the BundesMessenger also supports defining groups and rooms, as well as file-sharing. With its federal approach, it enables the spheres of individual organizations to be interconnected within the public community.

Customer benefits

“With the managed service for BundesMessenger, we get an end-to-end package from a single source,” says Eitelbuss. “We can start with a relatively small number of 50 users and then scale up as needed, adding new users bit by bit.” By running the sovereign open-source software in a sovereign cloud, the city gets an all-round sovereign messenger solution. The costs for the messenger are completely transparent and based on the number of users. Kirchheim is using the BundesMessenger to capture the potential of sovereign digitalization for its employees and, as a result, achieving a part of its digital strategy. In addition, the federated approach offers Kirchheim the possibility of using the messenger solution to exchange information with other public sector institutions as well. “The managed service for the BundesMessenger satisfies all the requirements that we have of a digital solution: it is modern, sovereign, and offers an excellent user experience,” summarizes Eitelbuss.

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