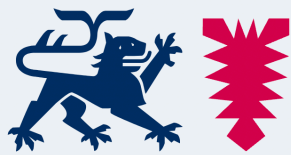04 Apr 2024

German state moving 30,000 PCs to LibreOffice

Posted in Announcements, LibreOffice By Mike Saunders On April 4, 2024

Following a successful pilot project, the northern German federal state of Schleswig-Holstein has decided to move from Microsoft Windows and Microsoft Office to Linux and LibreOffice (and other free and open source software) on the 30,000 PCs used in the local government. As reported on the homepage of the Minister-President:

> *Independent, sustainable, secure: Schleswig-Holstein will be a digital pioneer region and the first German state to introduce a digitally sovereign IT workplace in its state administration. With a cabinet decision to introduce the open-source software LibreOffice as the standard office solution across the board, the government has given the go-ahead for the first step towards complete digital sovereignty in the state, with further steps to follow.*

The term **digital sovereignty** is very important here. If a public administration uses proprietary, closed software that can't be studied or modified, it is very difficult to know what happens to users' data:

> *We have no influence on the operating processes of such [proprietary] solutions and the handling of data, including a possible outflow of data to third countries. As a state, we have a great responsibility towards our citizens and companies to ensure that their data is kept safe with us and we must ensure that we are always in control of the IT solutions we use and that we can act independently as a state.*

This follows on from the finding by the European Data Protection Supervisor (EDPS) that the European Commission's use of Microsoft 365 breaches data protection law.

In addition, there is this question: **Why should local governments use taxpayers' money to buy proprietary, closed software from a single vendor?** With LibreOffice and free software, administrations have much more choice where to get the software and support, and can fund local developers to make improvements. In addition, local governments can maintain full control of the software, study its source code, make changes they require and deploy it entirely on their own infrastructure. Learn more about "Public Money, Public Code".

So we welcome the decision in Schleswig-Holstein to move its IT administration to free and open source software, for all the benefits it brings, both for the local government and the almost three million citizens of the state.

Full statement from the State Chancellery here (in German)

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