

Cloud computing 'made in Germany' stirs debate at CeBIT

March 11 2012, by Aurelia End



A network hub is seen at the world's biggest high-tech fair, the CeBIT, on March 6, 2012 in Hanover, central Germany. Having lived through first a Nazi dictatorship, then a Communist one, Germans are especially sensitive when it comes to data protection

When it comes to cars or machines, "made in Germany" is seen worldwide as a sign of quality, but some firms are now extending it to "cloud computing", the buzzword at this year's CeBIT tech fair.

It may seem paradoxical to impose borders on this multi-billion-dollar industry, which allows users to store data remotely rather than on individual machines, but this is exactly the aim of Deutsche Telekom.

The head of the German communications giant, Rene Obermann, told visitors to the [CeBIT](#) this year that "the 'German Cloud' could present a competitive advantage for us."

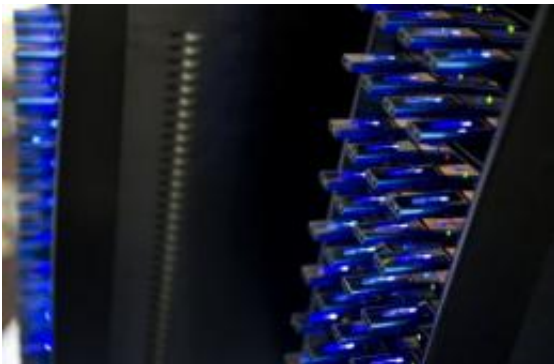
Why? In a word, security.

Having lived through first a Nazi dictatorship, then a Communist one, [Germans](#) are especially sensitive when it comes to data protection and Deutsche Telekom hopes to leverage this to its advantage.

"In Germany, the data protection laws are very strict. But several operators do not come from Germany and do not adhere to these standards," said Obermann.

He is aiming at the 3.6 million prosperous German small and medium sized firms who have not yet taken the leap to storing their data using [cloud computing](#). Only 12 percent have done so.

"It's an enormous potential," said Obermann, vaunting the advantage of his firm's 30 giant servers or "[datacenters](#)" across Germany.



Multiple USB memory sticks are seen mounted on a rack to provide storage solutions on the world's biggest high-tech fair, the CeBIT, on March 6, 2012 in Hanover, northern Germany.

However, Sergei Schlotthauer, head of the German IT security lobby

Egosecure, accused Deutsche Telekom of "playing on people's fears."

"For me it makes no difference. Our clients are well aware that with the Internet it is difficult to localise something," he said.

But it is clear that whoever wants to grab a slice of the cloud computing pie -- expected this year to exceed the 100-billion-dollar mark for the first time -- must deal with [security concerns](#).

German [Consumer Protection](#) Minister Ilse Aigner said that the country's strict laws on data protection "could be a competitive advantage."

Thilo Weichert, an expert in data freedom, explained the potential risks.

"When the servers are situated outside Germany or Europe, there is a risk that companies will use your data for commercial purposes or, worse, they will be spied on by the secret services," he said.

"This is what the US Patriot Act" allows, he said, referring to the anti-terrorism laws passed in the United States in the wake of the September 11, 2001 attacks.

"American operators are well aware of this and they are preparing tailor-made solutions for the European market, with servers located in Europe. German clouds 'made in the USA'," said August-Wilhelm Scheer, former boss of high-tech industry lobby Bitkom on his blog.

The German subsidiary of tech giant Microsoft has also had its cloud computing business "certified" by German authorities.

And Hewlett-Packard came to the CeBIT to present "a cloud computer model for the German market and in the German language."

Germany is not the only country in which there is a debate about the "nationality of the cloud."

The French government has launched a project called "Andromeda" which hopes to bring companies under a national cloud. Nevertheless, some big firms such as Atos or Dassault Systems have already shunned the project.

Global software giant SAP, also a German company, believes that the best response would be to have a "European cloud," a view shared by [Deutsche Telekom](#).

The European Commission has been working on a "European Cloud Computing Strategy", but with no concrete results so far.

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