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The University of Cologne integrates SOGo webmail solution to its infrastructure to serve 50 000 users



An email system supporting
over 50 000 mailboxes



An intuitive and
contemporary user interface



Integration with the
identity management
system

The University of Cologne, one of Germany's largest universities, regroups seven faculties spanning various fields of study. It is home to more than 50 000 individuals, including students, lecturers, researchers and administrative staff. Additionally, the university's IT department employs around 120 dedicated professionals.

To facilitate communication, the University offers email services to all its students and staff. In 2022, recognizing the obsolescence of the existing webmail system, the institution initiated a project to replace it with SOGo, an open-source webmail, and called on Alinto to integrate it into the existing infrastructure.

Patrick Holz, Director of Technical and Web Support at the University of Cologne, reflects on this collaboration.

A new On-Premise Open-Source Webmail

Until now, the University of Cologne was using an open-source webmail system that relied on a limited group of developers for updates. The discontinuous development of this webmail platform led the university's IT team to seek an alternative solution.

To avoid significant technological changes, the University of Cologne sought a tool with a functional scope and a development approach similar to the previous one. They drew inspiration from the University of Ulm, which was already using the open-source webmail SOGo.

Patrick Holz elaborates, *"We manage messaging for a user base ranging from 50 000 to 60 000 individuals. Our requirements were a flexible open-source solution that could adapt to our specific technical constraints. This is why we opted for SOGo webmail, considering the positive feedback from the experience at the University of Ulm."*

In addition, the University decided to implement SOGo webmail On-Premise (on-site), which required a dedicated technical infrastructure. Naturally, the integration task was entrusted to Alinto, the software publisher responsible for supporting the open-source version of SOGo.

Integration within a complex technical infrastructure

The University of Cologne faced the task of integrating webmail into a specific technical environment, which included establishing connections with the existing SMTP/IMAP backend mail server. Moreover, the identity management system is complex and often presents interfacing challenges to the providers.

Alinto's challenge therefore was to consider these technical aspects before deploying SOGo webmail within the current infrastructure. Patrick Holz further explains, *"We held several preliminary meetings to convey our technical environment and its prerequisites."*

Ultimately, Alinto decided to configure a cluster of six servers (comprising application front-end, calendar synchronization) for

Goals

- Implementing a new webmail solution
- Seamless integration into the current infrastructure
- Identifying an expert to set up the open-source SOGo webmail system

About Alinto

Founded in 2000, Alinto became an international player in the email business : webmail hosting, anti-spam, email server... through several products :

- **SOGomail:** Carrier-grade mail server for organizations that are looking for a proven European alternative.
- **Cleanmail:** Best-in-class email filtering & AI technology to protect your email communication from any risk & threats.
- **Serenamail:** SMTP Gateway with carrier-grade email deliverability for your transactional emails.

the deployment of SOGo webmail. This resilient architecture was designed to handle and to distribute the workload during peak connection times.

Patrick Holz adds, *"We provided the requested servers, and Alinto implemented their configuration, sparing us the need to be concerned about installation specifics."*

A solution appreciated both technically and by the users

The University of Cologne is now deploying the open-source SOGo webmail within its departments. The initial feedback from the IT team is very positive, especially from a technical perspective.

"They have really done a great job. The SOGo service operates seamlessly, and we are currently in the process of gradually expanding its usage. We've observed that the system is remarkably stable, and they have successfully integrated it with our identity management system, which is typically a challenging task," remarks Patrick Holz.

Moreover, users express great satisfaction with the SOGo webmail open-source interface. Patrick Holz notes, *"We have already received numerous positive comments about the SOGo user interface. It is very modern and user-friendly, representing a substantial improvement over our previous webmail system."*

Advantages

- Achieving a flawlessly operational configuration
- Integration with the university's identity management system
- A user-friendly and intuitive email interface for users