



City of Potsdam Advances Digital Education in Schools

Situated in the southwest of Berlin, [Potsdam](#) is the capital and largest city of the German state of Brandenburg. Surrounded by lakes, rivers and forests, the city is an inspiring place to live, study and work.

Industry

Public Sector

Strategic priorities

- Cloud Transformation
- Anywhere Workspace

Headquarters

Potsdam, Germany

Partner

[PROFI Engineering Systems AG](#)

is a mid-sized IT solutions provider headquartered in Darmstadt and operating for more than 35 years.

VMware footprint

- VMware® Cloud™ on AWS
- VMware Workspace ONE® Unified Endpoint Management™

As part of a federal government funding program to advance the digital infrastructure of the German school system, the City of Potsdam bought a fleet of iPads for its students and teachers. The local municipality used VMware Workspace ONE Unified Endpoint Management (UEM) on VMware Cloud on AWS to unify the management of the devices to ensure compliance with EU GDPR and German data privacy laws. Potsdam accelerated the rollout of the urgently needed devices during COVID-19 school closures and is now well-positioned to support the same schools as they embrace digitally enhanced teaching.

The municipality with a mission for modern education

The capital city of Brandenburg state, Potsdam is home to more than 180,000 residents. With nearly 2,500 employees, the city administration supports services ranging from physical infrastructure and public transport to healthcare and cultural services. Among its most important missions is providing a modern educational experience—including digital services—for 25,000 students and 5,000 educators.

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Mathias Horezky, Head of IT Infrastructure and Service, City of Potsdam



Accelerating towards a digitized education system

Digitalization of the education sector is one of Germany's top priorities, and among its most significant challenges—now and for the next few years. According to the European Commission¹, digital standards in German schools lag behind those of their EU neighbors. The federal government has provided a billion-Euro, multi-year “Digital Pact School” funding program to accelerate the development of a modern, connected and digitized educational system.

Eager to seize the opportunity to digitally advance its schools, the City of Potsdam administration used its funding to buy 3,000 iPads with supporting software licenses. Previously, IT equipment in schools had been scarce, and device management typically fell to teachers or a school IT administrator. With this influx of new devices, the city's 30-person IT team needed to assume device management for all the schools.

With the arrival of COVID-19 and subsequent school closures, the municipality was under even greater pressure to act. With schools rapidly transitioning to home learning, iPads were fundamental to the new teaching regime, and many students didn't have a device to use for school.

The municipality faced several challenges: the devices needed to be up and running fast; they needed to be managed in compliance with the European Union General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR); and the city's small, resources-constrained IT team had to absorb the new workload effectively.

“Buying the 3,000 iPads was only the first step. In the future, we anticipate managing 25,000 clients across our schools. We needed a solution that was extremely flexible,scalable and easy for us to manage,” says Mathias Horezky, head of IT infrastructure and service.

Unified and compliant device management

Having worked with VMware partner PROFI AG for many years, Potsdam turned to the IT systems integrator for help. Because the project was urgent, PROFI AG recommended a cloud-based solution to minimize deployment time. This plan also supported the authority's longer-term goal to commence its journey to the cloud. Because of GDPR compliance and strict German public sector data security and protection requirements—especially for data about school children—the solution had to reside in Germany.

The combination of VMware Workspace ONE UEM running on VMware Cloud on AWS—located in the AWS Frankfurt, Germany data center—met the exacting requirements for the City of Potsdam. Working closely with PROFI AG and VMware, the municipality implemented the solution quickly, taking only a few weeks to complete.

Workspace ONE provides the city's IT department with unified management of mobile devices from a centralized platform. Its multi-tenant architecture allows the IT team to assign unique roles and policies for each school. This helps ensure devices are properly configured so students and staff are given access to only the right applications and resources, and also limit overuse and expense of licenses.

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City of Potsdam

1. European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, “Education and training monitor 2020 : teaching and learning in a digital age,” 2020 <https://op.europa.eu/webpub/eac/education-and-training-monitor-2020/countries/germany.html>



Many municipalities are hesitant to use the cloud due to security concerns, but not so for Potsdam as Horezky explains. “We quickly overcame our security fears because we were confident that, in the shape of VMware, we had the right partner by our side—one that could assure us of data security.”

VMware Cloud on AWS provides the municipality with a GDPR-compliant hybrid cloud infrastructure, enabling the extension of its on-premises environments to a VMware Software-Defined Data Center running on AWS infrastructure. Data is permanently encrypted and always secure. VMware data protection certifications and policies—including Schrems II compliance and the VMware Data Processing Addendum—enabled the City of Potsdam to verify the GDPR compliance of the cloud solution.

The start of a multi-cloud journey

With the new solution in place, the City of Potsdam quickly delivered the urgently needed iPads—fully configured and ready to use—directly to the schools and into the hands of students and teachers. Providing access via the devices to educational apps, portals and websites—as well as a connection between teachers and students—was a critical component in the schools pivoting to remote teaching in the wake of the pandemic.

As part of its “Digital Pact School” initiative, the City of Potsdam has equipped schools with other digital resources such as interactive whiteboards. And with more funding opportunities to invest in broadband internet, online learning platforms and more, the city will continue to advance the digital infrastructure in its educational system.

“COVID-19 placed digital learning solutions firmly on our agenda and forced some changes that are going to be beneficial in the long run. We’re now much better prepared to embrace future teaching methods where remote and digital platforms are blended with in-person classroom learning,” says Horezky.

The city administration and its schools are also benefiting from streamlined IT operations. Resources that were previously managed on local servers in schools are now hosted in the cloud and managed remotely, providing the IT team with the ability to provision IT resources quickly. Additional mobile devices can be configured and integrated easily into the new setup.

“With VMware Cloud on AWS and Workspace ONE UEM, we have a cloud foundation which accommodates adjustments and additions as our digital learning platform expands and matures. It’s changed how we do things and has been a great start to our multi-cloud journey. Soon we’ll start using this cloud platform to support services and internal functions,” says Horezky.

For the City of Potsdam, this was a game-changing project that has paid dividends in many ways. “Going with this cloud solution was quite a brave decision on our part, and we’re proud of the results. We want to encourage other municipalities to be bold and ambitious about their digitalization strategies, taking the road less traveled, if need be,” Horezky says.