

GAIA-X project

A European Cloud Network



France and Germany join hands to accelerate the build-up of a European Cloud Network to provide counterweight and more Digital independence from American and Chinese Cloud Providers. This European Cloud Network should see the first light of day in 2020 and is meant to provide an alternative to the larger Non-European Cloud providers where Europe does not

have to depend on foreign organizations to provide Cloud Services to the European market.

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Why a European Cloud Platform

Cloud is broadly used and large Cloud (platform) organizations from the United States have a huge market share in Europe. However, not only US Cloud providers are in play, also the Asian, and in particular the Chinese providers are rising to the occasion, look towards the east and you will notice the rise of Chinese tech companies, gaining more influence on the European market. Europe depends more and more on Cloud providers that are situated abroad and are beyond any European control in legislation, security and in assurance. To become more independent from foreign Cloud providers and have more control over data generated in Europe, Germany, and in particular German Economy Minister Peter Altmaier, launched the idea to create a European Cloud Platform under the name GAIA-X to take control over our "European Digital Sovereignty".

What is the relevance of GAIA-X

The relevance may become quite clear when you take a closer look at the developments in European Legislations and the fact that data has, over the years, become the "new fortune" of every organization. Take for example the "General Data Protection Regulation" (GDPR) and the "Free Flow of Non-Personal Data Regulation" (FFD). Both are large examples where data across the European continent are involved and, in its current form, largely shared across datacenters in the far east or in the US. Not only

privacy but also seamless change of provider (IaaS, SaaS or PaaS) is a factor to consider when selecting a service provider to handle privacy related personal or business data. Currently different legislations may not always be applicable to the solutions your company is using. With this in the back of your mind, the uprise of a European Cloud Platform suddenly sounds like a logical step in the development of an European Digital Single Market. With concerns about Europe losing data sovereignty and have more self-determination in the areas of digital development, digital services and beyond, the European Commission and several EU member states see the need to support European industry by creating a federated data infrastructure to facilitate a vibrant European ecosystem.

Where did the project originate from

The GAIA-X project is initiated by the German governance, supported by organizations like Siemens, Bosch, Deutsche Telecom and Deutsche Bank. France is also keen to break the hold of U.S. cloud providers, and earlier in 2019 its government said it had enlisted local tech companies to work on similar plans. Germany and France will collaborate on developing the core concepts of GAIA-X, before trying to get other European countries to join early 2020. So this whole concept starts with Germany and France and is supposed to evolve over time with more supporters/contributors from other European countries. In the paper "Das Projekt GAIA-X" from BMWi (Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Energie) the initial goal of the project is to create "*fair and equal conditions of competition and the affirmation of free competition of all players in the market under the premise of Non-discrimination and on the basis from open systems in a common Partnership with international providers*"¹. This basically suggests that this does not exclude US or China based organizations but they will have to comply to the rules of GAIA-X.

The Goals

The project strives to achieve a couple of goals. Without describing them thoroughly, we have listed them as follows:

- Datasovereignty: Full control over our own data
- Reduce dependencies from providers abroad
- Make Cloud services broadly more attractive
- Create an ecosystem for innovation

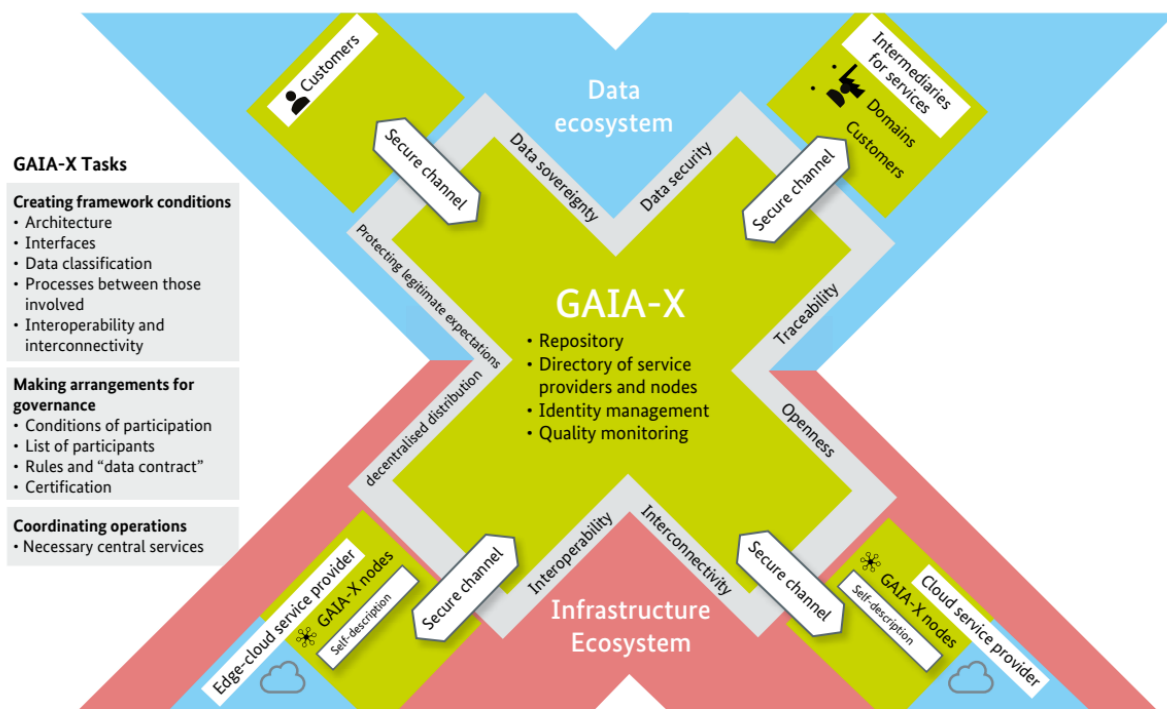
The concept envisages a network of cloud platforms and complementary services; a "decentralized" or "virtual" hyperscaler is mentioned in Altmaier's department. In order not to cause confusion, there should be a common standard for data exchange. The network is designed to include all kinds of organizations, small to big, IT and non-IT.

¹ Translated from German to English

Background details

The global public cloud computing market is currently dominated by Amazon Web Services (47,8%), followed by Microsoft Azure (15,5%), Alibaba (7,7%), Google (4%) and IBM (1,8%). None of these players are European. Geopolitical tensions and trade wars, however, are making European politicians and companies cautious about storing data in the cloud on American or Chinese servers. In both situations the government can order organizations to hand over personal information, which is, according to the European GDPR, not allowed. To come to a more secure Cloud environment that is full European and in line with the Digital Single Market strategy from the European Commission, the project GAIA-X was masterminded in Germany, with Minister Peter Altmeier as the frontrunner in the initiative. The GAIA-X project is established with the following principles in mind;

1. European data protection
2. Openness and transparency
3. Authenticity and trust
4. Digital sovereignty and self-determination
5. Free market access and European value creation
6. Modularity and interoperability
7. User-friendliness



Source: BMWi

What's with the name

In Greek mythology, Gaia is the personification of the Earth and one of the Greek primordial deities. Gaia is the ancestral mother of all life: the primal Mother Earth

goddess. 'Project GAIA-X' is seen by its authors as the cradle of an open, digital ecosystem where data can be made available, securely collated and shared while enjoying the trust of its users. So freely translated GAIA-X is intended to become the "Mother of the European Infrastructure".

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BPdelivery B.V. focusses on the improvement of business processes within the cloud chain between supply and demand. BPdelivery also provides for strategies on how to move businesses successfully to the Cloud and is often asked as specialist to help organizations acquire certifications on quality and security and digital transformation.

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For this article the following sources have been consulted:

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