Customer Case
VMSW

Inetum-Realdolmen sets VMSW on the road to the hybrid cloud

The Flemish Society for Social Housing (VMSW) plans to gradually move towards the public cloud in the coming years. At the same time, the Flemish government agency wants to be able to flexibly switch between the various components of its data center infrastructure. Inetum-Realdolmen is guiding the agency through this strategic transition with advice and assistance.

The Flemish Society for Social Housing encourages, advises and supports social housing companies (SHMs), social rental offices (SVKs), municipalities and public centers for social welfare (PCSWs). "Together with these local residents, we make quality and affordable living possible in Flanders," says IT Director Jan Dooms, summarizing the agency's mission. The VMSW can provide all these residential operators with a wide range of information and support: from advice on building projects to the actual construction of residential infrastructure. They may also call on the services of the agency for lending and other financial support. "We also act as a knowledge center," stresses Jan Dooms. "For example, we organize a lot of information sessions and consultation sessions on relevant topics for the sector, from new regulations to new building techniques."

Focus on application development

Another core function of the VMSW is to provide support for the operational functioning of the various housing actors. The agency also develops and manages IT

applications for SHMs and SVKs. The VMSW, which employs a total of about 250 people, has the necessary qualified personnel to do this. "If I count our external consultants, then I still have about forty ICT employees," says Jan Dooms, "which is quite large in relation to our total workforce and also indicates the importance of ICT for our organization."

"Around thirty of these employees are directly involved in application development," continues the ICT director. "This is our core mission, which is why our main focus is on it. Of course, we can't do that job properly without servers, networks and other ICT equipment. But that only involves a few specialists internally. We have been outsourcing our ICT infrastructure and its management for many years."

"We were really on the same wavelength. This is also one of the qualities that make the relationship special: Inetum-Realdolmen challenges us consistently, but they also listen effectively to us and think with us. This is how we arrive at the right solution together."

**JAN DOOMS,
DIRECTOR ICT @ VLAAMSE MAATSCHAPPIJ VOOR
SOCIAAL WONEN**

Infrastructure: outsourced is well spent

Since the summer of 2020, the VMSW has been relying on a new ICT partner for this: Inetum-Realdolmen. This choice of a new service provider was prompted by a new strategy. The cloud plays an increasingly important role in this. "We want to be able to take advantage of the latest developments, especially in the public cloud,"explains Jan Dooms. "Because that's where all the innovation is happening these days. Public cloud providers are constantly developing new services at attractive conditions."

As VMSW strives to outsource its ICT infrastructure to the greatest extent possible, it also wants to bring it to the public cloud as much as possible in the long term. "It won't work completely, not least because there are legal constraints that also play a role, especially when it comes to privacy and data protection. But we do want to evolve towards a coherent hybrid data center infrastructure. In doing so, we can use both a private and a public cloud and switch easily between the two environments."

Migration: phased approach

In anticipation of the VMSW's full move to that public cloud, the agency has already migrated its existing traditional data center infrastructure to Rcloud, Inetum-Realdolmen's private cloud. "That migration went very well, despite the tight deadline. And Inetum-Realdolmen's professional approach was instrumental in that. Their project manager closely monitored everything, in constant consultation with our project manager and me. He not only pointed out all the potential risks and real problems that arose, but he also contributed constructive solutions each time."

The role of Inetum-Realdolmen is not limited to purely operational support. "Of course, we count on them to manage our new infrastructure in a correct and, above all, secure manner. The intention is ultimately to relieve us of as much of our worries in that area as possible," explains Jan Dooms. "But we also expect that they can play a certain advisory role. Similarly, we are counting on Inetum-Realdolmen to help us determine which workloads we should best move from their private cloud to the public cloud."

This migration to the public cloud will happen in phases, based on a well-considered step-by-step plan. "We definitely preferred this phased approach, even if only to limit the risks. And Inetum-Realdolmen supported us in this.

Expertise is definitive

To be able to fill the role of trusted advisor successfully, you must have the necessary expertise. That was the definitive reason to opt for Inetum-Realdolmen. "All the parties we consulted said they had the required expertise to set up a hybrid cloud environment. When we actually got to talking, however, this was often revealed to be more of a marketing strategy than genuine competence. That didn't apply to Inetum-Realdolmen, who were able to present us with a number of relevant references right off the bat."

"Besides, their expertise isn't limited to a single cloud provider," concludes Jan Dooms. "They have experience with both Microsoft Azure and Amazon Web Services. Last but not least, an IT partner like Inetum-Realdolmen is big enough to assume a neutral position regarding those providers and offer us sufficiently objective advice and guidance."

MORE INFORMATION?
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About VMSW: www.vmsw.be

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