Nexthosting

Study · Public sector

Who owns the networks behind the websites of German municipalities?

Review of all 10,747 official municipalities, 10,438 analysed

Type of study	Own measurement
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Sample	10,438 of 10,747 Municipalities evaluated
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1 Key results

10,440 of 10,747

Confirmed municipalities

For 10,440 of the 10,747 official municipalities, the website was confirmed, by its content or through an official source, as the website of the municipality or its administration.

Evidence: daten.csv · Source [1]

93.9 %

Network registered in Germany

For 93.9 % of the analysed municipalities, the website is in a network with a German registry entry. The entry names the network holder, but neither its parent group or investor nor the server location.

Evidence: daten.csv · Source [3] · Source [4]

at least 1,041 of 10,438

Service under control from outside the EU

For at least 1,041 of 10,438 analysed municipalities (around 10.0 %), the website is served by a hosting, cloud or CDN service that is demonstrably controlled by a company or investor outside the EU.

Evidence: daten.csv · netze.csv · Source [7] · Source [8] · Source [4]

at least 1,454 of 10,438

Including transit and city networks

If transit, city network and data centre operators are added, the website of at least 1,454 of 10,438 analysed municipalities (around 13.9 %) is in a network with documented control from outside the EU. The website may be operated there by a different service provider.

Evidence: daten.csv · netze.csv · Source [7] · Source [8] · Source [4]

at least 819 of 10,438

Service under control from the USA

For at least 819 of 10,438 analysed municipalities (around 7.8 %), the website is served by a hosting, cloud or CDN service controlled by a company or investor from the USA.

Evidence: daten.csv · netze.csv · Source [7] · Source [8] · Source [4]

at least 237 of 10,438

Financial investors

For at least 237 of 10,438 analysed municipalities (around 2.3 %), control of the hosting, cloud or CDN service lies with a financial investor outside the EU.

Evidence: daten.csv · netze.csv · Source [7] · Source [8] · Source [4]

at least 1,926 of 10,438

Nameservers

For at least 1,926 of 10,438 municipalities with a confirmed website and a determinable nameserver network (around 18.5 %), at least one nameserver of the website domain is in a network with documented control from outside the EU.

Evidence: daten.csv · netze.csv · Source [7] · Source [8] · Source [4]

41.4 %

IPv6 address in DNS

For the website of 41.4 % of the confirmed municipalities, an IPv6 address is entered in DNS.

Evidence: daten.csv

2 Summary

> **Research question:** Which networks serve the official websites of German municipalities, and for what share of municipalities is the service demonstrably controlled by companies or investors outside the EU?

The study examines, for all 10,747 official municipalities in Germany, which networks serve their website. 10,438 municipalities with a confirmed website and a determinable network were analysed.

93.9 % of these municipalities use a website in a network with a German registry entry. The entry names the network holder, but neither its parent group or investor nor the server location. For 703 municipalities, the website is in the network of a German-registered hoster that is demonstrably controlled from outside the EU.

If services with a foreign registry entry are added, the figure is at least 1,041 of 10,438 analysed municipalities (around 10.0 %), of which at least 819 are under control from the USA. Including transit, city network and data centre operators, the figure rises to at least 1,454 municipalities (around 13.9 %). Only what is backed by ownership sources that were read and cross-checked by a second AI agent was counted. The actual shares may therefore be higher.

The study makes no statement about server locations, data outflows or legal violations. For email, researchers from the University of Fribourg, the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts, TH Ingolstadt and TH Nürnberg have already examined the municipalities in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. This study adds the websites and their nameservers.

3 Results

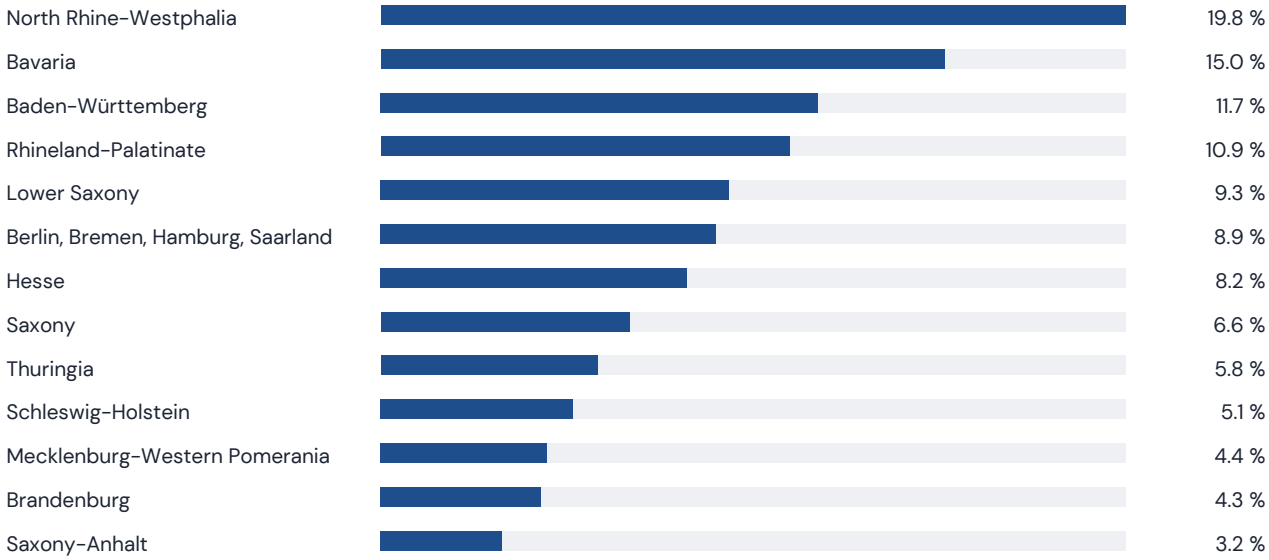
Registry entry and ownership are two different things

93.9 % of the analysed municipalities use a website in a German-registered network. For 1,072 of these municipalities, the network demonstrably belongs to a company or investor outside the EU, 703 of them to hosters.

Of the 1,041 municipalities with such a service, 819 are attributable to the USA and 237 to financial investors. 15 municipalities belong to both groups.

Minimum share with a service under control from outside the EU, by state

Share of the analysed municipalities in percent. Berlin, Bremen, Hamburg and Saarland are combined. Differences are often due to individual shared IT service providers and are not an assessment of the states.



Results by state

Differences are often due to individual shared IT service providers and are not an assessment of the states.

State	Municipalities	Analysed web	Analysed DNS	Min. service, control outside EU	Min. nameserver, control outside EU
North Rhine-Westphalia	396	388	388	19.8 %	9.5 %
Bavaria	2,056	2,038	2,038	15.0 %	26.3 %
Baden-Württemberg	1,101	1,098	1,098	11.7 %	30.9 %
Rhineland-Palatinate	2,300	2,177	2,177	10.9 %	16.1 %
Lower Saxony	939	915	915	9.3 %	15.2 %
Berlin, Bremen, Hamburg, Saarland	56	56	56	8.9 %	16.1 %
Hesse	421	417	417	8.2 %	14.4 %
Saxony	418	407	407	6.6 %	5.4 %
Thuringia	601	554	554	5.8 %	8.7 %
Schleswig-Holstein	1,104	1,075	1,075	5.1 %	22.0 %
Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania	724	699	699	4.4 %	11.9 %
Brandenburg	413	398	398	4.3 %	13.8 %
Saxony-Anhalt	218	216	216	3.2 %	5.1 %

Results by population

Inhabitants	Municipalities	Analysed web	Analysed DNS	Min. service, control outside EU	Min. nameserver, control outside EU
under 1,000	3,802	3,605	3,605	8.2 %	16.1 %
1,000 to 4,999	4,010	3,924	3,924	10.6 %	19.7 %
5,000 to 19,999	2,231	2,207	2,207	10.3 %	19.7 %
20,000 to 99,999	625	623	623	14.3 %	20.9 %
100,000 and over	79	79	79	16.5 %	11.4 %

Networks with documented control from outside the EU

The ownership evidence per network is in the file netze.csv. Networks with fewer than 5 municipalities are combined, and small individual values are shown as under 5.

Network (AS)	Country of control	Control by	Function	Municipalities web	Municipalities DNS	Source date
13101	GB	Financial investor	Transit, city network or data centre	365	180	2024-12-04
13335	US	Group	CDN	188	383	2026-11-05
34011	US	Group	Hosting provider	159	0	2026-02-25
21499	US	Group	Hosting provider	142	16	2026-02-25
8648	GB/GG	Financial investor	Hosting provider	136	under 5	2025-11-14 (portfolio page undated, retrieved 2026-11-21)
8972	US	Group	Hosting provider	94	10	2026-02-25
60253	US	Group	Hosting provider	67	0	2026-02-25
16509	US	Group	Cloud	63	31	2026-10-30
45012	GB/GG	Financial investor	Hosting provider	50	209	2025-11-14 (portfolio page undated, retrieved 2026-11-21)
15830	US	Group	Transit, city network or data centre	44	11	2026-07-29
8075	US	Group	Cloud	31	11	2026-10-28
47215	GB/GG	Financial investor	Hosting provider	25	0	2025-11-14 (portfolio page undated, retrieved 2026-11-21)
51167	US	Financial investor	Hosting provider	15	25	2022-06-08 (portfolio page undated, retrieved 2026-11-21)
20773	US	Group	Hosting provider	15	0	2026-02-25
209242	US	Group	CDN	13	0	2026-11-05
51468	GB/GG	Financial investor	Hosting provider	11	26	2025-11-14 (portfolio page undated, retrieved 2026-11-21)
396982	US	Group	Cloud	11	under 5	2026-11-05
54113	US	Group	CDN	7	0	2026-11-10
14061	US	Group	Cloud	6	under 5	2026-11-03

Network (AS)	Country of control	Control by	Function	Municipalities web	Municipalities DNS	Source date
15169	US	Group	Cloud	under 5	17	2025-12-31
63949	US	Group	Cloud	under 5	7	2026-11-05
44273	US	Group	DNS and domains	0	832	2026-02-25
13246	GB	Group	DNS and domains	0	105	undated, retrieved 2026-11-21
62597	US	Group	DNS and domains	0	69	2026-06-29
197495	GB/GG	Financial investor	DNS and domains	0	26	2025-11-14 (portfolio page undated, retrieved 2026-11-21)
6 more networks	Several	Mixed	Mixed	8	6	varies by network

4 Method

1 **Population**

All politically independent municipalities according to the municipality directory of the Federal Statistical Office, as of 30.09.2026. Unincorporated areas are not counted.

2 **Website per municipality**

The addresses come from Wikidata and were matched using the official municipality key. 33 missing addresses were researched individually. If a municipality has no website of its own, the website of its office or its collective municipality is used.

3 **Content check**

The home pages were retrieved once, redirects were followed and robots.txt was respected. A site is confirmed automatically if it contains the name of the municipality and typical terms of an administration. Unclear cases were additionally checked using the home page and the legal notice. All 794 addresses still open after that were checked individually, and the 311 that remained unclear were checked in a second round using municipality lists of districts and state portals. Wrong addresses were replaced by the documented official address and measured again. Content of sites blocked by robots.txt was not used as evidence in the analysis. For 67 confirmed municipalities, the stored address was blocked: 64 were confirmed through an official third-party source, 3 through a home page that was not blocked. Parked and default pages never count as a confirmed website.

4 **Network measurement**

For the target address, CNAME, A, AAAA and NS records were queried via DNS. The first address was assigned, using public routing and registry data, to the network (Autonomous System) that announces its most specific address block.

5 **Control of the networks**

For 306 networks, the holder and registered seat were recorded, and for 104 of them an ownership statement with at least a medium level of evidence is available. Of 47 networks with possible control from outside the EU, the 40 with at least a medium level of evidence were checked individually using mandatory disclosures, annual reports, legal notices and registry data, and subjected to an attempt at refutation. Networks of the same owner group were assessed uniformly. One large transit network was removed because the registered holder of the address block used there has no longer belonged to the group since the sale of the European business. A network with only one municipality and its own country of control is not counted, to protect that municipality. 31 networks are counted in the results. 10 further networks were only added through the individual check or the renewed network assignment, were not checked for their owners and are therefore not counted. The ownership information of 13 networks with reported sales transactions or older sources was checked again on 22.11.2026 and remained unchanged.

6 **Control check**

A fixed random sample of 150 automatically confirmed municipality sites was checked without knowledge of the automatic result: 146 were official sites, 0 were wrongly assigned and 4 could not be decided. At 95 % confidence, an error rate of up to around 2.4 % remains possible for the automatically confirmed sites, and up to around 6.7 % if the undecidable cases are counted as errors. The individually checked municipalities are not covered by this sample.

7 **Use of AI**

Research, individual checks, source checks and the control check were carried out by AI agents. A second agent cross-checked the ownership assignment and the upgrades made in the second round. The result figures are calculated from the data by script.

Measurement setup

Measurement date	21.11.2026
Municipalities	10,747
Confirmed municipalities	10,440
Input addresses	8,202
Distinct target addresses with network	7,846
Analysed municipalities (web)	10,438

Analysed municipalities (nameserver)	10,438
Networks with recorded holder	306
Networks with documented control from outside the EU	31
DNS resolvers	1.1.1.1 and 8.8.8.8

5 Sample and period

Period	Nov 21, 2026
Population of the study	10,747 Municipalities
Evaluated	10,438 Municipalities
Not evaluated	309 Municipalities
Selection	Full survey of all politically independent municipalities according to the official municipality directory, as of 30.09.2026. Included in the analysis are municipalities whose website was confirmed, by its content or through an official source, as the website of the municipality or its administration, and whose network could be determined.

6 Limits of what the study can show

Minimum values. A network only counts as controlled from outside the EU if the ownership source was read and the assignment survived an attempt at refutation. Three networks of one owner group did not pass this check because the country of the manager was disputed (United Kingdom or Guernsey), and they are counted through the uniform group assessment. For 202 of the 306 networks, with 55.6 % of the analysed municipalities, the owner has not been established. They are not counted. The shares are therefore lower bounds for the analysed municipalities. Relative to all 10,747 municipalities, the 1,041 municipalities with such a service correspond to around 9.7 %. The study deliberately does not report a share of German or European owners.

No server location. What was measured is which network an address belongs to, not where the server is located. A network under foreign control can operate servers in Germany. No statements about data outflows or legal violations can be derived from the data.

Network and website operator. Of the 1,454 municipalities with documented control from outside the EU, 413 are in transit, city network or data centre networks. They are therefore shown separately from the hosting, cloud and CDN services. For transit networks, the address block may belong to a different company, including a German one. What is counted is the network that announces the address in routing. For upstream CDNs, only this network is visible, not the origin

server.

Excluded municipalities. 307 municipalities are not included in the shares: for 150, the known address does not lead to an official website, and for 157, the assignment of the address was not unambiguous. For a further 2 confirmed municipalities, no network could be determined.

Shared websites. Many small municipalities share the website of their administration. The 10,438 analysed municipalities lead to 7,846 distinct target addresses. Each municipality counts once, so a shared website counts several times. Calculated per target address, the website is served by such a service for at least 967 of 7,846 addresses (around 12.3 %).

Differences between states. Differences between states and size classes are often due to individual shared IT service providers and are not an assessment of the states or municipalities.

Snapshot. The measurement comes from one day and one measurement point. Ownership and hosting can change at any time. The date of the respective ownership source is stated in the data, and for some networks the most recent explicit source dates back several years.

Definition of control. Control here means: the network belongs to the company, to a documented subsidiary of the group, or to an investor with documented controlling influence. For financial investors, the country of the manager applies, not the seat of individual funds. The group outside the EU comprises countries with different standing towards the EU under data protection law. The study does not assess this.

7 Data and verifiability

The numbered scripts document the measurement and analysis. The ownership and individual checks were carried out by AI agents, and their results are summarised in netze.csv and stichprobe.csv. The individual verdicts for each municipality are not published, so that no municipality is exposed. For the 6 networks that are grouped together, the evidence is not named in order to protect the municipalities. A complete re-run from the published files is therefore not possible. The core results can be recalculated from daten.csv, and the ownership information can be checked using the evidence addresses. Tables by state and by size, as well as figures per target address, are based on the unpublished assignments.

File	Size	SHA-256
daten.csv Measured values per municipality (anonymised, CSV)	555.3 KB	7abbfbb53672e0f36be37f5503234f13231385306ea9e7e9e31f8b137ab43374
laender.csv Results by state (CSV)	0.7 KB	54ab7e34f99be290fbdf3d2ff1d808c82bd388d223b6f74b4732036b1875dbf1
groessen.csv Results by population (CSV)	0.3 KB	6d7e6f8de1cf30d78c4e6995dfcebe0f507d558ada16a8c13693d2e6c49f9617

File	Size	SHA-256
netze.csv Networks with ownership evidence (CSV)	14.3 KB	7cb2aac93a23300882306c30ab105b1b 617a71afac0879a3a50016f009da8361
stichprobe.csv Result of the control check (CSV)	2.5 KB	13f400f0a2f709c1bc6feb1d4f6cd94b 053d2dc3b7d31f0b371b09b26fd898dc
01-wikidata.mjs Script 01-wikidata.mjs	2.7 KB	141679f4f2a695acea47c3a0a08d6444 42605e23bbbb0369db688bdba4e8b2bd
02-liste.mjs Script 02-liste.mjs	2.9 KB	374be3a36cea6b205a02826483f21237 ec174671e10575c44df3a16809281b1f
03-messen.mjs Script 03-messen.mjs	7.9 KB	cc15d2de15ce9bebd0afaf83e07b3551 af984eb9da61d35ff6c61da68f9baca3
04-destatis.mjs Script 04-destatis.mjs	6.6 KB	8dafc11e154553ab36319164d20fb12e 3309e82f22b80a1a3b5058c07a3ba54b
05-luecken.mjs Script 05-luecken.mjs	1.9 KB	345eb2f11ef1a66f225e6e269988fe05 08ac87885fcf07fd587679bbdb81b3fc
06-startseiten.mjs Script 06-startseiten.mjs	13.1 KB	f827bc35a0364a42bc30ebfca4e7fcaf 75e2bd174228146a5ee9c0b904056d92
07-universum.mjs Script 07-universum.mjs	2.0 KB	d6ef47d83ab8c2dfd32b7d5435f51225 faa7ed3efe16ba8dc0fd4bedb4b2c78e
08-nachpruefung.mjs Script 08-nachpruefung.mjs	9.8 KB	6f4af08be28e2f24f1e0bbee09a89c14 6de76e59342af927b86216c8f2ef8405
09-zusammenfuehren.mjs Script 09-zusammenfuehren.mjs	5.9 KB	55f7d133c6dad42cdb39e6331d8d239a 219581494d88699f2e3f3cf44164dc94
10-rdap.mjs Script 10-rdap.mjs	3.1 KB	733e61b164a97ce2c02ea25b23ea259c 312fe05068dfdeeb92d658bbf4798bca
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12-nichteu-liste.mjs Script 12-nichteu-liste.mjs	1.8 KB	6837ce147c98eef183f387fe408a0c4b 446ff9348fc6e2dcd7d5bf99ded2b3df
13-stichprobe.mjs Script 13-stichprobe.mjs	1.3 KB	acfaf328419338c14fc286fcb12c872a e1149eaf4bf68fb2d9a73f70aeb3e373
14-studie.mjs Script 14-studie.mjs	40.8 KB	64b065d96a292c3d2838e420d6c086e3 7c3d16c8e7e16b8be4e0a8def78701d8
15-einzelpruefung-liste.mjs Script 15-einzelpruefung-liste.mjs	1.3 KB	8f8ea7f9ed860e1fdf5c8417544fcd96 268bb28baab56f2aff2ea303410b487e
16-einzelpruefung-runde2.mjs Script 16-einzelpruefung-runde2.mjs	2.6 KB	3114be18f7ca002c729b092ee6be6615 edc440cc9774cb7ec024efd7b76e3bc3
17-einzelpruefung-abschluss.mjs Script 17-einzelpruefung-abschluss.mjs	4.1 KB	0527838c7ecd210c3e55e8751dab7e05 e8b8d83cafde9415f644018150034b3a

File	Size	SHA-256
18-netze-nachmessen.mjs Script 18-netze-nachmessen.mjs	3.4 KB	56031e05ec918aa8ec5c0d1528980da8 5060a35d6b3e61d2a88873ed7e7a1f94

Fields of the data files

Field	Unit	Meaning
inhalt		Result of the website check: bestaetigt, nicht_offiziell or nicht_entscheidbar
web_auswertbar		Website confirmed and network determinable
netz_register		Registry country of the network: DE, EU, nicht_EU or unbekannt
web_kontrolle		dienst: hoster, cloud or CDN service with documented control from outside the EU; netz: transit, city network or data centre operator with documented control; kein_nachweis: not counted
web_region		Region of the documented control: USA, UK/Kanalinseln, Sonstige or zusammengefasst
web_rolle		Type of control: konzern, finanzinvestor or zusammengefasst
web_funktion		Function of the network: hoster, cloud, cdn, netz_rechenzentrum, dns_domain or zusammengefasst for fewer than 5 municipalities
dns_auswertbar		Website confirmed and at least one nameserver network determinable
dns_nicht_eu		At least one nameserver in a network with documented control from outside the EU
dns_usa		At least one nameserver in a network with documented control from the USA
ipv6		The target address has an AAAA record in DNS
gruppe		State or population class
gemeinden		Number of official municipalities
bestaetigt		Municipalities with a confirmed website
web_basis		Analysed municipalities for website shares
dns_basis		Analysed municipalities for the nameserver share
anteil_dienst		Minimum share with a hosting, cloud or CDN service under control from outside the EU, in percent
anteil_dns		Minimum share with a nameserver under control from outside the EU, in percent, relative to dns_basis
asn		Number of the Autonomous System or a summary row for networks with fewer than 5 municipalities

Field	Unit	Meaning
region		USA, UK/Channel Islands, Other or Mixed
kontroll_land		Country of control as ISO code or Several. GB/GG: manager in the United Kingdom, fund structure in Guernsey, in part together with a Canadian investor
rolle		Group, financial investor or Mixed
funktion		Function of the network: hoster, cloud, CDN, transit, city network or data centre, DNS and domains or Mixed
gemeinden_web		Confirmed municipalities whose website is in this network, values from 1 to 4 shown as under 5
gemeinden_dns		Confirmed municipalities with a nameserver in this network, values from 1 to 4 shown as under 5
quellenstand		Date of the most recent dated document on the ownership relationship, with a note for undated sources
belege		Addresses of the ownership evidence that was read, separated by spaces
pruefurteil		Verdict of the control check: offiziell_eigen, offiziell_verwaltung, nicht_offiziell or nicht_entscheidbar

8 Sources

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9 Disclosure

Own interest

Nexthosting sells hosting in Germany itself, so it competes with companies in this analysis and uses data centres and networks of other companies. These include services of network operators that are listed here as controlled from outside the EU, among them a CDN. The method, analysis scripts, data and the ownership evidence for the listed networks are therefore disclosed.

Authorship

Erik Friedl, Nexthosting. The publisher is Nexthosting.

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10 How to cite this study

APA

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BibTeX

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@techreport{nexthosting2026gemeindenwebsitehosting,
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  title      = {Who owns the networks behind the websites of German municipalities?},
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  type       = {Study},
  year       = {2026},
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  url        = {https://nexthosting.net/en/studies/gemeinden-website-hosting},
  urldate    = {2026-11-22},
  language   = {english}
}
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11 Changes and corrections

Version	Date	Type	Change
1.0.0	Nov 22, 2026	Version	First version.