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Rethinking how storage services are delivered to end-users at CERN: prototyping a file sharing and synchronisation platform with ownCloud

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Individual users at CERN are attracted by external file hosting services such as Dropbox. This trend may lead to what is know as the "Dropbox Problem": sensitive organization data stored on servers outside of corporate control, outside of established policies, outside of enforceable SLAs and in unknown geographical locations. Mitigating this risk also provides a good incentive to rethink how our storage services are delivered to end-users: a file syncing and sharing platform which would allow offline work for mobile devices, seamlessly integrate with major desktop environments and provide convenience and functionality of commercial competitors. This would not only allow us to stay aligned with the expectations of the users in the rapidly evolving area but ultimately it should allow us to keep the data under control. As the market of open source projects capable of meeting such requirements begins maturing we think it is a good moment to evaluate potential technologies. This work will present the outcome of evaluating ownCloud at CERN including functionality and scalability testing. The goal of the prototype is to understand if ownCloud may be used to serve a community of 10ˆ4 users and provide storage space on par or exceeding the one offered by storage systems currently in production. We will also discuss how a file sharing and synchronisation platform could fit into existing service architecture at CERN: storage backends, shared filesystems and interfaces. Additionally, we evaluate how this platform could take advantage of emerging storage technologies.

Primary author: Dr MOSCICKI, Jakub (CERN)

Presenter: Dr MOSCICKI, Jakub (CERN)

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