



INDUSTRY

Government

GEOGRAPHY

EMEA

CHALLENGE

As the federal employment agency for Germany, Bundesagentur für Arbeit (BA) has a mandate to deliver vital public services reliably, securely, and efficiently through digital channels. How does the organization achieve this goal?

SOLUTION

Axway API Gateway
Axway B2B Integration
Axway Managed File Transfer

RESULTS

Axway enables BA to serve millions of citizens and companies by:

- Paying €150 billion in benefits in 2020
- Integrating more than 100,000 employers on a secure, central platform
- Defeating up to 5 million cyber threats daily

CUSTOMER CASE STUDY

Bundesagentur für Arbeit

Bundesagentur für Arbeit enables secure, seamless eGovernment services in Germany with Axway

In Germany, Bundesagentur für Arbeit (BA) is the federal agency responsible for providing a range of labor market services for employers and employees.

BA's 100,000 employees assist tens of thousands of people every day. As a forward-looking organization, BA has been evolving its approach to delivering and managing its services to take advantage of digital technology for more than two decades.

Peter Neuhauser, Head of TEC1 – CERT-BA, Network Services, and Security as a Service at Bundesagentur für Arbeit, takes up the story: "In the past, BA was a relatively decentralized organization. For example, social security claims were mostly processed using paper forms filed at our local branches."

Through the 1990s, BA used multiple digital systems and processes to send payment files from its local offices to its headquarters. During this period, BA engaged Axway to rationalize and streamline its approach to mission-critical data transfers. The agency has relied on Axway Managed File Transfer for over 20 years to facilitate the secure and reliable transfer of payment instructions to its head office.

Walter Karl, Lead Architect for Security and DMZ Services, IT Department at Bundesagentur für Arbeit, explains, "Local and national governments began to recognize that digital channels had the potential to transform their approach to service delivery – enabling citizens to access the support they require without the need to call or visit government offices. As these changes gained momentum in the early 2010s, there were many new opportunities for BA to add value for the German taxpayer through eGovernment services."

Putting Axway to the test

In 2004, Axway helped BA with a large-scale B2B integration project, designed to enable the organization to share unemployment statistics with government agencies. Impressed by this work, and by the deployment of Axway Managed File Transfer in the 1990s, the agency engaged Axway in 2010 to help with its transition to the incoming Electronic Banking Internet Communication Standard (EBICS).

Neuhauser recalls, “We needed to ensure that we could send all payment instructions to our banking partners using the new standard in a timely manner.”

He adds: “To meet the deadline for the switchover to EBICS, Axway helped us to augment our existing payment frameworks in Axway Managed File Transfer with a new solution based on Axway B2B Integration, a central EDI platform. From day one of our go-live, we were able to send EBICS payments files seamlessly. The professionalism, expertise and dedication of the Axway team throughout the project assured us that they would be the optimal partner for the next several phases of our eGovernment transformation journey.”

Strengthening the partnership

Based on its positive experiences with Axway on the EBICS project, BA decided to build on its investment using Axway solutions.

As eGovernment initiatives in Germany gained pace during the early 2010s, BA engaged Axway to help lay the foundation for next-generation digital services. An early project, named eAkte (in English, “eFiles”), aimed to replace manual, paper-based workflows at BA’s local branches with ultra-efficient, data-driven business processes.

“The key goal of eGovernment is to provide BA’s services to every citizen,” says Neuhauser. “As well as being easy to use, these services must deliver the highest levels of privacy and security for sensitive personal and financial data. Moving from paper files to digital records was a vital first step on this journey.”

Building a foundation for digital services

Using its in-house knowledge of Axway Managed File Transfer, BA mapped out its paper-based processes and designed new workflows to deliver the same functionality with digital systems. Today, Axway Managed File Transfer acts as the integration hub for the new workflows.

“Practically every customer case record is now stored digitally,” Karl elaborates. “Even if a customer writes us a letter or submits a paper form, we use a document-scanning platform to scan the content and store it as an image file. Axway Managed File Transfer helps us to ensure that all our customer records and communications are in the right system to support each of our digital workflows.”

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Peter Neuhauser, Head of TEC1
— CERT-BA, Network Services,
and Security as a Service at
Bundesagentur für Arbeit

Integrating with industry partners

Building on the foundation of the eAkte project, BA partnered with Axway to enable integration with external partners and to build digital eGovernment processes that span multiple public-sector agencies. In the mid-2010s, the two organizations collaborated to digitize and automate the sharing of data between BA and more than 100,000 employers in Germany.

“Benefit entitlements depend on a number of factors, including recent earnings from employers in Germany,” explains Neuhauser. “If a person has recently become unemployed, it’s important for us to get information from their former employer so we can calculate and pay their benefits quickly and accurately.”

He continues: “For more than 25 years, we’d relied on paper-based processes to gather salary data from employers across Germany. Thanks to our partnership with Axway, we are now harnessing B2B integrations to receive and process vital information from employers digitally, with minimal human involvement. It’s now far easier to access the information we need to make timely payments to our customers.”

Ensuring watertight security

The BA payment platform – based on the Axway EBICS Gateway – is defined as critical infrastructure for the Federal Republic of Germany.

“A new law called KRITIS – legislation that mandates robust information security standards for critical government infrastructure – made protecting our services even more crucial,” says Neuhauser. “Using the Axway solution, we deliver rock-solid security and full traceability of all financial transactions on the platform.”

KRITIS also mandates that nonfinancial systems be hardened against cyber attacks, including the APIs that empower businesses and citizens to access key services via BA’s online and mobile channels.

“Our dedicated cyber security team now has a single point of control for API security,” explains Karl. “We use the solution to manage our external connections with web-based applications, and defend our organization against up to five million cyber attacks per day.”

Responding effectively to a crisis

When the COVID-19 crisis struck in 2020, the organization had to react quickly to accommodate a surge in requests for financial support. This support took the form of additional digital business processes for short-term working allowances, representing an additional 50 billion euros in financial benefit payments.

“During the first wave of the COVID-19 crisis in 2020, the German government pushed through emergency legislation to help ensure that people who had their working hours significantly reduced because of the pandemic could claim relief from BA,” says Karl.

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Walter Karl, Lead Architect,
IT Department at Bundesagentur
für Arbeit

“To help process a massive quantity of applications from our citizens, we had to react fast. Working with Axway, we compressed the equivalent of five years of work into just three months, and configured our Axway solutions to support a complex range of communications protocols securely and reliably.

Pushing the boundaries

In the future, Axway will help BA to support new demands for data-driven eGovernment services. For example, the organization is currently exploring the possibility of creating a secure API catalog for authorized software development teams working for other government bodies.

“The potential to use our data for the good of citizens in Germany is almost endless,” adds Karl. We’re now in the middle of a proof-of-concept exercise for a central API catalog, which could enable external developers to rapidly see which services are available and accelerate their projects.”

Neuhauser concludes, “We’re very proud of how everyone at BA has come together to support people in Germany during the disruption of 2020. With Axway at our side, we navigated an extremely challenging time while keeping our IT headcount flat. Our success during the COVID-19 crisis clearly demonstrates the value of a mature approach to data integration and security – and we look forward to supporting a new generation of eGovernment services using Axway solutions.”

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Discover why integration solutions are a game changer for IT leaders →