



SOVEREIGNTY & FRENCH CLOUD

OVHcloud, Scaleway, Scalingo which cloud for your business application?

A technical and operational comparison of the three French providers for hosting a business application: architecture, managed services, sovereignty, total cost and operational effort. To choose with full knowledge of the facts — and to know when not to choose.

11 pages · Multi-criteria comparison grid, decision matrix and migration checklist included

3

French offerings compared: IaaS, cloud native and managed PaaS

12

decision criteria assessed (cost, sovereignty, SLA, operations, reversibility)

2

detailed migration scenarios: lift-and-shift and replatforming

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What you will find in this document

This document starts from the regulatory and economic context that puts French clouds back on the table, details the real technical differences between the three platforms, then offers a decision matrix and an actionable migration roadmap.

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Who is this document for? CTOs, CIOs, architecture leads and platform teams in SMEs, mid-caps and SaaS vendors running one to a few dozen business applications. Also useful for public-sector or regulated organisations that must justify European hosting.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The essentials on one page

Three French providers, three different operating models: the right choice depends less on the advertised price than on the operational workload your team can absorb.

The three American hyperscalers account for roughly **two thirds** of the global cloud infrastructure market, while European providers represent **less than 20%** of their own market. Yet for a classic business application — a back end, a relational database, a cache, object storage and a few workers — the functional gap between a hyperscaler and a French provider has narrowed sharply: OVHcloud, Scaleway and Scalingo now cover these needs with managed services, APIs and mature Kubernetes offerings.

The movement is accelerating for regulatory and economic reasons. The SREN law (2024) and then the European Data Act, applicable since September 2025, remove transfer fees when switching providers by January 2027; at the same time, VMware's pricing overhaul following its acquisition by Broadcom has triggered massive re-platforming programmes and reopened hosting trade-offs that were thought to be locked in for a decade.

The good news is that these three providers do not compete head-on: OVHcloud plays on catalogue depth and cost per server, Scaleway on developer experience and modern managed services, Scalingo on the PaaS that removes almost all operations. This document provides the framework for deciding — and explicitly names the cases where none of the three is the right choice.

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share of the global cloud infrastructure market held by AWS, Azure and Google Cloud

2027

end of transfer fees when switching providers in the EU (Data Act)

450,000

servers operated by OVHcloud, the only listed European cloud provider of this size

The real question is therefore not "which is the best French cloud?", but "which operating model can my business application and my team genuinely sustain over five years, and which provider serves it best?". The sections that follow offer a criterion-by-criterion comparison grid, a four-step decision method and a migration checklist that can be reused directly.

SECTION 02

Why French cloud now

Choosing a French host for a business application is no longer an activist gesture: it is a technical and economic trade-off made possible by three converging developments. The legal framework has hardened, reversibility has opened up, and the French managed offering has reached a credible level of maturity.

1. 1. Legal risk has become explicit

The Cloud Act and FISA 702 allow the US administration to demand data held by a company subject to United States law, regardless of the country of storage. In response, France's "Cloud au centre" doctrine mandates SecNumCloud qualification for sensitive data belonging to the State and its operators.

2. 2. Reversibility is no longer a myth

The SREN law of May 2024 prohibits charging for data transfer when switching providers in France, and the European Data Act extends this removal across the EU by January 2027. Exit costs, long the main lock-in on changing host, cease to be an argument.

3. 3. Operations cost more than the invoice

For a business application, the heaviest line item is not the infrastructure bill but the engineering time spent on updates, backups and on-call duty. SRE and platform profiles remain scarce and expensive: every unmanaged building block is paid for in recurring person-days.

“ French cloud is not chosen on principle, but because the trade-off between cost, effort and compliance is often the best there. ”

These observations now have to be translated into concrete criteria: that is the purpose of the following sections, which compare OVHcloud, Scaleway and Scalingo on architecture, managed services, sovereignty, total cost and operational effort.

SECTION 03

IaaS, cloud native or PaaS

Between a bare instance and a simple "git push" there are three distinct operating models — and it is this choice, far more than the provider's logo, that determines the workload that will land on your team.

MODEL	WHAT YOU OPERATE YOURSELF
IaaS	You rent machines, storage and networking: operating system, runtime, database, backups, security patches and monitoring remain entirely your responsibility.
Managed cloud native	The provider runs the Kubernetes control plane, the managed databases and object storage; you remain responsible for your manifests, your images, your quotas and application version upgrades.
PaaS	You push code: build, deployment, TLS, horizontal scaling, log aggregation and OS patching are industrialised by the platform, at the price of a more constrained execution framework.

Key takeaway: Put a number on operations before the list price: if no engineer has the time, the skills and the on-call availability to run a cluster and its databases, a PaaS that costs more per month still costs less in total.

The decisive factor: the number of engineers genuinely available

The most reliable criterion is not technical but capacity-related: how many full-time equivalents can your organisation genuinely devote to infrastructure, outside of projects? Below a stable half-FTE, PaaS is the only sustainable model: nobody will keep up with kernel CVEs, PostgreSQL minor version upgrades or certificate rotation. Between half and two FTEs, managed cloud native becomes relevant if the team already masters containers and infrastructure as code. Pure IaaS is only justified when a hard constraint imposes it — third-party software that cannot be containerised, hardware-tied licensing, a need for predictable disk performance — or when a platform team already exists and spreads its effort across several applications. A single business product run by three developers never justifies a Kubernetes cluster built from scratch.

SECTION 04

Comparing the three platforms

The three players partly overlap on catalogue, but each is optimised for a different team profile — and that is where the comparison becomes useful.

PLATFORM	DOMINANT MODEL	HOW IT WORKS	BEST SUITED TO
OVHcloud	Broad IaaS, from bare metal to private cloud	The widest catalogue of the three: dedicated servers, OpenStack-based Public Cloud, VMware private cloud, managed Kubernetes, managed databases and SecNumCloud-qualified offerings.	Heavy workloads, hardware or licensing constraints, and organisations that already have an infrastructure team.
Scaleway	Cloud native and API-first	Instances, Kubernetes Kapsule, serverless (containers and functions), managed databases, VPC and granular IAM, all driveable through Terraform and a consistent console.	Teams already comfortable with containers and infrastructure as code, who want modern primitives without leaving France.
Scalingo	End-to-end managed PaaS	Deployment by git push or Docker image, database add-ons, horizontal scaling, review environments, ISO 27001 and HDS certifications, French underlying infrastructure.	Product teams with no dedicated infrastructure engineer, who want to ship a critical business application fast.

Common pitfall: Comparing a Scalingo container with the hourly rate of a Scaleway or OVHcloud instance of the same RAM makes no sense: the PaaS price includes backups, monitoring, patching and support, which you would otherwise have to build and maintain.

The right reflex: reason by workload, not by single provider

All three platforms can host a classic transactional web application (API, relational database, processing queues, object storage) with backups and replication. So the question is almost never "is it possible?" but "at what operational cost?". A hybrid architecture is in fact common and perfectly legitimate: the business application and its databases on a PaaS, large cold volumes on S3-compatible object storage billed per GB at OVHcloud or Scaleway, and long-term storage or offsite backups with the third. The determining factor remains the responsibility boundary: the higher it sits, the more your team writes code; the lower it sits, the more it operates.

SECTION 05

Data, networking and reversibility

It is on data, private networking and the ability to move elsewhere that the real gaps between the three platforms appear — far more than on CPU.

Managed databases: restoring matters more than backing up

Always check three points on a managed database: the point-in-time recovery window (PITR), the ability to export a standard dump without going through support, and a real restore test, not merely the existence of the backup.

Private networking: isolation you build or isolation you are given

Expose the strict minimum to the Internet. Scaleway and OVHcloud offer VPCs and private networks you build yourself; Scalingo encapsulates that isolation, at the price of less network control over interconnections with an existing IT system.

Reversibility: standard formats, not promises

S3 compatibility of object storage, standard Docker images and PostgreSQL dumps are your real reversibility insurance. The European Data Act now governs the progressive removal of provider switching fees.

POINT TO CHECK IN THE CONTRACT	WHAT YOU MUST OBTAIN
Data export	Database and object dumps retrievable at any time with your own tools, with no ticket or imposed delay.
Infrastructure as code	Deployment fully described in Terraform or a versioned manifest, a precondition for rebuilding elsewhere.

SECTION 06

Real cost and operational load

The cost of hosting is not read on a monthly invoice: it is read in the engineering time consumed every month to keep that invoice worthwhile.

The invoice line items forgotten at scoping time

Beyond compute and storage, think about the line items that are often forgotten: backups retained for several weeks, snapshots, QA and pre-production environments, load balancers, public IP addresses, and sometimes paid support. With the French players, outbound bandwidth remains far less penalising than with the hyperscalers, which simplifies file- or media-oriented architectures. But a forgotten pre-production environment left running often weighs more than fine-tuning the production instance.

What keeping things running really costs

A managed Kubernetes cluster imposes several minor version upgrades a year, each one requiring a check of deprecated APIs and third-party controllers. Add to that major PostgreSQL upgrades, application security patches and secret rotation. This work, invisible in a quote, amounts in practice to several person-days per quarter for an experienced team — and considerably more for a team that is learning. That is exactly the load a PaaS absorbs, and exactly what it charges for.

Key takeaway: Add engineering time, on-call duty and version upgrades to the monthly quote: that total, and only that total, allows an honest comparison between a PaaS and a managed infrastructure.

The right trade-off therefore consists in reasoning in total cost over three years: subscription, storage, backups, traffic, but also person-days of operations, the cost of an outage and the risk of depending on a single person. On a business application serving a few hundred internal users, the billing gap between a PaaS and a managed infrastructure is often smaller than the cost of a single badly handled incident. Conversely, as soon as the load becomes significant and stable, and a platform team exists, IaaS or cloud native regains the advantage — provided you accept the discipline that comes with it.

SECTION 07

Self-assessment grid

Review these six questions with your technical team and your management before opening a single quote with a hosting provider.

- ☐ **Have you costed the full three-year total (subscription, storage, backups, egress traffic and operations man-days) rather than the monthly list price alone?** The advertised price of an instance ignores operations, which is often the dominant share of actual spend.
- ☐ **Can you name, without hesitation, the person or people able to restore your production database on a Friday evening?** Dependence on a single person is the most common and least budgeted risk on a business application.
- ☐ **Have you tested a full backup restore from your current provider within the last six months?** A backup that has never been restored is only a hypothesis, not a guarantee of recovery.
- ☐ **Are your sovereignty requirements formalised (data location, SecNumCloud qualification, nationality of the provider and its subcontractors) and validated by your legal department?** Choosing a French provider without written requirements leads to paying for a poorly defined constraint, or to discovering too late that it is not covered.
- ☐ **Can your application be deployed on another host from its code and its documentation, without untracked manual intervention?** Reversibility is built from the very first deployment; it cannot be improvised on the day you decide to leave.
- ☐ **Do you know precisely the actual load of your application (concurrent users, peaks, data volumes) over the last twelve months?** Without measurement, sizing is pure guesswork and distorts every trade-off between PaaS, IaaS and cloud native.

How to read your answers: Three "no" answers or more indicate that the hosting decision is premature: start by addressing these points before comparing platforms.

SECTION 08

A 5-step roadmap

The approach proposed here is deliberately progressive: it starts from measuring the existing setup and triggers no migration until the three scenarios have been costed and a deployment has been replayed end to end.

- 1 Map the existing setup**

Inventory the application's components (runtime, databases, queues, object storage, scheduled jobs, external dependencies) and measure the actual load over twelve months: concurrent users, peaks, data volumes, egress traffic. It is this snapshot, not an estimate, that conditions every subsequent trade-off.
- 2 Formalise the requirements**

Put in writing what is genuinely required: acceptable RTO and RPO, service windows, data location, SecNumCloud qualification where it applies, sector-specific obligations. Have these requirements validated by the business and legal departments before looking at a single offer.
- 3 Cost three scenarios**

Build three comparable scenarios — PaaS, managed infrastructure, cloud native — including subscription, storage, backups, traffic and support, but also operations man-days, on-call duty and the estimated cost of an outage. Think in three years, not in one month.
- 4 Validate with a pilot**

Deploy the application on the shortlisted platform in an isolated staging environment, with a representative dataset. Measure response times, test a full restore and time a complete redeployment from the code.
- 5 Engineer reversibility**

Write into the code what has been learned: explicit dependencies, infrastructure described as code, externalised secrets, an exit procedure that is documented and tested. Schedule an annual review of the hosting choice in light of how the load and the team evolve.

CONCLUSION

Choosing a platform means choosing an operating model

The organisations that get this choice right are not those that found the cheapest platform, but those that were able to look squarely at their own situation: the application's actual load, the skills available in-house, their tolerance to downtime and the sovereignty requirements that are genuinely enforceable. OVHcloud, Scaleway and Scalingo address three different operating postures, not three levels of quality. The right choice is the one that matches the team that will have to live with it, for three years.

Beyond the comparison, let us remember that the decision is never final: a business application started on a PaaS can legitimately migrate to a managed infrastructure once the load stabilises and a platform team takes shape, provided its reversibility has been preserved from day one. Containerisation, infrastructure described as code, portable data and externalised secrets cost little at the outset and are worth a great deal on the day of the switch. That, far more than the initial choice of the logo on the invoice, is where an organisation's freedom is decided.

Move2Cloud	is a consulting firm specialised in infrastructure, cloud and IT transformation. We support organisations in the audit, hosting choice, migration and operation of their cloud environment.
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Next step	A diagnostic lasting a few days, built around the six self-assessment questions, is usually enough to cost the full three scenarios and to document a recommendation that will stand up before an executive committee.

Sources

ANSSI — SecNumCloud framework (version 3.2) and list of qualified providers — CNIL — Recommendations on data transfers outside the European Union and the use of cloud services — Regulation (EU) 2023/2854 on data (Data Act) — provisions on switching data processing service providers — Public technical documentation of OVHcloud, Scaleway and Scalingo (service catalogues, SLAs and specific terms) — Cloud Native Computing Foundation — Annual Survey, on Kubernetes adoption and operating cost

Document written by Move2Cloud as an example and illustration, for educational purposes. The three providers' offers, pricing and service scopes change regularly: check the terms in force before any contractual commitment.