

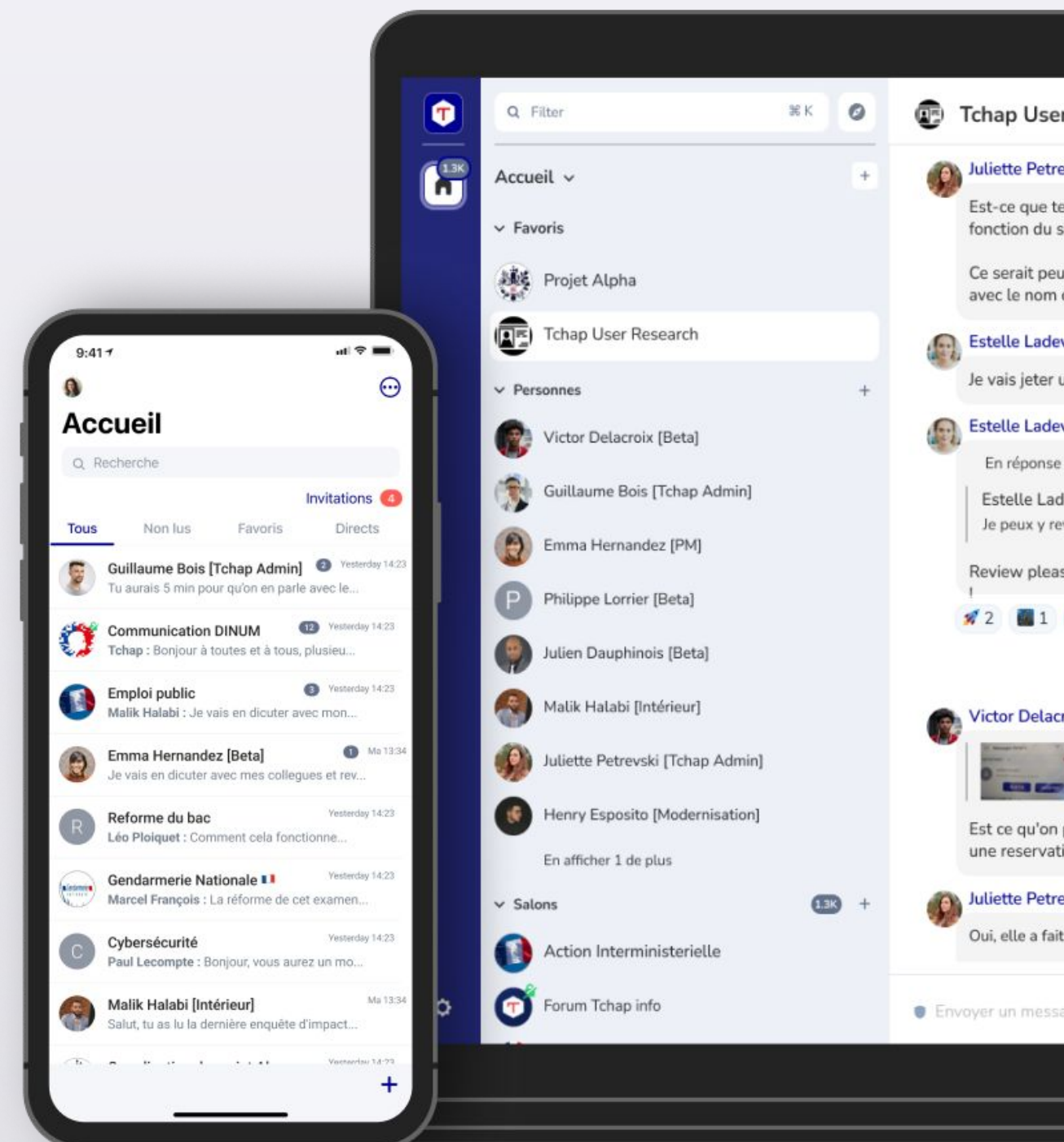


Pass The Salt 2025



Tchap

Matrix French gov deployment: opening a private federation securely

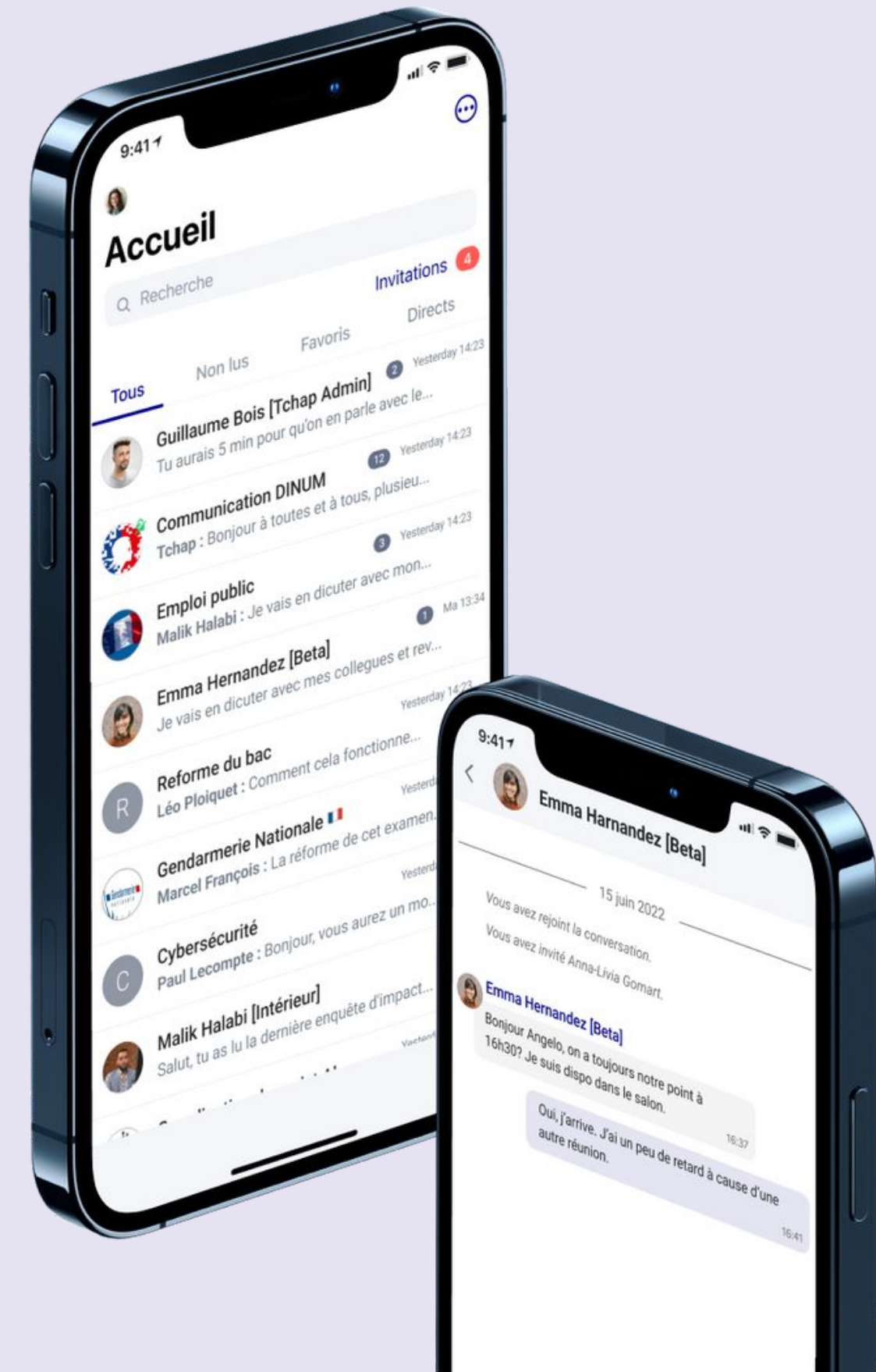


Who we are ?



Mathieu Velten
Matrix Expert

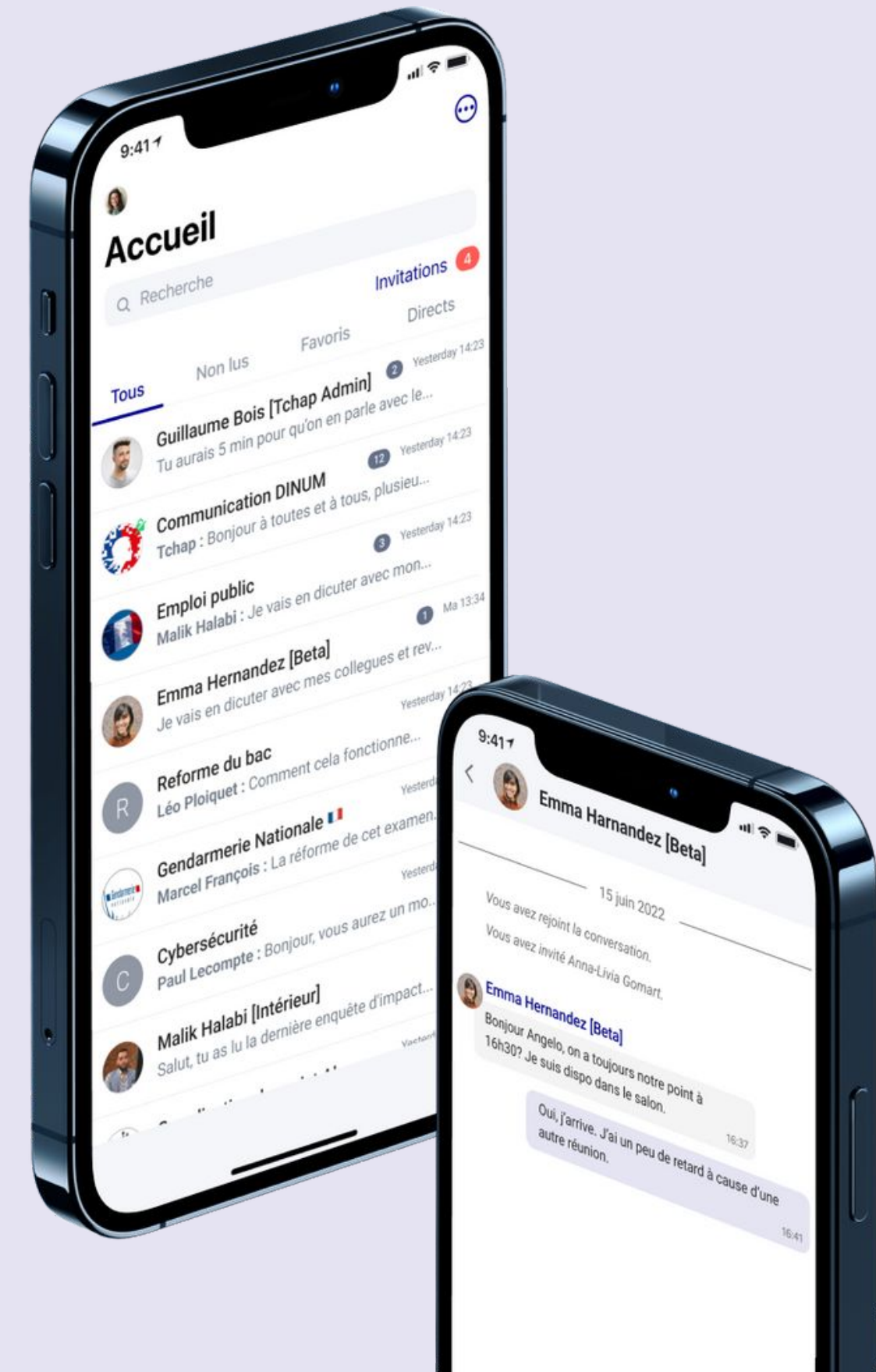
Yoan Pintas
PO of Tchap



What we're going to talk about

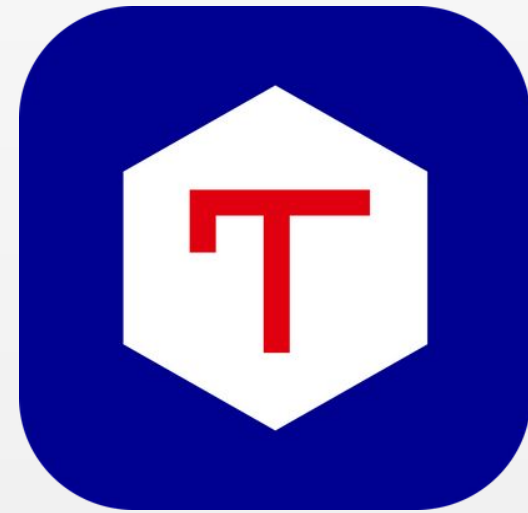


- Matrix in France
- Tchap's specificities
- Tchap's aspirations
- Matrix network
- Open the Federation

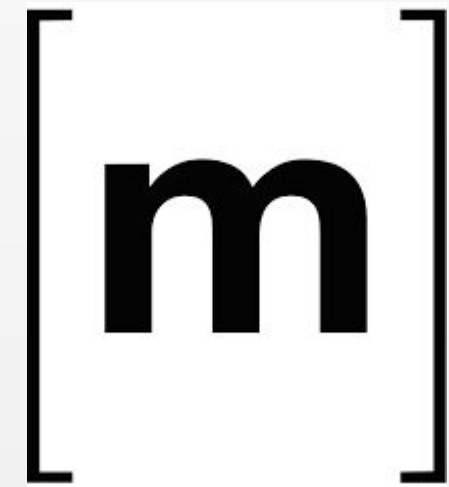




The Matrix Protocol

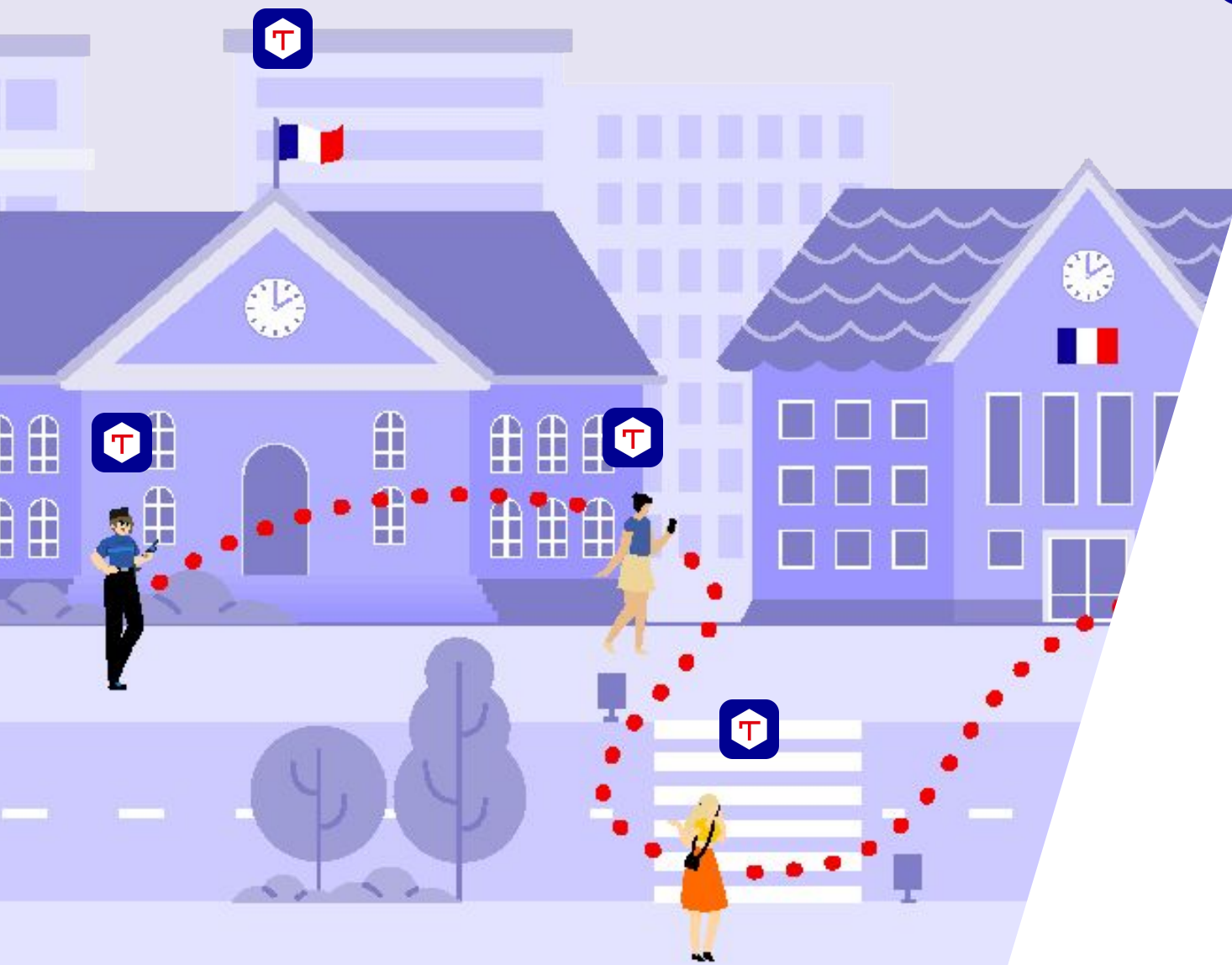


Tchap



Matrix

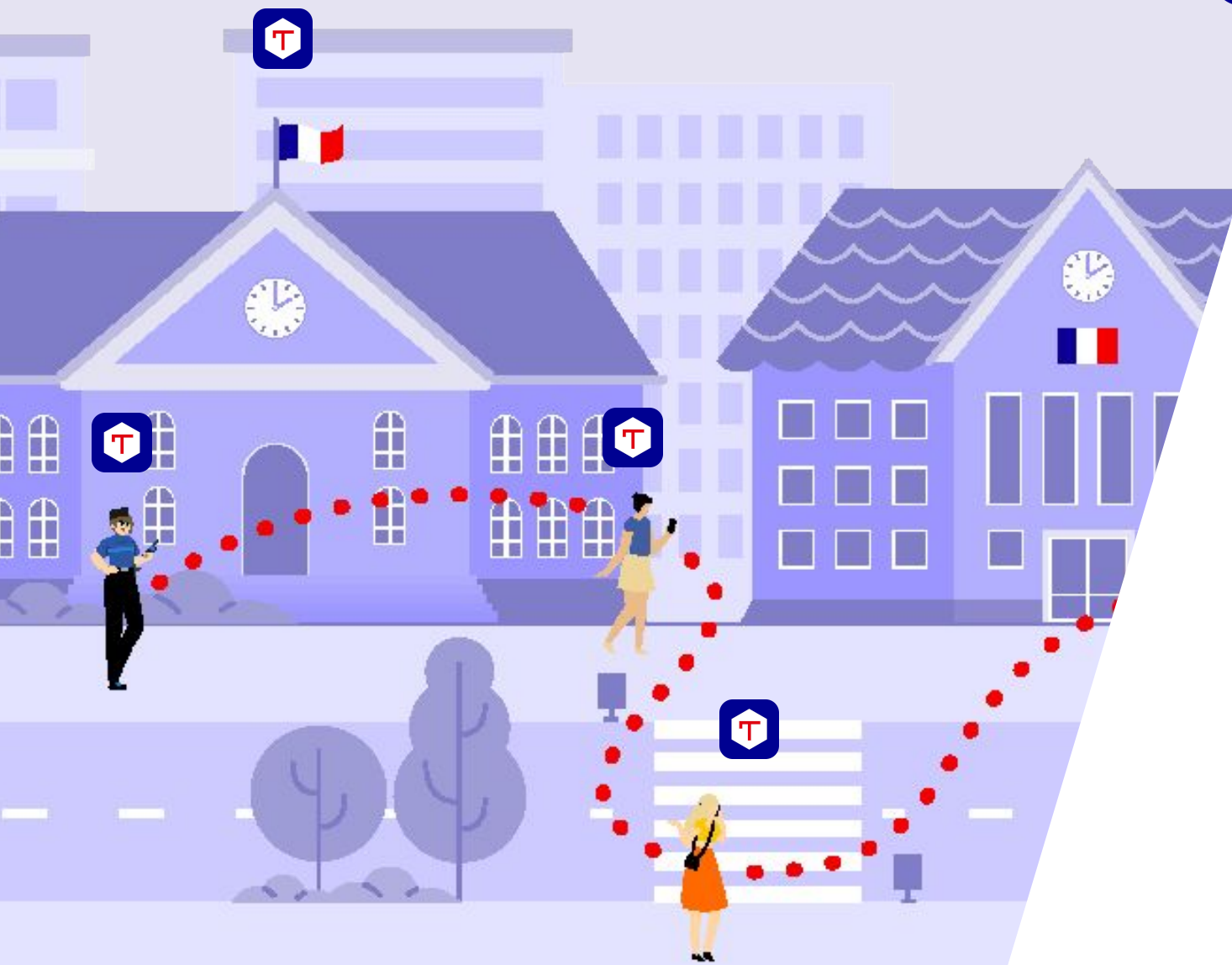
About Tchap



Tchap is the French public sector instant messaging tool.

It's part of **La Suite Numérique** : some collaborative work tools offered by la Direction Interministérielle du Numérique (DINUM) to all public agents.

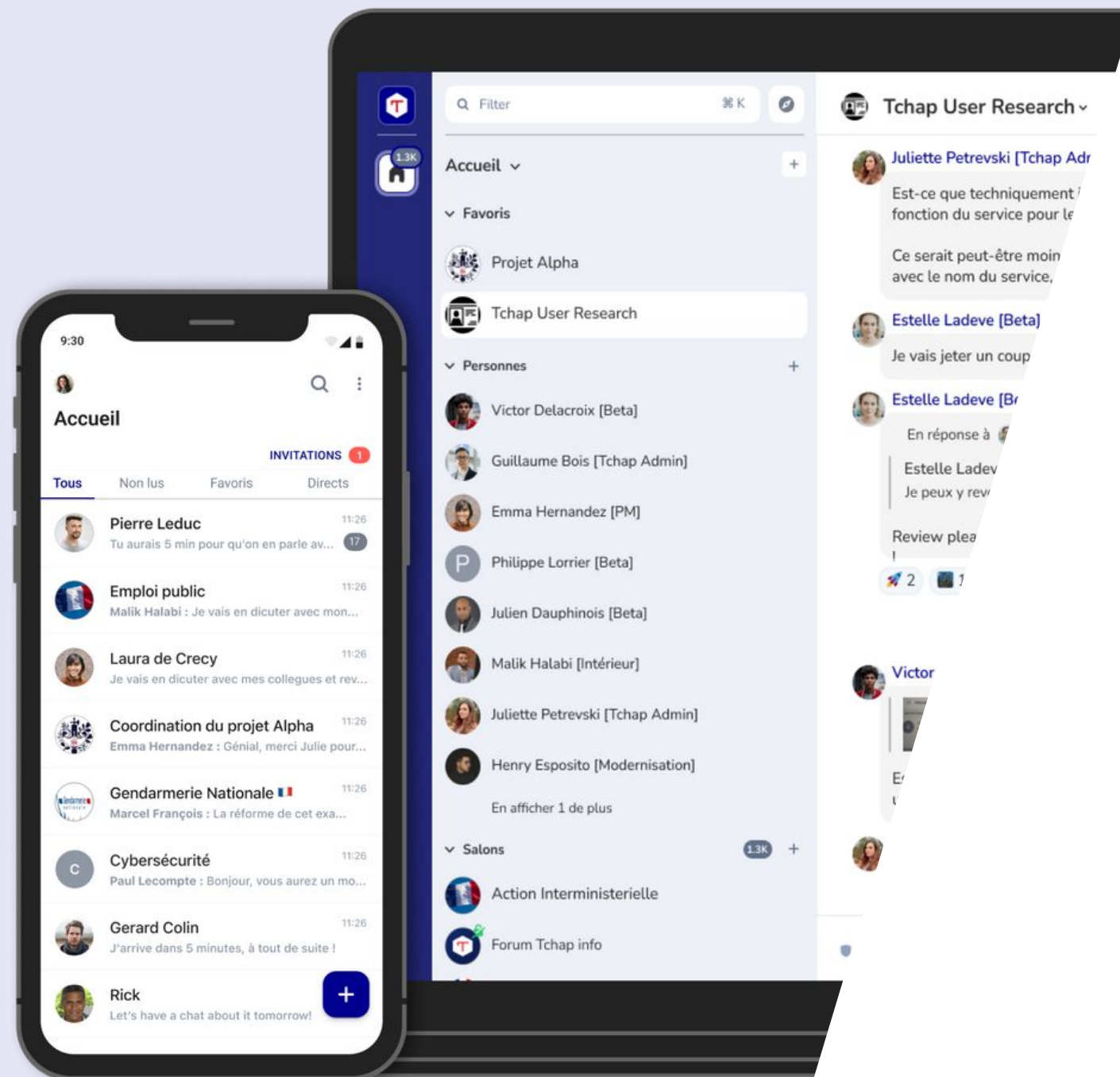
About Tchap



The choice of Matrix :

- Public money, public code : opensource
- Interoperability
- Strong community behind the protocole
- Matrix was already used by a strong French actor for Defense teams : Thales (Citadel)

Tchap's specificities



- Closed federation but external users (private sector) with restricted possibilities
- 17 homeservers: one for each ministry + **one for local authorities** + external users
- Antivirus
- Private room vs public room
- Native directory built with email addresses

About Tchap

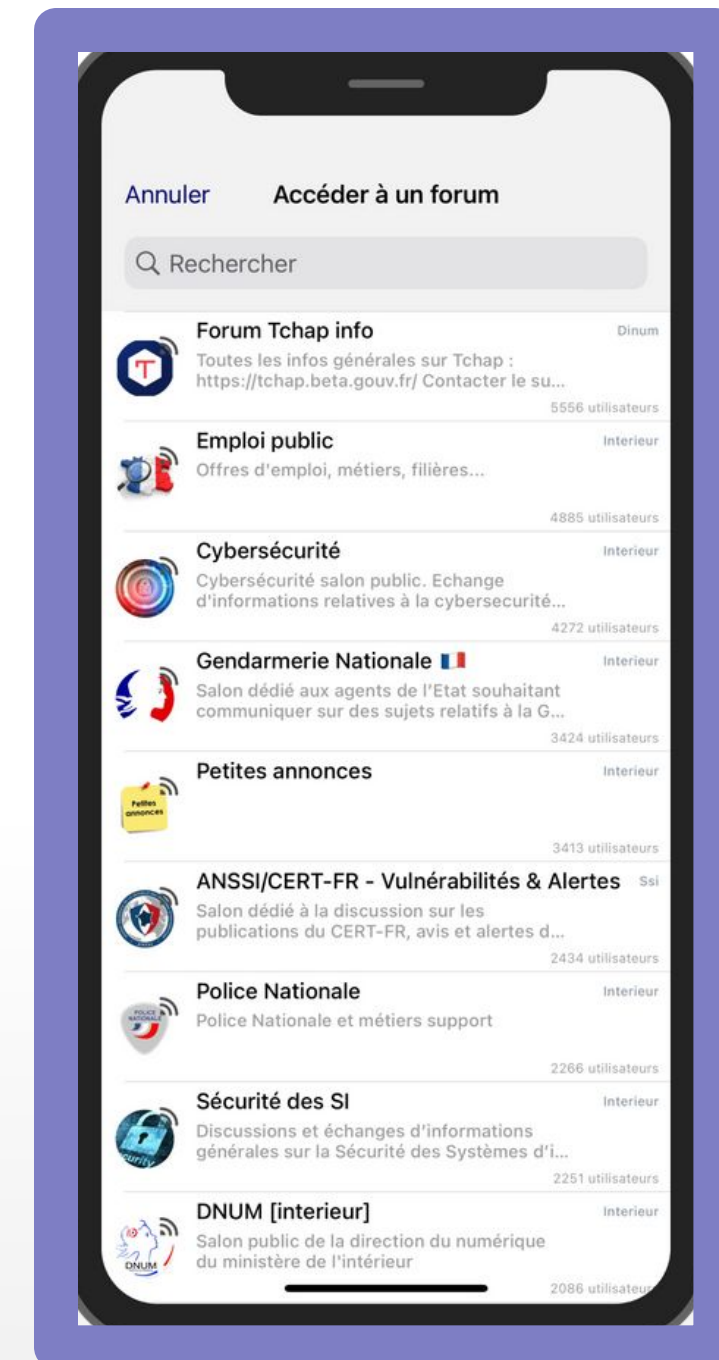


3 clients : Tchap Web, Tchap android, Tchap ios

570 000
Accounts on Tchap

9,6 million
Messages sent each month

300 000
Active users each month



Tchap's aspirations



Digital suite

- Be part of a **La Suite** using ProConnect SSO
- Deeper integration of other tools of La Suite

Open our federation to some others

- Help local authorities deploy Matrix nodes and connect with them
- Connect with the Germans

Matrix network



Who uses Matrix protocol ?

- Governments & Public Institutions

 France – Tchap for government and public agents

 Germany – Bundeswehr (army), healthcare institutions

 Denmark – Ministry of Health

 Luxembourg – Public sector Matrix deployment

- Cities & Local Authorities

 Marseille, Lyon, Échirolles (France)

Open the Federation, securely!



User impersonation is a big challenge

- Connect to trusted parties only
- Those parties must control their users => the trusted homeserver must be connected to an user directory or SSO
- Display name must be enforced and not user changeable

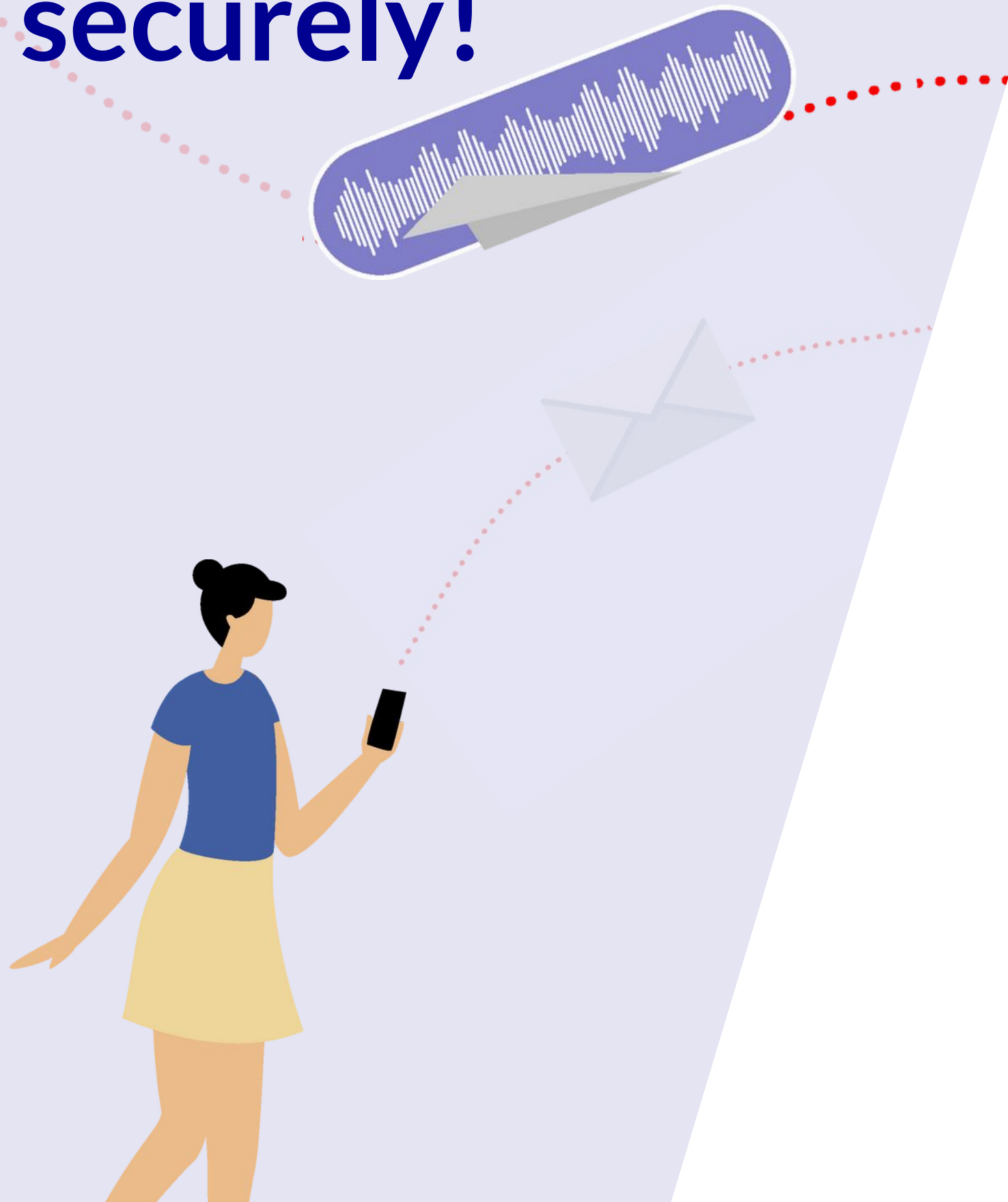
Later on, uses trust levels: needs a LOT of UX/UI work

Open the Federation, securely!

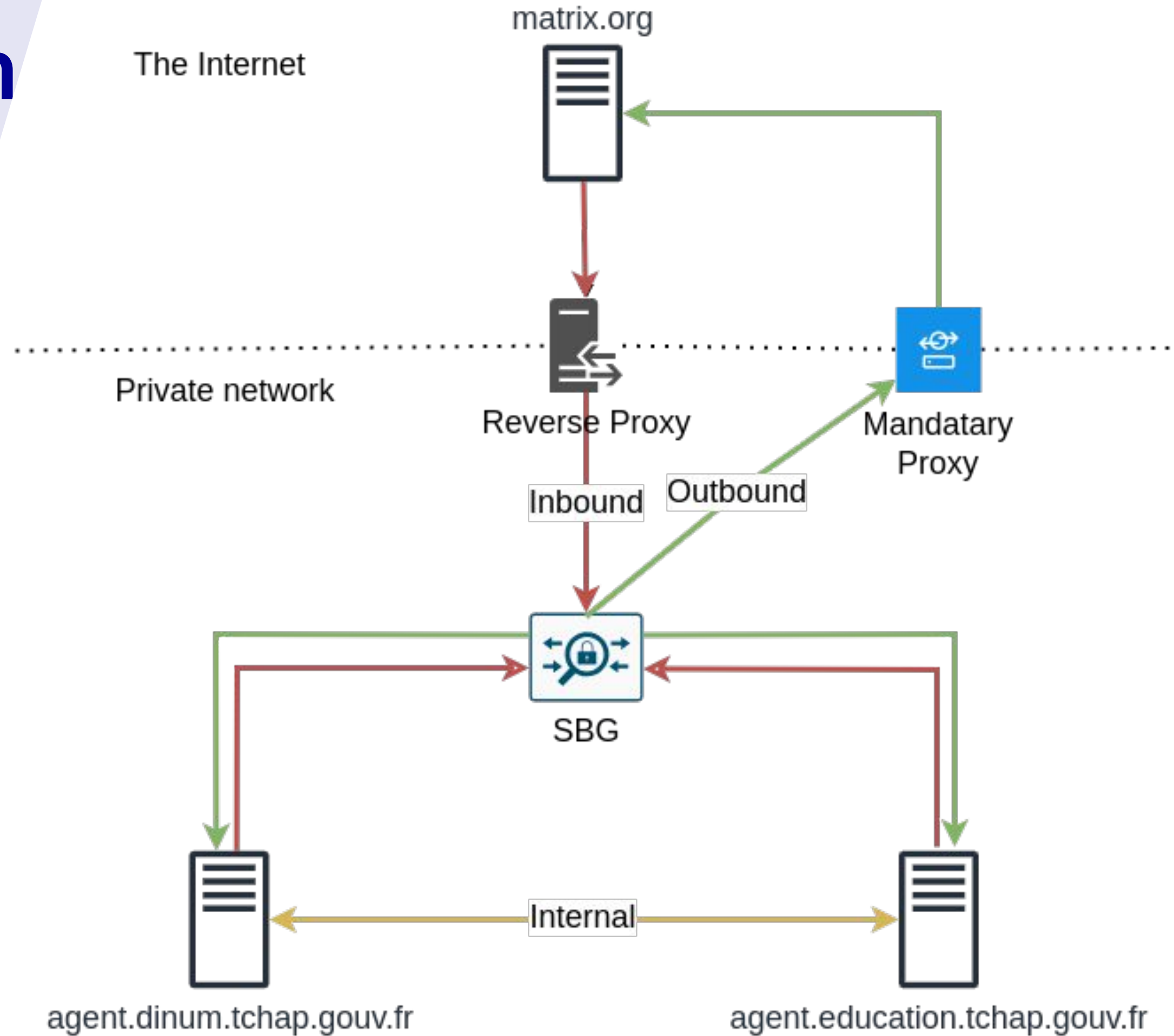


Protect Tchap deployment with a border gateway

- Sort of Matrix specific WAF put at the boundary of the network
- Filter both inbound and outbound traffic
- Easy kill switch in case of attack



Open the Federation securely!



Open the Federation, securely!



Inbound traffic

- Only trusted homeservers are allowed
- Signature of authenticated requests is verified
- TLS MITM is avoided (state actor)
 - Matrix signing key is pinned in config

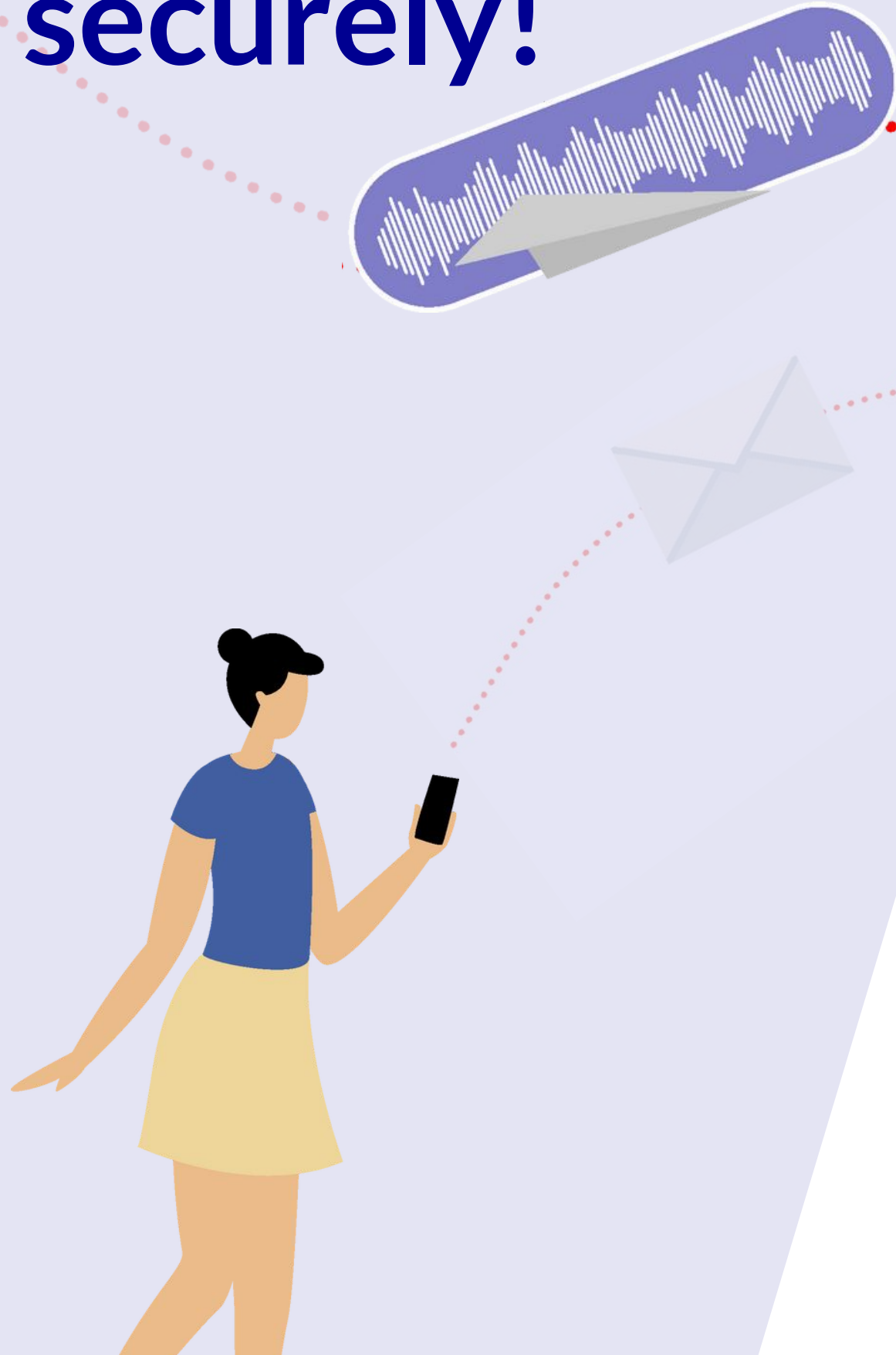


Open the Federation, securely!



Outbound traffic

- Only trusted homeservers are allowed
- We trust the requester so no verification of the request signature here
- Federation domain of the trusted server is pinned in config
 - TODO: pin the TLS root CA? Can help with state actor. Less important than inbound traffic however.

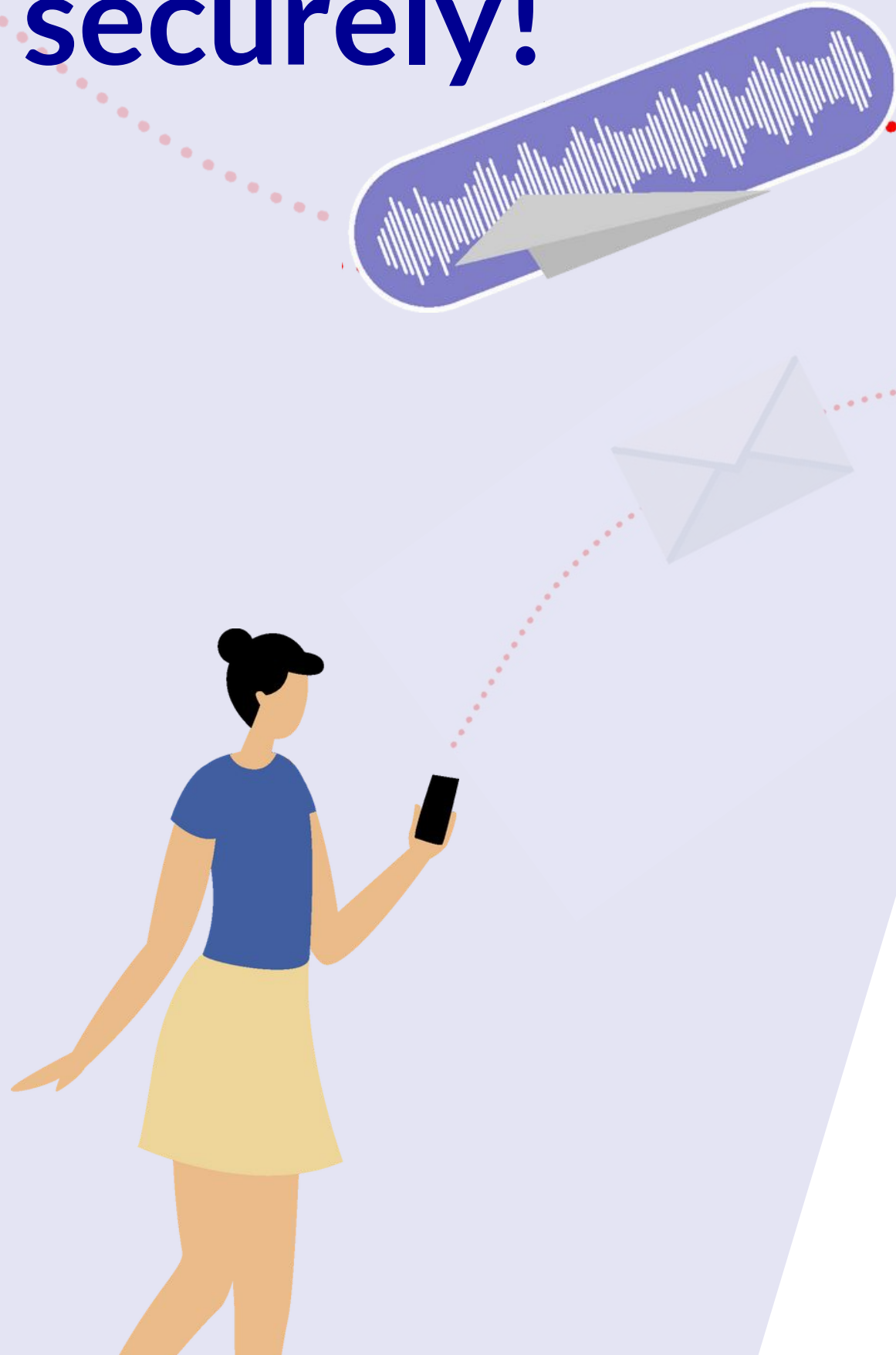


Open the Federation, securely!



Out of scope

- Changing the content of a Matrix transaction
 - Not really possible easily, we would need to resign the transactions with another key and make our homerservers accept this new key
 - In the end we still want to restrict some events
 - Will be done with Synapse modules



Open the Federation, securely!



Trust model

- V1 with current gateway
 - Can connect to trusted homeservers, with users trusted enough to have the same capabilities as official Tchap users
 - Homeserver identity is verified, and users are identifiable

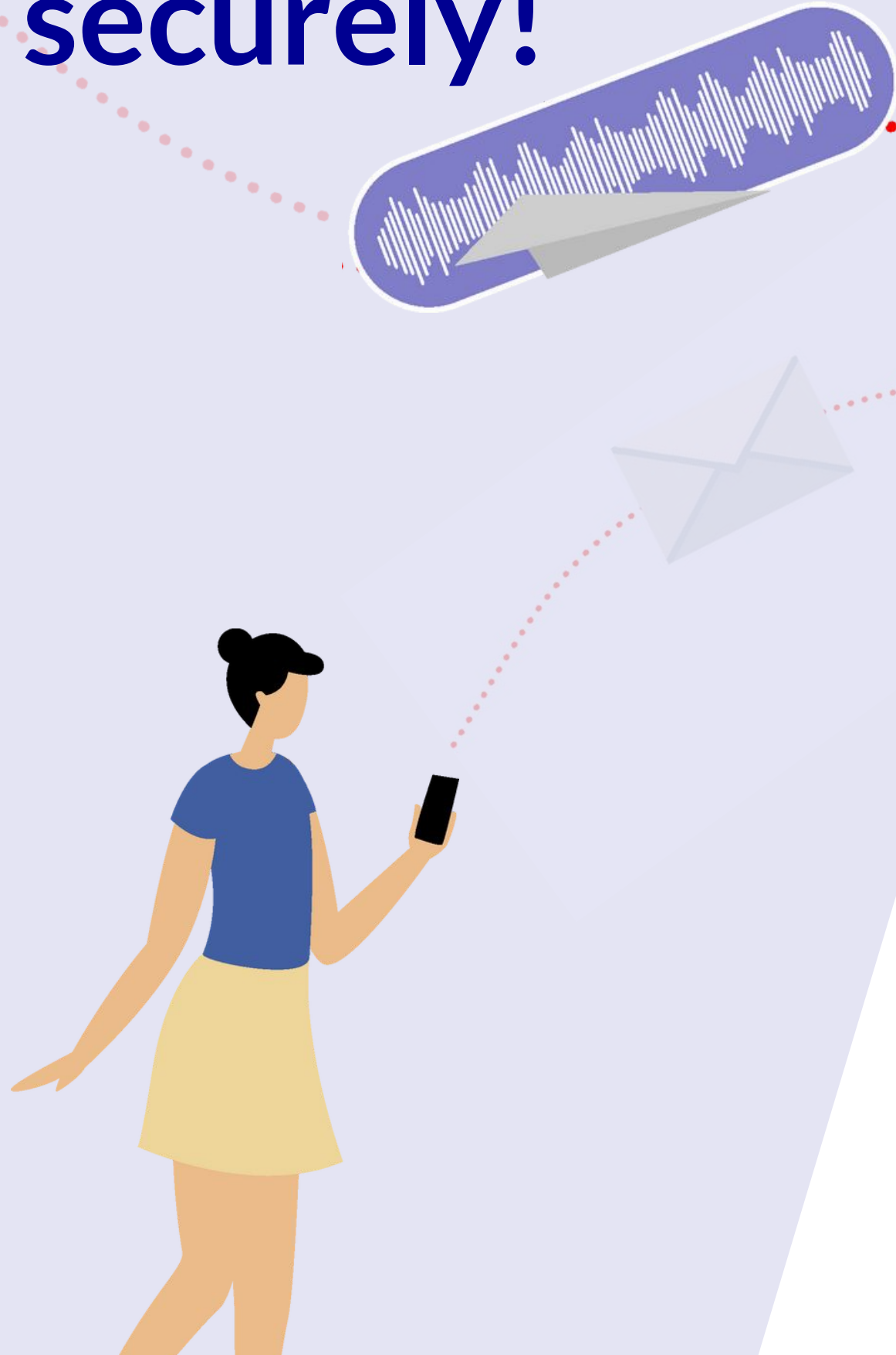


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Trust model

- V2 with Synapse modules
 - Capabilities of other users can be restricted
 - Existing ACL events to be investigated
 - Custom events (to be MSCed if it makes sense) may be needed
 - TBC/TBD if we can leverage recent work around Trust & Safety



Open the Federation, securely!

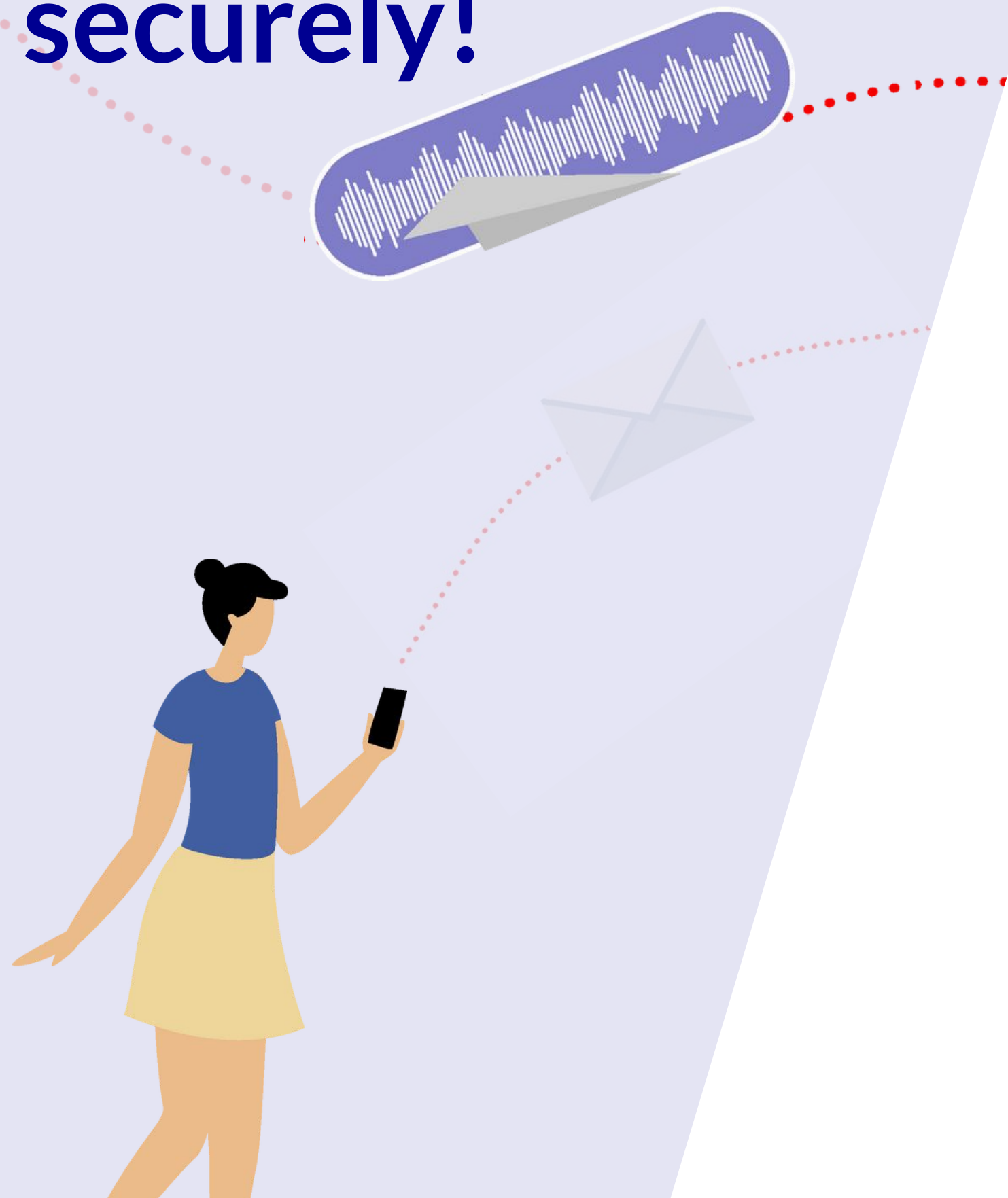


Trust model

- V3 one day?
 - Protocol and clients have evolved to support several trust levels
 - UX needs to be top-notch, securing end users behavior without compromising usability is already hard with a single trust domain
 - On fully open federation one day?



Open the Federation, securely!



Demo



Any questions ?

Don't hesitate to write to tchap@beta.gouv.fr

Join us in the Federation !



Tchap