

Audit of the federal content management systems (CMS) projects DDPS General Secretariat, Federal Office of Information Technology, Systems and Telecommunication and Federal IT Steering Unit

Key facts

Content management systems (CMS) are used for the compilation, processing and dissemination of internet and intranet content. The Federal Administration uses CMS for its websites. Two projects are under way in the General Secretariat of the Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport (GS-DDPS) and in the Federal Office of Information Technology, Systems and Telecommunication (FOITT). Both selected the same solution provider independently of each other. In contrast, the operating models of the solutions differ greatly from each other: the FOITT procured its solution and operates it itself, the GS-DDPS has its solution operated by an external service provider and acquires it as a service. The awards made for the basic mandate amounted to CHF 7.3 million for the DDPS (establishment of service and 5 years of operation) and CHF 3.6 million for the FOITT (product licences and services).

The CMS projects were audited by the SFAO for the first time in 2014¹. In addition, the SFAO submitted its comments on possible synergies in a summary report² to the Federal Council. The SFAO came to the conclusion that it was too late for an amalgamation. The SFAO once again scrutinised the status of the projects in August 2016. It also investigated the question of transferring CMS to make it an ICT standard service under the management of the Federal IT Steering Unit (FITSU).

The DDPS and the FOITT were able to prepare their CMS services

The data transfer projects are under way both in the FOITT and in the GS-DDPS. The GS-DDPS is supporting the executing bodies very closely and is planning to conclude the transformation by the end of 2016. This is part of the overall project.

For the migration, the FOITT is concluding a service level agreement with the offices concerned in each case. These offices will themselves carry out the migration projects in their sectors. The FOITT will accompany and support them with its own project managers. The written notice to the clients using the present system had not yet been given at the time of the audit. As a result, there is the risk that it will not be possible for the old system to be shut down at the end of 2017 and operating costs will thus continue to be incurred.

The FOITT still has to conclusively define the data backup and data recovery procedures in operation. Then, the security compliance test checklist must once again be worked through and the unresolved issues eliminated.

¹ The reports "Audit of the key ICT project Content Management System (CMS), Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport (DDPS)" and "Audit of the key ICT project CMS.nextgen" (audit mandate 14559) are available on the SFAO website (www.sfao.admin.ch).

² The report "Renewal of content management systems" (audit mandate 14572) is available on the SFAO website (www.sfao.admin.ch).



In the case of the GS-DDPS solution, the approval of the security concept by the Information Security and Facility Protection (ISFP) specialist unit was still pending at the time of the audit, with the result that improvements will be required in the worst case scenario. The lack of security measures could lead to incidents.

The FOITT and the GS-DDPS indicated that performance suffered at peak recording times. However, the burden on the editing systems will decline as soon as just the changes are made, in their opinion. It remains to be seen how the systems will cope in the event of exceptional burdens from the internet.

There will be no new standard service for the time being

The SFAO got a picture of the status of the project on transferring CMS to make it a standard service at the FITSU. The FITSU stated that the contractual situation for the GS-DDPS system does not currently guarantee long-term operation. The contracts signed allow the supplier to terminate the service agreement unilaterally after the first five years. In addition, the proposed prices for extension to the entire Federal Administration are higher than originally expected. The FOITT solution cannot be used for the entire Federal Administration without additional investments and procurements.

Under the circumstances, the FITSU came to the conclusion not to recommend either of the two solutions as the sole federal standard at this point in time. In accordance with the Federal Council decree of 29 June 2016, the FITSU will deliver a federal solution by December 2022 for federal websites and manage this solution from 2023. For the transitional period, the FITSU declared both of the existing services to be the binding standard and also designated the service providers.

For the SFAO, this decision is largely understandable. The FITSU made this decision in particular because it was not clear whether and under which terms the DDPS can continue to manage its solution as a possible standard service for the entire Confederation with its current service provider beyond 2020. However, this decision poses a huge challenge for the continued operation of the existing solution, above all in the GS-DDPS, during the transitional period. In addition, the rapid realisation of a standard service for "federal websites" requested in 2013 is becoming a more distant prospect. The SFAO thus believes that the launch date in the anticipated application to be made to the Federal Council in March 2018 should be called into question once again. The onus is on the FITSU to push through the current standard until a standard service is introduced.

A further challenge will be to evaluate all of the Confederation's websites within the scope of the overview. Particular mention should be made of the Federal Department of Justice and Police (FDJP) and the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA), which have had to continue using their own solutions up to this point in time. According to the FITSU, possible migration scenarios were agreed with the service providers concerned within the scope of the Federal Council decree of 29 June 2016. The corresponding recommendations from the SFAO's summary report are thus still relevant.

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