

# Audit of service provision in the "projects and services" area

## Federal Office of Information Technology, Systems and Telecommunication

### Key facts

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The Swiss Federal Audit Office (SFAO) assessed performance and organisation in the "projects and services" area at the Federal Office of Information Technology, Systems and Telecommunication (FOITT) following the "on FOITT" reorganisation. The focus was on the duration, quality and costs of project implementation, quality assurance (tollgate process) and interfaces. Other focal areas included communication and the management of external resources.

In the "projects and services" area, the FOITT supports its service procurers by developing, maintaining and enhancing applications in line with their orders. In 2017, expenses and revenue in the region of CHF 146 million and CHF 142 million, respectively, were generated with an average of 312 FTEs.

#### **Benchmarking shows greater efficiency in development**

The SFAO commissioned benchmarking of the performance data (expenses, duration, efficiency and quality) of eleven completed non-key FOITT projects from 2015 to 2017. The international sector comparison shows a significant increase in efficiency in software development for the period after the FOITT's reorganisation.

Project expenses are in line with the international sector average. The duration of FOITT projects is substantially higher than average. It was not possible to make general statements about the causes. Clients have different opinions about the FOITT's services. The SFAO thus believes that it makes sense to continue monitoring the development of efficiency in the future by means of regular benchmarking.

#### **Project management specifications are expedient, but optimisation is required in early phases**

The FOITT has continuously enhanced the tools and specifications for project management. These effectively support a project's planning, execution and quality assurance. Nevertheless, improvements are still needed particularly in the initiation and concept phases. For example, insufficient, poorly defined requirements and objectives of a project hindered the tender phase. Uncertainties and misunderstandings led to elaborate discussions or even to a project being abandoned.

Explicit completeness and quality controls with regard to the deliverables are missing for the initiation phase of projects. The FOITT has already responded to the situation by setting up a "pre-planning workshop".

In the SFAO's view, the tollgate process for carrying out traditional projects using the waterfall method has reached an appropriate level of maturity. However, the existing process

is too cumbersome and unsuitable for agile projects<sup>1</sup> and the micro-releases used more and more frequently. The objectives of the tollgate process must be addressed differently for such methods and tasks. Furthermore, this process should be checked for efficiency and economic efficiency.

### **The service procurers criticise the frequent project manager changes**

In the projects considered, the managers often had to be changed, which was also perceived negatively by the service procurers. In addition, they repeatedly criticised the insufficient sector knowledge of the project managers deployed.

In the case of complex issues (project and environment), senior project managers should thus be deployed, supported by qualified specialists if necessary. Although the FOITT has begun to prepare project managers for the business of the respective service procurers, studies have shown that the preparations still need to be stepped up.

### **Communication has scope for optimisation, management of external resources is effective**

Communication and the escalation process in projects work constructively across all hierarchical levels both within the FOITT and with the service procurers. Regarding internal FOITT communication, project managers would like to see faster reactions from management and stronger support from internal contacts. Clients generally feel well integrated into a project. However, there is a desire to be supported by the service provider as early as the scope establishment and requirements definition stage. Primarily in the case of agile projects (SCRUM<sup>2</sup>), service procurers lack the necessary methodological knowledge.

The FOITT's steering and monitoring of external resources were appropriate for the projects audited.

**Original text in German**

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<sup>1</sup> Software development method in which the sub-processes are kept as simple and agile as possible in order to accelerate development and increase its transparency and flexibility.

<sup>2</sup> Project and product management process model, especially for agile software development.