

# Audit of the modernisation project for the Official Publications Centre Federal Chancellery

## Key facts

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The Official Publications Centre (OPC) of the Federal Chancellery (FCh) manages the federal law publication platform which receives thousands of visitors every day. After an initial attempt (abandoned in 2010), the OPC started a new modernisation project for its system in 2014. The cost of the project is estimated at nearly CHF 14.7 million. The first project phase, the move to the primacy of electronic versions of official publications, was successfully completed in 2016. A second phase is currently underway. It aims to replace the existing system which has reached the end of its life cycle. The concept phase is complete but implementation is experiencing difficulties.

The aim of the Swiss Federal Audit Office's (SFAO) audit is to evaluate the progress made on the project, its risks and the quality of its leadership. Consideration of economic aspects and information assurance, as well as the definition of needs, are also addressed.

### A delicate situation

The second phase began in 2015. Under the leadership of the FCh, this work is performed in collaboration with the Federal Office of Information Technology, Systems and Telecommunication (FOITT) and a company based in Greece. The latter won the tender to develop a new solution and signed a service contract with the Confederation.

Initiated in May 2017, the initial work carried out will not meet the objectives set. The deadlines will be exceeded by two to six months and the current system's lifespan will have to be extended. The supplier's deliveries do not meet the defined quality standards and will be returned for rectification. In terms of costs, an additional amount of CHF 4.2 million was already approved in 2016 following the decision to outsource the development. When the SFAO visited, the decision to extend the project raised fears of other budgetary overruns although their amount cannot be reliably estimated.

In response to this, the FCh issued the supplier with a reminder. The latter contests the analysis of the situation in part but has requested a delay of three months to put the first implementation unit into production. Integration tests are planned for the end of May 2018. However, at this stage, the developments delivered only partially cover the business processes. A second implementation unit is scheduled but its planning stages are not complete. Based on the current dynamics, the SFAO considers the prospects to be bleak. The next integration tests will be crucial. They will determine the conditions for the rest of the project.

### **Despite appropriate project management, collaboration with the supplier is difficult**

Overall, the project is managed correctly from the Federal Administration side, apart from certain aspects of risk management. Organisation is adequate and the FCh management is committed. Project documentation is of a very high quality and the management processes are suited to the complexity of the project.

However, collaboration with the supplier is difficult. The distance to the developers based in Greece does not permit efficient collaboration. Attempts to move them to the project site have not succeeded. Significant differences also exist in working methods, perception of commitments and priorities. The contract and specifications describe the details of the results required but do not define the working methods. Clearly, the process of learning to collaborate is still in progress. In the SFAO's opinion, a final workshop should provide the opportunity to mutually optimise the terms of collaboration. The parties present should actively prepare concrete proposals.

### **Suitable risk management but compensatory measures partially effective**

The processes and organisation of the project risk management are generally adequate. An external specialist is responsible for this, under the direct leadership of the contracting party. The risks and compensatory measures are identified and monitored regularly.

Two of the seven main project risks identified in the monitoring report of April 2018 have materialised. Production start has indeed been postponed and the number of delivery cycles ("iterations") has had to be revised upwards. The compensatory measures have therefore not prevented risks materialising. Some of these measures are not formulated in a sufficiently specific manner. Their implementation has sometimes been underestimated.

The emergency plans and an escalation process at client level have been activated. The SFAO finds these actions justified. It believes that a new deterioration in the risk status is possible. Given the tense situation with the supplier, the FCh must consider and prepare for all eventualities. Active risk management is more crucial than ever.

### **The foundations of the project are adequately defined**

The SFAO considers the process for the collection and validation of needs to be appropriate and believes that the key players have been sufficiently involved. Given the project's concentration on the mandatory requirements ("must haves"), it underlines that the project will have to continue to actively manage users' expectations.

The economic aspects have been correctly dealt with in seeking a solution. Cost estimates and quantitative and qualitative components of the usefulness of the project have been established and regularly updated throughout the project. The different estimates and feasibility demonstrations also contributed towards ascertaining the financial stakes and reducing risks. They also allowed the project boundary to be actively managed.

As this stage, the SFAO considers the definitions which define information assurance, protection of personal data and application controls to be sufficient. These elements are in the process of being implemented and will need to be thoroughly tested before entering production.

**Original text in French**