

Audit of the key ICT project ASALfutur

Report addressed to the Supervisory Commission for the Unemployment Insurance Fund and the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs

Key facts

The Swiss Federal Audit Office (SFAO) audited the ASALfutur project at the Unemployment Insurance Compensation Office. The ASAL ICT system is used to pay unemployment benefits of around CHF 5 billion a year to an average of 118,000 unemployed people. The now outdated ICT system entered into operation in 1993 and is to be replaced by a new one by 2021. The SFAO already considered ASALfutur as part of the 2017 governance audit.¹

No overall detailed project plan as a management tool in early May 2019

A proof of concept confirmed the fundamental feasibility of the solution on schedule. However, the milestone of delivering the planned detailed specifications at the end of March 2019 was not achieved. The Compensation Office nevertheless decided to maintain the planned start date of the first implementation unit, i. e. the beginning of July 2019, and to carry out the work in parallel.

The SFAO considers this to be appropriate. However, this decision also carries risks. For example, the complexity of the ASAL system and the implementation time pressure could put too much strain on those involved in the project. Since a number of questions can only be clarified within the framework of the detailed specifications, all of the uncertainties regarding costs and deadlines have not yet been resolved. The project sponsor and the risk manager must therefore remain fully attentive. The project sponsor's firm stance on potential compromises in terms of quality and testing must continue. The SFAO also recommends that a management tool be created in the form of an overall detailed project plan containing all activities and dependencies, as well as the identification of the critical path.

The SFAO found that the project's reporting and risk management are both exemplary.

Coordination with other federal projects necessary

During the audit, ASALfutur was in the detailed specification phase. For this reason, the SFAO focused on the system architecture. This architecture was defined from the perspective of the ASAL replacement and therefore is only a first step towards the digitalisation of unemployment insurance. Since the Supervisory Commission for the Unemployment Insurance Fund still has to approve the strategic direction for its further development in terms of IT from 2022, the recommendation from the governance audit has not yet been fully implemented.

¹ "Governance audit of unemployment insurance" (audit mandate 17540), available on the website of the SFAO (www.sfao.admin.ch)

As the supervisory authority, the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs must also continue to ensure that the detailed specifications in the area of master data management are consistent with the federal IT objectives. The SFAO therefore recommends that the Compensation Office coordinate master data management with the other federal projects SUPERB23 and DaziT.

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