

Key ICT project audit: Interception System Switzerland ISS 2

Key facts

In accordance with the Federal Council's directives for key ICT projects, from April to June 2014, the Swiss Federal Audit Office (SFAO) audited the Interception System Switzerland (ISS 2) project at the IT Service Centre of the Federal Department of Justice and Police (ISC-FDJP). The audit's aim was to assess the project status and risks with regard to the achievement of targets.

The Post and Telecommunications Surveillance Service (PTSS) can no longer fulfil its legal mandate with the current system used for telephone tapping. This Service carries out telephone tapping at the request of the public prosecutors and with the approval of the courts responsible for the investigation of serious offences and for emergency searches. To this end the ISC-FDJP operates the Lawful Interception System (LIS) which receives the data from the telecom operators and makes this available to the criminal prosecution authorities. LIS is at the end of its operational life and must be replaced. For this purpose, the Interception System Switzerland (ISS 1) project was initialised in 2008.

The ISS 1 supplier was selected within the scope of a tender invitation procedure based on Article 3 of the Federal Act on Public Procurement (PPA). In 2013, the project was abandoned for various reasons and relaunched under the name ISS 2 with a sister company of an alternative provider from the same tender procedure. This report refers to the current ISS 2 project.

In spite of the need for action, overall the ISS 2 project is on course. The schedule and financial risks for the operational start planned for March 2015 are being kept appropriately in check. The information security and data protection concept (ISDP concept) has not yet been approved. Should this result in requirements and adjustments, it could have a negative impact on the progression of the project.

Project organisation is expedient. The scope of the project has been clearly defined and the structure of the project organisation is lean. The most important stakeholders are involved via the project committee which is managed by the Secretary General of the FDJP as the project manager.

The solution architecture requires accompanying measures for implementation and operation. In line with the project brief, a basic system was defined which is not redundant in design and fulfils the minimum requirements on guaranteeing the current statutory mandate. The data amounts which the system and the receipt and delivery networks will have to process in the future are difficult to predict. This is in particular because telephony is moving away from conventional technology to voice-over IP and other Internet services with an increasing amount of multimedia content. Added to this is the fact that the development of the amount of monitoring is difficult to predict. Precautionary, generous dimensioning of ISS 2 would be an uneconomic course of action which is why the project is pursuing a different approach. So as to compensate for any data entry peaks and to reduce the negative impact of the lack of redundancy, the basic system should be preceded by a buffer system which has yet to be developed. However, the corresponding concept has not yet been finalised and it has not yet been decided whether or not it will be developed internally or put out to tender. From the perspective of the SFAO, the required priority has not been accorded to the buffer system in the project.

The uncertainties described above relating to dimensioning apply equally to the buffer system and they may be only partially alleviated by the buffer system. Upgrading the capacity always affects all components in the processing chain. The SFAO recommends that the FDJP regularly examine the capacity calculations from the time production starts on the basis of the amount of data effectively entered and to draw up now an expansion of the system that may prove necessary.

In view of the lack of redundancy of the basic system, continuity management plays a central role. In the area of business continuity management, the PTSS is already drawing up corresponding concepts. The IT Service Continuity Management is today making provision for the integration system to be converted to a productive system in the event of a disaster. However, this has not been fleshed out. From the perspective of the SFAO, detailed emergency plans with scenarios must be available already before the operational start.

Security requirements have not yet all been drawn up. Protection requirements have been determined and security requirements are known. However, the ISDP concept is behind schedule; its completion should be given high priority. The authorisation concept must be implemented before putting ISS 2 into operation.

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