



Parallel Audit on Biometric Passports

Key facts

Under the aegis of the European Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions (EUROSAI), the Information Technology Working Group designated the issuing of biometric passports as the subject of the audit in the preliminary stages. The selection was based on the existing joint requirements concerning passports which have biometric features. The audits were conducted in the form of an international parallel audit. The basic principles and the audit programmes were agreed with the six participating countries.

The objective of the audit is to assess the processes and organisational procedures over the life cycle of the latest generation of Swiss passports with biometric features. The audit covers the process from the application for a new passport to delivery to the applicant. As the basis, the Swiss Federal Audit Office (SFAO) used the fundamental requirements for IT general controls (ITGC) to assess the ICT systems and equipment installed. These requirements are usually used in IT audits within the scope of the Swiss auditing standards.

The SFAO considers the result of the audit conducted to be good and regards the process from passport application to delivery of the biometric passport as appropriate and controlled. In relation to the information systems and installations used, the SFAO believes some improvements are necessary and has issued corresponding recommendations in this report.

The main findings are listed below:

- Emergency precaution systems and back-up systems exist for breakdowns and interruptions for the IT applications used. The emergency measures have already proved their worth in the case of power cuts. However, a planned, periodic and comprehensive test of the emergency measures is not carried out.
- The Federal Council has defined a new computer centre strategy for the entire ICT environments of the Confederation. It is important that passport applications are included at an early stage when planning new back-up computer centres.
- The Federal Council decided back in 2011 to start preparatory work on the construction and operation of a second and independent production location for passport production by 2016 at the latest. In addition, a new generation of passports is planned for the near future. The planning of both activities must be coordinated in good time and harmonised.
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This report will be sent only to the Swiss authorities and those involved in this audit. A short, anonymous report will be drawn up and mutually exchanged at the level of the participating European countries, under the leadership of the SFAO. The short report will contain no details about any identified weaknesses.

Original text in German