

AUDIT

Follow-up audit on the implementations of key recommendations

General Secretariat of the Federal Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications, Federal Office for the Environment

KEY FACTS

The Swiss Federal Audit Office (SFAO) carried out an audit in 2023⁴ on the online management of hazardous waste in the context of the digital transformation at the Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN). As part of this project, the FOEN introduced two processes which were built on the eGovernment platform (eGov DETEC) of the Federal Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications (DETEC). The FOEN was one of the platform's two pioneering offices. At the time of the SFAO's audit, it had not been possible to implement either of the FOEN's two processes to the satisfaction of the end user. The SFAO issued two recommendations for each process to DETEC's General Secretariat (GS-DETEC) and the FOEN. This follow-up audit analysed whether the four recommendations had been implemented.

Three of the four recommendations have been implemented. A recommendation issued to the GS-DETEC on systematic evaluation of the eGov DETEC programme is expected to be implemented at the end of 2025.

The stakeholders are more closely involved in the new project

The cantons and businesses that are working with the new FOEN portal 'Waste and raw materials' were critical of the efficiency of using it and the user-friendliness of the portal. The programme committee consequently decided to stop progress and take stock of the situation. The SFAO recommended that the FOEN use this stock-taking as a systematic analysis of the lessons learned. In doing so, the FOEN analysed, amongst other things, whether the aims set in the project charter had been achieved and concluded that some of the aims were unachievable or could only be partially achieved. The FOEN developed variations of the architecture and came to the conclusion that developing a new specialist application would be the most suitable solution based on the technical requirements. The FOEN sought a third opinion on the matter. The company contracted supported the decision reached by the FOEN.

The SFAO also recommended that the FOEN identify the individual stakeholders' requirements when using the programme as part of the situational analysis. The FOEN carried out in-depth investigations with the individual cantons and waste management companies to find out their needs. The knowledge gained was incorporated into the tender documentation for the new solution. Individual cantons and waste management companies are also directly represented in the project team or in advisory groups.

As such, the FOEN has implemented both of the SFAO's recommendations.

An external audit should demonstrate further development of the platform

The FOEN was one of the two pioneering offices on the eGov DETEC platform with the 'Waste and raw materials' portal. The complexity of the projects was underestimated from the beginning. Ultimately, the solution that was developed did not produce a satisfactory end product. In order to avoid similar occurrences in the future, the SFAO recommended that the GS-DETEC develop criteria for processes and organisations. The criteria can be used to assist with making decisions for successful implementation on the eGov DETEC platform.

⁴ Digital Transformation: Audit of the online management of hazardous waste (audit mandate 22355); the audit report is available on the SFAO website (<https://www.efk.admin.ch/en/>)

Furthermore, the GS-DETEC added the new processes step 'Complexity assessment' to the existing roadmap processes. This allows the risks and possible feasibility challenges to be shown transparently for new projects. The complexity assessment takes place prior to the final decision on whether a new project will be accepted. This means the recommendation has been implemented.

In its report, the SFAO also recommended that the GS-DETEC carry out a systematic evaluation of the central eGov DETEC programme. As a result, the GS-DETEC conducted a survey of the contribution made by six roadmap projects to the overall efficiency of the eGov DETEC programme. The GS-DETEC also commissioned an external audit in summer 2025. This should highlight any potential shortcomings and areas for improvement in the eGov DETEC platform, taking developments in the surrounding environment into account. The results should be used to define measures for improvements. Given that the planned audit report and the catalogue of measures to be derived from it are not yet available, it was deemed that the recommendation had not been implemented at the time of the audit.