

AUDIT

Audit of the new archive storage facility in Zollikofen

Swiss Federal Archives

Federal Office for Buildings and Logistics

KEY FACTS

The Swiss Federal Archives (SFA) office preserves the documentation of government actions and makes it accessible, based on the Archiving Act. At the end of 2024, the SFA had already archived 80 linear kilometres of documents. For this purpose, it also uses temporarily rented storage capacity, which will no longer be available in the future. Additional capacity is to be created with a new building planned in Zollikofen. This is also necessary because the SFA expects to need up to 50 linear kilometres more by 2028, with the completion of the delivery of analogue collections from the Federal Administration. The commitment appropriation required for the planned new building is to be requested in the 2026 real estate dispatch. The Federal Office for Buildings and Logistics (FOBL) is responsible for the construction, which is currently estimated to cost CHF 46 million. The new storage facility will not be ready for use until 2029 at the earliest.

The Swiss Federal Audit Office (SFAO) audited the planned new archive storage facility. It assessed whether the project meets the various requirements as economically and sustainably as possible. The audit findings paint a positive picture overall at the current stage of planning. Economic efficiency will not become apparent until the assumptions made have been further developed and the Confederation's archiving needs have been considered in their entirety. The FOBL is responsible for ensuring the economic efficiency of the planned long-term renovation of the SFA's existing underground storage facilities, among other things by conducting feasibility studies and updating analyses of the Confederation's archiving needs.

The needs assessment is forward-looking

The SFA has determined its storage needs in detail and recorded them in a formal needs report, including requirements in terms of capacity, security and storage technology, taking work processes into account. This needs analysis is based on consultations with offices subject to mandatory delivery, with uncertainties being factored in by means of empirical values and contingency allowances. Future usage forecasts and the on-demand digitisation strategy have also been included.

The new construction project in Zollikofen covers all of the SFA's needs with 150 linear kilometres and offers additional reserves for relocations or third-party use. The decision in favour of an above-ground storage facility avoids high construction and operating costs, but requires additional security concepts. A temporary storage facility will be needed until the new one is put into operation in 2029; the operating costs for this will be borne separately.

The SFA's project organisation ensures close monitoring of the project with a specific team and clear structures.

The SFAO considers the approach to be sustainable overall, but sees a need for further action with regard to the security concept and the use of surplus capacity. The SFA and the FOBL had already recognised this.

The choice of an automated storage system is understandable

In the context of the new building, the SFA looked closely at the requirements regarding sustainable storage technology and opted for an automated high-bay storage facility due to its economic, ecological and work organisation advantages. The solution should not only efficiently cover current needs, but also take future developments into account. The SFAO considers the decision to be appropriate and emphasises the importance of setting the course for this key project at an early stage.

However, the economic efficiency of the investment cannot be assessed until the actual utilisation of the additional capacity has been clearly determined.

Sustainability aspects have been taken into account, but the economic efficiency of the measures is still being reviewed

The SFA itself has not defined any sustainability objectives for the new building, but is focusing on low operating and maintenance costs. However, the sustainability requirements were defined by the FOBL on the basis of its strategy and made binding in the architectural competition. The aim is to achieve Swiss Sustainable Building Standard (SNBS) "Gold" certification, although the criteria for special uses, such as archives, still need to be developed. The SFAO expects the FOBL to consider the cost/benefit aspects in this respect.

The winning design impressed the jury with its sustainable approach, among other things. However, the economic efficiency of the sustainability measures is only now being analysed. There is thus a risk that measures will be dropped as the project progresses, which in the worst case could partially call into question the original decision in favour of the winning design. Conducting an analysis earlier and standardising the methodology could overcome this problem in future projects. The SFAO has made a corresponding recommendation to the FOBL.