

Audit of the key ICT project Fiscal IT

Key facts

At the end of 2014, the Swiss Federal Audit Office (SFAO) audited the Federal Tax Administration's (FTA) key ICT project Fiscal IT for the second time. Fiscal IT will update the FTA's IT.

Great attention from management – positive development overall

The audit focused on planning and controlling. The question of whether the FTA as an organisation has been preparing itself adequately for the changes arising from Fiscal IT was also analysed in depth.

The FTA's IT landscape is largely based on obsolete technology. It no longer supports the FTA's business processes adequately. The main aim of Fiscal IT is to ensure that the FTA remains operational in the future too. The programme consists of 29 projects. It started in spring 2013 and will be completed at the end of 2018. It has a budget of CHF 85.2 million and was approved by the Federal Council on 10 April 2013.

At the time of the audit, 14 of 29 projects had got under way. Of these, three were in the initialisation phase, nine were in the conceptual phase and two were in the implementation phase.

Overall, we can confirm that the programme has continued to develop positively. Both at the FTA and the FOITT, Fiscal IT has been given a great deal of attention at the business management level. The programme has been assigned competent people. It is being managed consistently in accordance with the guidelines for Federal Administration projects.

Fiscal IT and the reorganisation project running in parallel are completely changing the FTA's business processes. The degree of automation and efficiency are being increased considerably. The FTA can position itself optimally for future challenges. Both projects affect up to one third of its workforce.

Such sweeping organisational changes have to be actively managed as "change management". If they are not, they could unsettle employees and could even have the opposite effect of the optimisation sought. As the SFAO sees it, the FTA management is still paying too little attention to these "soft" aspects. The changes to be carried out are being assessed and dealt with too rationally.

Appropriate structure and tight management, but high degree of fluctuation and weaknesses in risk management

Fiscal IT has a modular structure. It is divided into functional units, which were derived from the FTA's business processes. The procedure allows the available resources to be used optimally. The modules' entry into service can be aligned with the FTA's needs. There are fewer implementation and project risks. The project benefits take effect sooner. This increases the efficiency of the programme. Furthermore, the modular design will have a positive impact on operations and life-cycle management.

Some of the problems established in the report at the end of 2013 are still present. The issue of staff recruitment and the associated project delays have not yet been resolved. The architectural concept, which was delayed at that time, was delivered to a high standard in April 2014.



The delays in the projects "Datawarehouse" and "Outputmanagement" could no longer be made up and they will be launched later than scheduled. The delays are not expected to influence the programme's final deadline.

While this second assessment of Fiscal IT is predominantly positive, the SFAO considers that measures are needed to ensure it also remains on course.

The programme's success depends largely on the role of the specialist programme manager, who is an external staff member. If he should drop out, it is unlikely that he could be replaced within a reasonable period of time.

Formal deficiencies have been detected in quality assurance and risk management. The latter must be enhanced.

The programme schedule is realistic. Some of the time periods between the measurable deliverables are quite long, which makes prompt, objective controlling difficult.

The programme's modular design places high demands on the specialist and technical coordination of projects. The SFAO believes that this is a task which must be planned and managed across projects. It is currently delegated to the projects.

When the programme was launched, resource planning was done across all phases and projects. Analyses show, however, that not all project resources are available as planned. This is partly due to problems in formal procurement (WTO). The high level of fluctuation in project staff is particularly striking. Thirty changes were carried out at the project management level alone in 2014. This corresponds to a fluctuation of about 50%. In the SFAO's opinion, the loss of knowledge associated with this represents a considerable project risk.

During the audit period, external firms already performed procurement audits at various levels, one of which was explicitly on the Fiscal IT programme. For this reason, the SFAO did not conduct an in-depth audit of procurement in this follow-up review.

The recommendations from the 2013 review have been implemented. The SFAO considers that the measures taken have proved their worth and have had a positive effect on the course of the programme.

Original text in German