

Audit of the key ICT project Renewal of the biometrics system platform

State Secretariat for Migration

Key facts

In the second quarter of 2017, the Swiss Federal Audit Office (SFAO) carried out its first audit on the programme for the renewal of the biometrics system platform of the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM). It concluded that the programme was appropriately designed and the status at the end of April 2017 largely met expectations. However, tensions at the project level will impair the success of the programme unless they are remedied immediately.

The system platform ensures the collection of biometric data such as fingerprints and photographs. This information is required for example for issuing Swiss passports, Schengen and Swiss visas, the new residence permit for foreign nationals and Swiss travel documents for foreign persons. The system platform will reach the end of its technical lifespan at the end of 2019, and the existing maintenance agreement will also finish then. At the time of the audit, three projects were in the planning phase within the framework of the renewal programme, the remainder were in initialisation. The total estimated costs for the Confederation are CHF 46.6 million for 2016 to 2021.

The programme is well designed, but unresolved tensions at project level are jeopardising its success

The IT Service Centre of the Federal Department of Justice and Police (ISC-FDJP) is responsible for the WTO invitation to tender, although the Federal Office of Police (fedpol) defines the requirements for this. Tensions between the biometrics entry project in the ISC-EJPD and fedpol's competent specialist unit burden the program unduly and result in delays in procurement milestones. Further delays, for whatever reason, would lead to indeterminate additional costs, as the maintenance agreements would have to be renegotiated beyond the envisaged scope.

The programme management has reacted and defined measures to regularise the situation. However, the impact must be monitored closely, as a sustainable solution is decisive for the success of the entire undertaking.

The SFAO believes that the quality and risk management is expedient. However, in one project there is a critical accumulation of functions between the quality and risk management (QRM) role and the competent specialist unit. Measures should be taken to guarantee the required impartiality of the QRM role.

A modular structure should achieve significant improvements in further development and maintainability

The current system landscape does not have a modular design, which entails complexity and sluggishness. The SFAO considers the change to a modular design to be positive. Due to the new service-oriented architecture (SOA), supplier dependency is reduced, further

development is simplified, there is an improvement in maintainability and individual specialist applications and components can go through an autonomous life cycle. This allows savings to be made in future extensions and replacements, even if efficiency gains are not a programme objective.

Original text in German