

AUDIT

Audit of the transformation from ICT steering to federal digitalisation steering

Federal Chancellery – Digital Transformation and ICT Steering

KEY FACTS

The Digital Transformation and ICT Steering Sector of the Federal Chancellery (DTI) is tasked with steering the digital transformation in the Federal Administration (Fed. Adm.) in order to achieve an economical and efficient use of resources for information and communication technology (ICT), and in particular standard services, as well as better integration of digitalised business processes and increased use of existing data.

The Swiss Federal Audit Office (SFAO) examined whether the Delegate for Digital Transformation and ICT Steering (D-DTI) manages the topics from a holistic digitalisation perspective (business and IT). This involved the SFAO assessing whether decisions are made in line with the steering model in terms of time and level.

The DTI was created to link the specialist area more closely with the technology. The SFAO recommended that the D-DTI's advisory body, the Federal Digital Transformation Council (FDTC), should again focus more on strategic and technical business issues rather than on operational and technical matters. Currently, the specialist representatives are in the minority in the Digital Transformation Council. Access to the ICT specialist bodies and relevant directives needs to be improved.

Technical aspects are of great importance in the FDTC

In the FDTC, ICT managers outweigh representatives from the departments. With the ICT managers strongly represented in the Digital Transformation Council, technical digitalisation topics naturally tend to take a back seat. There is a risk that the FDTC, like its predecessor, the Federal IT Council (FITC), will increasingly develop into an ICT-dominated body, with technical digitalisation topics and governance issues being pushed further into the background. However, the D-DTI can only influence the FDTC's composition to a very limited extent, as the departments themselves appoint their representatives in accordance with the departmental principle. In view of the legal and organisational circumstances, the SFAO can understand why the D-DTI is driving the digital transformation of the Federal Administration forward through consensual decisions in the FDTC. With the exception of standard services, the Ordinance on the Coordination of the Digital Transformation and ICT (DTIO) still does not provide the Delegate for Digital Transformation with any authority to make key financial and hierarchical decisions. Various shortcomings inherent in the previous system, namely a lack of decision enforcement, cumbersome decision-making processes and unclear responsibilities, are only partially addressed by the DTIO.

The SFAO recommended changing the composition of the FDTC so that the business view is given more prominence again in the future. In addition, the FDTC should be provided with a more concise decision-making framework in the future to enable it to focus more on technical digitalisation areas and steering.

The quality of the overviews of the digitalisation projects and the specialist bodies is insufficient

It must be possible to use overviews of the digitalisation projects and the legacy systems to set priorities for new projects, and when replacing outdated applications and systems within the Federal Administration. Without such an overarching view, decisions are made at random and without knowledge of all the interrelationships.

There is a significant risk that system replacements will not be implemented systematically and that new developments will be implemented redundantly with other projects. In its report 22741¹, the SFAO recommended implementing a future project portfolio of this kind based on the existing SAP application. In the report on the mandate of the Conference of Secretaries General (CSG) of November 2023, the DTI defined a measure that required a binding migration plan for the replacement of legacy applications in the Federal Administration to be drawn up by the first quarter of 2025. This should enable the FOITT to ensure that legacy applications are replaced in the administrative units. The poor quality of the data in the overviews currently available means that they are not suitable as a basis for steering.

When questions arise about setting up their digitalisation projects, offices and departments are obliged to consult with the responsible body. However, in many cases it is not clear which body should be contacted for which questions. In addition, there is a collection of around 200 directives with varying degrees of detail and objectives that must be observed and complied with. There is a risk that the required interdepartmental coordination of business processes, data models, applications and technologies does not occur, or only selectively, randomly or indirectly. The SFAO recommends simplifying and updating access to the specialist bodies and relevant directives, and communicating this to the offices and departments.

¹ 22741: FCh (DTI); audit of the DTI key project SUPERB – PPM sub-project