

AUDIT

Audit of the key project Central Migration Information System renewal

State Secretariat for Migration

KEY FACTS

The Swiss Federal Audit Office (SFAO) has carried out a second audit on the ZEMIS renewal (ERZ) programme as a key project. The Central Migration Information System (ZEMIS) is outdated and is also no longer compatible with other standard systems in the Federal Department of Justice and Police (FDJP). The State Secretariat for Migration (SEM) is therefore running the renewal programme ERZ, which consists of seven projects, to modernise the system landscape while optimising its business processes at the same time. The programme was launched in May 2022. At the time, the SEM's plans were for the programme to run for around five years with total costs of CHF 65.9 million. This was later extended to 2032 after the plan was re-written. The total costs have increased by CHF 127.1 million to CHF 193 million.

With the new plan and the creation of new roles, the SEM laid important foundations for the successful implementation of the ERZ programme. Within the time available, the SEM has made considerable progress with the programme. However, there are still some significant uncertainties in the cost estimate. This means that the new plan is not yet reliable for the entire programme period. The SEM has not yet been able to fully implement some of the SFAO's recommendations arising from the audit carried out in 2022.⁷ To resolve these uncertainties, the interaction between the SEM, the IT Service Centre (ISC) and the General Secretariat of the FDJP must be optimised.

Key factors have not yet been taken into account in cost and time planning

The SEM has opted for a structured and transparent approach for the new plan. This primarily takes into account the technological aspects of replacing the old ZEMIS system. However, critical elements for achieving the programme's objectives have not been fully incorporated. For example, there is no target data architecture, including data migration planning. Due to the large amount of data, the migration costs could turn into a significant cost driver. The SEM has commenced initial measures to improve data quality, which will create a good basis for efficient migration. However, with regard to content they still need to identify requirements relating to important cross-functional roles in information security and data protection, the internal control system and business continuity management.

In its dispatch of 21 April 2021 on a guarantee credit for the ERZ programme, the Federal Council defined five objectives.⁸ These objectives include, for example, reducing expenditure and costs by optimising and automating process steps. The dispatch objectives have not yet been implemented and broken down into measurable key results. This means the SEM is missing an important instrument for managing key programme objectives. It therefore remains unclear how it will achieve the reported reductions in expenditure and costs amounting to millions. In order to pass these ERZ operating costs on by way of fees, there also needs to be transparency vis-à-vis the cantons regarding the development of costs.

The architecture is crucial to the planning of the ERZ programme. The SEM uses modern architectural principles in the programme, which allows for targeted and modular further development. However, architecture

⁷ Audit of the DTI key project Central Migration Information System renewal with a focus on digital transformation (audit mandate 22207), available on the SFAO website (www.efk.admin.ch)

⁸ Dispatch on a guarantee credit for the renewal of the Central Migration Information System (ZEMIS) of 21 April 2021, BBI 2021 1056

approvals in the relevant SEM architecture boards, or where appropriate at Department level, are not based on formal approval criteria. This makes it difficult for those making the decisions in the programme management to assess the quality of the architectural results.

Portfolio management for agile projects has not yet been implemented across the board

The SEM planned the programme implementation via the ERZ portfolio in a targeted manner. It has largely established the structures required for this. The SEM uses the ERZ portfolio to map the planned work and budgeted costs on a timeline, but because of the current planning uncertainties, no reliable medium- and long-term planning view is available at present. The SEM must quickly refine this view in order to enable sufficiently stable planning for its agile projects.

In addition to valid time/cost planning, the SEM must also be able to use the ERZ portfolio management to demonstrate, in a comprehensible manner, the progress made on content against the objectives of the dispatch. This is linked in particular to the benefits achieved and forecast, or the partners' time dependencies (e.g. ISC-FDJP, cantons). The SEM must further optimise programme implementation on the basis of these planning parameters in order to offset any additional costs arising from planning uncertainty.

Following operational handover of the new systems, further development will be managed within the SEM's office portfolio management department. The programme has already handed over the first programme to the SEM IT unit. To ensure the seamless continuation of development, the SEM must use uniform structures from the ERZ programme to manage its portfolio. A corresponding plan (roadmap) for the SEM systems still needs to be developed.

The cooperation model has not yet become operational

With the new plan, the SEM has achieved a high level of commitment to the ERZ programme within its organisation. It has established new roles for agile collaboration, in particular the Business Owner, Product Manager, Product Owner and those responsible for process management. However, there are still differences in how roles are understood and implemented in the various SEM management areas. With human resources becoming increasingly scarce, the ongoing development of new roles remains a risk. The SEM does not have a comprehensive personnel development strategy for this agile world.

The SEM, the General Secretariat of the FDJP and the ISC-FDJP have agreed a cooperation model based on agile principles for the ERZ programme. Overlapping roles can lead to additional costs and still need to be coordinated between the SEM, the ERZ programme and the ISC-FDJP.

As the body responsible for the cooperation model, the General Secretariat of the FDJP must enable work to be carried out according to agile principles. To this end, it must quickly establish the foundations for agile planning processes and develop them step by step. This requires active moderation by the General Secretariat of the FDJP, with timely decisions on current projects. For example, the ISC-FDJP must provide a transparent account of the programme development costs in order to gradually improve planning accuracy.