

AUDIT

Audit of the key project: new digitalisation platform for the Armed Forces

Defence Group

KEY FACTS

The new digitalisation platform (NDP) is bringing unity to the Armed Forces by creating a centralised and reliable infrastructure for its information and communications technologies (ICT). This will enable its resources to be deployed with precision, based on accurate, shared information. Implementing the necessary sensor-message-command and control network requires the networking and integration of services, sensors, actuators and decision-makers. This integration is being carried out using the standardised, mission-critical IT infrastructures and services that are being implemented with the NDP programme.

The project has previously been referred to in reports under the name of Data centres DDPS/federal 2020 ICT architecture & infrastructure (RZ2020 ICT A&I) as part of the DDPS's top projects: it is listed as a key project in reports of the Federal Chancellery's Digital Transformation and ICT Steering Sector (FCh-DTI). ICT A&I forms the basis of the ability to carry out robust and secure data processing. In order to reflect the broader context more closely, the entire NDP portfolio will be listed from now on as a programme encompassing all the required projects.

The Swiss Federal Audit Office (SFAO) had already audited the ICT A&I project in 2023 and 2024⁷. In 2023, the focus was on project management and financing, while in 2024 it was on the provision of centralised functions and services.

The current audit assessed whether the benefits of the NDP can be achieved as quickly as possible. As such, the SFAO assessed whether the proposed settlement plan can provide the capabilities required of the troops from 1 July 2026, as planned. It also assessed whether the ambitious plan on the possibilities of the Armed Forces Cyber Command (AFCC) had been drawn up. Last but not least, the SFAO audited whether the reporting was plausible and transparent after summarising the various projects under the NDP programme.

Realistic schedule and wide support for the new digitalisation platform

The audit showed that the project is on track in terms of substance, and information is being provided transparently. The proposed settlement plan has been compiled with all the parties involved and is widely supported. Its implementation is feasible according to the current plan. Alongside the minimum required work packages, additional experimental packages have been defined to allow any available reserves to be used for early developments.

The reporting is plausible at programme level. The status of the individual sub-projects is reported separately. However, the complexity of the NDP means that reporting in a manner appropriate to the audience is challenging.

The settlement is planned and geared towards continuous expansion

The mission-critical applications, which are intended to run on the NDP, have been jointly defined and prioritised by all the parties involved, in particular the user representatives. Based on the outcome of this, the capabilities required of the platform were allocated to the respective settlement package (SP). The aim of SP I is to

⁷ Audit of the DTI key project RZ2020 IC architecture and infrastructure (audit mandate 23155), available on the SFAO website

provide the operational platform at the 2028 World Economic Forum. In terms of a milestone, the level of readiness should be verified by means of an operational exercise.

As well as SP I, SP II is currently under consultation and SP III is under development. The aim is to ensure that use of the platform is continuously expanded. Additionally, the development process has been set up in such a way that further SPs and individual capabilities can also be integrated in the future.

Reporting is plausible, but complex

The switch from key project ICT A&I to the NDP programme is recorded plausibly in the reporting. The status of ICT/A&I from today's perspective is also evident and transparent. In the SFAO's view, the decision to amalgamate the individual projects into one programme in the NDP portfolio and to report on this, is sensible. However, this does increase the complexity of reporting to the NDP, which was already highly complex.

The AFCC has developed a communication strategy which it is currently expanding and adapting. In addition to the previous reporting, the results will be presented to a wider audience via a demonstrator. The DDPS is planning to introduce a demonstrator both internally and to the press and the members of parliament in November 2025.

The SFAO's recommendations have been implemented

This audit also included a follow-up audit of the implementation of five recommendations from previous reports within the context of the RZ2020 data centre programme⁸. Two recommendations related to the KASTRO II data centre, two related to security requirements and a testing environment for domotic systems – all four dated back to 2021. The fifth was from 2023 and related to open issues on external quality and risk management. All five recommendations have been implemented.

⁸ Audit of the DTI key project data centres DDPS/federal 2020» (PA 21462) and Audit of the DTI key project data centres 2020 ICT-architecture and infrastructure (PA 23155), both reports are available on the SFAO website.