AUDIT

Audit of IT governance

General Secretariat of the Federal Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications

KEY FACTS

The General Secretariat (GS) performs a central coordinating role within the Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications (DETEC). The GS is responsible for the efficient use of financial and human resources within DETEC, with an annual budget of CHF 13.36 billion, of which around CHF 15 million per year goes on the department's IT.

The GS is driving digital development forward, having adapted the management model of the Federal Chancellery's Digital Transformation and ICT Steering Sector (DTI) to the needs of the department, and further developed it.

DETEC has a firm digital foundation. However, the governance structures relating to quality management, risk management and IT personnel development are not yet fully integrated and standardised. To future-proof DETEC's IT governance, processes must be more closely integrated, the risk perspective consolidated, performance monitoring systematised and sustainable IT personnel management established.

A strong digital foundation – scope to expand strategic management and internal expertise

DETEC's digital strategy forms the basis for a user-centred and future-oriented digital administration. Digital Services performs central management functions and promotes the implementation of digital projects throughout the department based on a federalist, cooperative model. The steering model is clearly structured. The roles and responsibilities are defined and operational implementation is undertaken by specialised units.

However, DETEC lacks a binding, overarching departmental strategy. This makes it difficult to prioritise measures. In addition, the organisation's digital maturity is not systematically measured, which hampers targeted upgrades and performance monitoring.

In IT personnel management, there is a heavy reliance on external staff, posing knowledge transfer, continuity and controllability risks. There is also a lack of strategic management and sustainable development of IT personnel.

Joint risk management, targeted quality assurance

DETEC's quality and risk management largely meets basic federal requirements. Processes are defined and responsibilities clearly assigned. There is room for improvement in department-wide standardisation, the use of quality and risk data and the embedding of continuous improvements. For IT quality assurance to be sustainable, it requires greater integration, a consolidated risk perspective and a consistent focus on customer needs.

Strategic control elements lacking

DETEC has not yet standardised its quality and risk management. Quality assurance processes are primarily implemented at project level and are not systematically established. The same applies to risk management: there is piecemeal identification and management of IT risks, but neither of these aspects is strategically embedded or continuously monitored.

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Basic structures exist in service and supplier management, for example through service level agreements, and there is an IT service catalogue.

However, consistent, cross-service quality measurements and systematic recording of customer satisfaction are missing. In its cooperation with suppliers, DETEC only partially exploits the potential for innovation.

Overall, it is clear that, despite solid foundations in some areas, key strategic control elements that are crucial for future-oriented IT governance are lacking.

eGov platform: low level of use and unclear strategic direction

DETEC's eGov platform is a central digital interface between citizens, businesses and the administration, and aims to simplify administrative processes and make them user-friendly. Despite substantial investment, the platform is currently underused. The reasons for this are a lack of incentives for process digitalisation and the fact that the platform is not user-centred enough. Capacity utilisation would need to be increased to enhance the benefits of the platform and ensure that it is cost-effective.

Strategic development is carried out in line with the Confederation-wide digital strategy and is supported by agile methods and an action plan spanning DETEC's various offices. The GS-DETEC has also launched an external audit to create transparency concerning the platform's performance and to systematically review strategic, technical and legal requirements.

Lack of test automation – a risk in the release process

Testing is not carried out automatically for release updates, which significantly weakens quality management. Manual tests are time-consuming, error-prone and difficult to scale. As system utilisation increases, so does the risk of quality defects and delays. This jeopardises operational reliability and customer satisfaction in the long run.