AUDIT

Audit of the use of artificial intelligence

Federal Supreme Court

KEY FACTS

The Federal Supreme Court (FSC) is Switzerland's highest court. Each year, it hears between 7,000 and 8,000 appeals against decisions made by lower courts. It employs 40 judges and over 170 court clerks. In 2024, its total expenditure amounted to almost CHF 115 million, of which just under 7% was spent on IT services. The FSC develops and operates its own IT environment. It is increasingly relying on artificial intelligence (AI) with the aim of increasing efficiency in its daily work. Since 2021, the Federal Supreme Court has been using AI for quality assurance when anonymising judgments. In 2025, it introduced ChatTF, an internal alternative to commercial language models such as ChatGPT.

The Swiss Federal Audit Office (SFAO) examined the use of AI systems at the Federal Supreme Court, focusing on these two applications. The main question was whether the Federal Supreme Court works more efficiently thanks to AI. Closely linked to this was the question of whether the use of AI complies with the principles of trustworthiness. Possible synergies with other federal courts were also examined.

The audit found that the Federal Supreme Court has not yet been able to demonstrate any efficiency gains, but there is potential for this. Furthermore, the Federal Supreme Court addressed the risks and principles of the trustworthy use of AI at an early stage. The SFAO made four recommendations, which are intended, among other things, to help achieve the desired efficiency gains.

Risks and efficiency generally well addressed, but still too vague for specific uses

With its risk-based rules of use and ethics charter, the FSC has laid an important foundation for the responsible use of AI. The SFAO recognises the clear strategic focus on cost-effectiveness, combined with a high level of risk awareness when using AI. This underlying approach and the associated principles now need to be anchored in the upcoming revision of the IT strategy.

In the FCA's view, the risks and efficiency potential of AI should also be assessed in terms of specific uses. Such considerations are particularly important for versatile AI applications. In addition, it is important to closely monitor the use of AI and periodically assess whether the desired effects are being achieved. AI applications that have stood the test at the Federal Supreme Court and are easily transferable should also be made available to other federal courts at the earliest opportunity. The necessary steps can and should be taken today.