

An audit of the key ICT project UCC

Key facts

In accordance with the Federal Council's directives for key ICT projects, the Swiss Federal Audit Office (SFAO) audited the Unified Communication & Collaboration (UCC) programme at the Federal IT Steering Unit (FITSU) from 19 February to 8 May 2014. The audit's aim was to assess the programme status and risks with regard to the achievement of targets.

Conventional telephony as operated by the Federal Office of Information Technology, Systems and Telecommunication (FOITT) in the entire Confederation has reached the end of its lifecycle. Analogue telephony and digital ISDN telephony will be supported in its present functionality up to 2017. The aim of the UCC programme is to replace the Federal Administration's telephony (over 500 decentralised exchange systems with more than 68,000 lines) with the new UCC standard service in stages by the end of 2015. It is based on the UCC strategy and on the Federal Council decision on guarantee credit of CHF 54.6 million.

Swisscom was awarded the contract with the product Microsoft Lync for the conception, development and integration of the central UCC infrastructure. Due to delays, replanning of the programme was being carried out at the time of the audit. At the request of the Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport, introduction was extended there by one year.

Programme management is being carried out in a targeted manner. Service procurers and service providers have been involved since the start of the programme. Programme managers are very committed and are active at all levels. It is somewhat exceptional that the role of the client has not been undertaken by a member of the general management. The programme should formally assign mandates in all sectors as a basis for overall control and transparent disclosure of the stage of completion. For the SFAO it is important that the open risks and critical points in the audit of the detailed concepts and the system construction as a result still have to be resolved.

Various factors can have an impact on deadlines and should be correspondingly closely monitored for the sake of the success of the programme. Above all, creation of network requirements within the scope of the UCC Readiness project is crucial in terms of a timely launch. Furthermore, the IT security and data protection (ISDP) concept must be approved before the startup and completeness, implementation and effectiveness of the corresponding measures must be examined. Other significant dependencies such as for example the introduction of Microsoft Office 2013 and the progression of the data transport services tender should be monitored closely.

More transparency is required in the financial management. With a view to costs, all financing agreements with the three service providers concerning investment costs should be formalised. The SFAO welcomes that the forecasts for operating costs will be validated with the service providers in the near future. This will provide an important indication as to whether or not the operational cost savings will actually be able to be realised. Following specification of the services of the successful tenderer, proof must be provided that the envisaged individual procurements and services can be accommodated on the basis of the original requirements, the contractual arrangements and within the scope of the existing guarantee credit.