Audit of the key ICT project "Freight Redesign"
Federal Customs Administration FCA

Key points

The ICT landscape of the Federal Customs Administration (FCA) covers a large number of applications that emerged during a period of over ten years without consistent, uniform architecture and technology principles. They are very diverse and have a large number of dependencies and interfaces. The systems will reach the end of their life cycle at different times over the next few years. NCTS and e-dec are two key applications in particular. They are used to process import and export declarations as well as transit notifications and make up about one third of the application portfolio in terms of technology.

The purpose of the current study phase is to prepare the "Freight Redesign" programme

The FCA had both of these applications examined in an external technical audit back in 2010. E-dec and NCTS have partly overlapping functionalities and the technical audit compared them in terms of their potential for optimisation. The audit's findings resulted in the long-term solution of redesigning the freight applications being chosen. The original plan to replace NCTS with e-dec proved to be unfeasible in the short term. As there is currently no urgent need to swiftly replace the applications, the FCA carried out the necessary investigations in order to wait for the results from the study, even if this led to the postponement of planned plug-ins.

The FCA decided to take a structured, methodologically based approach and got the "Study of 'Freight Redesign' (enterprise architecture for FCA freight)" under way in 2013. The aim of the study is to provide clarity on the existing architecture at all architectural levels in 2014 and draw up the essential requirements associated with it. Further aims of the study are to develop the target architecture and business process architecture and to prepare a concrete implementation plan. By modernising the freight applications, the FCA expects to eliminate inefficient redundancies, reduce costs and increase operational stability and security. In addition, certain necessary functions in the existing applications (e-dec and NCTS) are not feasible.

A strategic, overall evaluation has to be added to the study phase

In accordance with the currently valid standard of the Federal IT Steering Unit (FITSU), the development of the study follows a structured architecture method with a systematic top-down approach. In the SFAO's opinion, the FCA is thus basically on the right path. At the time of the audit, the focus was on the freight area and should also spread to the rest of the application landscape as the study progresses. Fundamental ICT strategic considerations should serve as the basis for setting the framework so that the anticipated benefits of the "Freight Redesign" study can also be transferred to other business areas and additional complexity does not build up in other places.

To ensure economic efficiency, the costs and benefits of the chosen solution must be realistic and reliable. At present, the foundations for a viable cost-benefit-economic efficiency analysis are still insufficient and need to be developed by the end of the study. A second opinion should validate this analysis. For the study phase currently under way, expenditure with a financial impact is

expected to amount to almost half a million Swiss francs. The results of the study will influence programme implementation considerably. At present, expenditure amounting to tens of millions of Swiss francs and a time horizon of at least five years are planned for implementation.

In addition, the applicable requirements from HERMES, IT processes and in particular the Federal Council's directives for key ICT projects must be met for the further implementation of the programme. Effective risk management and comprehensive quality management must be established for this.