Audit of the key ICT project federal GEVER programme
Federal Chancellery

Key points

Ever since 1990, sequential controls and file management have been part of the Federal Administration's IT landscape (GEVER business administration). Significant obstacles have to be overcome in order to ensure the successful creation and introduction of GEVER. Previous efforts did not have any widespread success and led to a diverse GEVER landscape. The federal GEVER project has now laid the foundations for simplification and centralisation.

A new GEVER standard is to be created and introduced at a cost of CHF 142 million

During the first stage, two new GEVER products were procured in an open WTO tender within the framework of the two-product strategy (federal GEVER WTO procurement project). CHF 1.6 million was spent on these. The departments and Federal Chancellery (departments/FCh) had to choose one of the two products within three months of the contract being awarded. All of the departments and the FCh opted for the more economical one, i.e. ActaNova from Atos AG, because of the tight budgetary situation and other criteria such as product presentation and proof of concept results. The Federal Council adopted a corresponding guarantee credit of CHF 67 million for the following stages (dispatch of 11 September 2015 on financing the creation and introduction of a standardised GEVER product in the central Federal Administration). It still has to be approved by Parliament. In addition, contributions of CHF 75 million are needed from the departments and the FCh. The creation and introduction costs are thus CHF 142 million (creation and introduction of the federal GEVER programme). The total costs of almost CHF 144 million are comprised of those for the federal GEVER WTO procurement project and those for the creation and introduction of the federal GEVER programme. According to the dispatch, this investment stands against an annual reduction in operating costs of CHF 18 million.

The full benefits of GEVER as a management tool will be delivered only in the course of specialist application lifecycle management

Additionally, the Swiss Federal Audit Office (SFAO) concluded that advantages could be lost with a two-product strategy in the case of ICT standard products. The selection of the more economical product confirmed the SFAO's existing view that there is not much point in such a strategy in order to restrict the preferences of service procurers as little as possible. It will be difficult to justify a two-product or multi-product strategy in the future, as the federal GEVER project clearly illustrates that all departments and the FCh can agree on a set of requirements, thereby laying the foundation for selecting a single product.

Further investment is necessary in order to take advantage of the full benefits of GEVER as a management tool, including deadline control and status tracking, in the future. It will be possible with the federal GEVER standard to manage electronic documents from specialist applications centrally, for example (DMS functionality). Adjustments to specialist applications do not fall within the scope of the programme, however, and have to be commissioned separately. This will be necessary in the follow-up to the introduction of the new product, among other things to anchor GEVER as a management tool as planned. It is particularly important for the introduction projects to implement

the necessary measures in the process. Constructive and successful cooperation by all departments and the FCh to date is a key success factor for achieving mutual objectives.

A basis for overcoming the remaining obstacles is being created with the programme

Fabasoft, a company currently well-established in the Confederation, also submitted a tender, but it was defeated. The company contested the award decision before the Federal Administrative Court (FAC). The Federal Chancellery (FCh) decided not to contest the suspensive effect and to start the main proceedings directly. These proceedings are jeopardising deadlines. ████████████████

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In parallel, the FCh commenced preparatory work for the next creation and introduction stages. In this way, the FCh wishes to adhere to the ambitious schedule nonetheless. A uniform federal GEVER standard that has to be implemented in a binding manner by all departments and the FCh is to be created by 2017. It is to be introduced in departmental projects under the central steering and management of the programme by the end of 2018. GEVER should be managed as a standard service by the Federal IT Steering Unit (FITSU) from January 2019 onward. In order to ensure the necessary continuity, the SFAO recommends that responsibility should not be transferred from the FCh to the FITSU until launches have been successfully completed.

The file management preparatory work needed for the introduction of GEVER commenced at the same time as the WTO tender. Contrary to the Federal Council's instructions, this will not be completed in all departments by the end of 2015. The SFAO recommends seriously pressing ahead with this work.

Confidential items should be processed by means of reliable and user-friendly use of the information security software SecureCenter. Corresponding adjustments still have to be designed and made by the FITSU. The SFAO recommends stepping up this work and managing it tightly.

While the federal standard is being created, operation should additionally be established in a centralised manner within the service provider Information Service Center EAER (ISCeco). Work by five other service providers will thus be eliminated and the corresponding staff should be assigned to the ISCeco. These transfers have not yet been ensured and the SFAO also recommends considering alternative scenarios to staff transfers.

The SFAO is in favour of the programme having an influence on the introduction projects in order to orient them accordingly, emphasising that a basis will thus be created for overcoming significant obstacles that still exist, with the result that tight programme management remains necessary. Sequential controls and file management have to be widely used. By the same token, measures are to be maintained to raise awareness and train users as an ongoing task.

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