Audit of the Rehosting application migration programme
Central Compensation Office

Key facts

The Federal Office of Information Technology, Systems and Telecommunication (FOITT) hosts a large number of the applications of the Central Compensation Office (CCO). The current technical platform will be taken out of service in 2021. The CCO launched the "Rehosting" programme to set up a new infrastructure on its premises and repatriate around 30 applications. The migration work, which began in 2017 and is scheduled to continue until 2021, has been structured into seven projects, initially costing around CHF 19.8 million. External costs account for around 30% of this amount.

With this audit, the Swiss Federal Audit Office (SFAO) assessed the progress and risks of the programme, which is ongoing, but delays and cost increases on some projects are visible.

Programme management generally adequate

The SFAO did not find any major shortcomings in the management of the programme and its projects. The programme's steering bodies are correctly defined. Decisions to release phases are properly validated and documented, and work priorities are adequately managed. The majority of project management tools and processes are appropriate. Project management plans are defined and progress is regularly monitored. Dependencies between project tasks are identified. Elements of agile methodology are defined and implemented, and the learning process is ongoing.

The SFAO noted that project and programme risks, as well as mitigation measures, are regularly monitored. Quality management is well equipped. Implemented infrastructure tests are carried out regularly, but the details of the application migration tests are still under development. The SFAO recommends that the CCO further develop and finalise the planning and test concepts.

Cost overruns and delays to phases observed

Despite these efforts, the Rehosting programme projects have faced significant difficulties. The technical complexity of the work, tensions between the parties involved and the length of the procurement procedures have led to delays in the phases and cost overruns compared to the initial estimates. The CCO must continue to learn from these difficulties.

The target infrastructure was in the process of being implemented at the time of the audit. An overrun of the original budget was observed. Projected financial requirements for the entire programme now total CHF 22.9 million. The application migration projects are nearing the end of their design phase but delays are foreseeable. The planned completion date of the programme could be threatened by one of the projects.

Programme management must continue to monitor these developments closely. The SFAO recommended that the CCO should improve its tools for monitoring the timing of projects and determine the critical path at the programme level.

First stage of architecture development is well-grounded, but some shortcomings exist

During the initial phase of the programme, the CCO evaluated two main types of solutions for the new hosting of its applications. A comparison was made between the implementation of a new platform hosted at the FOITT or at the CCO. A study documented the evaluation of these options and opted for the latter. The economic criteria were decisive in this choice. The calculation assumptions were not documented. The SFAO recommended that the CCO update the cost-effectiveness calculation of the chosen solution and clarify the bases for work. These elements are essential in order to prepare the next strategic decisions concerning the hosting of the platform.

The CCO had to apply for authorisation to install and operate an on-site infrastructure. The Federal IT Steering Unit granted permission for this until the end of 2024, subject to conditions. In particular, the CCO must envisage the repatriation of services and infrastructure components to the Confederation's network of data centres from 2025 onwards. The SFAO noted that plans for this repatriation are expected as early as 2021.

For the infrastructure part of the programme, architectural studies are being drawn up and further developed on an iterative basis. The SFAO considers these artefacts to be an adequate basis for implementing the new platform. It notes, however, that these results have not been formally validated by the CCO's ad hoc committees.

Operational and information security requirements need better integration

The implementation of the new infrastructure had a strong impact on IT operations. The initial difficulties in integrating this area have largely been resolved. The unit has been reorganised and its competencies are being developed. However, its transformation is not yet complete and collaboration with the programme remains sensitive. The SFAO recommends that the CCO better integrate IT operations into the programme and develop a realistic resource plan for the unit with regard to the programme.

Information security is also a sensitive and essential aspect of implementing the new infrastructure. The SFAO noted the many initiatives that are currently under way. However, the volume of work here remains very high in terms of security infrastructure, applications and processes (updating documentation, implementation, verification, etc.). The SFAO recommends that the CCO take stock of the work in progress, update the documentation and draw up a realistic plan for the remaining tasks.

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