

Audit of service continuity management

Directorate for Resources

Key facts

The Directorate for Resources (DR) is responsible for ensuring the availability and management of resources within the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA). It provides the services required by the department and Switzerland's network of representations abroad, including the FDFA IT section, which has around 100 employees. FDFA IT's costs have remained constant for years, at approximately CHF 50 million per year. In 2019 they stood at CHF 49 million, of which CHF 37 million were operating costs and CHF 12 million were for projects. It operates about 70 specialist applications for around 5,050 users, of which 1,850 are in Switzerland and 3,200 abroad across 165 locations.

The purpose of the audit was to determine whether FDFA IT ensures that it can guarantee core business operations in accordance with the contractual agreements with its clients in the event of any type of disruption. FDFA IT received good ratings from its service recipients. However, when measured against relevant standards, it is not yet at the expected level of maturity for IT service continuity management (IT SCM).

FDFA IT performs its function to the satisfaction of users

FDFA IT has repeatedly demonstrated in the past that it has the capacity to deal with disruptions in a timely manner. Communication channels are short and direct due to centralised resources and strong integration with the service recipients. The FDFA places great emphasis on communication and collaboration. The regular satisfaction surveys conducted among service recipients show that FDFA IT's work is appreciated and rated as good.

Important elements of IT SCM in place, gaps exist

FDFA IT is dependent on fundamental preparatory work in the area of business continuity management (BCM). Since mid-2017, the FDFA has had guidelines in place for this purpose. These have not yet been implemented in such a way that FDFA IT is able to identify all necessary prerequisites with the necessary precision. The SFAO therefore recommends that the General Secretariat of the FDFA define the mandate for setting up BCM in more precise detail.

Key operational elements of IT SCM are in place, although important components are missing. For example, there is no overview of effective and possible disruption scenarios which includes a systematic business impact analysis. In addition, there is no coherent documentation showing the existing IT SCM elements and those still to be implemented. Only the preliminary work for a project to this effect has been carried out.

The SFAO recommends that the DR/FDFA IT carry out a targeted and pragmatic expansion of the IT SCM on the basis of requirements and benchmarks to be agreed with upstream offices and clients.

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