

Audit of the key ICT project Telecommunications Surveillance

Federal Department of Justice and Police

Key facts

The Swiss Federal Audit Office (SFAO) audited the Telecommunications Surveillance (TS) programme for the third time¹. The main focus was on the revised overall planning, which became necessary due to various delays. The TS programme aims to adapt the processing system of the Post and Telecommunications Surveillance Service (PTSS) and the police information systems of the Federal Office of Police (fedpol). Originally, the Federal Department of Justice and Police (FDJP) planned to invest CHF 112 million in this expansion of the criminal police's telecommunications surveillance. In 2015, Parliament approved a guarantee credit of CHF 99 million for this purpose.

Contrary to the original forecast, the FDJP now expects total costs of CHF 140 million and a postponement of the planned end date by two and a half years. The TS programme assumes that it will have to apply for an additional credit. It therefore wants to review the cost development in 2021 and is looking for ways to reduce expenditure.

The FDJP changed course in 2018. Instead of expanding the existing surveillance system, it plans to implement its own new system produced in-house. The SFAO can understand this decision, although time and financial risks must be assumed.

In-house product to replace the current ISS surveillance system

In contrast to the original plan to expand the current Interception System Switzerland (ISS) and following a market analysis, the PTSS decided in favour of in-house production. This key decision was reviewed and approved by the client. Together with a development partner, the PTSS intends to develop and operate a Federal Lawful Interception Core Component (FLICC) tailor-made for Switzerland.

As a risk mitigation measure, the TS programme does not rule out a replacement procurement as a plan B, although this would entail functional cutbacks. Funding requirements and financing for the plan B would still have to be clarified. The previous expenditure on in-house production would also have to be taken into account. For this procedure, the TS programme prepared the overall planning in a comprehensible and reliable manner, and coordinated it with all parties involved. The risk that the operation of the outstanding elements in the project "ICT-ProgTS-P1" (replacement procurements for the information system, the administration system and the retrospective surveillance) cannot be carried out according to plan is small.

¹ "Key ICT project Telecommunications Surveillance" (audit mandates 16315 and 18290), available on the SFAO website (www.sfao.admin.ch)

In-house production allows the digitalisation objectives to be pursued in a consistent manner

Digitalisation is an important element for real-time surveillance. This can be done in a consistent manner using an in-house product and thus contribute to the achievement of the federal digital transformation objectives (innovations in service, processes, management, organisation and IT). The details are to be specified in the concepts in conjunction with the implementation partner.

The TS programme is planning two implementation units for the functional replacement of the current ISS. This real-time surveillance project will therefore not be able to be carried out within the approved budget as planned. It will also require future investments to maintain and further develop the FLICC.

Risk management is well anchored and reporting is correct and transparent

The TS programme has strongly anchored risk management and provides the client with appropriate information. The TS programme's reporting to the Federal Council and Parliament is correct and transparent.

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