

Audit of the implementation of the federal master data strategy

Federal Chancellery and Federal Statistical Office

Key facts

In December 2018, the Federal Council adopted a strategy for expanding the federal joint master data management system. Stage 1 of the implementation runs until the end of 2021 and focuses on business partner master data. The steering committee on joint master data management is coordinating the work. The committee is part of the Federal Chancellery's Digital Transformation and ICT Steering Sector (DTI).

The Swiss Federal Audit Office (SFAO) audited the implementation of the strategy. It considers that the stage 1 activities are generally headed in the right direction. However, deliverables must be more detailed and activities must be performed in a more systematic manner. In particular, the SFAO mentioned the risks arising out of the decision not to set up a project organisation and the lack of overview. It also criticised the fact that there is no roadmap or sufficiently detailed description of the target architecture.

Stage 2 is planned for 2022 onwards. It will involve the processing of master data for physical persons and real estate, and is likely to be more difficult than stage 1.

A work plan is in place but has given rise to some questions

The work plan put in place for stage 1 activities has yielded positive results overall as regards the challenges faced. Responsibilities and processes have been roughly defined for the implementation. The steering committee on joint master data management specifies the activities, performs them or requests other administrative units to do so, or commissions projects and monitors their progress.

The SFAO noted that, despite the complex environment, the multiple participants and the scope of activities, it was decided not to have a project organisation with dedicated financing. This decision has not been without consequences. It is difficult to obtain an overview of the strategy implementation. The timetabling of resources within the units has to rely on internal offsetting, and the availability of these resources is not assured. Financial transparency is not guaranteed. Finally, in the absence of a rigorous project methodology, key deliverables may not be achieved.

During the audit, a new governance structure for master data management was in preparation. The aim was to identify the modifications needed in the legal framework and clarify the overlaps between the mandates of the DTI and the Federal Statistical Office as regards master data management. Among other things, it is proposed that the role model be expanded and that a new coordination committee replace the multiplicity of other participants. The SFAO considers that the new draft governance structure is on the right track. However, it also informed the owners of several elements that need to be made more precise, such as the positioning of the new committee, responsibility for its management, the details of a new legal framework governing the treatment of master data, etc.

Work is progressing but some deliverables need to be more detailed

Work is divided into three areas for action: organisation, legal framework and technical aspects. With the exception of the roadmap, the steering committee has achieved the deliverables defined in the strategy. The ongoing activities cover all the key challenges of joint master data management. Work is appropriately monitored and a report summarising the stage 1 activities is being prepared. However, the SFAO observed that the strategy's deliverables and implementation processes must be improved.

Work has begun on putting the joint management of business partner master data into operation. Partial descriptions of target architectures exist, but an overarching definition is not available in sufficient detail. More detail is required at the level of businesses, information systems and technology, as is the integration of architecture models that cover different domains. There is still no model for master data management processes that covers end-to-end processing in sufficient detail. This model must be drawn up. As regards data of physical persons and real estate, the main outline of the target architecture needs to be fleshed out.

The strategy implementation processes have been defined but they are not all applied with the same rigour. The SFAO recommends a systematic assessment of dependencies and stakeholders, and the creation of a more formal process for risk management and remedial action. Finally, it encourages the DTI to implement the communication process as initially defined.

The examined recommendation has not been implemented, and a roadmap needs to be drawn up

The SFAO examined the implementation of recommendation 18320.001, which was issued as part of the previous audit¹. The recommendation was initially directed at the Federal Department of Finance (FDF), but responsibility has now passed to the DTI. It concerned the drafting of a roadmap for harmonising master data management. This document must show the timeframe for harmonisation within the FDF. It must also describe how an overview of master data management can be obtained.

The strategy also mentions a roadmap as one of the deliverables. In the SFAO's view, this document helps communication with the participants and provides an overview of the main development phases and the interdependencies. In the Federal Administration context, listing the interdependencies between financing decisions and the amounts involved could be a useful addition. There is no roadmap, and the SFAO considers that the recommendation has not been implemented, and is therefore reiterating it.

Original text in French

¹ "Audit of the key ICT project DaziT" (audit mandate 18320), available on the SFAO's website