Key ICT project ERP systems D/ar programme – follow-up audit of the implementation of a key recommendation
Defence Group

Key facts

Two programmes for the implementation of SAP S/4HANA are in progress in the Federal Administration. The Federal Office for Buildings and Logistics (FOBL) is running the SUPERB programme, which focuses on civil support processes (finance, personnel, logistics, real estate and procurement). Defence (D) is running the ERPSYSVAR programme to implement a mission-critical system using the Defence & Security SAP solution. This system must be downgradable in case of deployment, i.e. it must be possible to couple and decouple it from civilian systems. At the same time, both systems should make use of the potential for synergies with common process cores and technical configurations.

The Swiss Federal Audit Office (SFAO) audited the ERPSYSVAR programme for the first time in 2019[1]. At the time, it recommended, among other things, that the common process cores be considered in terms of costs and benefits, in particular. To this end, the synergies of the same specific core should be identified both quantitatively and qualitatively in further programme work.

The SFAO examined the implementation of the recommendation by the Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport (DDPS). It concluded that the DDPS had not comprehensively conducted the recommended analyses. However, in view of the fact that both programmes have adapted their approach, the recommendation no longer applies. With regard to the adapted approach, the SFAO came to the conclusions set out below.

Focusing on the minimum common core required allows the work to progress

In accordance with the dispatch[2], ERPSYSVAR and SUPERB amended the implementation strategy from the "maximum common core" to a "minimum common core required". ERPSYSVAR and SUPERB have defined the common process cores for each support process on an individual basis. In logistics and distribution, for example, common process cores are consistently avoided in order to prevent artificial uniformity from being enforced at great expense. On the other hand, the Armed Forces want to holistically manage personnel processes on the civilian system in the future.

The mission-critical SAP system is only being implemented as a loosely coupled specialist application

The mission-critical SAP system is a specialist application that is coupled to the civilian system via asynchronous interfaces. This is intended to allow for simple coupling and decoupling. Both programmes pursue this solution approach, which the SFAO considers to be

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[1] Audit of the key ICT project ERP systems D/ar program report (audit mandate 19467) is available on the SFAO website (www.sfao.admin.ch).

[2] Dispatch of 13 December 2019 on the guarantee credits for the SUPERB and ERP systems D/ar programmes for the modernisation of support processes of the Federal Administration and of mission-critical SAP systems in the DDPS.

effective. However, ERPSYSVAR will not start working on the conceptual design of the deployment processes until 2025. This means that there is no basis for assessing the feasibility of the chosen approach. As this is a core requirement for the mission-critical SAP system, this void must be filled as soon as possible.

Transitional technical solutions would reduce implementation risks

Due to different implementation speeds, the programme organisations have recognised the need for a transitional technical solution. This would allow the two programmes to be decoupled in terms of organisation and time, and would reduce the implementation risks. At the time of the audit, however, neither the solution variant nor the cost consequences had been definitively set out. The clarification efforts that have begun should be continued in order to form a basis on which a decision can be made by the end of 2021.

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