

Audit of the national data management programme

Federal Statistical Office

Key facts

Motion 16.4011 "Digitalisation. No duplications in data collection", adopted at the beginning of 2017, requires the Federal Council to ensure that companies do not have to provide the same data and information to different authorities. The Tallinn Declaration¹ signed by Switzerland in the same year stipulates the once-only principle. The multiple use of previously collected data is intended to relieve the burden on companies and citizens.

Based on two decrees of the Federal Council from 2019 and 2020, the Federal Statistical Office (FSO) launched the "National Data Management" (NaDM) programme, which aims to implement this principle. The NaDM programme is designed to create transparency, via a metadata catalogue, as to which offices work with which data, thereby creating an important foundation for the digitalisation efforts of the administration at the various federal levels.

The necessary funding of CHF 23.8 million for 2020 to 2023 should be provided internally by the FSO. However, there is currently a funding gap of around CHF 15 million. In order to sustainably achieve the most urgent objectives regarding data management at the national level, measures are required in terms of finance, programme structures, cooperation and communication.

High ambitions... at zero cost?

The core business of the FSO is the production of statistics and the management of registers, such as the Business and Enterprise Register. With the implementation of the once-only principle, the FSO was faced with further major challenges with regard to the management of federal, cantonal and communal data. The FSO and the Federal Department of Home Affairs (FDHA) developed the NaDM programme for this purpose.

However, no funding was allocated for the implementation of these high ambitions in the Federal Council decree of 2019; the FSO was instructed to offset the costs internally. The supplementary Federal Council decree of 2020 did not address the financial situation, but in the meantime it has become clear that this plan cannot be implemented. Financing must be ensured, in keeping with the tasks assigned to the office.

The NaDM programme is already of sufficient importance and volume to justify its management as a key DTI project. The FSO should clarify the future positioning of the programme with the General Secretariat of the FDHA and the Digital Transformation and ICT Steering (DTI) Sector of the Federal Chancellery.

Programme management and communication must be strengthened

Within the framework of its pilot projects, the FSO addressed challenging topics in the narrower context of statistical production and is driving these forward with considerable commitment. These includes occupational nomenclatures, quality assurance of company master data, salary statistics data, tax data of natural persons and legal entities, and health data

¹ <https://www.news.admin.ch/newsd/message/attachments/49838.pdf>; viewed on 20 January 2022

of basic hospital inpatient care. At the programme level, some tasks must be intensified and the resources must be made available for this. This applies in particular to quality, risk and opportunity management, overarching programme communication, stakeholder management, financing and financial management, procurement coordination and architecture management.

Professional and broad-based stakeholder management is extremely important for a project such as the NaDM programme. So far, this has mainly been practised in the pilot projects. Information on the programme's mission is provided through various channels, including the NaDM interdepartmental working group and existing statistical bodies such as FEDESTAT². In future, the impact of the various communication measures must be given even greater attention and taken into account when managing the work. Cross-organisational cooperation is indispensable. This requires a certain level of persuasion and the inclusion of all partners. The FSO should devote more attention to this aspect in the future through a partnership approach, bilateral communication and explicit agreement on cooperation objectives.

Data infrastructures: avoiding duplications and exploiting potential for synergies

Various data infrastructures already exist at the federal level or are currently being created. They address different phases of the data life cycle. The harmonisation of data structures in particular is essential for the implementation of the once-only principle. These requirements should be applied, if possible, already during data collection, i.e. at the beginning of the life cycle. With regard to national data management, it is important to avoid duplications and to identify any conflicts of objectives with other federal offices and other bodies at an early stage. Likewise, potential for synergies should be quickly identified and exploited. This requires greater cooperation between the NaDM programme and organisations already responsible for data harmonisation under existing legal frameworks.

Original text in German

² <https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/de/home/bfs/oeffentliche-statistik/system-oeffentliche-statistik/gremien/fedestat.html>; viewed on 24 February 2022