

Audit of the DTI key project new production systems

Federal Office of Topography swisstopo

Key facts

The Federal Office of Topography (swisstopo) is the geoinformation centre responsible for spatial reference data and related products for civil and military purposes. These form the basis for land registry information, national, road and hazard maps, and much more. In order to produce most geodata, swisstopo uses the geoinformation system software ArcMap. As the manufacturer is no longer updating this software and will only maintain it until 2026, swisstopo initiated the "New production systems" (NEPRO) programme to replace it. The costs are expected to amount to CHF 65.6 million; this is based on the programme running for ten years.

swisstopo started the initiation of the NEPRO programme in 2019. In October 2021, the Federal Chancellor classified NEPRO as a key DTI project of the Federal Administration. The Swiss Federal Audit Office (SFAO) audited the programme for the first time in the second quarter of 2022. It focused on assessing the project risks and the extent to which the objectives had been achieved. The audit showed that key foundations of the programme were not yet in place at the time of the audit. In order to make the programme successful, swisstopo must develop these quickly. The situation is due to the fact that, until April 2022, the focus of the work in the programme was on drawing up the programme mandate, planning the replacement of the core applications and securing financing, in particular the dispatch on the guarantee credit.

Key foundations should be laid as soon as possible

As of mid-2022, the foundations that are indispensable for the programme's success were still not fully documented: important elements such as measurable objectives and deliverables, an analysis of the stakeholders and the legal framework, an overall view of the programme and independent quality and project risk management were missing. In addition, bodies, processes and structures were only in the process of being established or were not yet in place. It is regrettable that a consultancy firm had already complained about these gaps and the associated risks in 2019 and 2020 and that these continue to exist.

As long as these gaps in the programme initiation persist, solely the migration of the outdated production systems based on ArcMap to a new application can be classified as justified. However, swisstopo wants to use the migration as an opportunity to further develop the production processes and achieve significantly more than would be possible with mere upgrade projects. swisstopo is therefore striving to make a strategic contribution and to meet user expectations, such as shorter response times and improved cooperation with external partners, such as the cantons. Achieving these objectives is reliant mainly on projects that had not yet been started at the time of the audit and for which the resources had not yet been secured. In the event that swisstopo is unable to implement the projects as planned, the programme would have to be reduced to only migrating the production systems.

The SFAO recommends that swisstopo work on the missing outcomes of the initiation phase as a matter of high priority and, in particular, that it specify the needs in concrete terms.

The DTI key project reporting is not very informative

In the status report at the end of 2021, swisstopo did not disclose all the key risks: the selection made by swisstopo meant that risks were missing which had been highlighted by the consultancy firm or which were listed in the internal programme status report. Furthermore, a complete project list was not yet available, which resulted in an incomplete overview of the programme.

swisstopo must ensure that the reporting regarding NEPRO is correct, consistent, transparent and informative.

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