

Audit of the DTI key project Central Migration Information System renewal with a focus on digital transformation

State Secretariat for Migration

Key facts

The Central Migration Information System (ZEMIS) is the leading register of all foreign nationals living or residing in Switzerland. With more than ten million data records, it is one of the main working tools of the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM). A replacement system is to be implemented by 2027. The objective is to completely renew the technology and to optimise and focus the business processes. To this end, the ZEMIS renewal (ERZ) programme was launched in 2021. The total budget is CHF 80 million. At the time of the audit, the programme was in the implementation phase and most of the projects were in the initialisation phase. Despite the tense migration situation, the SEM is committed to the programme objectives. The targeted efficiency improvements should lead to an easing of the pressure on resources and help to ensure that crises can be better managed in the future.

The Swiss Federal Audit Office (SFAO) audited the DTI key project ERZ for the first time. It acknowledged that the programme has a complex objective and faces significant challenges, but the programme plan is not realistic given the circumstances at the time of the audit and the opportunities of the digital transformation are not being sufficiently exploited. In addition, there is no unanimous support for the programme vision and strategy between the business and IT units, and the programme structure is still lacking key basic elements.

New programme planning is necessary, programme governance must be strengthened and consistency with the programme vision and strategy must be ensured

For steering purposes, the programme sponsor receives monthly reports and a master plan. However, there is no detailed programme plan with dependencies and a critical path. In view of the stretched resource situation, the SFAO considers the master plan to be unrealistic.

For the purposes of an independent assessment of the risk situation, it must be ensured that the programme's external quality and risk manager is subject only to the sponsor's instructions. Although critical for success, lawyers and human resources managers are insufficiently involved in the programme.

Despite the formal programme release, there is no discernible agreement between the technical and IT units on the programme's vision and strategy. This represents a risk to the programme's success.

The enterprise architecture is in place, but the new data architecture will not be developed until 2024

The enterprise architecture is considered to be a key tool for managing the digital transformation at the SEM. The first important task was to establish architecture governance. Coordination with overarching architectures is planned through existing specifications and guidelines as well as mutual participation in architecture boards at departmental and office level.

However, during the programme's initial architecture work, the modelling tool prescribed by the Confederation was not used throughout. The SFAO therefore recommends that attention be paid to ensure that specifications and guidelines for the architectural work are consistently adhered to. This will ensure end-to-end management of the SEM digital transformation and provide a reliable basis for subsequent change management.

It is planned to address the new ZEMIS data architecture only once the target processes have been defined. However, the SFAO recommends going ahead with the new ZEMIS data architecture development, as well as planning the data migration. Furthermore, the SFAO recommends a comprehensive evaluation of the use of standard components (commercial off-the-shelf) for the ERZ target architecture.

Digitalisation opportunities are not being fully exploited

The organisational model jointly designed by the Confederation and the cantons defines how the federal levels are to be integrated into the project. It forms an important basis for stakeholder management. Only existing clients, partners, products and services are taken into account.

With the desired improvement in SEM data quality, new ways of optimising processes are to be made possible as part of the digital transformation, for example through process automation and the use of artificial intelligence. At the time of the audit, however, the scope of the SEM data governance project was limited to internal SEM units.

The work in the projects has not progressed to the point where it would be possible to make a reliable assessment of the exploitation of efficiencies. The dispatch on a guarantee credit for the ZEMIS renewal describes individual key performance indicators¹ for assessing the benefits. However, there are no concrete ideas as to how these should be applied to support the steering task. The basis for a uniform cost-benefit analysis of the target processes needs to be developed.

Semi-annual reporting must show developments and forecasts more precisely

The semi-annual report of 30 June 2022 is the second status report of the programme. The information contained in it is largely comprehensible. With regard to the information on programme planning and progress, the SFAO recommends that the plan version and any effects of a change to the plan on the framework conditions always be shown and briefly explained as necessary.

Original text in German

¹ Key performance indicators measure the performance of activities.