# Digital transformation: audit of the online management of hazardous waste
## Federal Office for the Environment

## Key facts

The Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN) is charged with various tasks relating to the management of hazardous waste, and it performs assessments in this regard, sometimes jointly with the cantons, associations and businesses. These tasks are regulated in ordinances, including the Waste Movements Ordinance (OMW), which has been in force for some time. Implementation has to date been supported by a specialist application developed for the purpose: veva-online. This solution is now showing its age and needs to be replaced.

Against this background, the Swiss Federal Audit Office (SFAO) audited the digital transformation, using the online management of hazardous waste as a basis. The "waste and raw materials portal" project was originally planned for 2017 to 2022, and had a budget volume of CHF 3.6 million. It has now been extended to 2023 and the current volume is CHF 5.4 million, of which CHF 4.8 million had been spent at the time of the audit.

As part of the project, two new processes were introduced: ADWO[1] – for the avoidance and disposal of waste – and CRSCO[2] – relating to the charge for the remediation of contaminated sites – albeit not yet to the satisfaction of the end users (cantons and operators). Moreover, the costs are much higher than planned. The actual centrepiece of the project, i.e. the replacement of the obsolete veva-online application, has not yet been achieved, in part due to the complexity of the task. As a result, the FOEN has decided to perform a situation analysis and assess the next steps for veva-online as part of an underlying architecture development.

**The FOEN as a pioneer office for the new DETEC eGovernment platform**

In 2017, the IT Council of the Federal Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications (ITC DETEC) and the Head of the DETEC General Secretariat (GS-DETEC) decided to establish the DETEC eGovernment platform as part of the "DETEC eGovernment" project. The FOEN and the Federal Office of Communications were selected as pioneer offices and, within the DETEC, waste management processes were chosen as pilot processes for implementation. The project was formally completed at the end of 2022, and handed over to the line organisations for further development and operation.

**A weak start to the project led to the FOEN learning some expensive lessons**

The causes of the currently missed targets can be traced back to the start of the "waste and raw materials portal" project. At the time of the project launch, the FOEN did not have the necessary skills or capacity. The organisation did not have enough staff for the project and

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[1]    Based on the Ordinance on the Avoidance and Disposal of Waste
[2]    Based on the Ordinance on the Charge for the Remediation of Contaminated Sites

the magnitude of the task was underestimated. This, combined with the time pressure owing to the implementation of new legal requirements (ADWO and OMW) and the need to replace the existing veva-online solution, resulted in major milestones being missed at the start of the project. The decision to use the eGovernment platform for waste management processes did not take other options into account.

In the meantime, various measures, including additional resources, have brought about an improvement in the situation. In addition, an overarching business architecture has been launched to manage the digital transformation.

Obviously, innovative projects involve a fairly steep learning curve. However, in this case the lessons learned were much more expensive than expected, relative to the planned project budget.

**The FOEN and the GS-DETEC must evaluate the findings and define measures**

The SFAO recommends that the FOEN and the GS-DETEC each assess their achievement of the targets and define measures accordingly. There must be a consistent focus on an end-to-end approach, and on creating favourable conditions for digital transformation.

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