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IT-STRATEGY AND IT-PLANNING IN THE FEDERAL STATISTICAL OFFICE OF GERMANY

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Summary

I. INTRODUCTION

1. All statistical offices and agencies have to face many new challenges, which can be partially coped with through the use of information technology.
2. There is a growing demand to reduce the burden for the respondents, to produce figures in a more timely way and to make access to data more comfortable.
3. The statistical program has to be adapted to the changes in the social and economic reality permanently, which causes a lot of change requests. In general, statistical offices and other statistical organizations aim at improving the quality of statistical products and services (EFQM, Code of Practice).
4. Furthermore, conditions for the work of IT-departments have changed in the last few years.
5. In addition to the long-known IT-processes in the production of statistics like data editing, tabulating and dissemination, administrative processes like human resources management, travel management, electronic workflow and content management systems etc. need support from IT.

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6. Progress in IT creates new facilities and demands like new features in the Internet or mobile working environments.
7. The growing use of IT in other administrative authorities and initiatives like e-Government also leads to a stronger centralization and standardization of IT and a centralized control is set up.
8. In the last few years, there have been big cuts in human and financial resources.
9. To meet the above-mentioned challenges and as a reaction to the changing conditions, we have set up new processes for planning and steering the handling of IT-projects in the Federal Statistical Office, which will be described in section II. As many projects in official statistics in Germany are undertaken in cooperation with the FSO and the offices of the Länder, an initiative called the master-plan was undertaken to optimize the cooperation too. A short description will be given in section III.

II. PLANNING AND STEERING OF IT PROJECTS

10. IT projects have to serve the achievement of the general aims of the statistical office. So the IT strategy must follow the strategic goals of the statistical office and the planning of IT projects has to be embedded in its general program plan. The IT strategy will be the guideline for the planning and steering processes of IT projects. The contribution will compare the strategic goals for the years 2004 to 2008 (FIT 2008) with the derived IT-strategy and show how the planning cycle of IT projects is organized and who takes part in it.

III. MASTER-PLAN

11. The “master-plan” is a strategic program for the development of the system of official statistics in Germany. It aims at the optimization of the statistical products and services and the cost-effectiveness of the production process. The program was started in 2003 and as one building stone contains the measure “optimized cooperation”. This new structure of cooperation between the FSO and the offices of the Länder and first experiences will be described in this section.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

12. The paper describes the processes of planning, steering and setting of priorities for the delivery of IT services within the FSO invented in the last two years and the changes which were implemented concerning the way the cooperation of the Federal Office and the offices of the Länder is organized. The latter concerns a special kind of “partnership”, as it is a partnership of administratively independent offices, but they cooperate within the framework of the common law for federal statistics.

13. A result of the new procedures is that it creates more transparency for answering questions such as:
- Where and how big is the demand for IT-services?
 - Which projects compete for the same resources (manpower for IT-development, money)?
14. A single-minded reaction to short-term influences, e.g. budget cuts, becomes easier.
15. A common understanding of problems exists between subject-matter statisticians and IT-people. Decisions are taken and responsibility is borne together.
16. Nevertheless it must be kept in mind, that the building up and carrying out of these new planning- and steering-tools needs additional capacities. An accounting system and Service Level Agreements (SLA) have to be set up for the IT services delivered from one partner of the cooperation to another.
17. Furthermore, some restrictions to transpose the theory into real life exist, caused by the lack of flexibility of legal regulations for official services, e.g. for budget and human resources.
18. Another crucial condition is the support of the strategy by the top management.
19. But even if the new strategies need manpower and new ways of acting and thinking from all persons concerned (management, subject-matter statisticians, IT staff) it seems to be worthwhile for us to go this way.
