

Summary of a country paper regarding the theme “Why IT Projects Fail” for the INTOSAI 3rd Performance IT Auditing Working Seminar on ‘IT Investment and Information Exchange’; Slovenia, May 14th – 16th, 2001.

Why IT-projects fail: the inter-organisational and international dimension.

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Summary

Both the private and the public sector have an increasing need for information systems that transcend national boundaries (Transnational Information System, or TIS for short). Economic and political developments create this need, while information and communication technology now offers solutions that enable processes and tasks across organisational and national boundaries. The European Market for persons, goods, capital and services poses a good example.

Development and management of a TIS is far from straightforward, though. The inter-organisational and international nature of these systems introduces various difficulties. One major explanation for this could be that the parties involved are partners of an equal standing, without formal powers over each other, and with full autonomy with regard to their own proprietary information systems and work procedures. Another area of potential difficulties is the international context, which introduces cultural, legal and language difficulties among participants.

Four cases were studied to identify problems that occurred during the development and management of TISs. In the full paper the conclusions drawn from this analysis will be presented and the TRANSIT-case (computerised support of the international customs process) will be discussed.

Relevance of the contribution – issues to be discussed

This paper not only adds the inter-organisational dimension but also the increasingly relevant international dimension to the issues raised in the lead paper. The two papers are supplementary as to their empirical object while having a similar focus.

The paper is relevant at least from the following two perspectives:

- IT-auditors need to be aware of the reasons why information systems fail and of the increased complexity of the development and management of information systems caused by the inter-organisational and international dimensions of systems development.
- The growing importance of the inter-organisational and international dimensions of information systems implies that also IT-auditing has to explore inter-organisational and international forms of co-operation. Therefore, the question arises whether SAIs at present are ready for such forms of international co-operation?

The discussion during the working seminar should focus on the last question.

¹ The research covered by the paper was done while the author was associate professor in Information Management at Delft University of Technology.