

IT Audit Self-assessment is a management support instrument

Supreme Audit Institutions need to set up and develop the IT audit function. Their approach determined both by their mandate and importance of IT in the public sector is unique. There is no uniform solution on how an IT audit function should be developed. A straight-forward attempt of a direct transfer of experience from one SAI to another may end with unacceptable results.

The IT Audit Self-assessment (ITASA) method, as implemented by the EURO-SAI IT Working Group, suggests a set of simple and standard actions which ought to contribute to the desired improvement of the IT audit function according to the specific needs of a Supreme Audit Institution.

Workshop approach for a focussed and pragmatic solution definition

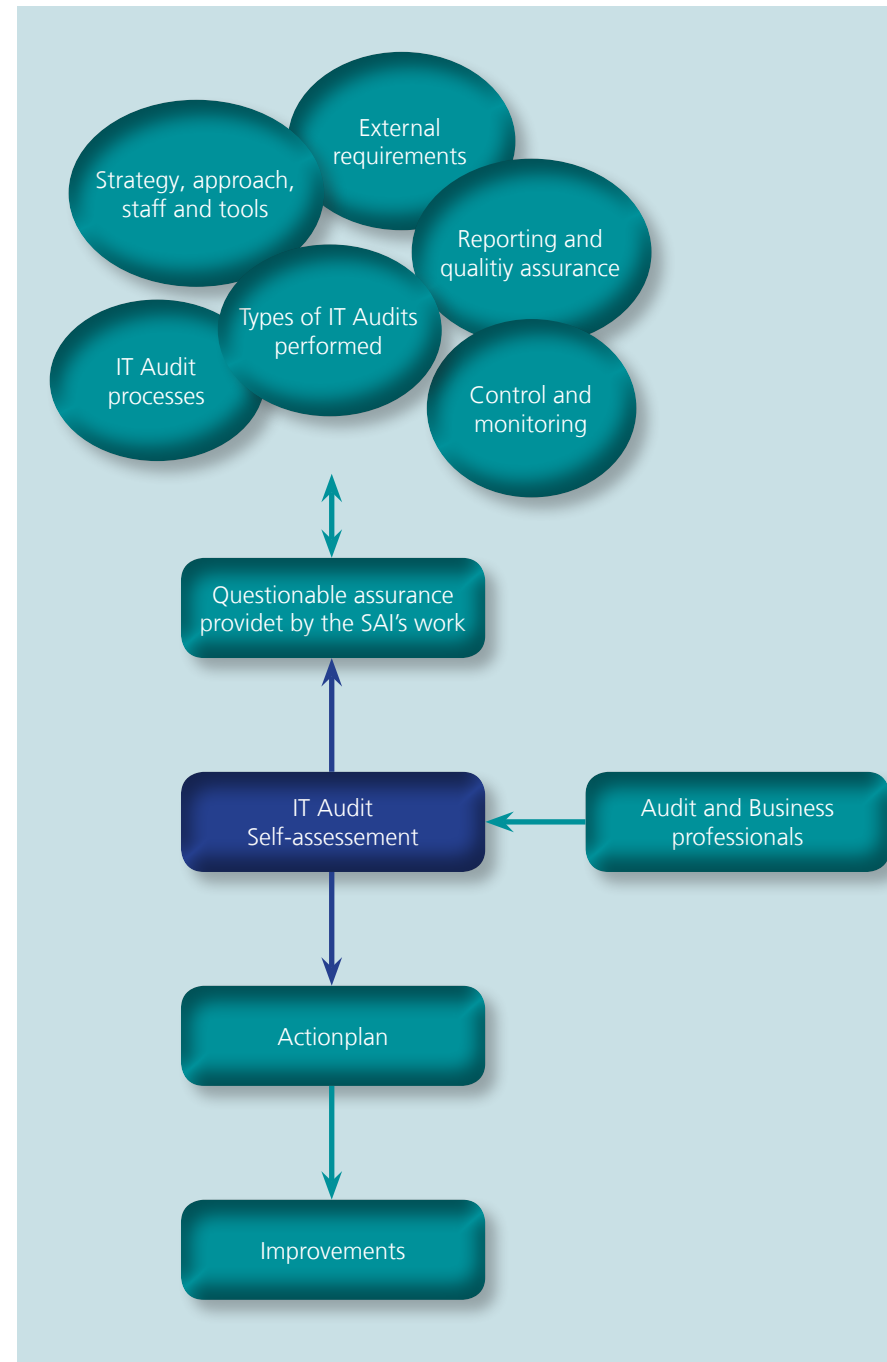
The IT Audit Self-assessment takes place in the form of a workshop and is undertaken by a group of 15 to 20 persons from different disciplines within the SAI: a mixture of auditors (financial and performance, IT auditors, audit metho-

The aim of an ITASA is to provide management with specific insight about the current state of the IT audit function and how to position it for the challenges ahead. This implies considering the Supreme Audit Institution's mandate, the extent and complexity of IT projects in the government sector, the existing IT audit methodology as well as the skills and competences of the staff.

An ITASA

- suggests volume, extent and alignment with traditional audit activities
- advises on methodology, current and expected competence of IT auditors and training
- offers strategies for embedding IT audit into existing organisational structures of a SAI

dology experts), IT staff and managers. The composition of the group depends on the Supreme Audit Institution. The necessary time to invest in an ITASA workshop varies from 1 to 1 ½ days.



An ITASA is led by a moderator who comes from another Supreme Audit Institution

The group needs a moderator who will introduce it to the method and provide guidance on the ITASA methodology. A good number of EUROSAI IT Working Group members are currently available

as moderators. Supreme Audit Institutions wishing to undertake an ITASA are requested to contact the EUROSAI IT Working Group Secretariat for advice.

Workshop participants assess current and future maturity of the IT audit function

Five specific areas are defined to assess the IT audit function:

- External requirements (national and international regulations, IT audit standards)
- Internal requirements: Input & resources (IT audit strategy, organisation and approach, IT audit staff & training, IT audit tools)
- Internal requirements: IT audit process (risk analysis and planning, IT audit work, reporting and documentation)
- Internal requirements: Output (reports & quality assurance)
- Quality Management, Control & Monitoring

Within each of the five areas, the workshop participants assess the IT audit function to determine actual and desired maturity. "Gaps" generated by differences of desired and actual maturities are converted into actions which should lead to the desired maturity level. The action plan is submitted to and considered by the Executive Management of the Supreme Audit Institutions. It is important to keep in mind: The result reflects the consolidated perspectives of the workshop participants and not those of the moderators!

An ITASA is only the beginning, not the end

After the presentation of the ITASA results to Executive Management, the most important part begins: the refinement and implementation of the suggested actions. Thus, management commitment is crucial for overseeing and controlling the activities. Experience shows that Sup-

reme Audit Institutions' employees react positively to a transparent communication of the ITASA results and subsequent developments. It also turned out to be valuable to plan for a formal internal checkpoint to reflect on progress made.

Some tips for a successful ITASA

Be open to yourself

The quality of the action plan depends strongly on how fairly the initial state of the IT audit function is described, as the method works by identifying the “gaps” – differences between current and future IT audit maturity characteristics. If certain issues are omitted or neglected at a very initial stage, the ITASA will show limited or no positive effect.

Be ambitious, but realistic

Sometimes it might be indicated to split the way to the aspired maturity level of the IT Audit function into phases. It will render the action plan more realistic to be successfully implemented. This will make activities short-termed, more specific and easier to implement.

Ensure Management commitment

It is very important that the Executive Management approves the agreed action plan with due responsibility and recognises the necessity to implement it. This will also support the credibility of the ITASA approach.

It is not a performance evaluation

The ITASA method is intended neither to measure maturity levels for benchmarking the IT audit function at the different SAIs, nor to make judgments based on the maturity levels achieved. The only important thing is to get a credible evaluation of the current and desired state as perceived by participants.

Nominate the best as your internal coordinator and workshop participants

To perform ITASAs successfully, institutional commitment, knowledgeable and open participants as well as a strong local coordinator are a must.

Perform ITASAs regularly

In order to adjust the IT audit function to your office needs, it is recommended to repeat the ITASA after 3 years.

Can you answer the following questions with “yes”?

- The performance and the efficacy of IT investments are audited.
- The financial audits comply with Audit Standards, thus include IT audit elements (for example as outlined in ISA 315 and 330).
- IT Security is audited, including the risks of loss of confidentiality, integrity or availability.
- Audits of projects with a significant IT component are carried out.
- The regularity of IT procurement is audited.

If you are not sure, it might be time for an IT Audit Self-assessment!

This leaflet has been prepared in order to introduce the IT Audit Self-assessment method. For more information, please go to: <http://www.eurosai-it.org>. Questions regarding the method can be addressed to the EUROSAI IT Working Group Secretariat: secretariat@eurosai-it.org.

IT Audit Self-assessment



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