

Follow-up audit of implementation of main recommendations

Directorate for Resources / Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation

Key facts

Four audits carried out between 2016 and 2018 at the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) resulted in important recommendations, the implementation of which the Swiss Federal Audit Office (SFAO) reviewed at the end of 2019. This report deals only with the status of implementation. Background information, risks and audit results can be found in the published audit reports¹.

The SFAO considered the implementation of the recommendations by the FDFA to be good. The general approach described by the SFAO in its recommendations was observed in most cases. In some cases, solutions were found using existing instruments. In particular, the introduction of the functional salary system in the FDFA in the meantime provided significant support for the necessary measures.

Relocatable staff processes

The report contained six recommendations to the FDFA, including one of top priority. All of them were audited in this follow-up. The SFAO found that the FDFA's implementation measures each incorporated the SFAO's respective basic principles.

Only recommendation number 5, which called for the positions at the FDFA to be reviewed with regard to the appointment of transferable or non-transferable personnel, could not yet be fully implemented. This is due to the considerable effort required for the review. It should be completed in 2020/21.

Transition assistance for Serbia

The original audit took place at the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO). This resulted in five recommendations, two of which had to be audited in a follow-up. The implementation measures were drawn up by the SDC, and SECO was involved and consulted.

The measures implemented meet the SFAO's expectations and the recommendations can be closed.

¹ "Audit of relocatable staff processes in the FDFA" (16410), "Transition assistance for Serbia" (16472), "Governance audit after the transfer of central services" (17417) and "Procurement audit of goods and services for humanitarian operations" (18356). All documents can be downloaded from the SFAO website (www.sfao.admin.ch).

Governance after the transfer of SDC's central services to FDFA Directorate for Resources

At that time, the SFAO examined the merger of the FDFA's central services. The report contained six recommendations, two of which were of top priority (numbers 1 and 5). Both called for a renewed analysis of the organisational units of a service provider nature (personnel and finances) which remained at the SDC.

In its follow-up audit, the SFAO found that the analyses were carried out to the required extent. As the Directorate for Resources and the SDC were unable to reach agreement in both cases, the decisions were escalated to the Secretary General and the head of department. They decided to maintain the status quo to a large degree. The SFAO understands from the analyses that moving the units would have brought minimal economic advantages but considerable operational disadvantages.

Recommendation number 6 remains open for the time being. The recommended harmonisation of the offices (classification, function designations) by the SDC and the rest of the FDFA is complex and cannot be completed until 2020.

Procurement of goods and services for humanitarian operations

The audit report contained three recommendations, all of which required a follow-up. The SFAO considers recommendations 1 and 2 to have been implemented. In both cases, the SDC's Humanitarian Aid Unit (HA) made better use of existing instruments and improved documentation.

The description of procurement channels called for in the third recommendation has not yet been completed. The HA's operations committee requested a supplement to the aid concept submitted to it in December 2019. This should be completed in the first half of 2020.

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