

Audit on the use of the federal integration lump sum for temporarily admitted persons and refugees

State Secretariat for Migration

Key facts

Every year, the Confederation invests more than CHF 80 million in the integration of the population of asylum background¹. In 2018, the Confederation and the cantons adopted a shared vision to respond to parliamentary procedural requests and other findings of insufficient federal resources. Entitled "Swiss integration agenda", this approach includes an increase in the federal integration lump sum per temporary admission or asylum decision, bringing it from CHF 6,000 to CHF 18,000. By 2019, the federal financial resources could thus rise by around CHF 132 million to more than CHF 210 million per year.

The Swiss Federal Audit Office (SFAO) audited the use of integration lump sums in terms of transparency, compliance, economic efficiency and the effectiveness of the instruments used to measure the achievement of objectives. The audit took place mainly in the cantons of Aargau and Fribourg, which were identified by the SFAO as representative of the diversity of cantonal organisations and approaches. Around thirty individual cases representative of the target groups were examined in each of them.

The audit findings were positive. The resources for promoting integration are used in a transparent and economical manner. In almost all cases, the two cantonal mechanisms ensure that the specific needs of the asylum population are met by the integration measures. Since 2018, the clear definition and relevance of the objectives linked to indicators in their cantonal integration programmes (CIP) have provided a quantitative and even qualitative measure of the initiatives taken in the cantons.

Good boundaries and shared vision regarding integration measures are key factors

The integration of the population of asylum background is done primarily through pre-school and school education, as well as social security institutions. If these structures are not accessible or only partly exist, the promotion of integration at the federal, cantonal and communal levels supplements the system. For pre-vocational training, the Swiss integration agenda introduces delimitation criteria with the specific measures financed by the integration lump sum. The SFAO found that important topics such as disability insurance (IV) adaptation measures and the recognition of diplomas are not covered by the agenda.

In the areas of asylum and integration, the cantonal organisations vary significantly. The economic efficiency and effectiveness of integration mechanisms depend above all on the shared vision of public authorities and civil society players. The SFAO identified good examples of synergies in this regard, such as the care of young children by other refugees

¹ This concept includes temporarily admitted persons, statutory refugee temporarily admitted persons and statutory refugees. The sum of CHF 80 million does not include the ordinary expenditure of the cantons and communes on compulsory education, pre-vocational training and social assistance, i.e. an estimated total of CHF 162 million.

(McPhee programme in the canton of Fribourg) and pensioners' support for young adults who have found an apprenticeship as part of a work access programme in the construction sector (commune of Baden).

Economical organisations with appropriate measures in most cases

The economic efficiency of integration mechanisms is based on calls for tenders and close and regular monitoring of the basis for calculating the costs of specific integration measures. The canton of Aargau stands out for its systematic and regular implementation of open tender procedures. The canton of Fribourg has only partly used such procedures, but it regularly monitors integration expenditure as part of the annual budget. The SFAO noted the good use of the integration lump sum in these cantons.

The analysis of integration measures and individual dossiers made it possible to conclude that the measures are appropriate in relation to the collective and individual needs of the vast majority of the population of asylum background. At the end of the first cantonal integration programme for 2014–2017 (CIP 1), the integration measure offering appears complete and balanced.

The SFAO identified three areas with significant potential for improvement: access to appropriate occupational integration measures within or outside the framework of IV benefits for migrants requiring psychiatric support; the organisation of intensive language courses integrating childcare for infants; and (continuous) language learning for migrants in the working world.

Framework conditions and federal supervision to be improved

The SFAO identified areas for improvement in the cantons concerned, as well as in the federal integration system and in the supervision of the cantons by the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM). This report makes five recommendations for the SEM, dividing them into two sets of measures.

The first set of measures concerns the framework conditions for integration measures. The SFAO found that there was no clear boundary between the integration lump sum and other sources of funding. It recommended that the SEM specify this and inform the cantons. In view of the increase in the integration lump sum from 2019 onwards, the SFAO called on the SEM to allow broader use to finance the supervision and support activities of the cantons and communes. Another SFAO recommendation concerns the need to extend the range of integration measures to migrants suffering from psychological trauma. Its implementation primarily involves the Federal Social Insurance Office (FSIO) and the Confederation/Cantons Interinstitutional Coordination.

The second set of measures targets the federal supervisory mechanism. The SFAO pointed out that information on individual integration dossiers is still fragmented in a canton such as Aargau, where the communes are partly responsible for their management. To improve the quality of its supervision, taking into account the integration agenda, the SEM should develop indicators based on the data available on the development of the rate of gainful activity per canton or sector according to the average income, as well as monitoring to verify the achievement of objectives in each canton.

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