

# Evaluation of effectiveness of measures against particulate matter

Federal Office for the Environment

## Key facts

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High levels of air pollution caused by pollutants such as particulate matter cause serious damage to people's health and the environment. The economic consequential costs for the Swiss population alone are estimated at over CHF 11 billion per year. Switzerland has achieved considerable success in the fight against general air pollution in recent decades, but there is still a long way to go to reach the objective of safe air quality.

The Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN) is responsible for enforcing the requirements of the Ordinance on Air Pollution Control (OAPC). The cantons are largely responsible for implementing the OAPC in accordance with the law. During this evaluation, the Swiss Federal Audit Office (SFAO) examined the strategy, means and instruments used by Switzerland to ensure a high level of air quality.

### **It has been possible for air pollution to be reduced for years, but only isolated implementation costs are available**

Around ten years ago, Switzerland undertook to work towards extensive air pollution control protection objectives. Measurement data shows that air pollution has been falling continuously for 40 years. Despite this success, efforts will be needed also in the future to achieve the protection objectives. In concrete terms, it is necessary for primary and precursor gases of secondary particulate matter emissions to be reduced by another 40% relative to the reference year of 2005.

Estimates of the costs of implementing the OAPC in the area of particulate matter are available only for individual measures, and there is no overall picture. Sound technical information for estimating costs is of great environmental policy interest. Economic cost considerations would make it possible to better classify and evaluate the benefits of environmental policy measures. Consequently, the SFAO recommends striving for greater cost transparency in the area of air pollution control.

### **Stronger federal enforcement is important**

The implementation of the OAPC is a task shared by all levels of government. One benefit of this system is that the cantons can better adapt the implementation of the OAPC to local conditions and specific pollution situations. The considerable coordination effort associated with that is a disadvantage. In the course of this decentralised implementation, there is also the risk that effective measures may be delayed or implemented inconsistently because of cantonal differences in interests and implementation delays due to the granting of long deadlines, for example.

Even though the current implementation has become well established over the years, the SFAO still sees optimisation potential for further strengthening enforcement. This could ensure that defined measures are implemented with a high level of effectiveness and a good cost-benefit ratio.

**Original text in German**