

Audit of property management for motorways

Federal Roads Office

Key facts

In 2008, motorways were transferred from the cantons to the Confederation. Since then, the Federal Roads Office (FEDRO) has been responsible for the 3,800 plots that have been built. The value of the properties is posted in the balance sheet at more than CHF 4.2 billion. FEDRO invests annually in the construction of new sections as well as in the expansion and maintenance of the existing network. In 2018, the federal government invested about CHF 1.9 billion.

For the realisation of current or future motorway projects, third-party property alongside the roads is needed, partly temporarily, partly permanently. These property transactions are managed by FEDRO. This includes all FEDRO property transactions, such as land acquisition and sale. The land acquisition businesses are services for the road projects.

The Swiss Federal Audit Office (SFAO) carried out an audit in 2018 in the environment of the property management motorways. Six case studies from the regions of Zurich, Bern, Central Switzerland and Ticino were used to validate the findings on the main audit areas.

Uniformity, overall view and control must be ensured

The property transactions are carried out throughout Switzerland. Doctrinal unity for the organisation and management of these transactions is not consistently discernible for the SFAO. There are no official standards for buying and selling property. There are no regulations in the area of document and contract management.

FEDRO has no valid processes and binding procedures for the specialist area "land acquisition and property management". The financial powers of attorney do not correspond to the powers granted.

Key figures are required to control property management. Long-term needs can thus be better managed.

The land required for the road projects must be acquired by FEDRO at market value in accordance with the law. To this end, FEDRO must apply a market-oriented practice. There is no uniform and comprehensible practice.

The federal office carries out sales of land no longer needed, but without regulated procedures. Individual enquiries from interested third parties drive the business. Uneconomical sales are therefore not excluded.

Income and expenditure in property management can be improved

The property owned by FEDRO is partly rented out to third parties or given away free of charge. Within the federal office, this is handled very differently from region to region. The lack of uniform practice in the field of property management is due to a lack of overarching rules and common principles.

FEDRO partly works with third-party land acquisition companies. This division of tasks can make sense, although the contracts vary and do not always comply with the principle of economic efficiency. In the mandates which are often awarded directly, fees are sometimes overpriced. In the "Central and Northwestern Switzerland" and "Northeastern Switzerland" branch regions, the mandated parties receive up to twice as much in terms of fees as other comparable firms in other regions.

The transfer of ownership of motorways, which began in 2008, is roughly 95% complete. The demarcations were regulated uniformly and appropriately throughout Switzerland. FEDRO has applied a meaningful freedom of design in the local implementation of the parcelling out of land.

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