

Federal Office for Buildings and Logistics

Architecture competitions for new buildings

### Key facts

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In August 2014, the Swiss Federal Audit Office (SFAO) conducted an audit at the Federal Office for Buildings and Logistics (FOBL) on the implementation of architecture competitions.

The architecture competition has been well established for decades as a special form of procurement in the public sector and with private developers. The FOBL also conducts architecture competitions within the scope of its preliminary studies. The object and the purpose of the architecture competition is to choose the most convincing project from a functional, economic and design perspective from a selection of different possible solutions. In the case of architecture competitions, the anonymously submitted contributions will be judged by a jury. The expert and independent assessment by the jury is a considerable prerequisite for the objective evaluation of the best solution in terms of quality. After the architecture competition has ended, the FOBL can directly award the contract for the services of planner.

The goal of the SFAO with the audit is to examine

- whether or not architecture competitions were correctly executed in the case of new buildings,
- how the sustainability objectives of the Confederation, in particular with regard to efficiency, have been implemented,
- and whether the project goals in the periods before, during and after the architecture competition were consistent.

The findings in the report are based on verification of the processes and an in-depth examination of three architecture competitions. The SFAO assesses the audited aspects as follows:

Architecture competitions are properly conducted by the FOBL and are a management issue. The procedure is well established, documented in a comprehensible manner and is equipped with effective controls. The organisation has the necessary flexibility and is open to optimisation.

The FOBL conducts architecture competitions in accordance with the law. The Public Procurement Act and the Public Procurement Ordinance are complied with.

The FOBL takes the time required to set up the competition project organisation. Even the jury is optimally geared towards the tasks of the competition and is put together on the principle of “affected persons being made participants”. Only the tasks in the areas of facility management and construction economics should be more clearly delineated.

The SFAO considers the preventive measures on subsequent cooperation with the planner team of the winning project to be sufficient. Early communication of the defined framework minimises the risk of misunderstandings on both sides.

The FOBL has sought for years to incorporate sustainability with due regard in projects, in particular those of new buildings. However, the SFAO has come to the conclusion that the topic of sustainability must be afforded greater importance in architecture competitions. The standard with which the FOBL wants to pursue the strategic thrust of sustainable construction in the coming years must be more consistently integrated into architecture competitions. The same is true when assessing the life-cycle costs of competition projects. The SFAO believes that this important pa-



parameter for efficiency must be calculated consistently in future in all architecture competitions and must be treated as an element of sustainability.

Based on its assessment in the individual points, the SFAO recommends to the FOBL that improvement measures should be initiated in particular in the areas of facility management, sustainability and life-cycle costs.

Original text in German

**Generelle Stellungnahme des BBL:**

Die Architekturwettbewerbe des BBL erreichen in der Fachwelt und bei den Teilnehmenden eine hohe Anerkennung. Das BBL freut sich, dass die Eidgenössische Finanzkontrolle EFK im Prüfbericht bestätigt, dass die Architekturwettbewerbe des BBL ordnungsgemäss und rechtmässig durchgeführt werden und die Organisation flexibel und offen für Optimierungen ist. Die drei Empfehlungen in Bezug auf die Präzisierung einiger Aufgabenbeschriebe, einheitlichere Formulierung von Nachhaltigkeitskriterien und die Integration der Lebenszykluskosten in die Beurteilungskriterien nehmen wir als konstruktive Kritik an und werden diese Verbesserungen umsetzen.