



Project owner support on the Gotthard pass road project Federal Roads Office

Key facts

The Swiss Federal Audit Office (SFAO) conducted an audit on the topic of project management at the Federal Roads Office (FEDRO), which focused on project owner support. To this end, the various projects that are part of the Gotthard pass road maintenance project were examined. The aim of the audit was to assess the tasks, powers and responsibilities in project organisations and to audit the procurement and management of external engineers as project owner support.

FEDRO is responsible for maintaining and expanding the motorway network. Investments in motorway maintenance and expansion amounted to CHF 1.3 billion for all of Switzerland in 2014. There is a project owner organisation in each of the five branches to implement the projects. At the same time, the workload of the project managers of FEDRO project owners is lightened with support. This support is financed by investment loans for the planning and development of motorways. According to FEDRO, between CHF 40 and 65 million is spent each year on project owner support fees.

Although FEDRO defined procurement principles for the procurement of this support function, there is no actual procurement strategy with targets for optimising the utilisation of project owner support. This means that synergies which could lower the costs for the Confederation are not being exploited.

Within FEDRO, there is no common understanding of the role and tasks of project owner support. The SFAO believes that a consistent system with a description of the tasks, powers and responsibilities of project owner support and a code of conduct for the branch when faced with conflicts of interest are lacking. Thus, it considers it essential that the existing regulations on commissioning project owner support be fleshed out and made more precise.

FEDRO was unable to coherently prove the need for project owner support in any of the projects audited. There are no overarching planning activities in the branches that can be used as a basis to systematically determine the need. The procurements examined were made based on individual projects and most of them were executed correctly.

The SFAO also recommends that FEDRO further develop the controlling instruments for the supervision of project owner support and define an upper financing limit for all contracts by generally refraining from "financial adjustments to contract amounts" and by setting a cost ceiling.

The maintenance of the Gotthard pass road entails costs of over CHF 300 million. Currently, approximately CHF 7.3 million is earmarked for project owner support fees. At the same time, gaps in the overall coordination of individual projects have yet to be closed. Moreover, the SFAO has identified some shortcomings in the management and monitoring of project owner support and in requirements planning.

The SFAO has also made corresponding recommendations at the central, branch and project levels.

Original text in German