



Audit of federal investment and operating contributions to the Maison de la Paix in Geneva

State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation

Key facts

The Maison de la Paix in Geneva was opened in the autumn of 2014. The architecturally noteworthy construction project was carried out by the Graduate Institute for International and Development Studies (IHEID) and approximately two thirds of the building is used by the project owner for operating the graduate institute. The building is also home to three foundations supported by the Confederation – the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP), the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) and the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) – as well as to other third-party institutions active in the areas of peace, security and foreign policy. The competence cluster that has ensued has simplified exchanges and cooperation, and solved the earlier space problem. The State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) gave an investment contribution of CHF 33.6 million towards the total construction costs of CHF 189 million (excluding land).

The Swiss Federal Audit Office (SFAO) did not find any deficiencies in either the construction cost reporting or the focus of the investment contributions. The construction process was actively followed by the IHEID, SERI and the Federal Office for Buildings and Logistics (FOBL). Despite the complexity and size of the project, the construction costs were kept under control. However, the financing of the future need for renovation has to be settled in a binding manner.

No holistic view of funds

The IHEID receives the SERI basic contribution for teaching and research and various contributions from the Confederation on a recurring basis. The three Geneva centres (foundations) also receive funds from various departments. Overall, the Maison de la Paix environment receives around CHF 62.5 million from the Confederation every year. However, there is no comprehensive picture of this. The SFAO thus recommends creating a consolidated view and establishing an interdepartmental exchange of information on federal funds.

The focus of the basic contribution for research and teaching is governed by a service level agreement. In that regard, it is apparent that the Confederation is paying increasing contributions despite the stipulated principle of proportionality relative to the canton of Geneva. Moreover, the selected profit-sharing model can harm the incentive for optimising results, and administration efficiency is not measured with concrete indicators. The support for the Swiss Network for International Studies (SNIS) provided for in the service level agreement is presented as direct financial support from SERI at least on the recipient's end. The statutory basis is missing, though. The SFAO is calling for a new arrangement for SNIS financing in view of the upcoming new service level agreement with the IHEID for 2017 to 2020.

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