



## Audit of relocatable staff processes in the FDFA Directorate for Resources

### Key facts

---

As at the end of November 2016, around 5,850 people were employed at the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA), of whom over 20% are relocatable. These are generally obliged to change job and location every four years. This means that, every year, it is necessary to appoint new people to around 300 posts, representing a total average wage bill of CHF 42 million. These transfers cost the FDFA around CHF 6 million each year. The FDFA Personnel Division in the Directorate for Resources (DR) is responsible for this process.

The Swiss Federal Audit Office (SFAO) examined the DR's transfer process, focusing on head office appointments. It got the impression that, although the processes at the DR level are well defined and implemented, there is a need for action at the level of the overall "relocatable staff" system.

### **The "system" requires further development**

In a closed system in which the same employees have to be distributed among the same posts repeatedly, optimum staffing is not always possible. However, the SFAO believes there is optimisation potential through greater individualisation. Postings lasting four years can be too short, especially for influential functions at head office. In general, relocatable staff should not be appointed to positions that require a high level of specific expert knowledge or autonomy.

The SFAO considers it vital for the DR, before its next round of job postings, to analyse all the positions available to determine the optimum length of time in post and the specialisation necessary.

### **No end-to-end transparency despite clearly defined processes**

The DR has defined the procedure for FDFA job appointments during the annual posting process. This process is clear and transparent. All processes and sub-processes are documented. The FDFA Personnel Division has a large number of suitable tools at its disposal.

The FDFA seeks to minimise the loss of know-how resulting from transfers with a separate process for knowledge transfer.

The DR performed this year's posting process as defined. However, the SFAO found that the comprehensively drawn up lists of candidates for the posts were subsequently altered by various hierarchical levels. This negates the defined and implemented processes. Moreover, the changes are not comprehensible. Changes are made in particular for top-level appointments that are ultimately decided by the Federal Council.

The SFAO is of the opinion that the DR must make improvements in order to ensure full transparency and comprehensibility.

### **Original text in German**