



Temporary employment programmes and occupational traineeships under unemployment insurance

Evaluation of impact, execution and supervision

Key points

The Swiss Federal Audit Office has evaluated two of the eleven labour market measures with regard to unemployment insurance, i.e. temporary employment programmes (TEPs) and occupational traineeships. The costs for both of these measures were approximately CHF 190 million in 2013. Throughout Switzerland, 33,000 jobseekers have attended TEPs and 1,800 have undergone occupational traineeships. This represents 20% and 1%, respectively of all jobseekers in 2013. On average, a programme lasts three to four months and an occupational traineeship lasts four and a half months. Six months is the maximum period allowed. Impact, cantonal execution and supervision were analysed based on eight cantons and national measures. The cantons involved were Aargau, Bern, Geneva, Lucerne, St. Gallen, Schwyz, Ticino and Valais. The national measures are TEPs and occupational traineeships which are open to jobseekers in all cantons. These two measures are intended to promote swift and lasting integration of unemployed people for whom finding a job is difficult.

The SFAO uses a different impact term from that used for the impact assessment in the agreement between the Confederation and the cantons. It is not just reintegration that is considered. Participants in a 2013 measure were asked whether they found it useful and if the outcome objectives had been achieved. In this way, account is taken of the unemployment insurance mandate to advise in a client-oriented manner and provide services for those insured. Those surveyed completed the measure on average a year ago.

Two thirds found a job, but only half considered the programme to be useful

TEPs provide work opportunities which are limited in duration and offer specialist support. The cantons are free to structure the programmes as they wish. This means that there are big differences in the types of TEP on offer, their outcome objectives and who they address. In the case of external TEPs, assignment is in a non-profit organisation in the primary labour market. This covers all jobs and occupations which exist in the free economy. In the case of internal TEPs, these are jobs in specialised organisations which are obtained by the public sector.

Overall, two thirds of the participants had found a job by the time the programme finished. A third is currently employed with permanent contracts and can thus be deemed to be sustainably reintegrated. However, only half of all participants found their programme useful in terms of occupational reintegration. There are considerable differences between the cantons in this assessment: with a two-thirds positive response, the national TEPs and those in the cantons of Bern, Geneva and Aargau fared best. The responses to individual outcome objectives reflect a picture which is consistent with this assessment in all cantons and in the case of national programmes.

Depending on the way they are structured, TEPs have different outcome objectives. A survey of the providers and deployment operations highlighted the different levels of importance. However, there was not one objective in a canton or in the national programmes which was considered as

unimportant. In external TEPs, professional experience should be gained as a matter of priority and professional skills should be improved. Having a reference when job hunting and career-relevant contacts are also important elements. In contrast, the focus is on training in social skills for internal TEPs. Topics such as team spirit, punctuality and trustworthiness are addressed. As a rule, an internal TEP is used where there are psychological problems or substance addiction. A work environment can have a stabilising effect here, where discipline is required and esteem is conveyed. Finally, they are also used to clarify availability and employability in relation to a new job. In this case, the TEP was felt to be rather unuseful. Both types of TEP are meant to provide motivation when seeking employment.

The programme participants gave much better marks to the external TEPs than to the internal ones. But not all cantons have vacancies for programmes of this nature in the primary labour market. Consequently, the analysis of cantonal execution shows that the more a canton offered such assignments, the better the average response was from participants. This is why external placement should always be sought if this is possible based on the psychological condition and basic motivation of the person as well as being reasonable for the social working environment. Internal TEPs also have their place, but they should be used sparingly because of the higher costs involved.

An insured person seldom changes programme. In spite of the majority of programme participants expressing negative views in some cantons, the programme is not discontinued in more than 50% of cases. A more regular review by the personnel advisor in advisory discussions is recommended and, if necessary, a change should be made or the programme should be discontinued.

Higher level of approval and reintegration in the case of occupational traineeships, but seldom used

80% of the interns considered the measure to be positive, 90% subsequently found a job and 55% of these have a permanent employment contract. In the case of occupational traineeships, the focus is on acquiring practical work experience after completing a training course. The assignment takes place directly in a company, non-profit organisation or administration. As a rule, the interns themselves seek their assignment. Occupational traineeships are similar to external TEPs in how they work, but they are seldom used. Only in the case of this measure does the assignment operation have to pay 25% of the daily benefits which the unemployed person receives from the unemployment insurance scheme.

Focussing the use of measures and improving agreements on objectives

In accordance with the guidelines, both measures should be used for jobseekers for whom it is fairly or very difficult to find work. Employability is assessed differently by the cantons. Harmonisation is required to ensure that resources are used effectively. The execution analysis showed that the cantons of Aargau, Bern and Geneva are more restrictive in their use of TEPs and on average implement them later than the others. There is also a higher risk of long-term unemployment amongst their programme participants. The SFAO recommends focussing usage in the other cantons.



The objectives are an important component with regard to what should be achieved with the measures. The more appropriate the objectives are found to be by jobseekers, the more useful the TEP is perceived to be. There is room for improvement here in the level of detail, meaningfulness and communication of the objectives. Too many programme participants said that no objectives had been agreed. In addition, all the players involved should be aware of the objectives.

TEPs and occupational traineeships harbour risks; improved supervision is required

TEPs and occupational traineeships also harbour risks. Firstly, the duration of unemployment can be lengthened because a person sends off fewer applications during a measure. Application intensity scarcely diminished in the case of TEPs, but a third of the interns made less intensive efforts to send off applications. However, the problem is somewhat attenuated: half of the interns who are currently in work subsequently found a permanent job in the company where they did their internship. In some cantons, there was too high a number of programme participants who indicated that they did not receive a certificate of completion. Both of these matters should be controlled better by the personnel advisers.

Execution is geared towards reintegration in all cantons. However, there are supervision gaps in the case of external TEPs. More proactive and systematic attention should be paid to potential negative repercussions on the labour market. Likewise, there is no appropriate data basis at the level of SECO to supervise the labour-market relevance of TEPs and the use of resources in favour of people for whom it is fairly or very difficult to find jobs. The focus is on successful and swift reintegration. The aspect of client orientation is not though sufficiently taken into account.

SECO and the Association of Swiss Labour Market Authorities have provided their comments.