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Press release

More discipline and controlling for federal purchases

Bern, 26 November 2015 – In 2014, the Federal Administration spent more than CHF 5.5 billion on goods and services, as well as on construction services. The Swiss Federal Audit Office (SFAO) performed several audits on this topic. There are shortcomings in these procurement processes. The strategic role of the Federal Procurement Conference, in particular, has to be strengthened. The Federal Office for Buildings and Logistics (FOBL) has accepted the SFAO's recommendations.

The SFAO has published eight procurement audits, including two on key issues for the Federal Administration (PA 15318 and PA 15567). The other audits concern consultants and IT mandates, real estate investments, procurement in the military sector and the hiring of temporary members of staff. All of them confirm the general findings set out below.

The Federal Administration's strategy body in this area, the Federal Procurement Conference (FPC), does not have sufficient powers. It has to be strengthened, have clear objectives and target key procurement issues. Its organisation has to be reconsidered. In operational terms, the SFAO wants more intense controlling of the Federal Administration's transactions and also for such controlling to become a management tool.

More restrictive requirements needed for the granting and controlling of procurement delegations

Restrictive requirements have to be defined for the FOBL's granting of delegations to the administrative entities. For example, the Federal Customs Administration (FCA) spends almost CHF 100 million on goods and services each year, largely based on these delegations. A specific audit performed by the SFAO revealed shortcomings due to a non-unified procurement process at the FCA and patchy cooperation with the FOBL.

This example should prompt the FOBL to ensure that these delegated procurement transactions are subject to more frequent controlling and are transparently disclosed in the report on federal procurement controlling, which is submitted to the Federal Council each year.

The FOBL has accepted these recommendations. They will be incorporated into the revision of the Ordinance on the Organisation of Federal Public Procurement.

An economical approach to be favoured for IT products

Pursing a two-product strategy, a common approach for federal purchases, is warranted for reducing dependence on a single supplier. This strategy is unwise and proves expensive for standard IT products (software and licences, for example). The SFAO recommends a single-product strategy in this regard.

The Federal IT Steering Unit has undertaken to follow this recommendation in the future.

List of the audits published

1. Umsetzungen der Weisungen der Querschnittsämter – Bundesamt für Bauten und Logistik (audit mandate 15318, only in German)
2. Prüfung der Beschaffung von IKT-Produkten mit Potenzial zum Standardprodukt – Bundesamt für Bauten und Logistik (BBL) & Informatiksteuerungsorgan Bund (ISB) (audit mandate 15567, only in German)
3. Audit du système de contrôle interne dans le processus des achats – Administration fédérale des douanes (audit mandate 14366, only in French)
4. Beschaffungsprüfung – Gruppe Verteidigung / Logistikbasis der Armee LBA (audit mandate 14410, only in German)
5. Prüfung des Beschaffungswesens – Eidgenössische Zollverwaltung (audit mandate 14501, only in German)
6. Système de contrôle interne dans le domaine des achats – Office fédéral de l'environnement (audit mandate 15143, only in French)
7. Beschaffungsprüfung – Generalsekretariat des Departements für Wirtschaft, Bildung und Forschung (audit mandate 15304, only in German)
8. Audit du système de contrôle interne dans le processus des achats – Office fédéral de la statistique (audit mandate 15547, only in French)

Further details

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The audit reports are available on the SFAO's website: www.cdf.admin.ch