

For immediate release



Press release

Swiss Federal Audit Office reorients its audit activities to support Federal Administration

Bern, 24.3.2020 – Due to the spread of the new coronavirus in Switzerland, the Swiss Federal Audit Office (SFAO) has suspended a large proportion of its audits in the field and discontinued its publications. It is reorienting its audit approach and using decentralised teams to monitor the measures foreseen by the Federal Council.

Last week, the SFAO complied with the measures announced by the Federal Council to cushion the economic impact of the health crisis caused by the spread of the new coronavirus (Covid-19) in Switzerland. These measures concern in particular support for businesses, unemployment insurance, compensation for loss of earnings, and support for cultural and sports communities.

In an exceptional move, the SFAO Management has decided to change its audit approach. Depending on the case, ex post reviews of compensation programmes developed by the Federal Administration will be replaced by rapid spot-checks *before expenditure is implemented*. The Federal Audit Office Act already makes explicit provision for this approach. The SFAO has notified the Chancellery, the federal departments and the parliamentary Finance Delegation of this change in practice.

Swissair textbook case

The SFAO is drawing on its experience from the rescue of Swissair in 2001, when, just four days after the airline was granted a loan of CHF 1 billion, an SFAO audit team was dispatched to work onsite in Kloten (Zurich) for six months to verify that the federal funds were being used correctly. The proximity of the auditors made it possible to work efficiently and without obstructing the compensation process.

The SFAO believes that this exceptional measure will enhance the quality of the Federal Administration's work and reassure Parliament that the funds allocated are achieving the intended goals. Moreover, this approach should limit the risk of subsequent corrections and provide security for all those involved.

SFAO bolsters Federal Administration

Since last week, the SFAO has also suspended a large proportion of its audits in the field and discontinued its publications. These decisions provide direct relief for the Federal Administration. In addition, two SFAO employees have joined the crisis management team in the General Secretariat of the Federal Department of Home Affairs.

Finally, like the entire Federal Administration, the SFAO promotes working arrangements that comply with the containment rules and the restrictions on its employees' movements, scrupulously following the recommendations of the Federal Council and Federal Office of Public Health.

Further details:

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Federal Council recommendation: stay at home

Stay at home, especially if you are elderly or ill. The only exceptions are: if you have to go to work and cannot work from home; if you have to go to the doctor or pharmacy; if you have to buy groceries or help someone.

You can find more information on [the website of the Federal Office of Public Health](#).