

AUDIT

Subsidy audit in relation to violence prevention

Federal Office of Police fedpol, Service for Combating Racism, FDHA General Secretariat, Federal Office for Gender Equality, Federal Social Insurance Office

KEY FACTS

Article 386 of the Swiss Criminal Code (SCC) forms the basis for federal financial assistance that supports measures to prevent specific offences and crime in general. At the time of the audit, the four administrative units listed above used this legal basis to award subsidies in seven areas. For each area, the Federal Council has specified in a separate ordinance which objectives, content and types of preventive measures are supported. The four administrative units approved a total of 168 applications in 2024 and granted subsidies totaling around CHF 13.2 million.

The Swiss Federal Audit Office (SFAO) examined the awarding of the subsidies and reached a positive overall assessment. However, some adjustments are needed within individual administrative units and in the cooperation between the four units.

Various specific adjustments required

In all subsidy areas, the application requirements are specific and aligned with the respective ordinances by means of template documents. The administrative units conduct the application review process systematically and examine, among other things, the cost and benefit aspects of the preventive measures. At the Federal Office for Gender Equality (FOGE) and at the Service for Combating Racism (SCRA) within the General Secretariat of the Federal Department of Home Affairs (GS-FDHA), the workload in the application review process could be reduced by avoiding multiple assessments going beyond the four-eyes check. In addition, the SCRA's working documentation must be designed in such a way that an independent third party can understand it.

The Federal Office of Police (fedpol), the FOGE and the SCRA consider voluntary work to be eligible expenses, without there being a specific legal basis for this. This affects the total costs and therefore also the subsidies granted. Conversely, the Federal Social Insurance Office (FSIO) excludes voluntary work from eligible expenses. The SFAO therefore recommends that, in future, the three offices concerned no longer consider voluntary work to be eligible expenses if there is no specific legal basis for doing so.

At fedpol and the FOGE, additional federal funds from other legal bases are recognised as third-party funds. This affects the amount of the subsidies granted and, in extreme cases, may lead to full financing by federal funds. This is not in accordance with the provisions of the Federal Act on Financial Assistance and Subsidies (Subsidies Act, SubA).

In the SFAO's opinion, the supervisory activities of the FSIO, FOGE and SCRA could be more case-specific. Risk-based supervision tailored to each subsidy recipient should reduce the workload for both the administrative units and the subsidy recipients.

Both fedpol and the SCRA lack a verification plan as required by Article 25 of the SubA.

Cooperation between administrative units to be strengthened

The administrative units meet at least once a year as part of the Financial Assistance Working Group and exchange information on relevant issues. The SFAO welcomes this exchange and recommends further strengthening cooperation. It believes that alignment in specific areas would be advisable, particularly with regard to best practice at process level and requirements for subsidy recipients, and in the event of future amendments to the ordinances.

However, given the heavy dependence on specialist knowledge in the various subsidy areas, the SFAO considers the general benefits of centralising subsidy processes to be limited: centralisation would generate only limited resource savings in personnel and IT costs, and would yield some simplification of the organisational structure, albeit only up to a certain point. The disadvantages and the loss of quality in the thematic assessment and selection of suitable applications for financial assistance would outweigh any potential efficiency gains.