

Audit of subsidies for gender equality measures

Federal Office for Gender Equality

Key facts

The Federal Office for Gender Equality (FOGE) supports projects that promote equal employment opportunities for men and women by awarding financial aid. Approximately CHF 4.5 million is available to the Federal Office each year. Between 35 and 50 applications are approved annually.

The Swiss Federal Audit Office (SFAO) carried out an audit at the FOGE and at subsidy recipients. It assessed the project managements' use of funds and checked whether effectiveness and economic aspects are appropriately considered when awarding financial aid. The audit findings were good.

2017–2020 order of priorities takes into account changed framework conditions

The Federal Department of Home Affairs (FDHA) issued an order of priorities for awarding financial aid for the period 2017 to 2020. This is based on the Swiss Confederation's qualified workers initiative. Support is primarily given to projects that promote equal pay for men and women, a good work-life balance and equal participation of both sexes in sectors with skills shortages.

From 2019, individual consultations will no longer be supported as these fall within the cantons' area of responsibility. The duplications with the cantons which were identified in the SFAO audit report 14417 no longer exist¹.

Projects are evaluated and monitored diligently

The Federal Office employs 2 people (1.25 Full Time Equivalent) for the assessment of the around 60 applications received each year and the monitoring of approximately 100 ongoing projects. The Federal Office is supported by external experts.

The processes are efficiently organised. However, the SFAO sees room for improvement in two areas: a recommendation was made on implementing exemption rules for external specialists and a further recommendation was provided on updating ICS documentation with the defined key controls.

When submitting applications, the FOGE already emphasises the importance of responsible bodies providing high-quality dossiers and comprehensive project planning. The Federal Office requires a reasonable share of own contributions. In 2017, financial assistance mostly accounted for between 30% and 70% of the costs for approved projects. In recent years, the completion success rate for projects was nearly 100%. Requests for financial assistance to be paid back are the exception.

¹ The audit report is available on the website of the SFAO (www.sfao.admin.ch).

Focus on wide-reaching projects

The heterogeneity of the projects means that their effectiveness is assessed on a case-by-case basis. Wide-reaching projects are preferred. "Wide-reaching" refers to the region, cooperation with other organisations or the exemplary nature of a project. At the end of each project, a report is submitted with a statement on the degree of objective achievement. The SFAO considers this to be the appropriate approach.

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