

Audit of the use of funds

Health Promotion Switzerland

Key facts

The Health Insurance Act (HIA) stipulates that insurers must promote the prevention of illness. As a result, the insurers, together with the cantons, set up the Health Promotion Switzerland (HPS) foundation, which implements and supports health promotion and illness prevention measures throughout Switzerland. These are financed by health insurers through a levy of CHF 0.40 per month per insured person. In 2022, HPS had around CHF 42 million at its disposal. The Confederation is responsible for supervising the foundation.

HPS was last audited by the Swiss Federal Audit Office (SFAO) in 2018.¹ This recent audit of HPS's use of funds again showed good results. The SFAO identified little need for action on the part of HPS and the supervisory bodies, the Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH) and the Federal Department of Home Affairs (FDHA).

The cooperation agreement with the Confederation should cover the entire remit

The objectives and priority topics for HPS are defined in various federal and cantonal health policy strategies. There is also a cooperation agreement with the federal government, which is represented by the FDHA and the FOPH. However, this agreement only covers some of the topics that HPS deals with. This is because the agreement only regulates the use of the additional funds since the 2018 levy increase. In the SFAO's view, the agreement should reflect all of HPS's mandate.

HPS and the FOPH justified the increase in the levy in 2018 with three new topics to be addressed (mental health, health promotion and prevention in old age, prevention in healthcare). The SFAO noted that the additional funds from the increase in contributions are indeed being used for programmes in these areas.

The organisation and financing of HPS, and the supervision of the foundation, comply with the provisions set out in the HIA.

The funds are channelled into projects and measures in accordance with the strategic guidelines

HPS was involved in the development of federal and cantonal health policy strategies such as the National Strategy on the Prevention of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCD Strategy). The objectives and measures it set out have therefore been incorporated into the foundation's strategy. At the same time, it also incorporates the needs of stakeholders and guidelines from the cooperation agreement.

The SFAO observed that HPS responds to any indications of a need for action with regard to demographic change. The processes allow HPS to quickly offer programmes on priority topics. This was demonstrated during the pandemic, for example.

¹ "Audit of the economical use of restricted funds" (audit mandate 17542), available on the SFAO website.

An impact model exists. It helps to turn the strategy into processes and criteria that are used to assess project applications, and to develop proprietary programmes and instruments. The relevant processes are defined and the criteria for project evaluation are also published and therefore known to tenderers.

Around 75% of HPS's funds flow into projects and measures. Around 25% is spent on internal project management and administration. In order to prevent this figure from rising to an undesirable level, the foundation imposed a limit on the number of positions (maximum 50 full-time equivalents).

Increasing the transparency of third-party activities and use of funds

In addition to annual reports, HPS also publishes the results of evaluations and project assessment criteria. Interested parties can obtain an overview of HPS's activities quickly and easily. HPS does not run any programmes entirely by itself; instead, it commissions third parties for this. An SFAO analysis showed that some of these third parties do not provide the same level of transparency regarding their business activities as HPS. The foundation should demand a minimum standard from its implementing partners so that their activities and use of funds can be better understood at all times.

The SFAO did not identify any duplications with other federal units' programmes and their funding.

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