

Risk management audit

Pro Helvetia

KEY POINTS

Pro Helvetia is a cultural foundation operating under public law. It promotes contemporary professional artistic and cultural work of interest to all of Switzerland under a federal mandate, but is autonomous in the fulfilment of its tasks. It supports the diversity of artistic work, the promotion of Swiss art and culture at home and abroad, contemporary popular culture and cultural exchange.

The foundation employs around 95 people and has annual operating costs of around CHF 46 million. In 2023, it supported around 2,100 cultural projects in Switzerland and around 4,600 projects abroad. The Federal Council manages the Pro Helvetia foundation using strategic objectives – currently for the period 2021 to 2024. These stipulate, among other things, that Pro Helvetia must have a corporate risk management system based on ISO 31000.⁴

The Swiss Federal Audit Office (SFAO) examined the quality of risk management at Pro Helvetia. An effective and sufficiently formalised risk management system that is aligned with the size and business activities of the organisation has not yet been implemented.

A risk management system is barely in place

An effective and sufficiently formalised risk management system exists only to a limited extent. Risk management is therefore not currently an integral part of Pro Helvetia's governance and organisation. Although risk awareness exists within the organisation and risk situations are recognised, risk management is ad hoc and reactive. Important basics are missing: these include a risk policy and strategy approved by the Board of Trustees and the integration of risk management into the decision-making processes at the appropriate level.

Pro Helvetia has so far neglected the Federal Council's goal of implementing a risk management system. The efforts made by the foundation immediately before and during the SFAO audit merit particular mention. In particular, the measures introduced in 2024 to manage IT and cyber-risks are designed to counteract possible risks and damage.

Original text in German

⁴ This standard sets out guidelines for implementing appropriate risk management in three stages within an organisation (principles, framework and process); see <https://www.iso.org/iso-31000-risk-management.html>