

Supervision audit

Swiss Federal Office of Energy, Federal Inspectorate for Heavy Current Installations

Key facts

The supervisory and inspection area of the Federal Inspectorate for Heavy Current Installations (ESTI) covers all electrical installations and products outside the remit of the Federal Office of Transport (FOT). ESTI's tasks focus on the Swiss electricity grid with a total value of over CHF 21 billion, which was equivalent to just under 3% of Switzerland's GDP in 2022.

ESTI is managed as a separate unit of the Electrosuisse association with no legal personality of its own and is subject to the supervision of the Federal Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications (DETEC). DETEC delegates supervision to the Swiss Federal Office of Energy (SFOE). The DETEC General Secretariat retains the authority to issue directives to ESTI and to assess supervisory complaints.

The Swiss Federal Audit Office (SFAO) examined whether ESTI fulfils its mandate as a supervisory and control authority in a targeted and transparent manner. It found that the supervisory and control tasks are not fully conceptualised and planned in a risk-oriented manner. Furthermore, there is no concept to protect against unauthorised access to or misuse of sensitive personal data and infrastructure data. The SFAO also reviewed the SFOE's supervisory concept and concluded that the SFOE is unable to exercise supervision of ESTI effectively enough with the reporting provided by ESTI.

Supervisory strategy, concept and planning are not (fully) in place

The strategy is strongly focussed on ESTI itself and pays little attention to the environment and stakeholders such as Electrosuisse, the federal supervisory body, the Federal Office of Transport (FOT), the cantons and those subject to supervision. The strategy should be categorised as a corporate strategy and not a supervisory strategy. The various levels listed in the strategy should also be better coordinated in order to be able to determine the measures in a comprehensible manner and prioritise them. The SFAO recommended that ESTI perform its supervisory activities based on a comprehensive and comprehensible supervisory strategy, a supervisory concept derived from this and risk-orientated planning.

The Electricity Act and the accompanying ordinances need to be reformed

The Electricity Act (ElecA) enacts provisions on the safe use of high- and low-voltage installations. ESTI's tasks are derived from the seven accompanying ordinances. These have grown over time and are partly redundant and contradictory. The SFAO therefore recommended that the SFOE initiate a fundamental revision of the legal basis.

Shortcomings in risk analysis, cash flows and information security need to be rectified

In order to make effective and efficient use of resources, ESTI should plan its supervisory and control activities based on a risk analysis. Data from the accident statistics and the ERP system should be included in the analysis.

As ESTI does not have its own legal personality, it does not have its own bank or postal account. There are no regulations governing the form in which the earmarked funds must be held at Electrosuisse. In order to ensure their availability at all times, it is necessary to specify the form in which Electrosuisse must hold the earmarked funds for ESTI.



The design of the SFOE's supervision is not effective enough

The Coordination Commission of the Inspectorate for Heavy Current Installations was dissolved in 2022. As a result, DETEC transferred supervision of ESTI to the SFOE. The DETEC General Secretariat retains the authority to issue directives to ESTI and to assess supervisory complaints. The SFOE has drawn up a new supervisory concept. Supervision is to take place in the form of two meetings per year and a review of various documents to be submitted by ESTI. However, the documents and information requested are not sufficient for effective supervision. The concept must be revised accordingly. The SFAO also recommended consulting experts with expertise in electrical engineering.

Original text in German