

Evaluation of the impact of measures implemented under the urban transportation programme

Federal Office for Spatial Development

Key facts

Within the framework of the urban transportation programme PAV, the Confederation contributes financially to transportation projects in towns, cities and conurbations. Conurbations whose programmes effectively align transportation with urban development receive federal subsidies. The Federal Office for Spatial Development (ARE) is the lead authority in the PAV, which is a joint task of the Confederation, cantons and communes.

Under the PAV, the Confederation has provided between CHF 270 million and CHF 360 million annually since 2009 to help fund transportation infrastructures in town, cities and conurbations. Of this, a total of CHF 5.8 billion has been released by federal decree to help fund measures in the 1st and 2nd periods (generations) of urban transportation programmes, as well as urgent projects. The subsidy is well anchored in law and the targets and framework conditions are generally accepted by those involved.

The evaluation looked at the question of whether the transportation infrastructure measures in urban transportation programmes are having the desired effect. The evaluation concluded that, in addition to quantity (number of implemented structural measures), programmes must also place greater emphasis on the quality of the impact of these measures.

Holistic view is having a positive effect on cooperation between institutions

The urban transportation programmes promote the planning of transportation and urban development across communes and have resulted in interdisciplinary structures being set up across all levels of government. In particular, the cooperation between the communes in a conurbation was an innovation in terms of federal subsidies. Networking the institutions in a conurbation improves the quality of transportation planning. Agreements between the Confederation and management organisations have led to the binding implementation of structural measures. As many conurbations have experienced delays in implementing the measures, the Confederation has introduced additional milestones into the project.

In future, the ARE wants to identify conflicting objectives arising out of the overlap between urban transportation programmes and national transportation infrastructures (e.g. motorways) at an early stage. The extent to which this instrument achieves the expected benefit and eliminates duplications in effort will become clear only during the forthcoming 4th generation (starting in 2024).

Conurbations should outline their core problems more clearly

Many urban transportation programmes do not have a discernible focal point. Many management organisations have not defined any core problem that the infrastructure measures are supposed to resolve. This results in urban transportation programmes with a host of

measures but without an overarching intended impact. Most conurbations review their programmes every four years. As a result, the focus is more on the implementation of the measures and less on their impact. These factors increase the risk of the Confederation applying a scatter-gun approach when disbursing funds.

Expectations regarding the impact of urban transportation programmes are too optimistic

The Confederation contributes between 30% and 50% of production costs. The higher the estimated impact of the urban transportation programme, the greater the financial support from the Confederation. Those involved in urban transportation programmes assume that, once put into practice, the measures will automatically have the impact envisaged on paper. The Confederation leaves it up to the conurbations to check, or not, whether the implemented measures have had the desired effect.

The Confederation helped to fund the urban transportation programmes' 1st and 2nd generations (starting in 2010 and 2014) via the infrastructure fund. The temporary nature of the fund gave rise to a "first come, first served" culture and a rush to launch projects that were not fully mature. Since that fund was replaced by the motorway and urban transportation fund, the Confederation's financial contribution is permanently ensured thanks to additional income sources. This allowed the conurbations to take more time with planning the measures for the 3rd generation onwards (starting in 2019), which improved both the maturity of the project measures and the urban transportation programmes overall.

Urban transportation programmes should be developed further in order to ensure that the effective impact is verifiable

In the selected programmes, the impact objectives are defined for the core measures; these objectives are in principle also quantifiable. In two of the five case studies performed, the conurbations had a monitoring and control system for checking the impact of measures. However, as regards programme applications, there is a lack of clear impact focus with associated funding requirements for the key elements of a given generation. The SFAO therefore recommends that impact models be used to further develop the urban transportation programmes.

The monitoring envisaged by the ARE to check the impact of the PAV is still too imprecise and some of the evidence does not stand up to scrutiny. This requires methodical improvement. In-depth assessments are needed in order to identify which measures are more effective, and which less.

Original text in German