



Legitimacy of statistics produced and quality management Federal Statistical Office (FSO)

Key points

The Federal Statistical Office (FSO) is the statistical competence centre of the Federal Administration. It produces and publishes important statistical information on the development and current state of Switzerland.

Taking into account the role assigned to the FSO and the amount of resources committed (expenditure of CHF 167.6 million in 2013), the Swiss Federal Audit Office (SFAO) carried out an audit to determine that all the statistics produced derive from an appropriate legal basis and that quality management is guaranteed both in terms of acquisition and making statistical data available. The SFAO is also interested in the office's risk management and in payments made for work carried out for third parties.

On the basis of information obtained during interviews and on detailed documentary analysis (national and international legal framework, statistical multi-year programme, interim results of the current evaluation), the SFAO found that the statistics produced are legitimate and are founded on an appropriate legal basis. However, it should be noted that the General Secretaries Conference mandated the FSO in April 2013 to conduct an evaluation of the Confederation's statistical activities. The definitive results will be presented with the multi-year programme at the end of 2015.

The SFAO also notes that payment obtained for work carried out for third parties was adequate for the situation and to the volume of work involved. A more developed method, e.g. full-cost-based, would not generate a significant added value for the office.

On the topic of quality, the FSO understands this to be primarily the quality of the product, i.e. the production of regular statistics, statistics which are specific to a topic and maintaining registries. Hence, the SFAO's examination focussed on the management of available data, data protection, the IT environment and quality management. In the SFAO's opinion, the following three measures would provide added value in relation to the aforementioned topics while taking the decentralised management of the office into account:

- Introducing the internally developed Statistical Information System (SIS) concept for all new projects, concerning the processing and saving of data and using it long-term for all statistical outputs and for maintaining registries. On the one hand, the advantage would be harmonising a single platform that ensures permanent storage of interim results and on the other, ensuring the traceability of all processing operations on data between the different stages.
- Establishing a body responsible for verifying and monitoring that data protection requirements at sectional level are met.
- Creating an internal structure responsible for the verification and monitoring of compliance with the requirements set out in the quality management manual. This structure would guarantee that identical and comparable working methods and standardisation are applied within the office.

Finally and as regards risk management, the SFAO recommends that the FSO develop a standardised risk management system thereby allowing the different risks to be identified and evaluated centrally whilst also involving the appropriate management levels.

(Original text in French)