

Audit of the economic implementation of the assumption of cantonal police tasks Federal Customs Administration

Key facts

Together with the Border Guard (BG), the Federal Customs Administration (FCA) performs security tasks in border areas, e.g. checks on individuals. In order to exploit the potential for synergies with the tasks of the cantonal police as much as possible, the FCA concluded administrative agreements with most cantons. Since 1 August 2016, the Federal Department of Finance (FDF) has been responsible for concluding the agreements.

The Swiss Federal Audit Office (SFAO) examined the efficiency, equal treatment and management of this cooperation. Overall, the SFAO found that the agreements provide added value for all parties, but that the structures of the arrangements are too diverse. The accusation that the cantons are deliberately outsourcing security tasks to the FCA cannot be confirmed. However, the audit did reveal certain tendencies whereby in some cantons the FCA is clearly operating in areas outside of its core tasks. The SFAO therefore recommends that in future the FCA and/or the FDF explicitly stipulate the connection to customs tasks in the administrative agreements and prioritise the tasks that promise the highest synergy effects.

The Confederation bears the costs for cantonal tasks at two airports

According to Art. 9 para. 1 of the Foreign Nationals and Integration Act (FNIA, SR 142.20), checks on individuals are a sovereign task of the cantons. At the international airports in Geneva and Basel – but not in Zurich – the BG is responsible for border control. The administrative agreements do not provide for any remuneration; according to the SFAO's estimate, this service is worth between CHF 17 and 22 million a year for Geneva and around CHF 5 million a year for Basel. Since there is no plausible reason or legitimation for the Confederation to assume these costs, this must be corrected.

By analysing the data, the SFAO was able to demonstrate that the type and location of the law infringements identified during checks differed between the cantons, in some cases significantly. The main reason for this is that the agreements are geared to the needs of the cantons and are therefore very diverse. In the past, active management of the scope and depth of services by the FCA was not very developed. However, the new management intends to incorporate the interests of the Confederation to a greater extent. The SFAO supports this paradigm shift and recommends that harmonisation take place for reasons of efficiency, including in the definition of border areas.

The management of the task area must be tightened up

The quantitative objectives from the integrated task and finance plan are unsuitable for managing the office. The FCA manages its day-to-day operations based on risk. Nevertheless, for too long it has not corrected the excessive resources committed to checks on individuals at Geneva airport – to the detriment of security at the border. Since only those who are found to be in breach of regulations are recorded during checks by the BG, the data

does not allow any statement to be made about the quality of risk-based operational management. The SFAO recommends that the FCA remedy these weaknesses. In this way, the FCA should be better equipped to manage the tasks more effectively.

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