

AUDIT

Follow-up audit of key recommendations: Audit of consular services provided by Swiss representations abroad

Federal Department of Foreign Affairs

KEY FACTS

The Swiss Federal Audit Office (SFAO) conducted a follow-up audit of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) on the implementation of key recommendations in a previous audit dating from 2022⁴. This earlier audit contained eight recommendations relating to the digitalisation strategy, the organisation of the consular network, services for Swiss citizens abroad and staffing. The FDFA accepted all the recommendations.

As part of this latest audit, all the recommendations were followed up. Seven have been implemented. The only recommendation that is still pending relates to the development and use of the online portal. At present, this tool is used for a limited number of operations (arrival, departure, change of address). Real progress will only be possible once the DigiHub project is put into effect. This new application is aimed at digitalising a wide range of processes linked to consular services. Access to services should be simplified and improved for Swiss citizens abroad. A modern, user-friendly and high-performance portal should be available from 2027.

The SFAO also took note of the first consular strategy, formulated by the FDFA and approved by the Federal Council in December 2025. This document picks up on several points mentioned in the evaluation report and is a coherent tool for consular services.

Digitalisation is in progress

The FDFA has made significant progress in this area. Firstly, it has developed an application that allows the dossiers of Swiss citizens abroad to be digitalised; it is available across the entire consular network. Secondly, it has assigned staff abroad to digital transformation projects and has expanded the information it provides via different channels. This last aspect has allowed the Swiss representations abroad to be relieved of certain tasks. The realisation in 2027 of the DigiHub project will provide a real digital service offering, as well as implementing the last of the recommendations from 2022.

Improvements for honorary consuls and for crisis management

Honorary consuls are essential players in the Swiss consular network. Consequently, their workload should be tailored to the reality on the ground and to the requirements. The SFAO found that the tools developed met current needs. The same applies to crisis management, where there is a more clearly defined division of responsibilities between the different players. This is particularly important if regional consular centres are involved.

Progress as regards skills and career development

In 2019, the FDFA introduced a new functional system at consular level. This paradigm shift has resulted in changes to the profiles required and the provision to staff of different training tools. Social and management skills are now regarded as key competencies. The SFAO observed that the consular staff,

⁴ Consular services provided by Swiss representations abroad SFAO-19404

represented by their professional association, are involved in these changes. The FDFA made adjustments in 2024 to allow greater flexibility in career progression.