

2022 Annual Report of the Parliamentary Control of the Administration¹

Summary

of 24 January 2023

Overview of the PCA's activities in 2022

Four evaluations of the Parliamentary Control of the Administration (PCA) were published in 2022. The PCA completed another evaluation and three were still in progress. In addition, the PCA submitted evaluation proposals to the Federal Assembly Control Committees (CCs) for their 2023 annual programme and supported them in the processing of evaluations and in follow-ups.

Published evaluations

In 2022, the PCA published four evaluations. The results of these evaluations are as follows:

- **Controlling of offset transactions:** *Offset transactions primarily serve to strengthen the competitiveness of Swiss industry, namely companies with a security-related technology and industrial base. However, it is not possible to measure the extent to which this goal is achieved on the basis of the controlling carried out. It merely checks whether certain operational goals have been achieved. The principle of legality, under Swiss law, on the other hand, is respected and considerable progress has been made in terms of transparency.*
- **Groundwater protection in Switzerland:** *Federal oversight of cantonal implementation of groundwater protection plans is only partially appropriate. Although the Confederation provides good support with implementing the plans, there are shortcomings in the monitoring of the status of cantonal implementation. The Confederation rarely intervenes where shortcomings in implementation are identified. The interfaces at federal level between groundwater protection, agriculture and spatial planning are generally sound.*
- **Parliamentary involvement in soft law:** *The rights of Parliament to participate in shaping soft law are well-developed by international comparison, but are open to interpretation, and the respective ordinance essentially restricts participation. The practice in the Federal Administration of involving Parliament is inconsistently applied, but efforts are underway to harmonise the approach. The responsibilities of the parliamentary committees are not clearly defined. Overall, the way in which Parliament is involved in shaping soft law is only partially appropriate.*

¹ The annual report of the PCA is published as an appendix to the 2022 Annual Report by the Control Committees and the Control Delegations of the National Council and the Council of States.

- **Extra-parliamentary administrative commissions:** For the most part, the Federal Council appoints administrative commissions expeditiously and in accordance with the legal provisions. With the exception of a few obsolete commissions, they fulfil their mandate to provide advice to the Federal Council and the Federal Administration as required. However, there are shortcomings in the commissions' appointment orders and some of their services are poorly used.

Ongoing evaluations

The PCA has completed the following investigation, but it is still being processed by the committee responsible, which is why the report has not yet been published:

- **Use of scientific findings by the FOPH in the recent coronavirus crisis:** Scientific findings play an important role in tackling the pandemic. The evaluation examined whether the Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH) adequately processed and took into account the scientific findings on the new coronavirus and whether these findings were communicated transparently to the public.

Three evaluations were ongoing at the end of 2022:

- **Short-time work during the recent coronavirus crisis:** In order to cushion the economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Confederation has relied heavily on short-time work for employees. The evaluation examines whether the adjustments made to the law during the crisis were expedient, whether the support provided by the Confederation to the relevant authorities in the cantons was appropriate, and whether the supervision and controls are effective in preventing fraudulent claims.
- **Measuring the effectiveness of international cooperation:** In order to account to Parliament for the effectiveness of international cooperation, the Federal Administration conducts evaluations. The PCA is examining the quality of these evaluations, whether their recommendations are put into practice and whether their costs are appropriate.
- **Communication by the authorities in the run up to popular votes:** The Federal Chancellery, together with the departments concerned, is responsible for the information provided by the authorities in the run up to popular votes. This communication includes the Federal Council's explanatory notes on the vote, publications on social media or public appearances. The PCA evaluates whether the instructions and procedures are appropriate, whether they were applied in contentious cases and whether citizens used the information in forming their opinions.

New evaluations in 2023

When finalising their annual programme on 24 January, the control committees instructed the PCA to conduct three new evaluations. These concern the system of part-time judges, the allocation of asylum seekers to the cantons and military service with restrictions.

The full annual report is available in French, German and Italian (www.parliament.ch).