



Case study – Swiss Federal Audit Office

Inputs on national practices and practical experiences

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Agenda

1. Reasons of a SFAO New communication strategy
2. Concretes measures
3. Indicators and monitoring
4. Examples and lessons learning
5. Challenges

1. New communication strategy – Reasons

- From 2014 onwards
- New SFAO Management
- Reasons :
 - **More and more transparency** : Extensive use of the Federal Act on Freedom of Information in the Administration (FoAI, 2006) by NGOs, private associations, lobbies, journalists...
 - Termination of a governmental IT Project (2012, circa €120 mio) and **strong political reactions** at Swiss Parliament (2014).
 - **Multiple risks** for SFAO and our audited entities:
 - Suboptimal and uncoordinated communication
 - Misunderstandings with audited entities
 - Unequal treatment of media (suspicion of connivance, lost of credibility...)
 - Press articles and quality of information (where are the efforts/measures of audited entities?)

2. New communication strategy – Measures

- Publish, publish, publish...
 - Since 2014 : SFAO published **circa 50 audits and evaluations** per year
 - **Annual Report** (4 languages, new layout...) & **Publications' programme** issued 6 times per year
 - **Internet** – New website, social media (Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram) and soon, short videos (Youtube)
 - **Equal treatment** (Parliament, Associations, Lobbies, Journalists, Medias...)
 - **Reply quickly** and **comprehensively** to the Parliament, to the press and to the public

2. New communication strategy – Lessons

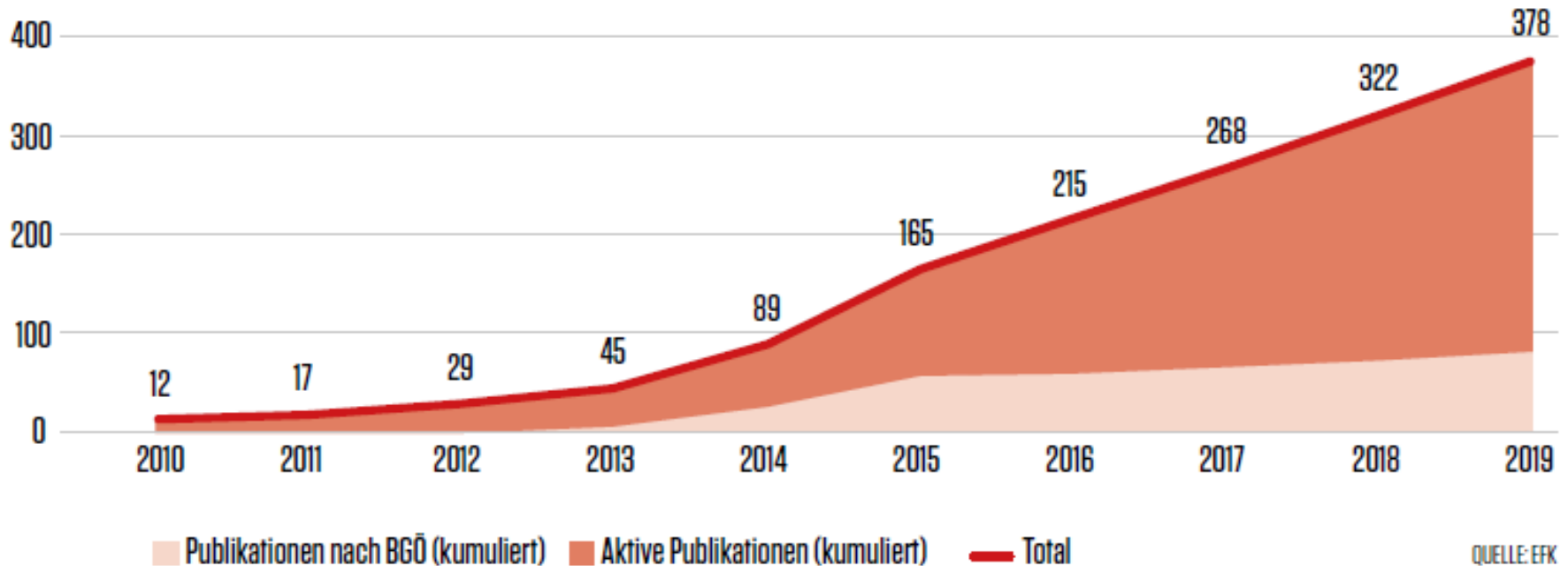
- **No more media release** / Press **embargo** : 3 days
 - Importance of summary (max. 2 pages, in a journalistic way)
 - Journalists need **time** to understand, to contact audited entities and... to write
- **Vulgarisation** as a cornerstone of our strategy
 - avoid the blah blah trap
 - use of cartoons, visualisation, videos...
- **Training** – Courses for auditors and evaluators
 - how to write clearly... to be read
 - focus on the reader (do not write for your colleague...)
 - concrete vs abstraction, concrete examples
 - media training / My Three Minute Audit / Evaluation

3. New communication strategy – Indicators

- **Active publications** vs publications based upon FoAI

Konstante Zunahme der Veröffentlichungen seit 2014

Anzahl der von der EFK zur Veröffentlichung geplanten Berichte vs. EFK-Dokumente, die nach BGÖ herausgegeben wurden

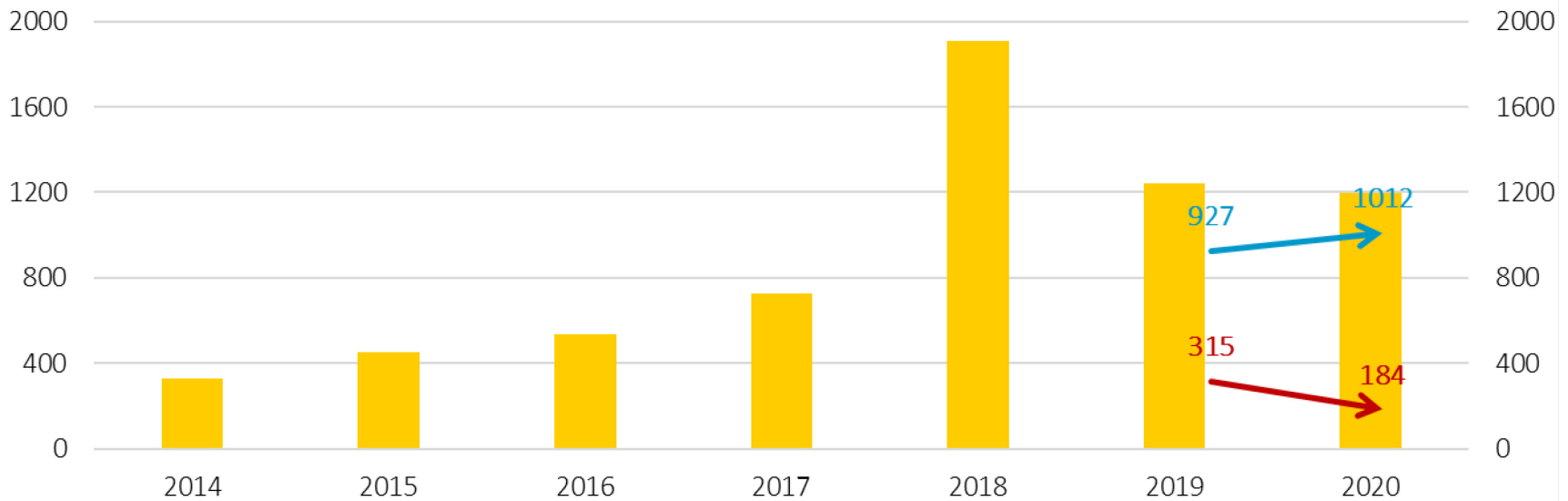


3. New communication strategy – Indicators

- Measuring the **media presence**

Résonance médiatique du CDF (2014–2020, prov.)

Nombre d'articles de presse écrite, en ligne ou radio/TV citant le CDF (articles en langue allemande en bleu, en français en rouge)



Remarque : en raison de la concentration des médias, un même article peut être compté plusieurs fois alors qu'il est diffusé dans plusieurs titres différents.

Source : Swissdox, CDF



3. New communication strategy – Evaluation

- Evaluation of SFAO external communication by a PR Agency (2014 and 2017).
 - Very good results in terms of media presence, quality of publication (even if, still complex to understand) and institutional trustworthiness.
 - SFAO media presence : well improved without negative impact on our image.
 - Areas to improve and recommendations

4. New communication strategy – examples

- Four evaluations / audits that **have provided information for the public debate**
 - **Free ports** and open customs warehouses, 2014
 - Decommissioning and disposal for funds for **nuclear installations**, 2014
 - **Prospective impact assessments** conducted for legislative projects (Federal Council dispatches), 2016
 - Transfer of **war material**, 2018

It will be a “professional mistake” to forget to mention these audits in a newspaper article regarding these topics. Or in a political intervention in the Parliament. Or in an official governmental paper.

4. New communication strategy – examples

- Good topics to investigate, because resulting **from highly valuable risks analysis**
- **Very critical** results (E=Evaluation / A=Audits)
 - E / Free ports : lack of federal surveillance and risks in terms of money-laundering activities in relation with illicit tracking in cultural propriety.
 - E / Prospective impact assessments : official projections are unreliable and reflections are incomplete.
 - A / Transfer of war material : federal control network for war material exports is too weak and insufficiently coordinated.

4. New communication strategy – examples

- **Political debate** already launched several years ago
 - Free ports : Switzerland and money-laundering issues
 - Decommissioning and disposal funds : Switzerland plans to phase out nuclear power
 - Prospective impact assessments : Switzerland votes four times per year and the Federal Council provisions are always a matter of debate
 - Transfer of war material : Switzerland debates for years about its neutral and peaceful tradition vs exporting arms
- **Huge media impact** (more than 500 articles in a case...)
- Audited **Entities Feedback** was sometimes strong... and add fuel to the fire.

5. New communication strategy – challenges

- Auditors and evaluators have to **deal more and more with communication** issues
 - With audited entities : “Yes, the report will be published”
 - Contact with the press
 - > Training and media courses / A step in internal QS
- SFAO Management take **more and more time to justify why and how we published** our works
 - Risk: the public debate is sometimes not about our results but on SFAO as information provider.



Danke für Eure Aufmerksamkeit!

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