

Report to the federal Parliament:

Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers – Audit of the staff processes

15 July 2009 – The Belgian Court of Audit provided the federal Parliament with an examination report on the staff processes at the Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (Fedasil). The Court found that this young agency has already taken significant steps to put in place an adequate internal control system of the staff processes. There still remain, however, possible points for improvement.

Fedasil has been operational since May 2002 and reports to the minister of Social Integration. It ensures and manages the reception of asylum seekers; it also coordinates their voluntary return. Besides, it contributes to the conception, preparation and implementation of the asylum seekers reception policy.

The Court analysed the main staff processes (recruitment and selection; salary fixing, calculation and payment; career decision-making process). It came to the conclusion that they operated efficiently, effectively and ethically. Through the application of a certain number of efficient management principles, Fedasil has succeeded in largely abiding by the regulations. A full-fledged quality HRM policy is now in place and the personnel service has competent staff members. Improvements are still possible though as far as risk control is concerned. The internal control culture should be perfected and integrity policy should be implemented on a larger scale.

The Court found there existed a strained relationship between asylum centres and central administration. The communication flow is not smooth and the asylum centres' HR responsibilities are not sufficiently defined. The personnel files are sometimes managed in a deficient way.

A positive point is that a procedure manual governing recruitment and selection has been drawn up. The central administration's control over the selections in the centres, however, does not cover all critical domains, so that many recruitments are not sufficiently substantiated. Additional selection tests should be added to the selection interviews.

Salaries are in general fixed, calculated and paid correctly thanks to a robust internal control framework. There is, however, no uniform method to record and check the work performance data.

As to the career decision-making process the Court sees a problem with the protocol agreements concluded with the trade unions in 2003 and 2004, namely the lawful basis of this career regulation. Also, the automatic implementation of later amendments to the regulatory provisions which inspired the protocol agreements cannot be deduced from the agreements themselves.

The agreement of the supervising minister and of the budget minister for the appointment of five of the eight senior officers was lacking. In two cases it could not be established whether the selection tests had been administered by Selor, the recruitment Office of the Belgian federal authority. Two offices only of the four offices to exercise were filled. A transitional provision of the regulation was wrongfully used for an assignment to a former general manager.

Finally, the Court stressed the significant role of process manuals. Such manuals would be more than useful for the part processes of salary calculation and the embedding of responsibilities within the control chain of the internal control system.