



INTOSAI

Working Group on Evaluation of Public Policies and Programs (WGEPPP)

EIDGENÖSSISCHE FINANZKONTROLLE
CONTRÔLE FÉDÉRAL DES FINANCES
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SWISS FEDERAL AUDIT OFFICE



How SAIs select the *right* topic for evaluations and performance audits

Meeting introduction and survey results

Andrea Haeuptli, Secretary General
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Why this year's meeting topic matters.

- **A precondition for success**
Pertinence of evaluations and performance audits is largely decided by the selection of the right topic at the right moment in time.
- **Our mission of knowledge sharing**
Institutional set ups and procedures must be appropriate and appropriately used in order to identify and select the right topics for evaluations and performance audits.



The two stages.

Topic identification

- Topic identification takes creativity and a high level of expertise.
- There are few standard or repetitive topic for evaluation or performance audits.
- Staff and stakeholder involvement

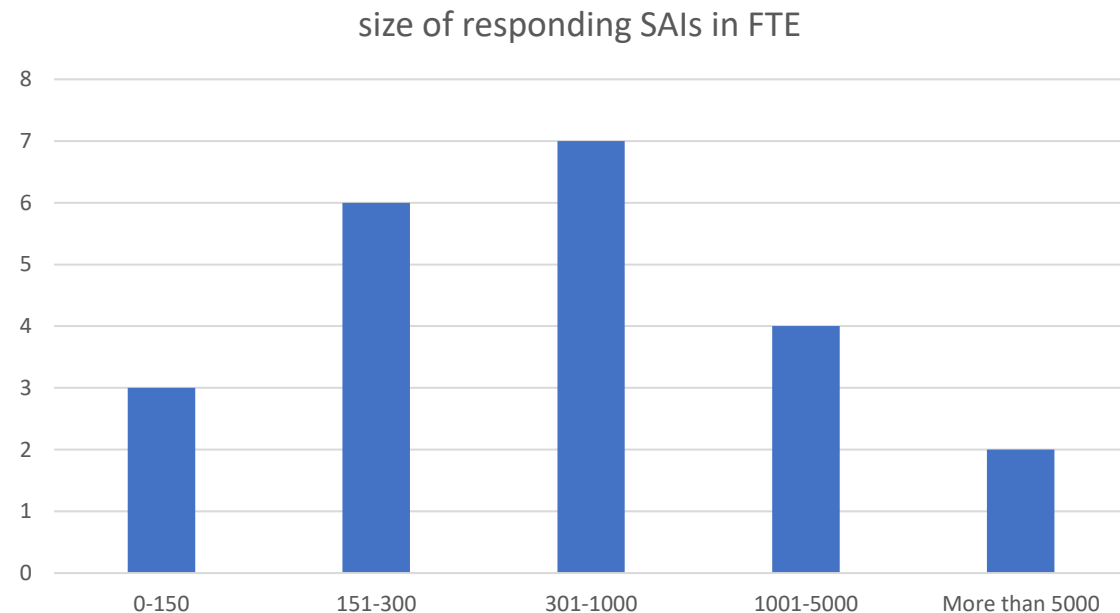
Topic selection

- Topic selection influenced by institutional and external factors, e.g. risk prioritisation, parliament mandates, strategic plans, public debate.
- Topic selection can be imperfect or at the wrong moment in time.

Insights into SAIs' topic identification and selection processes from this year's survey

22 participants:

Albania, Brazil, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, European Union, Finland, France, Hungary, India, Kenya, Latvia, Lithuania, Madagascar, Morocco, Philippines, Poland, Romania, Senegal, Slovakia, Spain, Switzerland





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Institutional Set-up



SAIs are very autonomous in choosing topics.

- 60% of responding SAIs report to decide on 100% of their performance audit topics by themselves
- 28% report to decide on over 50% of their performance audit topics by themselves
- For 45% of responding SAIs, parliament can mandate audits
- For 18% of responding SAIs, government can mandate audits as well
- **But how?**
 - 72% of responding SAIs reported to have the authority to amend audit topics mandated by parliament



Parliament plays a relevant, but not always helpful, role.

- 84% of responding SAIs report Parliament to suggest or mandate performance audit topics
- Only 14% of responding SAIs report this input as systematically helpful in the selection of topics
- The remaining SAIs judge the input as often (13%) or sometimes helpful (50%)



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Topic Identification

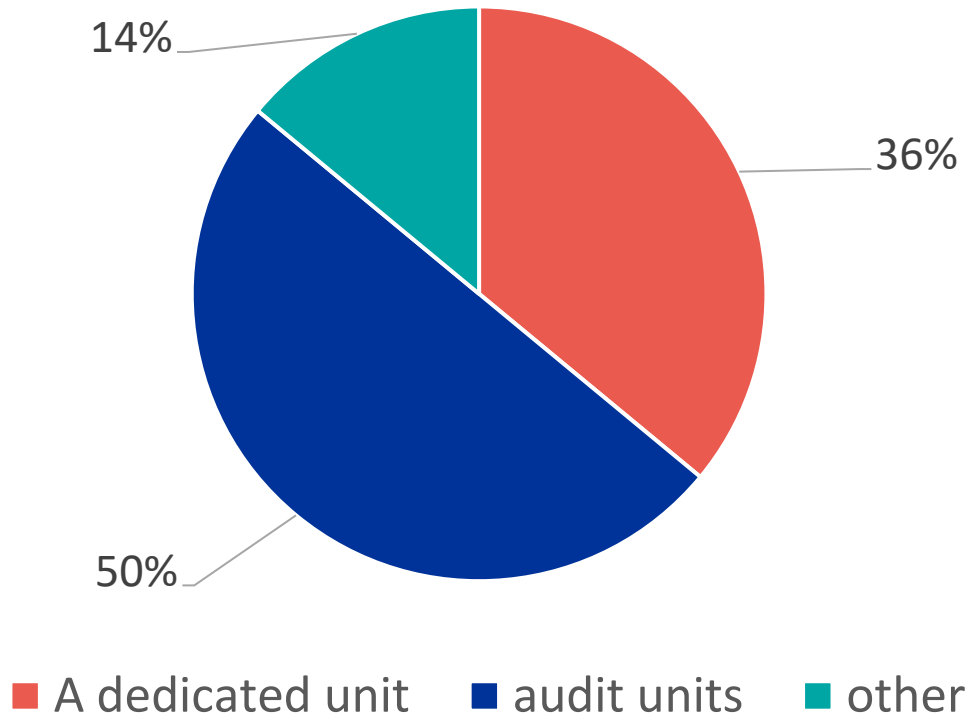


Global and formal risk assessments are key.

- 81% of responding SAIs perform a global risk assessment
- 40% quantify these risks based on impact and probability
- Only 27% of responding SAIs systematically include risks based on the impact or outcomes of public policies into these analyses
- 60% include them often or sometimes
- 50% of responding SAIs find risk assessment useful in identifying suitable topics for performance audits
- 31% found it to be often or sometimes useful



Topic identification happens often bottom-up.



95% of responding SAIs give employees the opportunity to propose topics

41% of responding SAIs report this input to be consistently helpful

60% of responding SAIs report to include external sources into topic identification as well as citizen input

e.g. in Latvia, via a structured survey

Other ways include meetings with institutional partners, academia, stakeholders and citizen panels



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Topic Selection



Topic selection follows strategic elements.

- 77% of responding SAIs follow a strategic planning process in order to select topics.
 - Annual thematic emphasis (e.g. Spain, Brazil, Philippines)
 - Emphasis on principles specified by the overall strategy of the SAI
 - Encompassing strategic mapping (Slovakia)
- 45% of responding SAIs make this strategic plan public



Topic selection follows quality criteria.

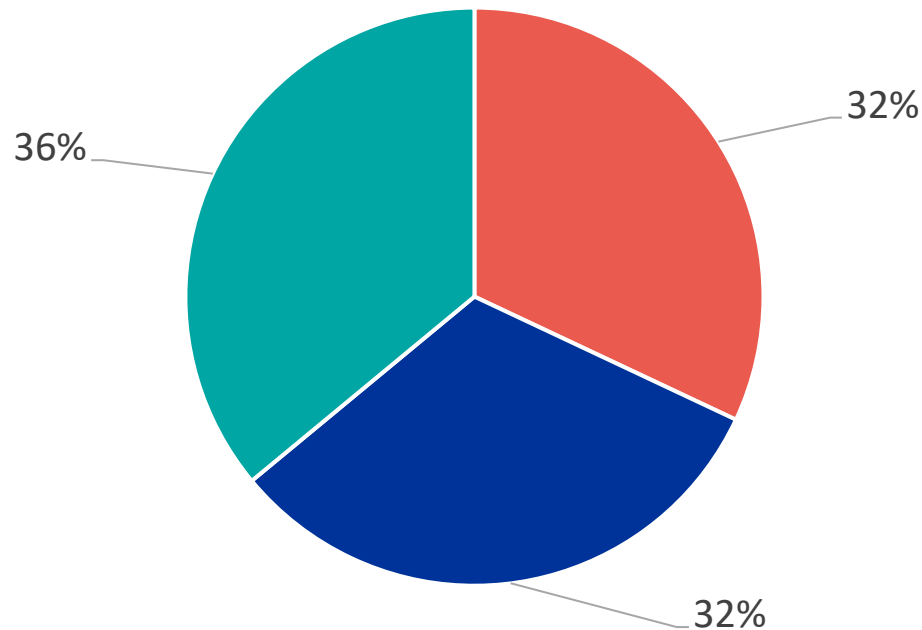
- 68% of responding SAIs impose quality criteria
 - ISSAI 300, ISSAI 3000, GUID 3910, GUID 392
 - Auditability
 - Financial savings / financial risk (based on risk assessment)
 - Potential for change (Kenya, Bulgaria)
 - Scope of stakeholders
 - Risk for the SAI (Senegal)
 - Appropriate timing (Slovak Republic)
 - Cost of audit (Lithuania)
 - Political sensitivity (Philippines)
- 63% of responding SAIs include pre studies to substantiate the relevance of an audit topic



Audit cancellation and Exit procedures

Cancellations are mostly due to external factors.

possibilities of cancellation



■ no answer ■ audits were cancelled ■ audits were never cancelled

Reasons:

- Data availability
- Reforms, structural change
- Studies / evaluations of other actors
- COVID-19
- Conflict of interests of auditors

Reasons for never cancelling:

- Pre studies

27% of responding SAIs have a formal exit procedure in order to cancel an audit



Summary

Institutional Set-up

SAIs are very autonomous in choosing topics.

Parliament plays a relevant, but not always helpful, role

Topic identification

Global and formal risk assessments are key

Topic identification happens often bottom-up.

Topic selection

Topic selection follows strategic elements.

Topic selection follows quality criteria

Audit cancellation and exit procedures

Cancellations are mostly due to external factors.



We hope to hear more details on the survey results from you directly during the meeting, especially during our workshops.

The results and more details will be part of the next article by WGEPPP in the INTOSAI Journal (autumn 2024).

Please, answer also to our next survey – those informations help greatly in the preparation of the meetings!