



Overland transport

What is it about?

As a transport hub and critical transit point in Europe's north-south axis, Switzerland has already invested heavily to develop a high-performing transport infrastructure, and is pursuing a further strategic objective through its policy of transferring freight from road to rail. It is therefore vital that Swiss achievements and initiatives in overland transport are safeguarded in the long term.

To that end, Switzerland has already concluded an Overland Transport Agreement (OTA) with the EU. It concerns both passenger and freight transport via road and rail. The OTA makes it possible to coordinate transport policy with the EU and establishes, inter alia: common technical norms; authorisation regulations; provisions on time spent working, driving and resting; and transport regulations for dangerous goods.

The agreement also secures important exemptions for Switzerland, including the ban on Sunday and night-time driving for trucks and the performance-related heavy-vehicle charge (LSVA). This allows the Confederation to fund its rail infrastructure and contributes to the transfer of freight from road to rail.

Due to the unresolved institutional issues, the EU does not currently recognise Switzerland as an equal member of the European Union Agency for Railways (ERA). This means that Switzerland is currently dependent on interim solutions, without which it would be significantly more difficult and expensive to authorise rolling stock for cross-border traffic.

The OTA is a single market agreement. As part of the further development of the bilateral approach, the unresolved institutional issues are to be settled directly in these agreements.

Outcome of exploratory talks and outlook for negotiations

Switzerland is to open up to international rail passenger transport, which means foreign rail companies will be able to offer their own connections to the country in future. Currently they can only do this in cooperation with the SBB. However, it is not yet certain that foreign rail companies will also have to comply with Swiss salary and employment conditions when operating in Switzerland. Switzerland's regular-interval timetable and its integrated fare system (e.g. recognition of GA Travelcard and Half Fare Travelcard) in public transport will also need to be safeguarded.

Once the institutional issues are resolved, Switzerland will dynamically adopt developments in EU law. However, it will be granted the following key exemptions, in line with the exploratory talks:

- The maximum permitted weight of a truck in Switzerland remains 40 tonnes.
- As before, road vehicles registered abroad are only permitted to offer cross-border transport of people and freight and cannot conduct journeys that begin and end in Switzerland (prohibition of cabotage).
- The ban on Sunday and night-time driving for trucks remains in place.
- The Alpine Initiative will be protected (no expansion of road capacity over the Alps).
- The EU accepts the performance-related heavy vehicle charge (LSVA), with fixed maximum tax rates.

At the same time, Switzerland will adopt EU rules on state aid within the scope of the Overland Transport Agreement (i.e. in international transport). Purely national (or 'universal service') transport is not affected by this.

In addition, the interim solution of cooperation with the ERA will be extended by a year.