

A Better Quality of Life Thanks to Free Travel Between Switzerland and the EU

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At a glance

- For 25 years, we have benefited from the Land Transport Agreement (LVA) with the EU.
- The Bilateral Agreements III secure the agreement for the future.
- The result: affordable, sustainable, and modern international transport.

The Land Transport Agreement with the EU is a success story. For 25 years, it has ensured a regulated framework for cross-border transport between Switzerland and our neighboring countries. Many of the positive outcomes have become so commonplace that we no longer even notice them today. These include, among other things:

- Cost-effective and straightforward freight transport for imports and exports, leading to better wages and consumer prices.
- The successful shift of heavy transit freight traffic to rail, thereby reducing traffic on the roads.
- The financing of rail infrastructure through the performance-based heavy vehicle fee.
- The ban on night and Sunday driving.

Without stable relations with the EU, these achievements would not have been possible. We would be annoyed more often and likely engage in endless discussions about noise, emissions, expensive transport services, and goods.

The Swiss get the best of both worlds

The Bilateral Agreements III do not alter the achievements of the LVA. These remain untouched—just as both contracting parties intended. However, one element of the agreement that has been neglected for 25 years is finally becoming a reality: the opening of international passenger rail transport. This means that in the future, foreign rail companies will be able to offer more connections to Switzerland, provided they can find available capacity on the rail network. In this context, “Swiss law applies on Swiss soil.” This means that all regulations and systems regarding wages, fares, schedules, and accessibility for people with disabilities must be complied with.

At the same time, Swiss rail companies receive reciprocal rights. They can independently offer cross-border connections to other European countries—something that was not previously possible on this scale. Last but not least, public transport within Switzerland remains unaffected. This is because it is still not covered by the LVA. Overall, Switzerland has exceeded its own expectations with this negotiation outcome. There was even praise from the labor unions.

Benefits will be felt in everyday life

No wonder. For rail passengers, this is unquestionably good news. Rail services will become more diverse, innovative, and affordable. We will all feel this in our daily lives—not just committed climate advocates, but also people who are currently still skeptical of rail travel. Those who prefer to continue riding SBB rather than Flixbus will also benefit. The new competition (under Swiss rules!) is invigorating the market, and all market participants will have to work harder to win over customers. A railway that's simply there for its customers: Who wouldn't want that?

Lukas Federer

Head of Department of Energy, Environment, Infrastructure and Digital Affairs, Member of the Extended Executive Board