European Policy & Open Markets

Bilaterals III: ***More competitiveness, less bureaucracy***

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At a glance

- The Bilaterals III do not threaten a flood of bureaucracy: they only provide for the adoption of exactly 95 new EU legal acts by Switzerland - that is less than 1 percent of EU internal market law.
- Without a functioning treaty, many product sectors would have to be certified twice in both Switzerland and the EU.
- The Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons has also led to major reductions for over twenty years.

In its media releases, the SVP regularly warns that the new treaty package with the EU would trigger a tsunami of bureaucracy. It justifies this with the large number of EU regulations that Switzerland would allegedly have to adopt. However, these fears are unfounded. The Bilaterals III will not lead to more bureaucracy, but to less - if it is approached correctly.

The Bilaterals have been helping to reduce bureaucracy for over twenty years

A good example is the Agreement on the Removal of Technical Barriers to Trade. This covers 20 product sectors and therefore 73 percent of all Swiss industrial products exported to the EU. Without a functioning agreement, many of these would have to be certified twice, both in Switzerland and in the EU, which would mean a considerable amount of additional bureaucracy, especially for SMEs. It is therefore crucial to finally update the existing agreement with the help of the Bilaterals III and keep the bureaucratic burden as low as possible.

The Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons has also led to major relief for over twenty years. Unlike the previous bureaucratic quota system, companies in Switzerland can now recruit workers directly and easily from the EU if they cannot find any at home.

99% of EU regulations have nothing to do with the Bilaterals

The Bilaterals III do not threaten a flood of red tape either: they only provide for the adoption of exactly 95 new EU legal acts by Switzerland - that is less than 1% of EU internal market law. Of course, this also involves a certain amount of regulation. However, the vast majority of the EU provisions to be adopted concern technical standards. And companies certainly don't want any Swiss peculiarities here: Uniform standards reduce the burden on our companies and make it easier for them to access the European market.

Another word on the remaining 99 percent of EU internal market law. There are actually quite a few examples of misregulation and overregulation here. The hit list is topped by environmental reporting, the CO2 border adjustment system and the Supply Chain Act. But despite repeated claims by critics, Switzerland is not adopting any of these rules as part of the Bilaterals III. The reason is simple: the EU regulations mentioned are not part of the Bilaterals III. The legal acts to be adopted are listed exhaustively in the six internal market agreements. Everything that is not listed will not be the subject of the legal transfer. The vast majority of EU legislation is therefore unrelated to the Bilaterals III. Switzerland will continue to make its own decisions in this area.

Business-friendly implementation of the Bilaterals III is key

The decisive factor is how Switzerland will implement the new treaty package domestically. The electricity agreement is a prime example. It allows Switzerland to maintain a regulated basic supply. However, the agreement does not stipulate how this is to be structured in concrete terms. We therefore have it in our own hands to make consistent use of the existing leeway and reduce the regulatory burden in Switzerland.

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