



# PRESS STATEMENT

12/09/2025, Brussels

## Swiss unilateral measures impair rail interoperability and rail freight traffic on Europe's main international corridor

**Safety is non-negotiable in rail freight. It is undisputedly a matter of great importance to the whole industry, in particular to wagon keepers, to maintain the safety of their wagon fleet at the highest level. However, the unilateral safety measures by the Swiss National Safety Authority (FOT) in reaction to the accident at the Gotthard Base Tunnel present a one-sided focus on wagon keepers, run counter to the work of the JNS and also initiate a meltdown for European rail freight traffic.**

### Safety is everyone's business

The **official final report** of the Swiss National Investigation Body (STSB) on the Gotthard Base Tunnel accident confirmed that wagon keepers and their ECMs fully complied with their maintenance obligations. Despite these findings, the unilateral **Swiss FOT ruling**, published on September 11, 2025, targets mainly freight wagon maintenance with its measures, asking the wagon keepers and ECMs to bear the brunt. We deplore a one-sided view that basically relieves the other rail system actors of their duties and does not consider safety investments on the side of operations and infrastructure. Safety obligations do not stop once the train is on the tracks. It is unacceptable that RUs keep scaling back their technical on-site inspections and cutting investment in staff education, especially in a system that crucially depends on rigorous controls before, during, and after train operations. We would do well to remember that, as highlighted in the STSB report, the investigation identified areas for action not only for wagon keepers but also railway undertakings and the infrastructure manager. In this context, the shortcomings on the infrastructural and operational side that contributed to the scale of the Gotthard accident must be addressed with the same urgency.

**Tighter regulations must maintain proportionality and hold all stakeholders accountable to reach the highest possible level of sustained safety on the network.**

### Dismantling rail interoperability and disavowing the European acquis

While there is no doubt about the severe impact of an event like the Gotthard Base Tunnel accident for Switzerland, consequences of unfortunate events like this are always like a seismic shock that travels across Europe. Because rail freight does not stop at the border.

As the Swiss FOT agrees in its ruling: *"Based on the principles of interoperability, the current risk of wheel failures must be addressed at international level in order to avoid national or even company-specific solutions."* Safety measures shall always be considered in a European context. **ERA's Joint Network Secretariat (JNS)** has therefore been set up as the entity that develops harmonised short-term ("urgent") and long-term ("normal") risk mitigation measures for the whole EU railway system in response to safety-related issues. Many safety measures relating to reducing the risk of broken wheels have been developed by the JNS since 2017 and consequently implemented.

**So the decision of the Swiss National Safety Authority to enforce additional and very stringent unilateral measures is untimely and deeply misguided. It throws a wrench in the relevance of the work of the JNS Task Force, which is expected to deliver a proposal by the end of the year.**

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## Reduced flexibility and increased complexity leading to less rail freight traffic

Implementing those measures will imply extremely complex and labour-intensive wagon handoffs from one area of responsibility to the other. Our Swiss member association **VAP warns against** the significant negative impact on the availability of freight wagons and the economic efficiency and viability of operations. This is echoed in the joint statement by Swiss shippers who condemn the inevitable resulting bottlenecks in supply chains which ultimately put at risk the country's security of supply. As maintenance capacities are scarce and the rules apply to all freight wagons operating in or through Switzerland, the measures will massively impede the free use of freight wagons and entail a huge loss of flexibility in international freight transport both for import/export and for transit. **The use of the readily available and flexible road transport options as an alternative will be unavoidable.**

We as UIP have constructively engaged in the Round Table discussions of the FOT to work towards a viable and balanced solution in the interest of rail safety. It is therefore all the more shocking that the FOT has proven incapable of finding a solution that serves the sector as a whole. Instead, it gives the disturbing impression that the FOT is extending undue support to RUs – at the direct expense of wagon keepers.

Wagon keepers, ECMs and RUs need sufficient time to analyse the measures, assess their impact and determine the most effective way to implement them. Forcing through full implementation by December 31, 2025 is reckless and paves the way for an uncontrollable chain reaction that risks plunging the entire rail freight sector into disaster. The feasibility being already compromised by stark ambiguity on how the demands can be met.

Finally, one should not forget that neighbouring countries like Austria, Germany and Italy are investing significant amounts in the Rhine Alpine corridor (RALP) in a bid to move freight from road to rail. The unilateral measures imposed by the Swiss National Safety Authority (FOT) are a clear “slap in the face” to the investments made and a disservice to the climate protection efforts in those countries.

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### About UIP

Founded in 1950, **UIP – International Union of Wagon Keepers**, with its seat in Brussels, is the umbrella association of national associations from 14 European countries, thus representing more than 250 freight wagon keepers and Entities in Charge of Maintenance (ECMs). As the voice for more than 255'000 rail freight wagons which perform 50 % of the rail freight tons-kilometers throughout Europe, the UIP represents half of the whole European wagon fleet and one of the most important resources for rail freight transportation in Europe.

