

PRESS STATEMENT

16/10/2025, Brussels

Wagon keepers welcome Swiss rail freight measure postponement but warn it still threatens free movement of European goods

Following the official communication received by the Swiss Federal Office of Transport (FOT), the International Union of Wagon Keepers (UIP) welcomes the decision to extend, by one year, the implementation of their most critical national safety measure on the technical wagon inspection. The postponement to the end of 2026 reflects the scale and complexity of the task faced by the rail freight sector. UIP regrets, however, that the FOT's measures remain unilateral, adopted without a coordinated European discussion. In order to safeguard our ability to freely move goods across Europe, this additional time must be used to develop coordinated, evidence-based solutions that enhance safety without disrupting operations.

Wagon keepers have been at the heart of Europe's progress on rail safety. Through the Joint Network Secretariat (JNS), created by the European Union Agency for Railways (ERA) in 2014, the sector has helped deliver measurable improvements, including the transition to monobloc wheels, refined maintenance practices, and the introduction of thermo-stable wheel designs, which have dramatically reduced wheel failures over recent decades. Furthermore, wagon keepers collectively invest up to €2 billion every year in safer rolling stock and monitoring systems and continue to participate actively in technical discussions to advance rail safety across Europe.

Despite the postponement of the deadline for the implementation of one of the measures, the underlying complexity of the Swiss decision remains unchanged. The requirement that all inspections be carried out in stationary workshops and outside regular maintenance intervals will reduce wagon availability, risk disrupting industrial supply chains, and will continue to add cost, especially along Europe's vital Alpine corridors. UIP represents a fleet of a quarter of a million, which is around half of Europe's wagons. Wagon keepers have strived to adapt so that only 20% of this fleet would be affected by the Swiss FOT ruling. However, 46,000 wagons is still substantial and the impacted number could be much higher depending on the needs of shippers and freight forwarders who transport goods across the EU and Switzerland. The impact on the economic efficiency and viability of operations is therefore expected to be significant.

The unilateral actions of Switzerland contradict the Principle of Interoperability under the EU-Switzerland Land Transport Agreement. **The rules create a range of serious challenges, including to the integrity of the European Single Market.** With most of the freight transport through Switzerland being international transit traffic, the decision impacts the ability of goods to move sustainably by rail to and from Europe's largest seaports and key industrial zones in Italy, Germany, Scandinavia and Switzerland.

Given their impact, and the unilateral nature of the FOT's decision taken against the tide of the JNS process, major companies have decided to challenge the FOT ruling before the competent courts. The JNS is already developing updated recommendations in response to the Gotthard Base Tunnel accident, expected by the end of this year. By keeping its unilateral national measures on the table, Switzerland is jumping to conclusions without respecting the pan-European processes already in place and, without the necessary multilateral technical debate.

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The Gotthard accident was a stark reminder that safety improvement is a continuous, collaborative process between Infrastructure Managers, Railway Undertakings and Wagon Keepers, one that depends on learning from incidents and applying those lessons together, not through isolated national decisions. **UIP therefore calls on all parties, including the Swiss authorities, ERA, and JNS, to use the extended period to agree on a single, harmonised framework for implementation by the end of 2026.** Only through collective, evidence-based action can we ensure the continuous improvement of rail safety while maintaining Europe's competitiveness and the seamless movement of goods.

UIP and its members are committed to constructive engagement and stand ready to contribute their expertise, data, and operational experience in pursuit of the shared objective of a green, safe, and interoperable rail freight system for Europe.

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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.

