

Approval of railway vehicles: importance of taking part in EU procedures as quickly as possible

Switzerland is strongly committed to ensuring that cross-border railway traffic runs as smoothly as possible. The Federal Office of Transport (FOT) has taken steps to revise the Railways Ordinance (RailO) in anticipation of EU-wide safety certificates and procedures for the authorisation of railway vehicles and in preparation for the new role to be played by the EU Agency for Railways (ERA). The revised provisions should come into effect as quickly as possible. Since certain points still need to be clarified with the EU, the originally planned date for entry into effect (16 June 2019) has been postponed.



Unlike EU regulations, the new Swiss provisions on authorisation of railway vehicles will not come into effect on 16 June 2019. However, these will be in effect as quickly as possible.
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Starting from 16 June 2019, the new EU Agency for Railways (ERA) will be responsible for authorisation of railway vehicles for cross-border traffic as well as for uniform certificates confirming the safety of railway operations. This development is part of the technical pillar of the EU's fourth railway package. With revision of the Railways Ordinance (RailO), Switzerland intends to align itself with EU legislation. The procedure for issuance of safety certificates and authorisation of railway vehicles travelling across national borders along standard-gauge railway tracks as well as material requirements will need to be adapted to bring them in line with those of the EU. This will ensure that Swiss railway manufacturers, railway inspection bodies and railway undertakings will continue to have equal access to the EU market and railway system.

New timetable

The draft of the revised Ordinance is now ready for implementation through the Federal Council. With Swiss preparation of national technical regulations and their publication in the ERA database, further important requirements have now been met. However, the procedures for cooperation between the ERA and the FOT have not yet been finalised. The FOT and the European Commission are currently working on a solution for Swiss integration. Only then will the Federal Council be able to decide on RailO amendments. Under these conditions, entry into effect on 16 June 2019 (i.e. when the new EU procedure commences) is not longer a realistic target despite the original plan being for Switzerland to take part in this development from the start.

The FOT is further committed to ensuring that the new RailO provisions come into effect as quickly as possible. It will actively post updates on progress. Until then, the FOT will continue to use the current procedure for authorisation of railway vehicles and the issuance of safety certificates.

Federal Office of Transport (FOT), June 2019