



BILATERAL

Technical barriers to trade

Today, Swiss industrial products can reach the EU market quicker and more easily because they now only have to be tested once – in the EU or in Switzerland. This facilitates exports for Swiss companies and ensures a greater choice of products in Switzerland.

The Agreement on dismantling technical barriers to trade (also known as the “Mutual Recognition Agreement”, MRA) allows the mutual recognition of conformity tests for most industrial products. So-called conformity tests ensure that a product complies with the applicable regulations. Only if all regulations are complied with – for example safety regulations for toys – can the product be offered on the market. This guarantees that it is safe and cannot put anyone at risk. Since 1992, Switzerland has to a major extent adapted its regulations to those of the EU.

The Agreement covers various product areas. These include machines, printers, medical products (such as heart pace-makers and prostheses), motor vehicles, tractors, measuring instruments, telecommunication devices and, since March 2008, building materials. Despite the Agreement, Switzerland can introduce stricter health protection regulations if it considers this necessary.

The mutual recognition of conformity tests for these products creates numerous advantages for the trade in goods: The declaration of conformity – for example for a compressor – carried out by a Swiss testing centre is simultaneously valid for the EU market (the testing centre must, however, be accredited in the Agreement). On the basis of this declaration of conformity, the manufacturer can attach the CE sign to his compressor and export the device to the EU. Naturally, this also applies in the opposite direction – for example, if a car has been tested in Germany, it can be imported into Switzerland without further tests.

The Agreement ensures that, when exporting, Swiss producers do not waste time and money on a second test, as was the case in the past. This enables them to place their products on the EU market more quickly. It also eliminates the double testing costs. As a result, the Swiss export industry can save between 200 and 500 million francs each year. And Swiss consumers benefit from a broader selection of products at lower prices.



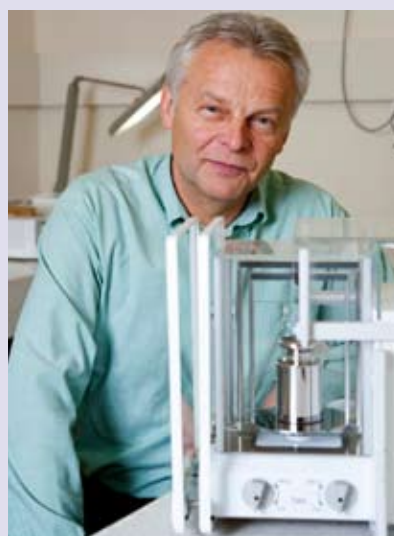
Key data

Date of signing: 21 June 1999 (in the framework of Bilaterals I)

Approval by the electorate: 21 May 2000 (in the framework of Bilaterals I)

Date effective: 1 June 2002

“ We produce scales in Switzerland, Germany and China. Thanks to the bilateral Agreement on dismantling technical trade barriers, we can have the scales tested in the respective country and then export them to all EU countries. The Agreement also helps us in the global marketplace: For example, the Federal Office of Metrology and Accreditation (METAS) has certified our production in China – a METAS official visited and tested the plant. The scales produced there can then be imported to the EU and Switzerland. In the past, we always had to involve a weights and measures officer when installing scales in a EU country. This cost money and annoyed customers. Today, this is no longer necessary and greatly facilitates our work. ”



Roland Nater, Head of Legal Metrology at a scale manufacturer