



European Policy & Open Markets

Without Bilateral Agreement III, the ***erosion of the MRA*** continues

25.11.2026

At a glance

- Starting in January 2027, Swiss mechanical engineering companies face new hurdles when exporting to the EU.
- The medtech industry illustrates the potential consequences of failing to update the MRA.
- The Bilateral Agreements III are crucial to preventing further erosion of bilateral market access.

The new EU Machinery Regulation will take effect in January 2027. The Agreement on Mutual Recognition of Conformity Assessments (MRA) between Switzerland and the EU has facilitated market access for machinery since 2002, but its chapter on machinery still refers to the old directive.

As long as the Bilateral Agreements III are not finalized, an update to the MRA—and thus its alignment with new EU law—is unlikely. Without an update to the MRA, Swiss companies could lose the existing simplifications for certain machines starting in January. For the affected companies, this means one thing above all: more effort required to export to the EU. What can still be handled easily through Switzerland today may require additional approval steps within the EU in the future. This creates new administrative hurdles, particularly for SMEs without a physical presence in the EU.

Medtech highlights the consequences of a MRA that has not been updated

This situation is not new. Since May 2021, the Swiss medtech industry has been feeling the effects of a non-updated MRA. Unrestricted access to the EU single market has been lost, resulting in new administrative requirements and additional costs. Medical devices are among the product categories covered by the MRA since 2002. Without an updated agreement, Swiss conformity assessments in this area will no longer be mutually recognized. For companies, this means they must go through the same procedures twice, spending both time and money in the process.

The example of WeroSwiss-Wernli AG illustrates just how significant the impact can be: The differing regulatory frameworks resulting from the loss of the MRA led to a doubling of the company's staffing and financial costs. To maintain direct access to the EU market, the company had to completely relocate its production and sales operations to Hungary. WeroSwiss-Wernli used to employ around 70 people in Switzerland; today, only five remain in administrative roles.

That is exactly why we need the Bilateral Agreements III

The medtech case and the looming hurdles for the mechanical engineering sector show that without updated agreements with the EU, bilateral market access is gradually eroding. The MRA is a central pillar of market access: It covers 20 product sectors and accounts for about three-quarters of Swiss industrial exports to the EU. This is precisely where the Bilateral Agreements III come into play. They lay the groundwork for the MRA to be updated again and ensure that Swiss companies can continue to participate in the European single market with as few barriers as possible in the future. The Bilateral Agreements III thus ensure predictability and legal certainty for the export sector and prevent unnecessary bureaucracy. This is particularly crucial for SMEs, which cannot afford additional structures in the EU or further export costs.



Monica Rubiolo
Head of International Relations, Member of the Extended Executive Board



Fabia Rancan
Project Associate International Relations

© economiesuisse | www.economiesuisse.ch