

# Audit of the implementation of measures related to railway access for the disabled

Federal Office of Transport

## Key facts

---

The mandate to implement railway access for the disabled in accordance with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) has been in place since 1 January 2004. This sets an implementation deadline of end-2023. Implementation in Switzerland is the responsibility of the infrastructure operators, of which there are around 35. The focus to date has been on full structural renovations of railway stations. The stations renovated in line with the law offer quality gains to all travellers.

Since 2004, total cumulative funding of CHF 3.3 billion has been made available for the implementation of structural modifications in railway stations up to the end of 2020. Funding from 2021 onwards for projects involving measures to improve disabled access<sup>1</sup>, in the order of several billion Swiss francs, is not yet guaranteed. In the meantime, some project areas have received funding under the authorised 2035 expansion step. It is hard to quantify the share of disabled access measures in these costs.

### **Implementing the DDA in railway stations will take longer than 2023**

In 2016, the Federal Office of Transport (FOT) launched a data survey on the state of implementation of the DDA as regards railway access, which showed that implementation by end-2023 is not achievable. Taking that as a starting point, the following targets have been set for that date: 75% of stations compliant with the DDA, 25% of stations offering alternative arrangements and 85% of passengers able to travel independently and with easy access. The DDA implementation concept drawn up by the infrastructure operators in 2018 showed that these targets will not quite be met either, even if sufficient funding is available.

The Swiss Federal Audit Office (SFAO) has recommended that the FOT, together with the infrastructure operators concerned, should set binding financial targets and timeframes for completion of accessible railways from 2024, and should communicate these regularly.

### **The proof of proportionality under the DDA is based on poorly documented project data**

The infrastructure operators ensure the legally required proof of proportionality by means of a standardised process using a special IT tool. The binding rules have been in force since 2016. In many of the case studies, the SFAO found that the figures in the tool did not match those in the project documentation. In the SFAO's view, therefore, the results of the proof of proportionality do not stand up to scrutiny.

The SFAO has recommended that the FOT, together with the infrastructure operators, should define appropriate measures to ensure that, for each station project, the qualitative balancing of interests under the DDA is performed properly to the extent possible and is documented in a comprehensible manner.

---

<sup>1</sup> Station modifications via service level agreements (SLAs) and reconstruction of hub stations via implementation agreements

### **Management of DDA-related measures is now part of the railway infrastructure controlling service level agreement**

In 2017, the FOT issued the "DDA planning instructions", aimed at enabling it to intervene in the infrastructure operators' implementation planning. This was to take place via three channels: the infrastructure operators' implementation concepts, the consistent balancing of interests for the proportionality assessment, and special controlling by the FOT. After the infrastructure operators had prepared their initial implementation concepts at the end of 2018, the FOT decided to link the introduced management tools more closely with existing tools.

This solution avoids duplications. However, it remains unclear why an integrated solution was not sought for the controlling right from the beginning.

**Original text in German**