



## Consequences of COVID-19 developments for the work of OTIF

Following the recommendations made by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the authorities in Switzerland, the Host State of the Intergovernmental Organisation for International Carriage by Rail (OTIF) and in light of the risks to health from the spread of COVID-19, several international meetings organised by OTIF have had to be postponed or cancelled.

In consultation with the Member States and in line with the rules of procedure of the Organisation's organs, the Secretariat has proposed that certain urgent and important decisions be adopted using the written procedure.

The Secretariat of OTIF is monitoring the situation closely and is doing everything possible to ensure that future international organisations can take place under conditions in which there are no health risks for the participants. In the event that the current health crisis continues, it is also looking at possible alternatives to holding meetings in Berne.

### The health safety of delegations and OTIF staff is a priority

Early on, at the start of the epidemic which has become a pandemic, discussions on the risks of the virus spreading and the consequences for the Organisation's activities resulted in a crisis management team being set up by the Secretary General, Mr Wolfgang Küpper. The decisions that have been taken have enabled services to continue in line with the WHO recommendations and those of the Swiss health authorities. All OTIF's staff have been able to work remotely in an effective manner thanks to the IT that is available. In addition, in March OTIF's staff stopped all official travel. A number of the Secretariat's internal meetings have been held remotely and it has also been possible to hold some external meetings remotely with the stakeholders.

As the health and safety of delegations and OTIF staff are a priority, the risks associated with delegates' travelling and the large number of participants at the meetings have been judged to be too high. As a result, the international meetings OTIF had planned in the second quarter of 2020 have been postponed or cancelled.

A calendar of OTIF's meetings can be found under this link:

[https://otif.org/fileadmin/new/5-Media/5A-News/2020/News\\_Table\\_4.6.2020\\_EN.PDF](https://otif.org/fileadmin/new/5-Media/5A-News/2020/News_Table_4.6.2020_EN.PDF)

### Solutions being studied and risk management

Together with the Member States, the Secretariat of OTIF is looking at various solutions for the Organisation's upcoming international meetings.

Uncertainty in terms of the spread of the virus means that the Organisation has to put in place the best conditions for holding meetings and think about new meeting formats for international meetings or even new consultation and decision-making systems for the future.

Several options are possible and the Secretariat's aim is to enable meetings that have been cancelled to be held before the end of 2020, whether remotely, partly remotely or with the physical presence of participants.

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