

Open letter to Commissioner Apostolos Tzitzikostas and the transport ministers of the Alpine countries

Schaan, Liechtenstein, 14 January 2026

Keep Tyrol's freight controls at the Brenner – for sustainable mobility management in the Alpine region!

The undersigned organisations, together with the International Commission for the Protection of the Alps (CIPRA), call on Commissioner Apostolos Tzitzikostas and the transport ministers of the eight Alpine countries to take decisive action against the increasing traffic burden in the Alpine region. In doing so, the special geographical and ecological conditions of the Alps must be taken into account: the Alpine region is under pressure owing to climate threats, high population density in the main valleys and increased air pollution caused by its mountainous topography. The current legal dispute between Italy and Austria before the European Court of Justice (ECJ) is therefore of fundamental importance.

In 2024, Italy filed a lawsuit against Tyrol's measures to regulate transalpine freight traffic. The ECJ's decision, due in 2026, will inevitably set a benchmark for other Alpine transit routes. It must not become a precedent for dismantling the existing achievements in human and environmentally friendly transport management, which were only achieved after years of debate.

In accordance with the Alpine Convention, it is essential to reduce pollution to a tolerable level for residents and visitors alike, as well as for animals, plants and their habitats.¹ In fact, air quality throughout the Alpine region is so poor in terms of particulate matter concentration that WHO limits are being exceeded.²

In order to achieve a level of traffic that is not harmful to people or nature, a coordinated transport policy must be pursued that promotes environmentally friendly and resource-efficient modes of transport, increases the effectiveness and efficiency of transport

¹ See, for example, Articles 3, 7 and 14 of the Transport Protocol, Article 4 of the Nature Conservation Protocol and Article 13 of the Tourism Protocol

² According to the WHO26, diesel exhaust has now been proven to be carcinogenic. In addition, the road circulation of vehicles contributes to this via the fine and coarse dust released by abrasion of brakes and tyres and by the resuspension of road dust (see:

www.alpconv.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications/RSA/RSA_8_EN_web.pdf)



systems, and reduces traffic volumes in accordance with the international agreements of the Transport Protocol of the Alpine Convention.³

Traffic management as a central instrument

Italy's lawsuit against Austria, however, aims to overturn the traffic management measures in place in Tyrol on the grounds that they violate the principle of free movement of goods guaranteed under EU law. Should Italy be successful, sensible and effective traffic management instruments for heavy goods vehicles, such as the night⁴ and weekend driving ban⁵, the sectoral driving ban⁶, the winter driving ban⁷ and the quota system for lorries on the Brenner motorway A12⁸, would be abolished. These measures previously taken by Austria are essential in order at least to partially curb climate-damaging, environmentally harmful and inefficient detour traffic. They serve to protect the health and lives of people and nature.

A removal of the steering measures by the ECJ in favour of unrestricted movement of goods in Europe would have unacceptable consequences for the regions along the Brenner axis and send a far-reaching signal for transalpine road routes on all Alpine transit routes. Like the Brenner corridor, all of these corridors are part of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T).

The signatory organisations warn that, if the ECJ overturns the Tyrolean measures, there could be a domino effect. Protective measures for people and the environment on other Alpine transit routes could also be lifted or fail to be introduced in future. Road freight transport would then be given priority, putting more environmentally friendly modes of transport such as rail at a disadvantage.

³ Article 1(1)(a) of the Transport Protocol states: ...The Contracting Parties undertake to pursue a sustainable transport policy which (a) reduces pollution and risks in the area of internal and transalpine transport to a level that is tolerable for humans, animals and plants, as well as their habitats, including through an increased shift of transport, in particular freight transport, to rail, primarily through the creation of appropriate infrastructure and market-based incentives; see also Art. 7, Art. 10(1)(c) Transport Protocol.

⁴ Night-time driving ban: Ban on lorries with a gross weight of over 7.5 tonnes between 1 May and 31 October: weekdays from 10 p.m. to 5 a.m., Sundays and public holidays from 11 p.m. to 5 a.m., and between 1 November and 30 April: weekdays from 8 p.m. to 5 a.m., Sundays and public holidays from 11 p.m. to 5 a.m.

⁵ Weekend driving ban: Driving ban for heavy goods vehicles weighing more than 3.5 tonnes on Saturdays from 3 p.m. to midnight and on Sundays and public holidays from midnight to 10 p.m.

⁶ Sectoral driving ban: Ban on the transport of certain goods by heavy goods vehicles on the A12 motorway between Langkampfen and Ampass.

⁷ Winter driving ban: In winter, in addition to the weekend driving ban, there is a driving ban for heavy goods vehicles in Tyrol from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m.

⁸ In order to regulate traffic flow, access to the A12 motorway will be limited to 300 lorries per hour on certain days.



The signatory organisations see the following urgent need for action to reduce traffic in the Alpine region in order to protect people and nature⁹:

COMMON OBJECTIVES

- Climate neutrality by 2050: as part of Europe-wide efforts, CO₂ emissions from all transalpine transport (rail and road) must be reduced to zero in order to achieve climate neutrality by 2050 at the latest.
- Common transport policy in the Alpine region: In addition, the European Union and the governments of the Alpine countries are called upon to develop a common, Alpine-wide transport policy in line with the Alpine Convention and the Simplon Alliance Action Plan, which will accelerate the reduction of diversionary traffic and the effective shift of traffic to rail, as well as enable capacity management on Alpine transit routes.
- Ensuring health and quality of life: Noise and particulate matter pollution from rail and road traffic must be significantly reduced. Compliance with EU and WHO limits (NO_x, particulate matter, noise, etc.) on transit routes and in Alpine settlement areas must be ensured under all circumstances in order to protect both travellers and the population living in the Alps.

INTRODUCTION OF PAN-EUROPEAN CONTROL INSTRUMENTS

Instead of completely opening up the Alpine transit routes – like the Brenner corridor – to road freight traffic, additional measures are urgently needed to effectively limit the steadily increasing volume of passenger and lorry traffic. There are already sufficient tried-and-tested, feasible concepts available to achieve real solutions:

- The **Alpine Crossing Exchange**: a market-based auction of lorry slots on all Alpine transit routes would lead to a balanced distribution of traffic volumes in line with existing capacities. This would even allow road and rail capacities to be managed in combination.
- A **slot system on highways**: The approach proposed in South Tyrol, Tyrol and Bavaria leads to a regulation of truck volumes on the respective transit axes. Such a system carries the risk of jeopardising existing control measures designed to protect people and nature. Under no circumstances should such a slot system lead to the maximisation of capacity on the Brenner corridor through the unconditional optimisation of transalpine transport infrastructure.

The introduction of an Alpine Crossing Exchange should enable uniform and user-based cost adjustment between the various transalpine routes, thereby effectively reducing route-related detours, which have previously been encouraged by differing toll and

⁹ See CIPRA's comprehensive transport and mobility policy: www.cipra.org/en/positions/transport-and-mobility-in-the-alps



pricing systems. It is of fundamental importance for all measures that the number of possible crossings is not maximised, but rather that a quota is set that takes into account the load limits of the regions concerned.

STRENGTHENING EXISTING TRANSPORT POLICY FRAMEWORK CONDITIONS

In addition to regulatory instruments, the following measures should be strengthened to ensure the consistent shift of freight transport:

- Dynamic increases in road tolls for lorries and delivery vans to create fair competition between road and rail and to charge external costs (air pollution, noise, infrastructure) according to the polluter-pays principle.
- Increased controls on road freight transport to improve road safety and ensure compliance with working conditions for drivers.
- Harmonisation of cross-border operating and licensing rules to make rail freight transport more reliable and faster.
- Modernisation of the rail network to expand capacity and eliminate bottlenecks: no expansion of road capacity.
- Effective operationalisation of the Brenner Base Tunnel for freight transport, including the construction of the necessary access routes and terminals.
- Abolition of diesel subsidies.

Only with a strong rail network can traffic be effectively shifted, transit traffic made climate-friendly and the quality of life of the Alpine population protected.

Keeping freight control measures at the Brenner and implementing sustainable road and rail traffic management across Alpine transit routes are essential for ensuring environmentally and climate-friendly transit while protecting both people and nature!

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