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Media release: Winter Olympics – the Alps are more than just a playground

The Alps: More than just a playground

After two decades of being staged on other continents, the Olympic Games are returning to the Alps in 2026 with a commitment to “sustainable games” – a promise that has already been broken several times in the run-up to the event. In its new position paper, CIPRA calls for comprehensive reforms from both the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the host countries.

In February 2026, Milan and Cortina will host the next Winter Olympics in the Alpine region, followed in 2030 by the French Alps. But referendums in recent years have shown one thing above all: large sections of the population are no longer willing to pay the social and ecological price for this. Uwe Roth, President of CIPRA International, says: “Despite the IOC’s promises of reform and its sustainability strategy, the preparations for Milan-Cortina 2026 show once again that the current Olympic model is anything but sustainable”. The competitions are scattered across many locations, with a large part of the mobility budget being spent on road construction. Against the will of the local population, a €120 million bobsleigh track was built in Cortina d’Ampezzo, while more than half of all construction projects have not faced environmental impact assessments – despite the fact that the IOC’s sustainability strategy requires the use of existing infrastructure.

Calls for genuine reform and responsibility

According to CIPRA’s new position paper, “the Alps are a sensitive natural and cultural area that is unsuitable for the Winter Olympics in their current form”. Despite ambitious wording in the Olympic Agenda 2020 and 2020+5, there have been no concrete changes in planning or implementation. CIPRA criticises the fact that the IOC is still not taking any substantial steps towards sustainable Games, and that contracts with the host cities undermine democratic processes. Infrastructure projects such as the new bobsleigh track in Cortina or the planned competitions in Nice contradict the principle of climate adaptation and highlight the lack of environmental and financial responsibility. CIPRA demands: no new buildings, clear ecological limits, full transparency in planning and budgeting – and a sustainable legacy that benefits both the people in the host regions and nature.



CIPRA's new position paper on the Olympics: <https://www.cipra.org/en/positions/winter-olympics-the-alps-are-more-than-just-a-playground>

This release and print-ready photographs are available for downloading from <https://www.cipra.org/en/media-releases>

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CIPRA, for a good life in the Alps

CIPRA, the International Commission for the Protection of the Alps, is a non-profit, non-governmental umbrella organisation with representatives in seven Alpine countries and a member network of over 100 associations. CIPRA works on a scientific basis with diverse communication, political education and in practical projects for sustainable development. It is committed to the preservation of the natural and cultural heritage, the strengthening of regional diversity and joint solutions to cross-border challenges in the Alpine region. www.cipra.org