



Schaan, 27 August 2025

Media release on “Renewable energies: Alpine Convention becomes decisive – CIPRA calls for nature-friendly implementation of RED III”

Renewable energies: Alpine Convention becomes decisive

The EU wishes to accelerate the expansion of renewable energies. In the Alps, however, this must not come at the expense of sensitive natural areas. CIPRA International has now achieved two important clarifications through legal action: as a treaty under international law, the Alpine Convention takes precedence over secondary European Union law – that is, EU regulations and EU directives; consequently, its provisions must also be complied with when implementing the Renewable Energy Directive (RED III).

Since 2023, the Compliance Committee of the Alpine Convention has been investigating whether the RED III Directive violates the objectives of the international treaty for the protection of the Alps (the Alpine Convention). Now available, the result is of fundamental importance, as stated by the EU Commission to the Alpine Convention during the proceedings: EU institutions are bound by agreements concluded by the EU, meaning that these agreements take precedence over secondary Union law.

The committee’s report also states that it is the responsibility of those EU Member States in the Alpine region to comply with the provisions of the Alpine Convention when implementing RED III. “RED III must not lead to the undermining of existing environmental and nature conservation measures. Member states have room for manoeuvre – and they must use it to protect the Alps consistently in accordance with the Alpine Convention”, explains Paul Kuncio, Executive Director of CIPRA Austria who, as a lawyer, also coordinates the legal service office Alpine Convention by CIPRA Austria. This approach includes, for example, not designating fast-track areas for renewable energies in protected areas, moors or wetlands. The construction of new hydropower plants in ecologically sensitive Alpine regions must also be ruled out.



The duty of Member States

EU Member States that are also signatories to the Alpine Convention may exempt certain energy sources (e.g. hydropower or biomass) from priority regulations, or overrule the “overriding public interest” for the construction of renewable energy production facilities in areas of particular sensitivity, thus maintaining the protection of the latter. CIPRA therefore calls for implementation in accordance with the Convention:

- no priority areas for renewable energies in protected areas, moors or wetlands
- suspension of the “overriding public interest” in particularly sensitive natural areas
- no exemptions from the screening of wind and solar projects to assess their potential significant environmental impacts
- a clear definition of the requirements of environmental impact assessments within the meaning of the Alpine Convention
- priority construction of new energy production facilities on already sealed or built-up areas.

“The Alpine Convention is not an obstacle to the energy transition – it is a compass for its nature-friendly implementation”, emphasises Kaspar Schuler, Executive Director of CIPRA International. “It is important that countries are now guided by this compass.”

The results of the procedure are particularly relevant given that EU Member States must report their acceleration areas for renewable energy production by February 2026. CIPRA calls on environmental organisations and committed citizens in particular to actively participate in national consultations.

(2,808 characters including spaces)

This press release and printable press photos are available for download at:

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CIPRA – for a good life in the Alps

The International Commission for the Protection of the Alps (CIPRA) is a non-governmental umbrella organisation with representatives in seven Alpine countries and a network of over 100 member associations. CIPRA works on a scientific basis, using a variety of communication tools, political education and practical projects to promote sustainable development. It is committed to preserving the natural and cultural heritage, strengthening regional diversity and finding joint solutions to cross-border challenges in the Alpine region. (554 characters including spaces)

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