



European Rail  
Infrastructure Managers



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# Fact Sheet



## ”The Alpine Convention”



## Fact sheet - Alpine Convention

The Alpine Convention is a framework agreement for the protection and sustainable development of the Alpine region.

It was signed on 7 November 1991 in Salzburg (Austria) and entered into force on 6 March, 1995. Its Contracting Parties are Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Slovenia, Monaco and the EU. The Convention is currently chaired by Austria, by Secretary General Mr. Marco Onida from Italy.



The Convention consists of the following 9 Protocols:

1. Spatial planning and sustainable development
2. Conservation of nature and landscape
3. Mountain farming
4. Mountain forests
5. Tourism
6. Soil protection
7. Energy
- 8. Transport**
9. Dispute settlement

Each Protocol is an independent agreement in international law and must also be ratified individually. All Contracting Parties have ratified the *Framework Agreement* for the Alpine Convention. Implementation of the 9 Protocols has proven to be more difficult. Since 2002 the focus of international cooperation within the context of the Alpine Convention is therefore on ratifying the protocols. They are applicable to those Contracting Parties which have ratified, accepted or approved them. In order for a Protocol to come into force at least three ratifications, acceptances or approvals are necessary.

## **The “Transport Protocol”**

### *Aim:*

To ensure the rational, safe and coordinated development of transport in the context of an integrated network. This should reduce the volume of and dangers posed by intra-Alpine and trans-Alpine traffic.

### *General policy objectives:*

- Reduce the overall volume of transport (separating the development of traffic from economic growth);
- Use existing transport systems and infrastructure optimally;
- Encourage the *development of inter-modal traffic*. Carriers, means and types of transport will be coordinated so as to promote inter-modal use;
- Favor a transfer to the most environmentally friendly means of transport (people and freight) in new land lay-out projects;
- Tax and charge the users of the transport networks according to the external and infrastructural costs caused by them. This promotes the use of more environmentally friendly systems and means of transport;
- Monitor the supply and use of transport infrastructures as well as setting environmental aims, standards and indicators.

### *Sector-specific objectives:*

- Rail network systems will be improved by building and developing the main trans-Alpine lines (axes), including nodes and terminal facilities. Furthermore, management will be optimised and the network upgraded. *Long distance freight transport must make use of rail networks* and the costing will be harmonised throughout.
- Road transport: no major trans-Alpine roadways will be built, without exception. Major communication roadways for intra-Alpine transport will have to be carefully considered and allowed only on certain conditions.
- Air traffic acoustic and environmental pollution will be reduced as far as possible.
- Waterways: transport on waterways will be developed further.

*Implementation schedule of the Transport Protocol*

	A	CH	D	F	FL	I	MC	SLO	EU
signed	31.10.00	31.10.00	31.10.98	31.10.00	31.10.00	31.10.00	31.10.00	06.08.02	12.12.06
ratified	14.08.02		12.07.02	12.05.05	18.04.02			28.01.04	
deposit ed			18.09.02		11.06.02				
entry into force	18.12.02		18.12.02	11.10.05	18.12.02			28.04.04	

As can be seen, the Transport Protocol was signed, but not yet ratified by all Members. The EU was the last to sign on 12 December 2006. The Protocol has come into force in the 5 countries that have ratified it, namely Austria, Germany, France, Slovenia and Liechtenstein.

**Multi-annual Work Programme 2005-2010:**

The Alpine Conference, where ministers of the contracting parties formally meet every 2 years, has some key issues for its joint work in order to ensure a strengthened implementation over the next six years with a particular view to sustainability under the heading "Mobility, accessibility, and transit traffic." These include:

- **Encouraging the relocation of traffic from roads to railways** and strengthening combined transport.
- Infrastructures and logistics concepts for *easing the burden of transit traffic*.
- **Study to improve cross-alpine rail corridors** and to transfer the method of the Brenner plan of action and the measures in the Gotthard area to other transit corridors. This study has shown that it is possible, on the basis of relevant agreements concluded between all parties involved in freight transport concerning operational, technical and organisational measures and their implementation in ambitious but realistic steps, to achieve significant improvements of the service offer on the trans-Alpine rail corridors without having to wait for major tunnel solutions.
- Support the development of transport-specific calculation systems that reflect the reality of costs, and **favour the use of the most environment-friendly means of transport**.
- Intensify co-operation with a view to improving connections in public transport within the Alps and beyond, and the public transport offers for tourists.

## Comments by the EIM Secretariat:

- *IMs should develop a “strategic vision” on clean transport*  
Further effort should be made by developing transport to contribute to sustainable economic development. A strategic vision needs to be incorporated where all stakeholders in the railways arena cooperate to make transport more environmentally friendly. EIM (European Rail Infrastructure Managers) should play a leading role in developing this vision.
  
- *Modal shift to rail instead of co-modality*  
In accordance with the long-term agenda of the Alpine Convention, EIM firmly believes that the further promotion of rail transport vis-à-vis road would make a vital contribution to saving the Alpine environment. T&E (*Transport and Environment*) argues that in order to protect the Alpine region, incentives have to be created to use railways not only for the alpine crossing, but from origin to destination. The EU, by finally signing the Transport Protocol and thus giving a commitment to **building no new motorways** through the Alps, supports a policy of sustainable transport. The modal-shift approach is in line with the objectives that the Commission set in its 2001 White Paper *and* its review in 2006. EIM previously warned against moving away from the modal shift in favour of co-modality as this will hinder the move towards more environmentally friendly modes of transport such as rail<sup>1</sup>.
  
- *Smart charging to protect the environment*  
The Commission is increasingly aware of the need for viable **transport charging regimes**. By 2008, the Commission will present a model for infrastructure “smart” charging based on the assessment of all external costs accompanied by an impact analysis of the internalisation of external costs for all modes of transport. In order for transport charging to bring about the modal shift in the Alpine area, it is important that existing taxing- and charging systems, such as the kilometre-tax in Switzerland, are reinforced and that other members implement such systems as well. Ideally, the charging system should provide an incentive for users of the transport network so that they choose the most environmental friendly mode of transport.

The current ***Eurovignette Directive (2006/38)***, allows Member States to levy so-called “mark-ups” in mountainous areas. These may be added to the tolls of specific road sections the use of which by vehicles is the cause of significant environmental damage. However, the additional revenues must be used for a priority TEN-T project in the same corridor. For cross-border priority projects the mark-up may be 25% at most. For other priority projects it can be a maximum of 15%. EIM firmly believes that these mark-ups should be applied to encourage environmental healthy transport and to add to the existing possibilities for financing TEN-T projects in mountainous regions.

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<sup>1</sup> When optimizing the specific potentials of the individual transport modes, “rebalancing transport models” (an aim in the Review of the White Paper) can no longer be expected.

- *Ratification Protocol essential to achieve results*

Not all signatory countries of the Alpine Convention have implemented the Transport Protocol<sup>2</sup>. In order for it to have a real impact on the sustainable development of the Alpine region, this is a matter of great importance. EIM therefore calls for an increased effort to ratify the Protocol. There is no need for EIM members to await ratification by the EU, since the Protocol will take force immediately once ratified by an individual member of the Convention.

EIM will carry out evaluations and report on periodic developments of the national actions to highlight the effect and implications for the main elements of the Transport Protocol. Furthermore, the EU institutions will be encouraged to ratify the Transport Protocol.

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<sup>2</sup> In this respect, the Swiss non-ratification seems to contrast with its clear ambitions to protect the Alps from pollution. However, Switzerland has already included provisions of the Protocol in its Constitution, aiming at a modal shift road-rail, and to refrain from building new roads in the Alps. The Alpine Convention implementation issue is relevant and will be included in the current discussion in Switzerland on its spatial policy. It is to be hoped that adding to existing provisions in national legislation, all countries including the EU, will ratify the Transport Protocol soon.