

Transalpine pipeline and SIOT projects: a summary

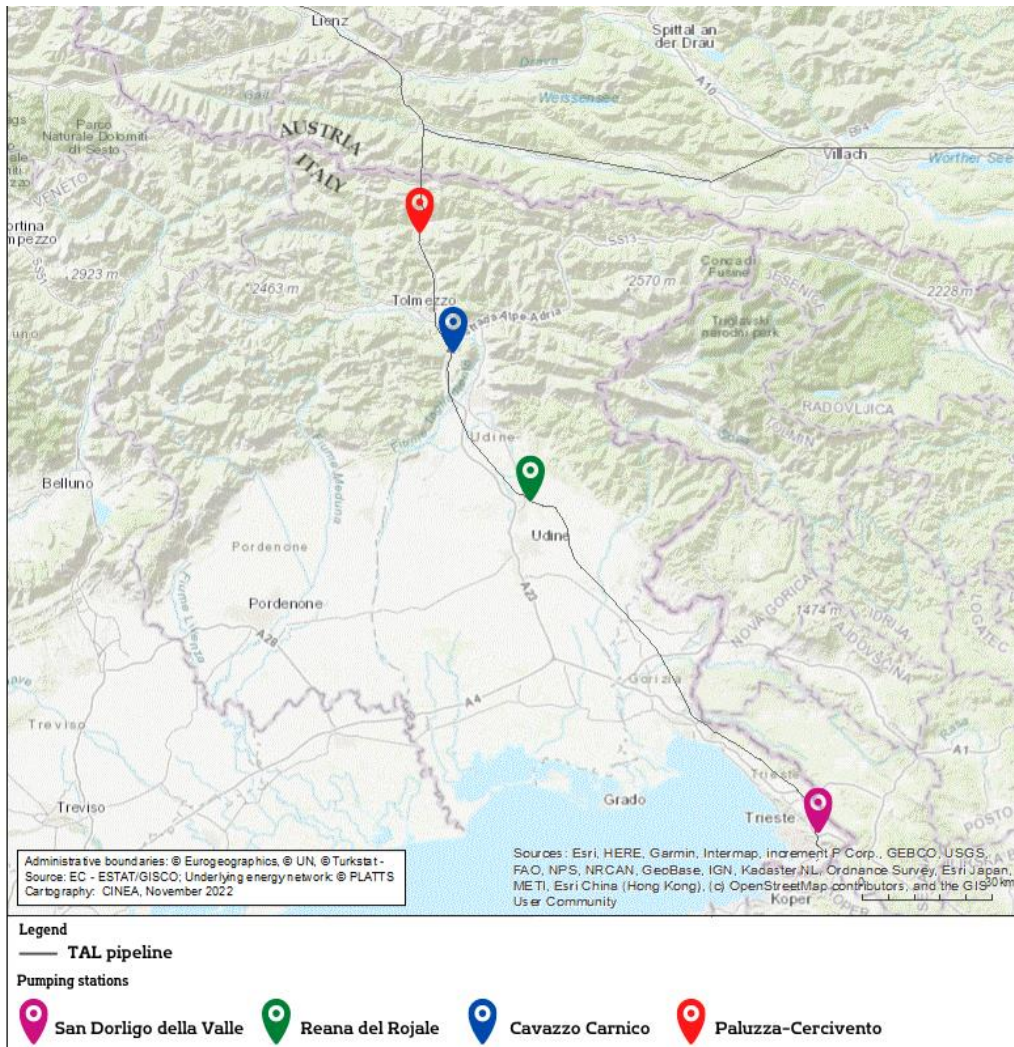
THE TRANSALPINE PIPELINE AND SIOT PROJECTS

Since 1967, the transalpine oil pipeline is the biggest one in terms of transported volume (in average, 43 million tons of crude oil per year) in Europe. Starting from the Port of Trieste (IT) to Austria and Germany, the pipeline is a property of the Group TAL which shareholders are the biggest oil companies such as OMV, Shell, ENI, BP (*data from 2018, [source](#)*). The TAL group is divided into three companies corresponding to each country the pipeline passes through. The Italian section is therefore managed by Società Italiana per l'Oleodotto Transalpino (IT).



1. Transalpine pipeline route (source: [TAL-oil website](#))

Along the Italian section of the pipeline, there are four pumping stations located in the municipalities of San Dorligo della Valle, Reana del Rojale, Cavazzo Carnico and Paluzza-Cercivento. These stations serve to push crude oil into the pipeline. Since the existence of the pipeline, they have been supplied with electricity drawn from the national grid which relies by more than 30% on renewable energy (the Paluzza-Cercivento pumping station relies by 100% on renewable energy).



2. Transalpine pipeline route - Italian section and pumping stations

SIOT intends to build for each pumping station a cogeneration plant (henceforth the “SIOT Projects”) based on methane combustion with two objectives:

- Producing electricity to make the station energy self-sufficient;
- Producing heat to make more fluid the crude oil and increase the volume transported.

In December 2021, SIOT submitted one project for each pumping station to the FVG Region for approval through a simplified procedure. The FVG Region approved the four projects, despite the negative opinions expressed by the municipalities and stakeholders, as well as the strong contradiction of the affected population. The municipality of Paluzza requested a technical opinion from the [FVG Agency for Energy \(APE\)](#). The technical opinion published in July 2022 brought the inconsistencies of the project to light.

INCONSISTENCIES

1. Increase in energy consumption

The SIOT-TAL predicted energy savings of 10%, which could have conferred the status of a High Yield Cogeneration plant (CAR). This status would then enable SIOT to benefit from the so-called “white

certificates” and the related public financial contribution. According to the APE FVG, there would not be an energy saving but even a 3% increase in energy consumption. Each cogeneration plant, considering 8,000 operating hours per year, will consume 14 million cubic metres of methane, as much as 45000 domestic heat generators!!!

2. Pollution

No Environmental Impact Assessment of the SIOT projects has been made because, according to SIOT documentation, the values of pollutant emissions are below the threshold set by the Italian law D.Lgs.152/2006. However, SIOT has never made public the technical documentation related to pollutant emissions, even when stakeholders explicitly asked for.

Regarding the **air pollution** and based on the little documentation provided by SIOT to the FVG region, APE FVG has estimated that pollutant emissions, for each pump station and annually, will be approximately:

- 28 000 tons of CO₂, contribute to the climate change;
- 79 tons of CO, contribute to the acidification of air, soil and waterways and to the climate change;
- 30 tons of SO_x, fine particles dangerous for health (smog) and damaging vegetation.

This is inconsistent with the targets for reducing carbon emissions set at 55% at European level and 60% in Italy by 2030. Moreover, it should be noted that the current electricity withdrawal from the national grid compared to the methane-fuelled plant proposed by SIOT foresees emission savings of almost 57%. While northern Italy is struggling with air pollution and its consequences on human health, SIOT will worsen pollutant emissions even in previously unspoiled natural territories.

The **noise pollution** is also a point that has not been addressed by SIOT while future power plants will be, in some cases, within 200 meters of homes. Residents near the pumping stations are already complaining about the constant noise from these stations. What about a cogeneration plant? More and more studies have shown the negative impact of noise pollution on health: according to the WHO, it is the second biggest environmental cause of health problems after air pollution.

The **landscape pollution** caused by the construction of these power plants is not to be neglected when natural areas with a high tourist potential are concerned. The cogeneration plant will include two chimneys of 15 and 16 meters in height. This may damage the tourism potential and thus, the economic fabric of these communities already extremely weakened.

THE OPPOSITION: CITIZENS, ASSOCIATIONS & MUNICIPALITIES

As the SIOT project became public and its inconsistencies were revealed, several citizens joined together in committees in support of their local representative to say no to the project:

- Committee “Alto Bût” for the Paluzza plant;
- Committees “Salvaguardiamo il Lago”, “Tutela Acqua Bacino Montano del Tagliamento” and “Pro Lago Tre Comuni” for the Cavazzo Carnico plant.

Regional and national associations also joined the citizen movements such as the environmental association [Legambiente](#), the citizens' rights association [Movimento Difesa Del Cittadino](#) and the youth association Fridays for Future.

These associations and committees organised several information sessions with the citizens of the territories concerned and beyond. They also questioned the FVG Region and SIOT several times to get more information about these projects. To no avail.

In August 2022, the regional councillor Mr Moretuzzo, who is opposed to the project, proposed to the council that a round table be held with SIOT and the stakeholders. Voted on by the council, the regional representative Mr Scoccimarro did organise this meeting. Mr Scoccimarro failed to provide answers to the stakeholders' questions, repeating that he "followed the rules". As far as SIOT is concerned, the company attacked the calculations of the APE FVG. The only result of this round table was the convening of a second technical round table between SIOT and the EPA where no agreement has been found.

In parallel, on the legal field, the municipality of Cavazzo Carnico was the first to request an appeal to the regional administrative court. This was refused on the grounds of "lack of argumentation during the procedure", explaining that the municipality of Cavazzo Carnico had not properly presented its arguments against the project all along the procedure (started in March 2022 and finished two months later with the Conference of Services – two months left to understand and study an industrial project).

As a result, the municipality of Paluzza, supported by the various citizens' movements, organised a meeting with the lawyer Roger Cox. [Lawyer Roger Cox won a case against SHELL](#) in which the judge ordered the leading energy company to reduce its carbon emissions by 45% by 2030. The aim of the meeting was to define the strategy for bringing a new appeal to the regional administrative court, this time for the Paluzza plant. The appeal was then requested by the Municipality of Paluzza (request n. 118 of 2023).

The citizens' movements also decided to request appeals against the SIOT projects to the regional administrative court. Led by the association Legambiente and with the financial support of citizens who collected over EUR 14'000 to support the legal costs and over 3000 signature against the SIOT projects in a public campaign, a second appeal was requested on 15.04.2023 (request n. 134 of 2023) by Legambiente and on 17.05.2023 by Movimento per la Difesa del Cittadino

FOUR PROJECTS... FOR ONE OUTCOME !

SIOT's objective is to improve the efficiency of the pipeline. However, SIOT submitted not ONE project but four different projects. This allowed them to go through a simple and faster procedure with the FVG region, to divide the negative consequences of their project by 4, to not be subject to an environmental impact assessment, which are mandatory by EU legislation and to divide the possible opposition to the project. We end up talking about "four small, very local projects that only concern small communities" when the real project and its impact actually concerns a whole region, or even a country, or even more?

In fact one of the main legal arguments which have been brought forward by the appellants is that division to four different projects was only made to avoid the environmental impact assessment and is thus unlawful, since all the four gas plants are dedicated to one single goal concerning one infrastructure and can thus not be seen as four independent projects.

Other arguments which have been brought forward in the appeals are:

- The SIOT projects are in contradiction to the Alpine Convention. The Alpine Convention is an international territorial treaty for the sustainable development of the Alps. The objective of the treaty is to protect the natural environment of the Alps while promoting its

development. This Framework Convention involves the European Union and eight states (Austria, Germany, France, Italy, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Slovenia, and Switzerland).

- The SIOT projects especially the one Paluzza is close to 3 important Natura 2000 sites, which are protected by EU birds and habitat directive, [Natura 2000](#) is a network of core breeding and resting sites for rare and threatened species, and some rare natural habitat types, the directive foresees a mandatory environmental impact assessment for industrial projects located near to the Natura 2000 sites. SIOT projects were not subjected to any environmental impact assessment.