Marco Polo II programme: financial assistance to improve the environmental performance of the freight transport system

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The Committee on Transport and Tourism adopted the report drawn up by Ulrich STOCKMANN (PES, DE), amending, under the first reading of codecision procedure, the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EC) No 1692/2006 establishing the second 'Marco Polo' programme for the granting of Community financial assistance to improve the environmental performance of the freight transport system ('Marco Polo II').

The main amendments are as follows:

Online helpdesk: submissions shall contain all the information necessary to enable the Commission to make its selection. If required, the Commission shall provide assistance to applicants to facilitate their application process, for instance by way of an online helpdesk.

Marco Polo III: the Commission shall present a Communication (rather than an evaluation report) on the results achieved by the Marco Polo Programme for the period 2003-2010. It shall do so before drawing up a proposal for a third Marco Polo Programme and shall take account of the Communication's findings when drawing up the proposal (rather than by 30 June 2011 as the Commission had proposed.)

Communication: the Communication should deal with the following:

- the impact of Regulation amending Regulation (EC) No 1692/2006 establishing the second "Marco Polo" programme for the granting of Community financial assistance to improve the environmental performance of the freight transport system ("Marco Polo II");
- the experience of the Executive Agency for Competition and Innovation with programme management;
- the need to differentiate between transport modes in the conditions for funding, on the basis of safety, environmental performance and energy efficiency;
- the effectiveness of Traffic Avoidance Actions;
- the need to set up demand-driven assistance at the application stage, taking into account the needs of small and micro transport companies;
- the recognition of economic recession as an exceptional reason for extending the duration of projects;
- product-specific lowering of eligibility thresholds;
- the possibility of indicating the targets for minimum funding thresholds for proposed projects in terms of energy efficiency and environmental benefits in addition to tonne-kilometres shifted;
- the appropriateness of including the transport unit in the definition of the term "freight";
- the availability of complete yearly overviews of projects which have been co-financed;
- the possibility of ensuring consistency between the Marco Polo Programme, the Logistics Action Plan and the TEN-T programme by taking the appropriate measures in order to coordinate the allocation of community funds, in particular for Motorways of the Sea;
- the possibility of making costs incurred in a third country eligible if promoted by undertakings from a Member State;

- the need to take into account the specific characteristics of the inland waterway sector and its small- and medium sized enterprises, for example by way of a dedicated programme for the inland waterway sector;
- the possibility of extending the programme to the neighbouring countries;
- the possibility of further adapting the programme to the insular and archipelagic Member States.

Eligible costs: the eligible costs related to ancillary infrastructure shall not be higher than 20% (rather than 10%) of the total eligible costs for the project.

Contract value threshold: value thresholds for motorways of the sea and modal shift are amended.