

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

2008/0239(COD) - 23/04/2009 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 581 votes to 7, with 5 abstentions, a legislative resolution amending, under the first reading of the 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 amendments are the result of a compromise negotiated with the Council.

The main amendments are as follows:

Submission of actions: actions shall be submitted to the Commission in accordance with the detailed rules on the submission and selection procedure. 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**.

The Commission shall, after having informed the committee referred to in the regulation, adopt the decision to grant financial assistance.

Communication: the Commission shall present to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions a Communication 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. The Communication shall in particular deal with the following:

- the impact of the future 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;
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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 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% of the total eligible costs for the project.

Motorways of the sea: the minimum indicative subsidy threshold per motorways of the sea action shall be 200 million tonne-kilometres, to be implemented over the entire life of the subsidy agreement.

Modal shift: the minimum indicative subsidy threshold per modal shift action shall be 60 million tonne-kilometres or its volumetric equivalent of modal shift per year, to be implemented over the entire life of the subsidy agreement. Modal shift actions aiming at implementing a shift to inland waterways will be subject to a special threshold of 13 million tonne-kilometres or its volumetric equivalent of modal shift per year.