

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

2008/0239(COD) - 16/09/2009 - Final act

PURPOSE: to amend Regulation (EC) 1692/2006 establishing Marco Polo II in order to facilitate participation by small and micro enterprises and simplify the Programme's implementation and administrative procedures.

LEGISLATIVE ACT: Regulation (EC) No 923/2009 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).

CONTENT: the Council adopted this Regulation amending Regulation (EC) 1692/2006 on the EU's Marco Polo II programme for the granting of Community financial assistance to improve the environmental performance of the freight transport system, following an agreement reached with the European Parliament in first reading. The amendment to the Marco Polo II programme is intended to increase its effectiveness in terms of shifting cargo from road transport to transport by sea, inland waterway and rail. The new Regulation addresses problems encountered under the previous regulation in that a substantial part of the allocated budget has not been used.

Measures to facilitate the participation of small enterprises and micro-enterprises: the participation by small and micro enterprises in the Programme will be increased by allowing single undertakings to apply for funding and by lowering the eligibility thresholds for proposals submitted by inland waterway transport enterprises.

Lowering the action eligibility thresholds: the eligibility thresholds for proposals for funding will be lowered and expressed in terms of yearly tonne-kilometres shifted, except for common learning actions. Those thresholds will be computed over the entire implementation period of the actions referred to in the Annex, without setting any yearly rate of implementation. There is no further need for a specific threshold applying to traffic avoidance actions, and a minimum duration is established for this kind of action, catalyst actions and Motorways of the Sea actions.

Increasing the funding intensity: the funding intensity is increased by introducing a definition for 'freight', in order to include the transport element in the calculation of the modal shift, and allowing exceptional extensions of the maximum duration for actions with start-up delays. The update of the funding intensity from EUR 1 to EUR 2 following the procedure set out in Annex I to Regulation (EC) No 1692/2006 is reflected in the text of that Annex as amended.

Simplifying the programme's implementation and administrative procedures: in order to simplify the implementation of the Programme, Annex II to Regulation (EC) No 1692/2006 on funding conditions for ancillary infrastructure is deleted. Furthermore the committee procedure for the yearly selection of actions to be funded is eliminated. A more detailed link between the Programme and the Trans-European Transport Network setting out the framework for the Motorways of the Sea is established and the environmental considerations extended to include the whole external costs of the actions.

The Commission will present a Communication on the results achieved by the Marco Polo Programmes 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 that proposal.

The Communication shall in particular deal with the following:

- the impact of this Regulation as amended by Regulation (EC) No 923/2009 of the European Parliament and 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 experience of the Executive Agency for Competition and Innovation with programme management,
- the need to differentiate between transport modes with regard to 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 enterprises,
- the recognition of economic recession as an exceptional reason for extending the duration of actions,
- the lowering of the eligibility thresholds for product-specific actions,
- the possibility of indicating the targets for minimum funding thresholds for proposed actions 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 actions which have been co-financed,
- the possibility of ensuring consistency between the Programme, the Logistics Action Plan and the TEN-T 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 the action is carried out by undertakings from a Member State.

ENTRY INTO FORCE: 10/10/2009.