

Programme Marco Polo II (2007-2013), financial assistance to improve the environmental performance of freight transport

2004/0157(COD) - 17/05/2006 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution drafted by Reinhard **RACK** (EPP-ED, AT) which includes a series of compromise amendments negotiated between the main political groups, and on which an agreement has been reached with the Council and Commission. The main changes compared with the Commission's initial proposal concern the budget allocated to the programme. Following the agreement on the 2007-2013 financial perspective, the programme's budget will be EUR 400 million and not 740 million as proposed by the Commission. This amount is based on 2004 figures and shall be subject to technical adjustment to take account of inflation. Other amendments lower the project subsidy thresholds proposed by the Commission as a means of facilitating the participation of small and medium-sized enterprises, and place greater emphasis on sensitive regions. There is in general a clear emphasis on the needs of SMEs in the amended version as opposed to the initial proposal.

The main amendments are as follows:

- Actions should not cause distortions of competition, in particular, between modes of transport other than road transport or within each alternative mode, to an extent contrary to the common interest. Special care should be taken to avoid such distortions, so that actions contribute to shifting freight from road transport to alternative modes, rather than withdrawing freight from an existing rail, short sea shipping or inland waterway service.
- Special attention should also be paid to sensitive and metropolitan areas within the geographic scope of the Programme when allocating funding.
- Financial assistance shall be based on contracts to be negotiated by the Commission and the beneficiary. The terms and conditions of those contracts shall, as far as possible, keep financial and administrative burdens to a minimum, for example by facilitating business-friendly bank guarantees, contemplated by applicable rules and regulations, especially the Financial Regulation, so as to achieve maximum administrative efficiency and flexibility.
- The Programme shall be subject to both mid-term and final evaluations in order to assess its contribution to the objectives of Community transport policy and the effective use made of the appropriations.
- In the case of a transport link with a close third country, projects may in exceptional cases, be submitted by one undertaking of a Member State.
- A number of amendments sought to reduce the minimum subsidy thresholds for the various categories of actions, thereby enabling more SMEs to participate. The minimum indicative subsidy threshold per MoS (Motorway of the Sea) action will be 1.25 billion tonne-kilometres or its volumetric equivalent of modal shift or, in proportion to the indicative amount per euro of subsidy, EUR 250 million. The Commission had proposed 2 billion tonne-kilometres of modal shift or, in proportion to the indicative amount per euro of subsidy, EUR 4 000 000. The minimum indicative subsidy threshold per modal shift action will be 250 million tonne-kilometres or its volumetric equivalent of modal shift or, in proportion to the indicative amount per euro of subsidy, EUR 500 000. The Commission had proposed 500 million tonne-kilometres of modal shift or, in proportion to the indicative amount per euro of subsidy, EUR 1 000 000. The

minimum indicative subsidy threshold per catalyst action will be EUR 2 000 000 (as opposed to EUR 3 000 000).

- Community financial assistance for traffic avoidance actions must not be used to support business or production activities which bear no direct relation to transport or distribution.
- The exchange of best practice should be encouraged.
- If the results of the ex-post evaluation of the 'Marco Polo I' programme reveal a need to adjust the programme, provision should be made for the Commission to submit proposals accordingly.