

## Marco Polo II Programme - Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

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### 1. About the programme

- a) What is the Marco Polo programme?
- b) What type of projects can be supported by Marco Polo II?
- c) What is the history of the Marco Polo I and II programmes?
- d) In what aspects does the Marco Polo II programme differ from its predecessor Marco Polo I?
- e) What are the consequences of the revision of the Marco Polo II Regulation?
- f) Who manages the Marco Polo II programme?
- g) How can I request specific information about the Marco Polo II Programme



## 1. About the programme

### a) What is the Marco Polo programme?

Marco Polo is the European Union's funding programme for projects which shift freight transport from the road to sea, rail and inland waterways. This means fewer trucks on the road and thus less congestion, less pollution, and more reliable and efficient transport of goods. The current, second Marco Polo programme runs from 2007-13 and is a continuation of the first Marco Polo programme, which ran from 2003-2006.

### b) What type of projects can be supported by Marco Polo II?

Only projects concerning freight transport services may be supported by the Marco Polo programme. Infrastructure projects, research or study projects are not eligible for support. However, also mixed passenger-freight services and RoRo Ferries services may be proposed, but the support would then only be given to the freight part.

### c) What is the history of the Marco Polo I and II programmes?

- 4 February 2002: Commission's Proposal for the Marco Polo I programme
- 22 July 2003: Adoption of the Marco Polo I programme
- 2 August 2003: Publication of the Marco Polo I programme in the Official Journal of the EC (O.J. (2003) L 196/1)
- 3 August 2003: Marco Polo I Programme enters into force
- 14 July 2004: Commission's Proposal for the Marco Polo II programme
- 24 October 2006: Adoption of the Marco Polo II programme
- 24 November 2006: Publication of the Marco Polo II programme in the Official Journal of the EC (O.J. (2006) L 328/1)
- 31 December 2006: Marco Polo I programme comes to an end
- 1 January 2007: Start of the Marco Polo II programme
- 9 October 2009: Publication of the revision of the Marco Polo II Regulation (O.J. (2009) L266/1)

### d) In what aspects does the Marco Polo II programme differ from its predecessor Marco Polo I?

- a) **Wider geographical scope:** Marco Polo II introduces the possibility for all "*close third countries*" to participate fully to the Marco Polo II programme on the basis of supplementary agreements. This means that all third countries having "*a common border with the European Union or with a coastline on a closed or semi-closed sea neighbouring the European Union*" could potentially receive funding from Marco Polo II. Agreements have been concluded between EFTA/EEA countries (Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein) and they are fully participating to the Marco Polo II programme. Croatia is fully participating in Marco Polo II as of the Call for proposals in 2009.
- b) **New Action Types (Motorways of the sea and Traffic avoidance actions):** In addition to the Modal shift, Catalyst and the Common learning actions, Marco



Polo II introduces two new action types: Motorways of the sea action and the Traffic avoidance action.

- c) **Modifications in the funding rules of the Modal shift- and the Catalyst action:** For Modal shift actions, the funding intensity increased from 30% to 35%. For Catalyst actions, the maximum duration of a grant agreement increased from four to five years.
- d) **Increased budget:** While Marco Polo I had a budget of € 102 million, Marco Polo II has a budget of € 450 million (taking into account the price inflation).
- e) **Extended duration:** Marco Polo I lasted from 1 January 2003 to 31 December 2006. Marco Polo II has a timeframe of 7 years, from 1 January 2007 to 31 December 2013.
- f) **Special attention to sensitive and metropolitan areas:** The Marco Polo II Regulation stipulates that "*special attention should also be paid to sensitive and metropolitan areas within the geographic scope of the Programme when allocating funding*". As a consequence, extra points for the qualitative environmental & social benefits have been given in the evaluations for proposals addressing this point.
- g) **Co-ordinated projects for Modal shift, Catalyst and Common learning actions are allowed:** Marco Polo II introduces the possibility to coordinate several small projects for certain action types in order to meet the thresholds (for example, the threshold of 60 million tkm (tonne-kilometre) per year in modal shift actions). This only applies to Catalyst actions, Modal shift actions and Common learning actions.
- h) **Eligible applicants: submission by a single undertaking of a EU Member State:** Marco Polo II gives the possibility for a project to have only one partner from an EU Member State or a fully participating close third country (i.e Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Croatia).
- i) **Vehicle-km in Traffic avoidance actions:** Marco Polo I only considered the concept of tonnes and tkm. The adoption of these measurement units did not allow taking into account empty containers when calculating the modal shift. For Traffic avoidance actions, Marco Polo II introduces the possibility to use vkm (vehicle-kilometre) for the calculation of the minimum threshold of traffic avoidance for this type of action. The definition of vkm is the following: "Movement of a truck, loaded or empty, over a distance of 1 km".

e) **What are the consequences of the revision of the Marco Polo II Regulation?**

On 9 October 2009 Regulation 923/2009 amending the Marco Polo II Regulation (Regulation 1692/2006) was published in the Official Journal. The main aim of this revision is to increase the effectiveness of the Marco Polo II programme. Four kinds of amendments are introduced:

- measures to facilitate participation by small enterprises;
- measures lowering the tonne-kilometre thresholds for eligibility;
- raising funding intensity;
- simplification of the Programmes procedures.

The Regulation can be found on our website (<http://ec.europa.eu/marcopolo>).



**f) Who manages the Marco Polo II programme?**

Originally the Marco Polo I (2003-2006) and II (2007-2013) programmes were managed by DG Energy and Transport of the European Commission. Since 1 March 2008, the Marco Polo programme management task has been transferred officially from DG Energy & Transport to the Executive Agency for Competitiveness and Innovation (EACI). EACI was established by a Commission decision, inter alia, in order to manage the Marco Polo I and II programmes. The Commission decision setting up the EACI is based on the Council Regulation defining the status of Executive Agencies. This legal framework confers to Executive Agencies their own particular legal statute. Executive Agencies are Community bodies governed by Community law which have the legal personality and enjoy consequently full legal capacity to engage in legal transactions and to manage a Community programme such as Marco Polo, including the implementation of appropriation entered in the Community budget.

**g) How can I request specific information about the Marco Polo II Programme**

In order to keep response times short, please always look first at our website [\[http://ec.europa.eu/marcopolo\]](http://ec.europa.eu/marcopolo) before sending a specific request:

Via the Marco Polo Mailbox [eaci-marco-polo-helpdesk@ec.europa.eu](mailto:eaci-marco-polo-helpdesk@ec.europa.eu)

Via the Helpdesk Line +32 2 29 50924

Via Fax +32 2 29 79506

