Marco Polo Programme

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)
as of 23 November 2005

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How can I request specific information about the Marco Polo Programme

In order to keep response times short, please always look at our web site first before sending a specific request:

- Via the Marco Polo Mailbox  TREN-MARCO-POLO@cec.eu.int
- Via the Helpdesk Line  +32.2.299.64.48
- Via Facsimile  +32.2.296.37.65

Can the EC-subsidy be given in addition to other public funding?

The EC-subsidy may be given in addition to other public funding, as long as this does not constitute illegal state aid, and as long as the combined public subsidy does not surpass the maximum subsidy rate of eligible costs. This rate is action type dependent: 30% for modal shift actions, 35% for catalyst actions, and 50% for common learning action (see start of chapter 4). However, requesting a Marco Polo grant for eligible costs of an action already funded by another EC scheme is not permitted. Neither can a second EC-subsidy from another EC-scheme concerning eligible costs of an action funded under the Marco Polo Programme be granted (no double financing).

What is the future roadmap of the Marco Polo Programme?

SECOND CALL

- 03 May 2005  Start of Negotiations on 12 top-ranked projects
- 05 June 2005  All other applicants informed of results
- 24 November 2005  Approval by the Commission of the selected projects
- From December 2005  Signature of contracts
THIRD CALL

- **24 November 2005** Publication of 3rd call for proposals
- **30 January 2006** Closing date for submission of application
- **10 February 2006** Date of opening of first batch of applications
- **17 February 2006** Estimated date of opening of second batch of applications
- **Mid April 2006** Estimated date for Report on Evaluation by Evaluation Committee
- **May/June 2006** Estimated period for co-decision process with Member States and Parliament (commitology rules)
- **July 2006** Estimated date of notification of applicants and start of contract negotiations
- **July 2006** Estimated date for completion of selection procedure
- **August 2006 onwards** Estimated date for signature of EC subsidy contracts

**(indicative budget about EUR 30 million)**

FOURTH CALL

- **Summer’06** Call for proposals
- **Autumn’06** Deadline for proposal submission
- **Early 2007** Programme Committee meeting (participating countries)
- **Spring 2007** Applicants informed of results & Start of contr. negotiations
- **Sum./Aut.’07** Contract signatures (incl.reserve list)

**(indicative budget about EUR 35 million)**

Which countries may participate in the Marco Polo programme?

First there is a differentiation between “participation” and “being eligible for funding” (the latter also often referred to as full participation):

From day one of the programme undertakings from EU Member States and "close third countries", such as all Candidate States, EFTA Countries as well as others due to their geographical proximity are eligible to participate in Marco Polo projects (definition of “close third countries” see call text, appendix 1).

But only cost arising on the territories of EU Member States or countries which have concluded Special Agreements (e.g. Memorandum of Understanding) with the EU are eligible for Marco Polo funding. See also question on "Candidate States" and “close third countries”.

The practical consequence for calculating the lengths of the transport routes is that only route sections going through participating countries which are eligible for funding are to be used. Such countries are also called “fully participating countries”. This is important when calculating the tonne-kms figure (modal shift volume), but also to estimate the environmental benefit of the modal shift effectuated by the freight transport service proposed in the project.
On 24.06.2005, the following third countries are fully participating in the Marco Polo programme: Liechtenstein, Iceland and Norway (i.e. all EFTA-EEA countries)

Can undertakings from Candidate Countries participate in the Marco Polo programme?

Commercial undertakings from Candidate States, which are scheduled to be joining the EU in the years to come, such as Bulgaria, are welcome to participate in the Marco Polo programme. However, according to financial arrangements required for a full participation of undertakings from these countries, the conclusion of a Special Agreement between the EC and the respective country is needed. In the case of Bulgaria, Rumania, Turkey, Croatia and Andorra it is still possible that the agreements are concluded in time for a full participation of these countries in the Call 2005.

Nevertheless, the participation of undertakings is possible without such a special agreement, but project costs arising on the territory of a Candidate State are not eligible for funding under Marco Polo and environmental benefits generated on their territory can not contribute to the project key figures either.

Which close third countries have meanwhile concluded special agreements with the EU for full participation in the Marco Polo programme? What are the effects on contracts?

Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. Costs arising on the territories of these close third countries are eligible for EC financial support under Marco Polo for all contracts stemming from call 2004 until 2006. They remain ineligible for contracts stemming from call 2003.

When can I submit a proposal?

Project proposals may officially only be submitted when a call has been published. The call will appear in the EC’s Official Journal and on the Marco Polo homepage and will specify all details. Calls are published annually, usually in late summer (August/September). Note that the calls are very similar to each other, but some details may change from year to year. For more up-to-date information, please see our presentations and worked examples in other sections of this website (Guidance for Proposers).

What are the key guidelines for the different actions (modal shift, common learning & catalyst)?

**Modal Shift Actions:**
- Aid to start-up services
- Robust, but not innovative: - just shift freight off road
- Subsidy of 1 € per 500 tkm shifted
- Minimum subsidy threshold 0, 5 Mio. €
- at least 250 million tkm shifted per contract
- Subsidy rate up to 30% of eligible costs
- Ancillary infrastructure up to 20% of subsidy
- Subsidy up to 3 years funding period
- No undue distortions of competition
- Viable after subsidy ends

**Catalyst Actions:**
- Overcome structural market barriers
- Highly innovative: *causing a real break through*
- Minimum subsidy threshold 1, 5 Mio. €
- Subsidy rate up to 35% of eligible costs
- Ancillary infrastructure up to 20% of subsidy
- Subsidy up to 4 years funding period
- Dissemination of results
- Mid-term review of each project
- If required by a project: political support from EC
- No undue distortions of competition
- Viable after subsidy ends

**Common Learning Actions:**
- Improve co-operation and sharing of know-how
- Mutual training: *coping with an increasingly complex transport and logistics market*
- Minimum subsidy threshold 0, 25 Mio. €
- Subsidy rate up to 50% of eligible costs
- Subsidy up to 2 years funding period
- No undue distortions of competition
- Dissemination of results

**Are new action types foreseen under the Marco Polo programme in the future?**

In line with the objectives spelt out in the Transport White Paper of 2001, the main objective of the Marco Polo programme, while already ambitious, cannot be the final goal of our intermodal policies.

Therefore, the Marco Polo II programme will introduce **2 new types of action** as proposed by the COM and if adopted by Council and Parliament:

- Motorways of the Sea
- Traffic Avoidance

For more information, please visit the Marco Polo II section at this address:

- [http://europa.eu.int/comm/transport/marcopolo/2/index_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/transport/marcopolo/2/index_en.htm)

**Can I apply for more than one project in a single call?**

Yes, but please submit the projects as separate proposals (in separate envelopes) to avoid confusion.
Does the minimum threshold of 250 Million tonne-kms apply per year?

No, the minimum threshold for modal shift actions refers to the total duration of the contract for modal shift actions, which may be up to 3 years. There is no minimum threshold (tonne-kms) for Catalyst actions and Common Learning actions.

Can tonnes-km be replaced by another unit in the case of light goods?

Yes, the 2005 Call for proposals indeed introduces an alternative. As an alternative for light goods the volume equivalent “freight tonnes” measured in m³ may be used by the applicant. This means, that 4 cubic metre–kilometre (m³km) shall be equivalent to 1 tonne-kilometre (tkm), and all calculations and key-figures throughout the proposal are to be presented in analogy to the tonne-kilometre case. The choice of basic unit m³km or tkm must be clearly specified by the applicant.

What about infrastructure?

According to our call text for proposals 2005, it is stated that pure infrastructure projects are not eligible for funding under the Marco Polo programme. However, ancillary (necessary, but subordinate, to achieve the goals of modal shift or catalyst actions), infrastructure measures are eligible to a maximum of intensity of not more than 20% of the total subsidy requested. The proposal for Marco Polo II (if adopted) from 2007 onwards will allow more flexibility. Please see pages 8, 16, 18 and 30) of the Marco Polo II proposal at this address: http://europa.eu.int/comm/transport/marcopolo/legal/doc/com_2004_0478_en.pdf

Is it possible to have some feedback on a project idea in advance of a formal call for proposals?

Yes, the Marco Polo help desk is open all year round to assist potential applicants to start preparing and developing their ideas in advance of a Marco Polo call.

However, in order to efficiently discuss your project idea and to cope with demand, please use the information given at the Marco Polo web site before contacting the Help Desk for detailed discussions or asking for an appointment at our offices.

How many calls are foreseen under the Marco Polo programmes?

It is intended to publish one call every year until 2013. However, due to the seven-year-cycle of the financial perspectives of the Commission, budget is currently only available until the call in 2006. The calls will usually be launched in summer.
Can administrations participate in Marco Polo projects?

No, only commercial undertakings are eligible to participate. However, administrations may be up to 100% owners of a participating commercial undertaking.

What type of projects can be supported by Marco Polo?

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

May projects carried-out by a single commercial undertaking receive support?

No, only consortia of at least two commercial undertakings from two different countries, one of them being an EU Member State, may receive support. The companies need to be:

• Independent* from each other;
• established legal entities.

* Definition of independent: In case of two undertakings A and B; A may control not more than 50% of B, and vice versa; A and B may be controlled not more than 50% by a third undertaking C.

Are national routes allowed?

No, based on the subsidiarity principle the Marco Polo regulation can only support projects with international routes.

Is there any restriction on eligible modal shifts?

Yes, only modal shifts off the road towards short sea shipping, inland waterway and rail are eligible for Marco Polo support. This means that, for instance shifts between the above non-road modes are not eligible, e.g. modal shift from rail to inland waterway is not eligible for support.

Is air transport included in call 2005?

No, Air transport is not included in the call because this mode of transport does not provide for less external costs than road transport. One of the main aims of Marco Polo is to reduce the amount of road traffic by using transport systems that are normally less damaging to the environment.
Can airports participate as partners?

Yes, they can if the objective of the project is in line with the programme objectives, e.g. moving freight off the road. An airport can for example be an origin or destination in a transport chain being realised within the programme.

Will the call texts be available in all languages?

The publication of the announcement of a call in the Official Journal of the EC will be published in all 20 official languages of the EU. The full call text is only available in English. Due to enlargement of the EC the availability of translation services are very restricted and would cause unacceptable delays for launching a call.

Can applicants submit additional material to their proposal after the deadline of submission?

No! Since it is a competitive evaluation of proposals, such an addition would be unfair to the other applicants.

What is the history of the Marco Polo Programme?  UPDATE 27 JUNE 2005

- 04/02/2002 Commission’s Proposal
- 15/05/2002 Committee of the Regions’ opinion
- 17/06/2002 Council’s debate
- 17/07/2002 Economic and Social Committee’s opinion
- 24-25/09/2002 European Parliament’s first reading
- 03/10/2002 Council’s debate
- 05-06/12/2002 Political agreement at Council
- 25/04/2003 Council’s common position
- 08/05/2003 Commission communication on common position
- 02 July 2003 Second reading of Parliament
- 22 July 2003 Adoption of Programme
- 03 August 2003 Programme enters into force

FIRST CALL
- 11 October 2003 First call for proposals
- 10 December 2003 Deadline for proposal submission
- 22 April 2004 Programme Committee meeting (participating countries)
- May/June 2004 “Droit de Regard” by Parliament
- July 2004 Applicants informed of results
- July 2004 Start of contracts negotiations
- October/November 2004 Conclusion of contracts
- October 2004 Start of services
**SECOND CALL**

- 15 October 2004  Second call for proposals
- 15 December 2005  Deadline for proposal submission
- 18 April 2005  Programme Committee meeting (participating countries)
- 03 May 2005  Start of Negotiations on 12 top-ranked projects
- 05 June 2005  All other applicants informed of results
- 24 November 2005  Approval by the Commission of the selected projects
- From December 2005  Signature of contracts

**In what aspects does the Marco Polo programme differ from its predecessor PACT?**

Marco Polo is broader in scope; it intends to foster modal shift projects in all segments of the freight market, not only in combined transport as it was the case under its predecessor PACT. Also, Marco Polo adds two additional new types of actions: Catalyst and Common Learning Actions. Finally, the number of participating countries has doubled.