

Brussels, 24 November 2005

Marco Polo: € 30 million for freight transport services

The European Commission published today on its website the third call for proposals under the Marco Polo Programme. Launched in July 2003, the programme's objective is to reduce road congestion and to improve the environmental performance of the freight transport system. For this third call, the budget has been increased by 50% to € 30.1 million to address increasing congestion problems and demand from the markets. Commercial undertakings across the European Union and participating third countries are invited to submit proposals for creating new freight transport services and improving the environmental performance of freight transport.

The Marco Polo programme aims at supporting companies in the high-risk start-up phase of new services that shift freight from the road to short-sea shipping, rail and inland waterways. Companies that submit projects which will be top-ranked in the competitive evaluation process will be offered grant contracts with a duration of up to four years. However, only projects able to demonstrate sustainable non-road freight transport services – that is projects which would survive in the marketplace after EU financial support ends – have a chance for receiving a grant.

The call covers, as in the past, all three types of actions foreseen by the programme: modal shift, common learning and the highly innovative catalyst actions.

The full text of the call, including the one-page application form and all information on how to apply, is available on the Marco Polo website:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/transport/marcopolo/whatsnew/index_en.htm

The website also contains other useful information, including details on projects which were successful in the first two selection rounds.