Call for proposals for catalyst actions in the sector for alternatives to international road freight
(2002/C 110/10)

1. Purpose and general description of the call

The Pilot Actions for Combined Transport (PACT) programme terminated on 31 December 2001. On 4 February 2002, the European Commission proposed the ‘Marco Polo’ programme (COM(2002) 54 final). The Commission endeavours to have this proposal adopted by the European Parliament and the Council in 2003. In order to bridge the gap between the two programmes, and to test certain features and ideas of the ‘Marco Polo’ programme, the Commission is issuing the present call.

Therefore, the Commission invites interested parties to submit proposals for catalyst actions in the non-road transport market. The available budget under the call is two million euro. The Commission envisages to fund not more than three projects under this call.

For the purpose of this call:

— ‘catalyst actions’ means any innovative action aimed at overcoming Community-relevant structural barriers in the market for freight transport, which impede the efficient functioning of the markets, the competitiveness of short sea shipping, rail, or inland waterways, and/or the efficiency of transport chains making use of these modes,

— ‘structural market barrier’ means any non-regulatory, factual and not only temporary impediment to the proper functioning of the freight transport chain,

— ‘action’ means any project related to the logistics market, executed by undertakings, which contributes to reduce congestion in the road freight transport system and/or to a better environmental performance of the transport system.

2. Scope and eligible applications

Only actions of an international character involving only European Union Member States are eligible. The international character of an action is witnessed by the fact that the envisaged route of the project is situated on the territory of at least two Member States. In the case of short sea shipping, the action must take freight from the road in at least two Member States.

Any undertaking established within the Community may submit a project to the Commission. As a general rule, the project should be submitted by two or more undertakings established each in a different Member State.

Pure infrastructure projects will not be funded. However, ancillary infrastructure measures are eligible to a maximum aid intensity of not more than 20% of the total subsidy requested under this call. Infrastructure measures are ‘ancillary’, if they are necessary, but subordinate, to achieve the goals of catalyst actions.

3. General eligibility conditions

Catalyst actions shall be eligible for funding under the following cumulative general conditions:

A. the catalyst action achieves its objectives within a period of a maximum of 24 months, and stays viable after that period, as ascertained by its realistic business plan;

B. the catalyst action is innovative on a European level, in terms of logistics, technology, methods, equipment, products or services rendered;

C. the catalyst action is forecast to lead to an actual and sustainable modal shift from road to short sea shipping, inland waterways, or rail;

D. the catalyst action proposes a realistic plan with concrete milestones towards its objectives;

E. the catalyst action does not lead to unacceptable distortions of competition in the relevant markets;

F. when the action requires reliance on services provided by third parties not part of the consortium, the applicant submits proof of tendering or market inquiry for such services, evidenced by at least two competitive bids;

H. eligible actions must not have started before 1 March 2002 or after 1 March 2003.

4. Specific eligibility conditions

Eligible catalyst actions under this call will further have to relate at least to one of the three types of projects mentioned below.

— Intra-European maritime freight services, meeting all of the conditions below:

— overcoming natural geographic barriers, such as the Alps and the Pyrenees, or involving the Baltic or Adriatic Sea,

— high-quality in terms of punctuality, client information, transhipment concepts and integration into the logistics chain (door-to-door concept),

— road-competitive quality of service.

— Through interoperable rail services, meeting all of the conditions below:

— central integrated control of the services and offer of a ‘door-to-door’ concept,

— guaranteed departures and arrival times,

— road-competitive quality,

— compensation system for quality deficiencies,

— applied international interoperability of equipment, safety or information systems.

— Inland waterway services integrated with rail or short sea shipping, meeting all of the conditions below:

— the inland waterway service must be linked with a rail or short sea shipping service,

— Central integrated control of the service and offer of a ‘door-to-door’ concept,

— optimisation of transhipment between inland waterway on the one hand, and rail or short sea shipping on the other hand in terms of cost efficiency, handling speed and information technology.

5. Selection criteria

Corporate bodies must be legally constituted and registered. Awards of grants to natural persons are not ruled out altogether, but will only be made in special circumstances, in which case they must accept individual responsibility for completing the operation supported.


Applicants must have the technical and operational capacity to complete the operation to be supported and should provide some supporting documents (CVs of those responsible for carrying out the operation, description of projects and activities undertaken in the last three years, etc.).

The project must fulfil all the eligible conditions, general and specific.

6. Evaluation criteria

The Commission will base its selection of projects and the rate of Community co-financing on the basis of a written presentation. Projects will be evaluated on the following criteria:

a maximum of 100 points will be given to each project in the evaluation, distributed as follows:

(a) innovative approach to overcome structural market barriers: 0 to 30 points;

(b) credibility and viability of operation: 0 to 30 points;

(c) environmental benefits: 0 to 30 points;

(d) dissemination plan: 0 to 10 points,

additionally, the following condition is scrutinised:

(e) Avoidance of unacceptable distortions of competition: Yes/No.

Proposals must achieve a total score of at least 60 points and simultaneously must have reached a threshold of 18 points for each of the criteria (a), (b) and (c), as well as a ‘Yes’ for (e), to be eligible for funding.
Among the proposals being eligible for funding, proposals which achieved the highest total score shall be considered for funding, within the limit of the available budget and the further limitation that not more than three projects will be funded. Grants will be awarded within the limits of the budgetary resources available.

7. Financial conditions

Community financial assistance for catalyst actions shall be limited to a maximum of 35% of all expenditure necessary to achieve the objectives of, and caused by, the action. Such expenditure shall be eligible for Community financial assistance, as far as it relates directly to the implementation of the action.

Ancillary infrastructure measures are eligible to a maximum aid intensity of not more than 20% of the total subsidy requested under this call. Infrastructure measures are 'ancillary', if they are necessary, but subordinate, to achieve the goals of catalyst actions.

The Community financial assistance for catalyst actions shall be granted on the basis of subvention contracts, with appropriate provisions for steering and monitoring. A model subvention contract is available at the Internet address given in Chapter 10. Eligible costs are specified therein. Important note: in case the project is selected, costs may be reimbursed only, if incurred after the signature of the contract.

The minimum subsidy threshold per funded action shall be EUR 600 000, and the maximum funding given per funded action shall not surpass EUR 1 400 000.

The budget will not finance costs and expenditure arising outside the Community. Nor can legal or natural persons established outside the Community be beneficiaries of funds under this call.

8. How to prepare a proposal

The objective of this and the following chapters is to guide proposers through the application process.

Pre-checking of the proposal concept (maximum one A4 page) is offered by the Commission services to ensure that the applicant's idea falls within the scope of the call. Since the pre-checking should be carried out before the full proposal is prepared, this service is only available until 31 May 2002 (date of receipt), via the co-ordinates given in Chapter 10, with e-mail being the preferred mode of submission (please indicate 'mini-call pre-check' in subject field). Pre-checking is not obligatory for applicants.

The full proposal should be sized and structured according to the following guidelines:

A full proposal should have a maximum of ten single-sided A4 pages of text, plus tables, figures and other visual material. CVs of responsible personnel, certificates, letters of intent, etc. may be added as annex(es).

I. Description of project

1.1. Partners involved

State the partners applying for this project.

Please state for each participating company:

— full legal name, address of registered office, telephone and fax numbers,

— the number of persons employed,

— its annual turnover or its annual balance sheet total,

— whether it is more than 25% owned by a large company (i.e. a company having more than 250 persons employed or annual turnover exceeding 40 Million euro and annual balance sheet total exceeding 27 million euro),

— the exact contribution of each partner to the project. If available, annual reports of the partners should be provided,

— CVs of those responsible for carrying out the operation, description of projects and activities undertaken in the last three years, etc. (include as annex please),

— in case the company is externally audited, please provide name and address of the auditing company.

Please provide letters of intent for the execution of the project from all partners involved.

State which partner would be the direct recipient of catalyst action funding (would sign contract) in case funding is granted.
It is also essential that you provide the name, address, telephone, e-mail address and fax number of the contact person (one only) to whom correspondence concerning the selection procedure should be sent.

1.2. Brief presentation of project

Please give a short introduction to the project and modes involved, so that the reader knows immediately what you want to achieve and how you propose to do it. State the implementation schedule (action to be taken) of the project. State here also the amount of funding requested.

If you plan a project introducing a new technology in the market, please provide information showing that you and your partners have the necessary technical certificates and permits to start the service in all the States concerned by your project.

If you plan a project relying on rail services, please provide information that you and your partners have access to the appropriate railway paths and all other required permits to start the service in all the States concerned by the project. If you do not, at the time of application, have all necessary permits and the path allocation, please provide information about the concrete future availability of train paths and necessary permits.

1.3. Reasons for project

Please indicate the reasons for the envisaged project (e.g. customer requests, congestion, market potential etc.).

1.4. Addressing and removing a structural market barrier

The answer to this point is central for the selection process. The contribution of the project to removing a structural market barrier should be described in specific terms.

1.5. Pilot character of the project

Describe the relevance of the expected project results for the transport sector as a whole.

1.6. Benefits to the competitiveness of alternatives to road freight

State how the competitiveness of alternatives to road freight is enhanced through your action.

1.7. Contribution to transport policy goals

Describe benefits to the environmental performance and safety of transport achieved by the project.

II. Route/axis of the project

2.1. Importance of route

Show that the route chosen is part of the trans-European networks.

2.2. Maps describing location or route of project, other visual information

Visual material is essential to familiarise the Commission's services with your proposal.

III. Project objectives

Please set out clearly and concisely what the project should achieve in a given time frame. The Commission will verify the achievement of the objective stated in the application. The project objectives should contain verifiable and, as far as possible, quantifiable information. The more verifiable data you are able to give, the better are your chances to qualify for support.

3.1. Customer potential for project

Please indicate the customers (by type and industrial sector) you expect to attract to your service.

3.2. Traffic shift forecast

State here your forecast, how much traffic will be shifted from road to your service as a consequence of the project. The shift should, as a general rule, be stated in tonne-kilometres (tonnes to be transported multiplied with length of the road-route). For terminal equipment investment and intermodal transport service operations (block trains, shuttles etc.), capacity utilisation forecasts would be useful. Is new traffic being generated (e.g. opening up a new transport link)?
3.3. Impact on competing services

Mention all existing transport services (in any mode) in the market in which your service will operate. Please be as specific as possible. It is not enough to state, for instance, that 'the market is mainly served by road' without further details. What is the effect of the project on other transport services and possible new entrants? Please reply to this question carefully, as it is crucial that your service does not lead to unacceptable distortions of competition in the relevant markets. The Commission will crosscheck your market impact analysis.

3.4. Price and service performance of the project

Describe accessibility, reliability, time gains, and yearly pricing forecasts in comparison with competing road or other services. You should describe here the status at the time just before the start of the project, and a forecast of the status after 12 months of operation.

3.5. Other project objectives relating to innovation

Please indicate other project objectives, only as far as they relate to the commercial exploitation of innovation and are not covered in the points 3.1-3.4 above.

IV. Funding of project

Please provide a budget for the operation setting out total costs and funding of the project (receipts, catalyst action assistance, other funding).

4.1. Envisaged costs and receipts per year

Please provide a list of the various cost items of the project. Provide also a forecast of your receipts, also listed per year (give 1. price asked per tonne transported or 2. volume in tonnes, on which receipts are based). Important note: if you wish some of these data to be kept confidential, put them on a separate sheet. They will not be disclosed outside the Commission.

4.2. Timetable for viability of project

Please provide a timetable for the viability of the project.

4.3. Amount of assistance requested

State the exact amount of assistance requested. In this selection procedure, you may ask for assistance for up to two years. If your project is scheduled to be running more than one year, state the request per year. Important note:

in case your project is selected, costs may be reimbursed, if incurred after the signature of the contract.

4.4. Sources of funding

Please state here how you envisage the total financing of the project (own means, loans, or further public funding). Important note: funds 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 35% of eligible costs.

9. How to submit a proposal

Each applicant should prepare a proposal according to the structure given in Chapter 8. The proposal will need to be fully completed, including a proposed budget following the structure indicated. Proposals of projects should be sent to the secretariat (see Chapter 10) not later than 8 July 2002 through one of the following options:

(a) by mail, express and registered. The date of submission will be taken to be the date shown by the postmark;

(b) by courier, or other express mail. The date of the submission will be taken to be the date shown by the shipping bill;

(c) by hand, either to the secretariat given below or to a delegation of the Commission.

In cases (a) and (b) the proposers are requested to send a fax at the same time to the secretariat given below to confirm the submission by mail. In addition, the date on the postmark or shipping bill will need to be clearly readable in order to prove if needed the timely submission of the proposal.

The proposals must be submitted in six copies, one original and five copies. A proposal should be given a short title or acronym and pages should be numbered throughout to minimise handling risks. It is the responsibility of the proposer that original and copies are identical and complete.

The project proposal submitted will need to be signed and stamped by the main proposer, at the end of the main proposal text (before the annexes) and in a cover letter.

For any financial statements, originals will be needed in a later phase only. Photocopies can be forwarded at this stage of the procedure.
Proposals must be placed inside two sealed envelopes. The inner envelope should be marked:

Call for proposals

Ref.: Mini-Call Catalyst Actions

DG-Tren-B4 ‘Intermodality and Logistics’

— Not to be opened by internal mail department —

The outer envelope should contain the address of the secretariat (see Chapter 10). If self-adhesive envelopes are used, they must be sealed with adhesive tape and the sender must sign across this tape.

Proposals sent in or handed in later than 8 July 2002, proposals not signed by the proposer and proposals sent by fax or electronic mail will under no circumstances be taken into consideration or qualify for further evaluation after the opening session. Proposals submitted in less than six copies may also be disqualified.

10. Secretariat for information and for receiving proposals

European Commission
Directorate-General for Energy and Transport
Directorate B — Unit B.4 ‘Intermodality and Logistics’

Ref.: Mini-Call Catalyst Actions

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Application deadline: 8 July 2002.