

THE MARCO POLO PROGRAMME: ACCESSING EUROPEAN FUNDS FOR INTERNATIONAL SUSTAINABLE DISTRIBUTION SERVICES



MDS Transmodal & the Marco Polo Programme

MDS Transmodal (MDST) provides advice on developing applications for funding from the European Commission's Marco Polo Programme, which provides support for international rail, short sea shipping and inland waterway services in Europe that result in modal shift from all-road transport chains.

MDST's advice ranges from assessing a project's eligibility for Marco Polo funding to drafting the application on behalf of the client and is based not only on expertise in developing applications for funding, but also on extensive knowledge of the transport policy that lies behind the Marco Polo Programme and the economics of road freight and sustainable distribution services.

The benefits

- €60 million of Marco Polo funding available in 2009
- €2 million average funding per project in 2008
- 70% chance of success, based on the results from previous years

The funding criteria

Successful applications need to:

- Provide significant quantified environmental benefits from the development of a new international sustainable distribution service
- Demonstrate a strong partnership between the commercial operators of the potential service
- Show that the potential service is credible i.e. it will actually start if funding is provided
- Show that the service can be financially viable without funding in the medium- to long-term
- Avoid distortions of competition with other sustainable distribution services
- Justify the funding requested through a Business Plan
- Be written clearly and concisely

Our methodology

Our advice guides clients through the three main phases in making the application:

- Assessing the eligibility of the project for funding
- Developing an outline case for funding and planning the inputs required
- Developing the application for submission to the European Commission

The next annual “call for proposals” starts in late January 2009 and applications have to be completed in early April 2009. In order to develop an application of the required quality, plans for projects for new sustainable distribution services need to have been reasonably well-developed by the start of 2009.

Our experience

- Developed successful application for a short sea shipping network involving shipping lines and ports in France, Spain, Ireland and England
- Advised an international rail freight operator on the potential for accessing Marco Polo funds
- Advised the UK Strategic Rail Authority on how a UK rail freight operating grant scheme should complement the Marco Polo Programme

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