

Brussels, 6 October 2004

## **Commission approves Italian regional aid to restructure the freight market and to develop road-sea combined transport**

***The Commission authorised today a package of aid measures that was notified by the Italian Region of Sicily for the restructuring of road haulage and the development of combined transport. The innovative scheme will be in force for three years with a budget of approximately € 35,000,000.***

The objective of the scheme is to promote road–sea combined transport services on long-distance routes between ports in Sicily and other Italian and Community ports. The scheme is conceived as a pilot project with an experimental character: it aims at achieving a structural modification of the current freight system in Sicily, encouraging road hauliers, in particular smaller companies, to form organisational groups to make better use of combined road-sea transport.

It consists in granting an ‘environmental bonus’ for the shipping of individual heavy goods vehicles of more than 12 tonnes or semi-trailers. The aid will be granted to loaded and empty trucks travelling both into and out of Sicilian ports, with the exception of lorries shipped on maritime services crossing the Strait of Messina.

Beneficiaries will be small and medium sized transport enterprises established within the territory of the European Union that engage in road haulage activities on their own account or on behalf of third parties from between the ports of Sicily and those of the continental Italian area. However, undertakings already engaged in combined road-sea transport operations and those currently operating combined road-rail transport will be excluded from the measure.

In the light of the specific geographical and economic situation of Sicily, the difficulties in organising the intermodal transport market and the experimental character of the measure, the Commission has considered this scheme to be compatible with the Treaty<sup>1</sup> as it will contribute to the development of the sector of combined transport and will not distort competition in a manner contrary to the common interest. It is moreover in line with the objectives of the Commission’s White Paper on Transport Policy<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> By virtue of Article 87 (3) (c) of the EC Treaty

<sup>2</sup> *European transport policy for 2010: time to decide.* COM (2001) 370