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EU approves public funding to promote freight from road to rail and sea

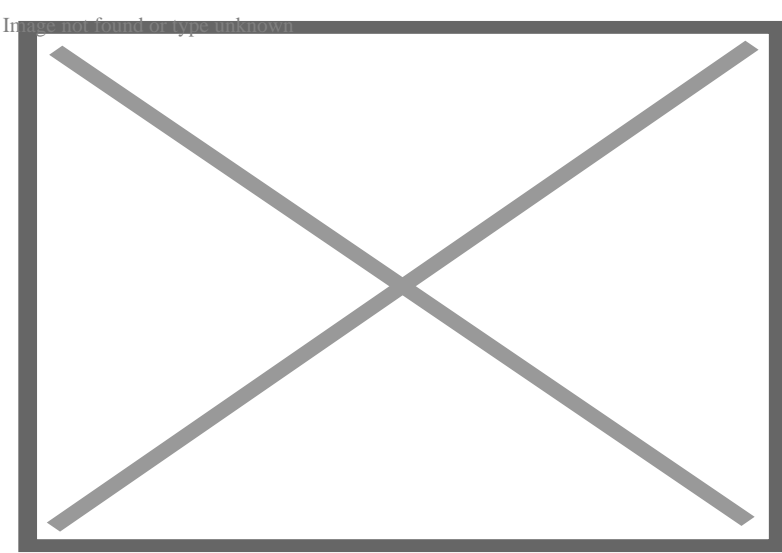
2016/12/24 10:58 στην κατηγορία INTERNATIONAL

The European Commission has found two Italian public support schemes to encourage **a shift of freight transport from road to rail and to sea**, to be in line with EU state aid rules. The measures will further EU environmental and transport objectives whilst maintaining competition in the Single Market.

The first measure, **with a budget of €255 million**, aims to boost the shift of freight traffic from road to rail in Italy by granting subsidies to rail transport operators. Supporting a mode of transport that is less polluting than road will have a positive impact on the environment. By decreasing road congestion it will also be beneficial in terms of mobility.

For these reasons, EU state aid rules, in particular the 2008 Commission Guidelines on State aid for railway undertakings allow public support to the rail transport sector under certain conditions.

The Commission's assessment showed that the scheme is open to all railway companies operating on the freight market in Italy. The measure will in particular boost the Southern part of Italy, where the imbalance between rail and road is significantly more pronounced.



In line with the Guidelines, the level

of support beneficiaries can receive under the scheme is based on a reduction of the infrastructure charges and external costs borne by rail transport operators when compared to road transport.

The second measure, called Marebonus has a budget of €138 million to encourage freight transport by sea rather than by road. This should also lead to less traffic on the roads and so reduce pollution and ease transport congestion.

The Commission's State Aid Maritime Guidelines allow Member States to support these objectives under certain conditions. The scheme will grant aid to shippers for starting new maritime services or upgrading existing sea routes. In line with the Guidelines, **the public support is limited to meeting some of the extra costs of switching to a more environmentally friendly mode of transport.**

The non-confidential version of the decisions will be made available under the case numbers SA.45482 (Rail Freight Transport Support Scheme) and SA.44628 (Marebonus) in the State Aid Register on the Commission's competition website once any confidentiality issues have been resolved. New publications of state aid decisions on the internet and in the Official Journal are listed in the State Aid Weekly e-News.

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