

Da: ZEITLER Martin Martin.ZEITLER@ec.europa.eu

Oggetto: RE: Request for further insights on co-financing and development of the Messina strait bridge project

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A: CORRAO Ignazio ignazio.corrao@europarl.europa.eu, D'AMATO Rosa rosa.damato@europarl.europa.eu

Cc: COX Pat (EC) Pat.COX@ec.europa.eu

Dear Ms Amato, dear Mr Corrao,

On behalf of Coordinator Pat Cox I would like to thank you very much for your e-mail regarding the Messina Strait Bridge project. Please find some elements of reply to your very pertinent questions here below.

Q: Updates on evaluations and studies: Could you provide us with an updated and detailed report on the status of feasibility assessments and environmental impact studies conducted by the Italian government on the bridge?

In November last year the Commission has been informed by the Italian authorities that works on the Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) studies (including NATURA 2000 and Do No Significant Harm assessments), Cost Benefit Analysis studies and other relevant feasibility studies in preparation of the project were ongoing.

Under EU law all major infrastructure projects will have to undergo an environmental impact assessment prior to their approval or authorisation. This is also enshrined in the TEN-T Regulation which states that Member States and other project promoters should carry out environmental assessments of plans and projects as in order to avoid or, where avoidance is not possible, to mitigate or compensate for negative impacts on the environment, such as landscape fragmentation, soil sealing and air and water pollution as well as noise, and to protect biodiversity effectively.

It is the responsibility of the Italian State or of the project promoter to conduct such an assessments and if necessary to propose alternatives or mitigation measures based on the findings.

Q: Details on EU co-financing: Could you specify the quantitative details of potential EU co-financing? What criteria for selection, management, and monitoring will be applied to ensure maximum transparency and independence in co-financing these studies?

Under the Connecting Europe Facility the Commission can indeed co-fund studies that have the aim to prepare the construction phase of infrastructure projects on the TEN-T network (e.g. EIAs, alignment studies, CBAs). Such studies can be co-funded with up to 50% of their total eligible costs. Given the rules set out in the CEF Regulation, only the railway part of the planned Messina Strait bridge would be eligible for EU co-funding.

The award of EU Grants is based on a competitive procedure. All project proposals are assessed by independent experts that judge the projects on their priority and urgency, their

maturity, the quality of the proposal, their impact on the wider TEN-T network and the importance of the grant for the advancement of the project. Based on this external evaluation an internal panel from various Commissions services will establish the list of successful projects.

In case a project is awarded a CEF grant, close monitoring is ensured via the European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency (CINEA). CINEA will establish so-called Grant Agreements with the beneficiaries that contain concrete timelines and milestones that will continuously be monitored in Annual Activity reports and through onsite visits. Should a project be delayed or not fulfil what has been established in the Grant Agreement, the agency can recover parts of the awarded co-funding and re-award this sums to other, more mature, projects.

Without knowing the results of the preparatory studies no assumptions can be made on a potential EU contribution to the actual construction activities of the planned Messina Strait bridge.

Q: Development of a complete proposal: Have there been concrete advancements toward developing a definitive and comprehensive proposal by the Italian authorities that meets the maturity and added value criteria required by the European Union?

As outlined above the Commission is aware that the Italian authorities are in the process of preparing the necessary preparatory studies to further advance with the project. The Commission is not aware that there is already a definitive decision or concrete alignment for the bridge. It is also for this reason that the maps in the revised TEN-T Regulation depict the project as a “studies/ideas” project.

We remain available should you have further questions/remarks.

With Kind regards,

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