

Maritime safety: establishing a Community vessel traffic monitoring and information system

2005/0239(COD) - 11/06/2008 - Commission communication on Council's position

The Commission takes note of the Council's common position, which was unanimously adopted, but points out its differing view on the key issue of places of refuge (the principle of accommodating vessels in distress in places of refuge and the requirement for Member States to set up an independent authority).

The Council departs significantly from one substantial point in the Commission's proposal, i.e. the question of places of refuge, which the Commission cannot accept. This is because the Council has considerably reduced the scope of the Commission's proposal by deleting, firstly, the principle that vessels in distress must be accommodated in places of refuge, subject to the results of an assessment of the situation, and secondly the requirement for the Member States to set up an independent authority to assess the situation and take a decision. However, the Commission takes the view that such independence is essential to ensure that the most appropriate decision is taken in good time, free from local political pressure, to make vessels in major difficulties safe or contain pollution where it cannot be avoided and thus reduce its impact, also on neighbouring countries.

On the other hand the Commission notes that the Council backs other aspects of its proposal, in particular by accepting that fishing vessels with a length of more than 15 metres should be equipped with automatic identification systems – AIS – to reduce the risk of collisions, and by recognising the need to ensure that SafeSeaNet, i.e. the Community data exchange network for vessels and their movements and cargo, operates continuously, i.e. 24 hours a day, seven days a week.