Double hull or equivalent design requirements for oil tankers

2002/0310(COD) - 22/07/2003 - Final act

PURPOSE : to phase-out single hull oil tankers following the Prestige accident and to amend Regulation 417/2002/EC. LEGISLATIVE ACT : Regulation 1726/2003/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation 417/2002/EC on the accelerated phasing-in of double-hull or equivalent design requirements for single-hull oil tankers. CONTENT : the Council adopted the Regulation banning single-hull oil tankers from European ports. From 21 October 2003, single-hull oil tankers may not be used to carry heavy grades of oil to or from EU ports. In addition, the timetable for the phasing-out of such tankers has been speeded up, and oil tankers more than 23 years old, as the Erika and the Prestige were, are banned from EU ports immediately. During the gradual phasing-out period, tankers 15 or more years old will undergo exhaustive technical inspections. The EU is now focusing on the international arena in order to have similar measures introduced by everyone concerned. The sinking of the Prestige has drawn attention to the urgent need to phase out single-hull tankers and the specific problem caused by heavy fuel oil, which is usually transported in old, single-hull oil tankers that are more accident-prone. On 20 December 2002 the Commission decided to propose amending the existing Regulation. The European Parliament and the Council adopted the amendment on 22 July 2003. The changes made to the legislation concern three points: 1) The transportation of heavy grades of oil in single-hull oil tankers is prohibited with immediate effect : The transportation of heavy oil in single-hull oil tankers to or from the ports of a Member State of the European Union is therefore now prohibited: double hull tankers must be used for this purpose. The categories of heavy grades of oil are heavy fuel oil, heavy crude, used oil and bitumen and tar. 2) The programme for the gradual phasing-out of single-hull oil tankers is being speeded up : The European Union will now be applying rules which are as strict as current US rules for the gradual phasing-out of single-hull oil tankers. - Category 1 oil tankers are the most vulnerable and the oldest vessels. The final date for the use of these oil tankers under the Regulation is therefore brought forward from 2007 to 2005 subject to an age limit of 23 years (28 years under the rules previously in force). - Category 2 oil tankers - known as Marpol tankers - provide greater protection against grounding and collision. These tankers will be withdrawn by 2010 in accordance with a stricter timetable. The same timetable now applies to small, category 3 oil tankers (with a deadweight of less than 20 000 or 30 000 tonnes). 3) The special inspection arrangements for oil tankers to assess the sound structural state of single-hull oil tankers which are more than 15 years old have been extended and will be implemented earlier. All single-hull tankers, including the smallest ones which were initially not covered by the scheme, will now be subject to the Condition Assessment Scheme (CAS) from the age of 15 years. The CAS is an enhanced additional inspection scheme specially developed to detect structural weaknesses in single-hull tankers. Oil tankers, even those built recently,which do not meet the test requirements may be refused entry to EU ports or permission to fly the flag of an EU country. ENTRY INTO FORCE : 21 October 2003.