Maritime safety: minimum level of training of seafarers

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The Council agreed a **general approach** on updating a 2008 directive defining the minimum level of training for seafarers, with a view to aligning EU legislation with recent amendments to the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watch keeping for Seafarers (STCW). The 2008 directive provides for the transposition into EU law of this Convention, which was adopted by the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) and to which all EU Member States are parties.

Two delegations raised certain issues, while supporting the general approach. The first voiced its concerns regarding the requirement to send the Commission information on certificates for statistical purposes. The other delegation considered that there were legal uncertainties in the text and invited the Commission to address this problem in a future recast of the EU's STCW Directive,

The amendments to the STCW agreed by the IMO in 2010, which enter into force in 2012 (with transitional arrangements until 2017), include provisions on:

- updated standards for medical fitness and fitness for duty, including as regards alcohol abuse;
- the establishment of the new professional profiles of "able seafarers", "electro-technical officers" and "electro-technical ratings";
- security-related training for all seafarers;
- clearer and simpler definition of certificates, and
- prevention of fraudulent practices relating to certificates.

The draft directive incorporates these amendments into EU law, while adapting the STCW provisions on watch keeping in order to bring them into line with EU rules on working time for seafarers.

In addition, the draft directive extends the time frame available to the Commission for deciding on the recognition of the training and certification systems of non-EU countries from three to eighteen months, as the three-month deadline has proved impracticable.

The new text also provides for the collection of information on seafarers' certificates for statistical purposes, as a tool for policy-making in this sector.