

Prevention of pollution from ships: sulphur content of marine fuels

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The Council took note of a **progress report** on the proposal for a directive amending directive 1999/32/EC as regards the sulphur content of marine fuels. The Council will pursue its work on the text under the incoming Danish Presidency.

- Member states in general welcomed the report and several ministers underlined the harmful effects for human health of emissions from shipping due to the combustion of marine fuels with a high sulphur content, which contribute to air pollution in the form of sulphur dioxide and particulate matter, thus also causing acidification.
- Several member states and the Commission called for the application of stricter fuel quality standards applicable to SO₂ Emission Control Areas (SECAs) to all territorial waters of the EU Member States. However, some ministers pointed out that this could lead to distortions of competition, since other non-EU countries will not apply the same rules and therefore any SECAs enlargement should only be done within the framework of the IMO.

Furthermore, a number of ministers also expressed concerns regarding the fact that adapting vessels to comply with the new rules would imply additional costs for ship owners and required a transitional period. Some member states also voiced doubts on the availability of low sulphur fuels from the date of entry into force of the directive.