Recognition of professional qualifications in inland navigation

2016/0050(COD) - 28/11/2016 - Committee report tabled for plenary, 1st reading/single reading

The Committee on Transport and Tourism adopted the report by Gesine MEISSNER (ADLE, DE) on the proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on the recognition of professional qualifications in inland navigation and repealing Council Directive 96/50/EC and Council Directive 91/672 /EEC.

The Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, exercising its prerogative as an associated committee in accordance with Rule 54 of the Rules of Procedure, also gave its opinion on the report.

The committee recommended that Parliament's position adopted in first reading should amend the Commission as follows:

Scope: Members excluded from the scope of the Directive:

- crafts used by armed forces, forces maintaining public order, civil defence services, waterway administrations, fire services and other emergency services;
- crafts navigating seasonally within a Member State on isolated lakes not connected to a navigable inland waterway of another Member State.

'Deck crew members': the text states that this means persons involved in the operation of a vessel carrying out tasks related to controlling the operation of the vessel, marine engineering, communication, safety, health and environmental protection, cargo and passenger handling.

Exemptions: holding Union certificates of qualification should not be made compulsory on national inland waterways that are not linked to a navigable inland waterway of another Member State.

Inland waterway stretches presenting specific risks: a high frequency of accidents at a specific location on the river should form part of the criteria for determining whether a particular stretch of water involves a specific risk. For stretches with specific risks, it shall be compulsory for a limited number of journeys to be carried out on the stretch concerned.

Recognition of certificates issued by a third country: Members suggested confining such recognition to third countries that are linked to a navigable inland waterway of a Member State. When a Member State considers that a third country no longer complies with the requirements of this Article, it shall notify the Commission immediately, giving substantiated reasons for its contention.

Assessment of competences: the demonstration of compliance with the standards of competence shall include a practical examination for obtaining, inter alia, a certificate of qualification for navigational safety experts on passenger vessels. Member States shall issue a **practical examination certificate** to applicants who have passed the practical examination. They shall **recognise,** without further requirements or assessments, practical examination certificates issued by competent authorities in other Member States.

Practical examinations may take place on board a vessel or **on a simulator**. As far as possible, nationals of other Member States must be guaranteed access to simulators.

Examiners must be qualified to assess the competences and the corresponding knowledge and skills and must not have a conflict of interest.

Training programmes: Member States may approve training programmes at national level on condition that such programmes meet the common criteria defined by **CESNI** (*Comité Européen pour l'Élaboration de Standards dans le Domaine de Navigation Intérieure)*. Where the conditions laid down in the Directive are met, the Commission should refer to CESNI standards when adopting implementing and delegated acts in accordance with this Directive.

The competence acquisition and assessment activities, and the administration of Union certificates of qualifications, services record books and logbooks, should be evaluated at intervals of **no more than six years** by independent bodies.

Essential competence requirements: Members also added other competences which they considered essential for obtaining the qualification of boatmaster:

- assist the vessel's management in providing services to passengers, know and initiate the application of relevant passenger rights, including special measures for persons with reduced mobility;
- know traffic regulations and basic knowledge of the carriage of dangerous goods;
- give instructions and monitor all tasks undertaken by other members of the deck crew;
- ensure good communication at all times with other ships and ground authorities and be able to communicate in elementary English.

Member States must apply the Directive within **4 years** of entry into force.