Minimum level of training of seafarers

2018/0162(COD) - 11/01/2019 - Committee report tabled for plenary, 1st reading/single reading

The Committee on Transport and Tourism adopted the report by Dominique RIQUET (ADLE, FR) on the proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Directive 2008/106/EC on the minimum level of training of seafarers and repealing Directive 2005/45/EC

The Commission proposal aims to update European standards in line with the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW), 1978 rules laid down under the auspices of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO).

The committee recommended that the position of the European Parliament adopted at first reading in the framework of the ordinary legislative procedure should amend the Commission proposal as follows.

Mutual recognition of certificates

In order to foster the professional mobility of seafarers within the EU, Member States should fully recognise certificates of proficiency and documentary evidence issued to seafarers by other Member States, including for the purposes of issuing national certificates of competency. If a Member State refuses to endorse or accept such a valid certificate issued by another Member State, it should state the reasons on which that decision is based.

The recognition of seafarers' certificates issued by third countries should be conditional upon the ratification of the international Maritime Labour Convention by those third countries.

With regard to applications from Member States to the Commission for the recognition of third-country certificates of competency or proficiency, Members took the view that such applications must be considered on the basis of the law.

In addition, Members felt that the period in which recognition of third countries that have not supplied seafarers to the Union fleet should be re-examined should be extended from 5 to 8 years.

Certificates

Any certificate required by the directive shall be kept available in its original form on board the ship on which the holder is serving, on paper or in electronic format, the authenticity and validity of which shall be guaranteed by the issuing State and which may be verified under the procedure laid down in the directive.

As of 1 January 2027, all certificates and endorsements shall be made available by electronic means.

The initial decision regarding the acceptance of such certificates or evidence shall be issued within one month of receipt of the request and supporting documentation.

Members proposed that certificates should be centralised by means of an EU-level electronic database, which is also linked to the database referred to in Directive 2009/16/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on port State control.

Improve the quality of training for seafarers

Members suggested offering training above and beyond the minimum requirements laid down in the STCW Convention and resulting in the award of a European Maritime Diploma of Excellence.

They stated that a broad debate involving social partners, Member States, training institutions and other stakeholders is necessary to investigate the possibility of creating a voluntary system of harmonised certificates going beyond the STCW in the level of training, in order to increase the competitive advantage of European seafarers. Such a STCW+ could establish “maritime certificates of excellence” based on European maritime postgraduate courses, which would provide European seafarers with skills above and beyond those required at international level.