Minimum level of training of seafarers

2018/0162(COD) - 04/04/2019 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 563 votes to 32, with 22 abstentions, a legislative resolution 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 European Parliament's position adopted at first reading under the ordinary legislative procedure amended the Commission proposal as follows:

Streamline the regulatory framework for training and certification of seafarers

The amending directive shall aim to update European standards with the rules of the 1978 International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers, as revised (STCW Convention) defined under the aegis of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO). The amended text underlines the need to take further measures to enhance the European maritime skills base in line with international rules and technological advances.

Mutual recognition of seafarers' certificates issued by Member States

Every Member State shall accept certificates of proficiency and documentary evidence issued by another Member State, or under its authority, in hard copy or in digital format, for the purpose of allowing seafarers to serve on ships flying its flag. The endorsement attesting the recognition shall be limited to the capacities, functions and levels of competency or proficiency prescribed therein. It shall only be issued if all requirements of the STCW Convention have been complied with.

The Commission shall process without delay that request and shall decide on the initiation of the assessment of the training and certification system in the third country within a reasonable time.

When a positive decision for initiating the assessment has been adopted, the Commission shall carry out an assessment of the training and certification systems in the third country for which the request for recognition was submitted, in order to verify that the country concerned meets all the requirements of the STCW Convention and that appropriate measures have been taken to prevent issuance of fraudulent certificates, and to consider whether it has ratified the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006.

Where the Commission concludes that all those requirements are fulfilled, it shall adopt implementing acts laying down its decision on the recognition of a third country.

If there are no endorsements attesting recognition issued by a Member State in relation to certificates of competency or certificates of proficiency issued by a third country for a period of more than eight years, the recognition of that country's certificates shall be re-examined.

Each Member State should accept certificates of competency and supporting documents issued by or under the authority of another Member State, in paper or electronic form, for the purpose of authorising seafarers to serve on board ships flying its flag. The visa attesting recognition would be limited to the capacities, functions and levels of ability specified in the document concerned. It would only be issued if all the requirements of the STCW Convention have been met.

The Commission should process without delay the application for recognition of third-country certificates of competence submitted by a Member State and take a decision on the opening of the evaluation of the training and qualifications system in the third country within a reasonable period of time.

When a decision in favour of opening the assessment has been adopted, the Commission should assess the training and credentialing systems of the third country for which the application for recognition has been made, in order to verify that the country concerned meets all the requirements of the STCW Convention, and that appropriate measures to prevent credential fraud have been taken, and to verify whether the country concerned has ratified the 2006 Maritime Labour Convention.

If the Commission concludes that all these requirements are met, it should adopt implementing acts incorporating its decision on the recognition of a third country.

In the event that no endorsement attesting recognition is issued by a Member State for certificates of competence or certificates of competence issued by a third country during a period of more than 8 years, the recognition of that country's qualifications should be subject to review

Reassessment

The Commission, with the assistance of the European Maritime Safety Agency, shall carry out the reassessment of the third countries based on priority criteria. Those priority criteria shall include the following:

- the number of seafarers' training and professional development programmes approved by the third country;

- the overall numbers of seafarers certified by the third country, serving on ships flying the flags of Member States and the level of training and qualifications of those seafarers;

- information concerning education and training standards in the third country provided by any concerned authorities or other stakeholders, if available.

Evaluation report

No later than five years after the entry into force of this amending Directive, the Commission shall submit to the European Parliament and to the Council an evaluation report, including suggestions for follow up actions to be taken in the light of that evaluation.

In that evaluation report, the Commission shall analyse the implementation of the mutual recognition scheme of seafarers' certificates issued by Member States, and any developments regarding digital certificates for seafarers at international level.

The Commission shall also evaluate any developments regarding a future consideration of the European Maritime Diplomas of Excellence, as underpinned by the recommendations provided by the social partners.

Education and training

The amended text underlines the importance of supporting the education and training of European seafarers as masters and officers through student exchanges between maritime education and training institutions throughout the Union.

In order to cultivate and develop the skills and qualifications of seafarers under European flag, an exchange of good practices between Member States is necessary. The opportunities offered by the Erasmus+ programme for the education and training of seafarers should be fully exploited