Maritime safety: minimum level of training of seafarers

1996/0240(SYN) - 20/10/1997 - Council position

The common position on the proposal for the amending of the Directive on the training of seafarers incorporates the substance of the amendments proposed by the European Parliament and introduces a substantial number of new provisions. The Council has adopted 13 of the 19 amendments included in the Commission's amended proposal, relating primarily to the following points: - recognition by the Member States of levels of training only where these are consistent with the provisions of the STCW Convention, and the possibility for Member States to establish higher standards than those of the Directive, should they wish to do so; - introduction of provisions to optimize oral communication and introduce a common working language on ships, both passenger ships and tankers, in accordance with the IMO's SOLAS Convention; - notification of the Commission rather than a committee procedure concerning the adoption of a decision on the definition of near-coastal voyages; - review of the Directive after it has been in force for five years, with possible amendments before then through a committee procedure; - addition of a new annex to ensure a harmonized Community approach to the recognition of certificates issued by third countries, whilst allowing Member States a certain amount of leeway to take individual action where collective action is not necessary. The Council has also introduced new provisions concerning mainly: - the scope of the directive, by aligning the Community text to the new STCW Convention of 1995, which applies to all seafarers and not just crew members; - improvement of the definitions contained in the Directive; - the recommendations (Part B) of the STCW Convention: the Council has deleted this section on the grounds that the recommendations are non-mandatory; - mutual recognition of foreign certificates: the Council felt it was more appropriate for the definition of the criteria for the recognition of foreign certificates to be based on compliance with the provisions of the STCW Convention by the third countries concerned. The procedures agreed by the Council in order to verify that the third countries satisfy the STCW standards refer to the requirement that the country should figure in the IMO White List. Member States must ensure that the standards of competence and rules on the issue and endorsement of certificates are fully complied with. The committee provided for by the Directive is authorized to check and approve the foreign certificates to be recognized by Member States; - port State control: the Council has replaced the Directive's provisions on compliance with Directive 95/21/EC on port State control by the provisions of the Convention on the same subject. The Council has not accepted the amendments proposed by Parliament on watchkeeping or on the establishing of a European training institute for seafarers.