Maritime safety: double hull or equivalent design for single hull oil tankers, package Erika I

2000/0067(COD) - 27/09/2000 - Document attached to the procedure

This present report from the Commission for the Biarritz European Coucil outlines the Community strategy for safety at sea. The Feira European Council of 19-20 June 2000 welcomed the Commission's intention to deliver a report on the overall strategy concerning the safey of transport at sea to enable a decision to be taken before the end of the year. Following the sinking of the oil tanker, Erika, on 12 December 1999, the Commission responded quickly to the calls from the European Parliament and the Council to tighten significantly the rules governing safety at sea at the Community level by adopting a "communication on the safety of oil transport by sea" on 21 March 2000. The communication describes an overall strategy that includes a certain number of practical short and medium-term activiites to prevent such accidents from ever happening again. The three proposed legislative measures adopted by the Commission after the Erika disaster are currently being discussed within the European Parliament and the Council. The three proposals relate in particular to: - amending the existing Directive on the inspection of ships by the Port State in order to make the checks in ports more stringent; - amending the existing Directive with regard to classification societies for which Member States delegate a major proportion of their inspection powers; - banning single-hull oil tankers in line with a timetable similar to that set by the United States. Progress has been made on the three proposals, however, substantial work still has to be done before the Nice European Council in December. Furthermore, beyond the proposed short-term actions set out in the communication, the Commission has announced further action to provide long-term protection of European waters against the risk of accidents and pollution of the seas. The Commission intends to propose that a European fund to compensate for damage caused by pollution be set up which would provide top-up compensation for victims where the ceilings set by the Conventions are exceeded. In addition, the Commission is contemplating the setting-up of a specific structure which might take the form of a "European Agency for Maritime Safety". Finally, as announced in the Commission's communication of 21 March, the proposals concerning the safety of traffic at sea and the European structure will be finalised at the end of the year and will be immediately followed by a proposal on liability. All of these forms of action together, including the first package of short-term measures, make up a coherent whole which should significantly improve maritime safety in the waters and the ports of the European Union.