Double hull or equivalent design requirements for oil tankers

2002/0310(COD) - 20/12/2002 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE : to phase-out single hull oil tankers following the Prestige accident and amend Regulation 417 /2002/EC. CONTENT : The Commission proposes three amendments to the existing regulation: i) a provision that heavy grades of oil will only be carried by double hull tankers. The Commission proposes prohibiting the transport of heavy grades of oil in single-hulled tankers bound for or leaving EU ports of a Member State. The choice of oil types are those with high viscosity that in the case of an oil spill either sink or float in the sea, causing the most severe forms of pollution of the marine and coastal environments. ii) a revision of the phasing out scheme to ensure, in particular, that single hull tankers of category 1 will not operate beyond 23 years and 2005, or, 28 years and 2010 for category 2 and 28 years for Category 3. The purpose of the modifications introduced in this proposal is to lower the age limits, and cut-off dates to the level as initially proposed in the ERIKA I package in order to ensure a better protection of the marine environment. The categories are defined as follows: Category 1 - so-called "pre-MARPOL" single hull oil tankers, being crude oil tankers of 20000 tons dead-weight and above and oil product carriers of 30000 tons and above having no segregated ballast tanks in protective location. Category 2 - corresponds to "MARPOL" single hull tankers, being of the same size as category 1, but which are equipped with segregated ballast tanks in protective locations. Category 3 corresponds to single hull oil tankers below the size limits of categories I and 2 but above 5000 tons dead weight. Under current legislation, the maximum age limit for category 1 tankers is 26 to 30 years. The Prestige and the Erika were Category 1 tankers of 26 years at the time of their fatal accidents. The prestige would have been phased out in accordance with the current legislation in March 2005. iii) a broader application of the special inspection regime for tankers (the Condition Assessment Scheme) designed to assess the structural soundness of single hull tankers, which have passed the age of 15 years. The CAS as introduced by Regulation 417/2002/EC is an additional reinforced inspection scheme specifically developed to detect structural weaknesses of single-hulled oil tankers. It is carried out every two and a half years. Currently, singe hull tankers of category 1 and 2 which have not yet reached their age limit can only continue to operate beyond 2005 or 2010 respectively if they have successfully passed the test of CAS. The Scheme does not apply to the smaller Category 3 ships. The Commission proposes that the latter also be required to comply. All remaining categories of single hull oil tankers shall comply with CAS from the age of 15 years. 2005 is an appropriate start-up date for this requirement.