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

2000/0067(COD) - 20/11/2000

The committee adopted the report by Kostas HATZIDAKIS (EPP-ED, GR) amending the proposal under the codecision procedure (1st reading). The committee amended the article dealing with the timetable for phasing out single hull tankers so as to take account of the common position of the Member States in the framework of the IMO negotiations on amending the MARPOL 73/78 Convention. It therefore laid down very specific phasing-out schedules, starting in 2003, for various categories of ships built in a period ranging from before 1973 up to 1992 and later. To avoid disruption of the market and European oil supplies by a simultaneous large-scale withdrawal of ships when the measures were first implemented in 2003, the committee felt that ships built before 1982 should be given the possibility to continue operating after 2005 (the deadline laid down in the current proposal), provided that they were subject to special restraints and to a special survey regime and were not in use beyond 2007, the phasing-out deadline which the committee was proposing for ships built in 1981. It also argued that some of the ships built between 1982 and 1996 were still in very good condition and should therefore be allowed to continue operating after 2010 (the deadline laid down in the current proposal for vessels in that age-range), provided they too were subject to a special survey scheme and were not in use beyond the committee's proposed deadline of 2015 for ships built in 1992 or later. However, the committee qualified its amendments by introducing a new recital making it clear that, if the IMO negotiations fell behind schedule or the amended Convention differed substantially from the regulation, the EU would have to take a unilateral decision to proceed with the accelerated phasing-in of double hull tankers. In that case, the committee argued, the original Commission proposal of March 2000 should constitute the definitive text. Another point raised by the committee was the need to ensure normal supply of the market in island regions of the Union (a task performed by low tonnage ships). It accordingly felt that the limit of 600 tons deadweight proposed by the Commission should be increased to 3000 tdw. Lastly, the committee disagreed with the idea of a differential charging system for port and pilotage dues for double hull and single hull oil tankers, and wanted this to be deleted from the proposed regulation. It argued that increasing dues for single hull tankers would only add to the burden on shipowners, who would also have to bear the cost of replacing their vessels with double hull vessels.