Carriage of goods and persons by inland waterway: conditions for obtaining national boatmasters' certificates

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The committee has adopted the report of Mr VAN DER WAAL on the Commission proposal for a Council directive on the harmonization of the conditions for obtaining national boatmasters' certificates for the carriage of goods and passengers by inland waterway in the EU. Although, by Council directive 91 /672/EEC of 16 December 1991 a reciprocal recognition of national boatmasters' certificates was already introduced, the conditions for granting of such certificates still vary from one country to another. The most striking differences are in the following area : - minimum age - physical suitability - professional fitness and - professional experience. The commission therefore proposes a directive seeking to harmonise the conditions for the granting of these certificates. Member States and professional associations are in favour of the proposals, which seek, besides eliminating distortions of competition, to improve safety of shipping. The proposal provides for a uniform boatmaster's certificate to inland navigation based on a Community model which the Member States issue and recognise reciprocally and this from 1 January 1996. The model proposed has the modern format of a credit card and fraud can be prevented by incorporating a hologram. The minimum age for acquiring the certificate is 21. A certificate issued in a Member State from the age of 18 is to be recognised by the other Member States which impose a minimum age of 21 in their territory when the boatmaster reaches the age of 21.