

Maritime safety: roll-on/roll-off (Ro-ro) ferries and high speed passenger craft, conditions for the operation

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By adopting Mark WATTS' (PES, UK) recommendation on the common position by the Council regarding the directive on conditions for the operation of regular ro-ro ferry and high speed passenger craft services, the Committee demanded that all these vessels be fitted with a voyage data recorder (VDR) within 5 years. The Committee disagreed with the Council and the Commission that the cost of such VDRs was too high. Exemptions in perpetuity were unacceptable as they compromised safety. Neither could the Committee accept the view that information on safety matters should be kept confidential. Dissemination of information on safety was an inseparable part of Community safety policy. Said the rapporteur: "There is a moral obligation to avoid confidentiality because the public is entitled to information. Exposure of the "bad" players to public knowledge is therefore unavoidable". Mr WATTS also asked for regular inspections of the life-saving appliances, including rescue boat equipment to ensure that they were complete and in good order.