Towards a new maritime strategy

1996/2065(COS) - 24/04/1997 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

In adopting the report by Mr Alessandro DANESIN (UPE, I), the European Parliament welcomed the Commission's proposal for a new maritime strategy, particularly the target of reducing flagging out to 25% of the fleet by the year 2005. It calls for a European register to be introduced to ensure uniform levels of quality and safety in the maritime sector. Given the shortage of qualified seafarers in the Union, Parliament calls for measures to attract young people to the maritime profession by providing opportunities for labour mobility and retraining, more land-based tasks, improved conditions for periods spent at sea and an improved insurance system. Noting that many ships are no longer up to standard, because of the evasion of safety standards and social costs, the report calls for genuine penalties against such ships and their owners, believing that merely detaining ships in port until repairs are completed is inadequate. Parliament believes the Commission should consider introducing restrictions on the emission of harmful substances by ships' engines. It also calls for support measures to offset the additional costs to the Community fleet of meeting the social and safety standards in force in the Union. It also calls for the 1996 directive on port State control to be applied uniformly and asks the Commission to consider the possibility of introducing differentiated port dues based on criteria of environment friendliness and safety. It calls for port State control to be stepped up for all ships which sail in Community waters and calls for all ships carrying dangerous or polluting cargoes to request approval for their routes, which should avoid environmentally sensitive coastal reserves. It also calls on the Commission to devise a European system for collecting ships' waste (bilge water) and to coordinate an effective system at European level for depositing this waste. It takes the view that national aid to the maritime sector should be aimed at promoting the Community's naval industry on the world market, its know-how in the maritime field and the numerous industries within the sector. It stresses the need for training and recruitment of seamen and staff on land. Needless to say, such aid should not create distortions of competition and it condemns the indirect state aid created through the flag of convenience system at international level and through the deregulation of national registers or the introduction of second registers at European level. Finally, it stresses the need to include seaports in the trans-European networks as points of interconnection between maritime transport and other transport modes. It also wants to promote both short-distance shipping (coastal and inter-island) and long-distance maritime transport for intra-Community liaison.