Port services: market access and financing of maritime ports

2001/0047(COD) - 20/11/2003 - Text adopted by Parliament, 3rd reading

The European Parliament rejected, at third reading, the joint text that had been approved by the Conciliation Committee. This was only the third time in ten years that Parliament had overturned an agreement reached in conciliation.

229 MEPs (chiefly members of the PSE, Greens/EFA and GUE/NGL groups) voted against the joint text, with 209 MEPs in favour and 16 abstaining. Most Members of the EPP-ED and ELDR groups were in favour of the agreement.

The most contested element of the agreement was the definition of "self-handling". A majority of MEPs argued that the directive would allow workers from boats in harbour to carry out unrestricted loading in European ports and that this would significantly degrade safety conditions in EU docks. Under current regulations only professional dockers employed by port authorities were allowed to do this type of work. The opponents of the agreement said that professional dockers were more qualified and could ensure higher safety levels. They felt that, under the proposed directive, competent workers risked losing their jobs to cheaper and less qualified people and that the conciliation result had not brought about a satisfactory solution to this problem.

Under the rules governing codecision, Parliament's failure to approve the joint text meant that the legislative procedure would automatically come to an end.