Maritime safety: establishing a Community vessel traffic monitoring and information system

2005/0239(COD) - 23/11/2005 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE : to amend Directive 2002/59/EC establishing a Community vessel traffic monitoring and information system, particularly in order to reflect technological developments and to harmonise the “places of refuge” plans.

PROPOSED ACT : Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council.

CONTENT : for more than ten years the EU has been pursuing a proactive maritime safety policy aimed at improving ship safety, safeguarding human life at sea and protecting the marine environment.

Directive 2002/59/EC requires all the ship monitoring tools now available to be properly organised and coordinated and sets up a system of deployment of resources and coordination between national authorities, to enable Member States to take better preventive action or respond better to dangerous situations.

It has become clear that some of the provisions of Directive 2002/59/EC will have to be amended. In particular this is to take account of the good results obtained by novel equipment such as automatic identification systems or to ensure cohesion between national policies, for example on plans for accommodating ships in distress in places of refuge. Certain sea areas of the EU, in particular the Baltic Sea, are ice-covered for several winter months, entailing greater risks of accidents and pollution and potentially disastrous consequences for the environment. The trend observed for a number of years, of a steady increase in the transport of oil products in the Baltic, calls for more stringent protection and surveillance measures. The proposal deals with the enhancement of ship monitoring by means of SafeSeaNet, the laying down of measures concerning navigation in ice conditions and the implementation of a stronger framework for the accommodation of ships in distress in places of refuge.

This amendment is intended to:

- incorporate in Directive 2002/59/EC additional measures for better ship safety and environmental protection. The proposal introduces an obligation to carry an automatic identification system (AIS) for fishing vessels of more than 15 metres is a response to the large number of collisions involving fishing vessels which have evidently not been identified by commercial vessels. This measure takes into account the work of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), which several years ago adopted the principle of the carriage of AIS on board commercial vessels (Class A AIS) to limit the number of accidents;

- harmonise the implementation of the “places of refuge” plans to ensure they are applied uniformly in the different Member States, which will help in preventing serious pollution. There is a need, in particular, to clarify the rules for applying these principles. Directive 2002/59/EC introduced provisions requiring the Member States to draw up plans to accommodate ships in distress in places of refuge. The experience gained with implementing the Directive has revealed differences of understanding and implementation by the Member States as regards the content of the plans and the responsibilities of the authorities concerned, which have to be remedied by making the existing provisions clearer and more focused;

- integrate in the Directive the principles defined in the work done by the Member States and the Commission to set up the Community maritime safety information exchange system SafeSeaNet. In particular, the principles have to be established on the one hand for the systematic exchange of maritime

safety information at Community level via the SafeSeaNet system and on the other hand for cooperation between the Member States on monitoring and developing the system. All national systems will have to be compatible with SafeSeaNet and any information of Community interest will have to be

presented in a harmonised manner;

- prepare the Community legal framework for future technological developments, especially the space applications such as ship monitoring beacons, imaging systems or Galileo. This progress has to make it possible to extend surveillance of maritime traffic into European waters and, in particular, provide better coverage of the open sea.

In addition, the proposal deals with:

- new harmonised rules for winter navigation in the Baltic, which are necessary for reducing the very high accident risk in that area. There will be specific measures allowing coastal States to take appropriate measures to limit the potential threat to navigation from ice formation in certain northern sea areas of the European Union;

- improving the exchange of information on dangerous goods being carried by ships, which will enable all Member States to improve their ability to anticipate and prevent risks.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS :

There is no operational expenditure of administrative expenditure within the reference amount.

Administrative expenditure not included within the reference amount (human resources): EUR 0.324 million (EUR 0.054 each year over five years.)

Total staff: 0.5 per annum.