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## **Working Party on Inland Water Transport**

### **Sixtieth session**

Geneva, 2–4 November 2016

### **Agenda item 3**

### **Current situation and trends in inland water transport**

## **Proposal for a EU Directive on the recognition of professional qualifications in inland navigation**

### **Transmitted by the European Commission**

### **I. Objective of the proposal**

The objective of the proposal is to facilitate labour mobility in the inland waterway transport sector by ensuring that skilled workers' qualifications are recognised throughout the Union. The initiative builds upon over 19 years of experience with implementation of Directives 96/50/EC<sup>1</sup> and 91/672/EEC<sup>2</sup> which are however limited to the mutual recognition of boatmasters operating on EU inland waterways other than the Rhine river.

Inland navigation is a cost-saving and energy-efficient transport mode that could be used more efficiently to support the European Union's energy efficiency, growth and industrial development goals. However, its contribution is hampered by difficulties in terms of labour mobility, persistent vacancies and skills mismatches, which continue in spite of attempts by the sector to tackle the problems at bilateral and multilateral level.

This initiative therefore proposes to extend the scope of recognition of professional qualifications beyond boatmasters and to include the Rhine river. The proposal also responds to calls from the sector and Member States to introduce a competence-based framework similar to those used in other modes of transport.

The proposal has been prepared under NAIADES II, following a review of the framework on the harmonisation professional qualifications in the sector. As part of the new approach to governance in inland navigation, the Commission has strengthened its cooperation with various River Commissions, in particular with the Central Commission for the Navigation on the Rhine. This cooperation has led amongst others to the creation of CESNI (Comité Européen pour les Standards de la Navigation Intérieure) whose task is to develop technical standards for the inland waterway sector, including in the area of

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<sup>1</sup> Council Directive 96/50/EC of 23 July 1996 on the harmonization of the conditions for obtaining national boatmasters' certificates for the carriage of goods and passengers by inland waterway in the Community.

<sup>2</sup> Council Directive 91/672/EEC of 16 December 1991 on the reciprocal recognition of national boatmasters' certificates for the carriage of goods and passengers by inland waterway.

professional qualifications. It is intended that CESNI takes on an active role in the preparation and laying down of the future standards which would represent the basis for the development of a harmonised approach in the Union.

## **II. State of play in the Council and the European Parliament**

Discussions in Council started in March 2016 and the Dutch Presidency reached a general approach at the June Transport Council<sup>3</sup>. The Commission maintains a general reserve on all aspects of the Council text, pending the European Parliament's definition of its position.

The European Parliament's Committee on Transport and Tourism (TRAN) appointed in May Ms Gesine Meissner (ALDE, DE) as rapporteur<sup>4</sup>. Following an exchange of views with stakeholders in June, she presented a draft report in September. The next milestone is the discussion on amendments and vote in TRAN scheduled for 9-10 November.

The European Parliament's Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL) and Legal Affairs (JURI) Committees provided an opinion respectively in October and in July.

## **III. Opinions from other bodies**

The European Economic and Social Committee adopted its opinion in July 2016.

## **IV. Next steps**

If vote in TRAN takes place on 10 November, trilogues between the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission could start under the Slovak Presidency. The Commission hopes that an agreement will be reached either under the Slovak Presidency or under the Maltese Presidency in the course of next year. The Directive could then be adopted by mid-2017.

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<sup>3</sup> Doc 8970/16 available under [www.consilium.europa.eu/register](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/register)

<sup>4</sup> Further information available under:  
[www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?lang=&reference=2016/0050\(COD\)](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?lang=&reference=2016/0050(COD))