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Training of seafarers: agreement between Council and European Parliament on update of EU directive

The permanent representatives of the EU member states endorsed today an agreement reached with the European Parliament on an update of the EU directive defining the minimum level of training for seafarers. The agreement is the result of discussions between the Danish presidency, the European Parliament and the Commission at first reading. The new draft directive ([11948/12](#)) still needs to be formally approved by Parliament, whose vote is expected for autumn 2012, and by the Council, which is due to take its decision after the vote in Parliament.

The update aligns the EU directive of 2008 with recent amendments to the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW). The 2008 directive provides for the transposition into EU law of this convention, which was adopted by the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) and to which all EU member states are parties.

The amendments to the STCW agreed by the IMO in 2010, which enter into force in 2012 (with transitional arrangements until 2017), include provisions on:

- updated standards for medical fitness and fitness for duty, including as regards alcohol abuse,
- the establishment of the new professional profiles of "able seafarers", "electro-technical officers" and "electro-technical ratings",
- security-related training for all seafarers,

P R E S S

Rue de la Loi 175 B - 1048 BRUSSELS Tel.: +32 (0)2 281 6319 Fax: +32 (0)2 281 8026
press.office@consilium.europa.eu <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/Newsroom>

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- clearer and simpler definition of certificates, and
- prevention of fraudulent practices relating to certificates.

The draft directive incorporates these amendments into EU law, while adapting the STCW provisions on watchkeeping in order to bring them into line with EU rules on working time for seafarers.

In addition, the draft directive extends the time frame available to the Commission for deciding on the recognition of the training and certification systems of non-EU countries from three to eighteen months, as the three-month deadline has proved impracticable. The new text also provides for the collection of information on seafarers' certificates for statistical purposes, as a tool for policy-making in this sector.

The proposal for the directive ([14256/11](#)) was presented by the Commission in September 2011, as part of its "Social agenda for maritime transport", which also includes a communication and two legislative proposals for the enforcement of the 2006 Maritime Labour Convention adopted by the International Labour Organisation (ILO). The Council agreed on a general approach on the proposal in December 2011 ([18147/11](#)).

