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Council and European Parliament agree on updated rules for marine equipment

The member states' permanent representatives today endorsed the compromise reached between the Council and the European Parliament concerning a directive to regulate **marine equipment to be placed on board EU ships**.

The Hellenic presidency of the Council welcomes the agreement between the Council and the European Parliament on the proposed marine equipment directive. Greek Minister for Shipping, Maritime Affairs and the Aegean Mr Varvitsiotis, Chair of Council meetings of maritime transport ministers stated that *"the Hellenic presidency has set as a priority the enhancement of maritime safety and the protection of the marine environment and had declared the adoption of this proposal at first reading as a main priority. I am more than happy that we have delivered"*.

While marine equipment is installed on board ships at the time of their construction or repair all over the world, EU countries must ensure that the equipment placed on board vessels flying their flag complies with international and European requirements. As proof of compliance a particular logo, the **wheel mark**, is affixed to the equipment. This is the maritime equivalent of the CE-marking on, for example, household appliances.

Purpose of the updated directive

EU marine equipment rules basically serve two objectives:

- to improve safety at sea and prevent maritime pollution through the uniform application of the requirements set by the International Maritime Organisation (IMO)
- to ensure the free movement of marine equipment within the EU.

P R E S S

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The new directive - which replaces the old one from 1996 - enhances the implementation and enforcement of these rules. It aligns them with the [new legislative framework](#) for the marketing of goods within the EU. In addition, it clarifies and speeds up the enactment of changing international standards in European and national law. It reinforces market surveillance, conformity checking and the periodic updating of EU rules.

Main issues agreed between the Council and the Parliament:

International conventions

The directive covers vessels falling under the scope of the following IMO conventions:

- the 1972 Convention on the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea (Colreg)
- the 1973 International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (Marpol)
- the 1974 International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (Solas).

The list of conventions can only be changed by the Council and the Parliament through the ordinary legislative procedure.

Electronic tag

Manufacturers will have the option of electronic tagging to supplement or replace the wheel mark. This should facilitate inspection of ships and thus reinforce market surveillance and help combat counterfeiting more effectively.

Standards for marine equipment

The EU will pursue the development by the IMO and by standardisation bodies of international standards for marine equipment, including technical specifications and testing standards. If there is no international standard for a specific item of marine equipment, the Commission may, in exceptional circumstances and subject to certain conditions, adopt harmonised technical specifications and testing standards for that item.

Accessibility of standards free of charge

The compliance of marine equipment with the requirements will be demonstrated in accordance with the testing standards and by means of the conformity-assessment procedures provided for in the directive. In order to allow for fair competition in the development of marine equipment, efforts will be made to promote the use of open standards in order to make them available freely or at a nominal charge.

In the event of non-compliance attributed to shortcomings in the testing standards, the Commission may adopt interim harmonised requirements and testing standards for that specific item of marine equipment. These requirements and standards will be accessible free of charge.

Language to be used for communication between authorities and economic operators

The directive describes the respective obligations of authorities and economic operators such as manufacturers and distributors. The authorities and economic operators should make efforts to find common means of written communication. When manufacturers receive a conformity-related request from a competent authority, they must promptly provide it with all the information and documentation necessary to demonstrate the product's conformity, in a language which can be easily understood by or is acceptable to that authority.

Enactment in national law

Member states will have two years from the directive's entry into force to adopt national provisions to comply with the directive.

Next steps

To enter into force, the text still needs to be formally approved by the Parliament, whose vote in plenary is expected to take place in the coming months, and the Council, which is due to take its decision after the vote in Parliament.

See also:

- [MarEd website](#) - co-ordination group for the member states' notified bodies assigned to carry out the conformity assessment procedures referred to in the marine equipment directive
 - [International Maritime Organisation's website](#)
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