

Brussels, October 26th, 2006

Improving maritime safety

COMMISSION PROPOSAL ON CLASS DIRECTIVE IS NECESSARY TO ENSURE SAFETY

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EMEC welcomes and supports the Commission's proposal for a Directive on classification societies, particularly where it gives recognised organisations the possibility to agree on mutual recognition of certificates based on equivalent standards, established by recognised organisation themselves (art. 20);

EMEC believes that classification societies are given a unique chance to modernize the current system to the benefit of the whole maritime community. The Commission has put them at the centre of the process and they should not waste this occasion. In fact:

- By agreeing the conditions for mutual condition of certificates, as provided by the Directive, classification societies will have the possibility of setting the highest safety standard for their certificates, therefore improving the global safety of maritime transport and fostering the modernisation of fleets at a worldwide scale;
- No resources will be wasted by equipment producers and ship-owners, as it currently happens, in seeking for ten equivalent certificates for the same product. Rather, classification societies, equipment producers and shipyards will be free to focus on providing new services and research and development to the benefit of the maritime community and society as a whole;
- The definition of common conditions for the issuing of generally recognised certificates will drive out of the market, firstly, those classification societies which are not able to guarantee the quality of their classification process: this will boost the reliability and reputation of those classification societies which – on the opposite – invest energies and resources to meet the highest standards;
- Only those shipbuilders and equipment producers which will be able to satisfy strict environmental and safety standards will enjoy success on the market, obtaining certificates recognised at Europe-wide level: the European Marine Equipment Industry is ready to meet the challenge.

The current system is a source of great inefficiencies and needs to be revised: at present equipment producers are forced to obtain up to ten equivalent certificates for the same product: there are no advantages from the point of view of safety, since most of those certificates are based on the same standards. There is, anyway, a waste of time and resources, with a dramatic impact on the competitiveness of the European Marine Equipment industry.

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Mutual recognition is a reality for European industry. Is a basic principle of European Law and should be applied to the maritime industry as well. There already are practices of mutual recognition both with respect to products comprised by the Maritime Equipment Directive (MED) for products relating to safety and environmental issues and in cases where there are no alternatives to products except for products certified by other classification societies. Neither of these cases has lead to reduced safety on board or to dilution of responsibility.

EMEC agrees with the Commission that there are margins for a wider application of the principle. The current situation has grown into an obstacle for the marine equipment industry, which is having a negative impact on investments in innovation and safety.

The European Marine equipment industry is ready to join classification societies in their effort to achieve the harmonised standards for classification rules and certificates, in order to ensure environmental protection. This process is already in act and should be developed with the contribution of all stakeholders to the benefit of highest standards in maritime safety . EMEC believes that the present Commission Proposal is necessary for the success of this process.

Note:

Definition of Marine Equipment

The term 'marine equipment' refers to all products and services supplied for the building, conversion, and maintenance of ships (seagoing and inland). This includes technical services in the field of engineering, installation and commissioning, and ship maintenance (including repair).

EMEC – European Marine Equipment Council

The European Marine Equipment Council (EMEC), which represents the European marine equipment industry, consists of 13 European trade associations from Austria, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany (two), Italy, Norway, Poland, Spain, The Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

The undertakings active in this important field, many of which are SMEs, are world leaders in many of the activities described in the definition above. They are responsible for 262,000 jobs directly and 436,000 indirectly, qualifying as the most important employer in the maritime industry. They generate a turnover of 26 billion Euro, 12 billion of which relate to the export market, contributing to European economic growth.

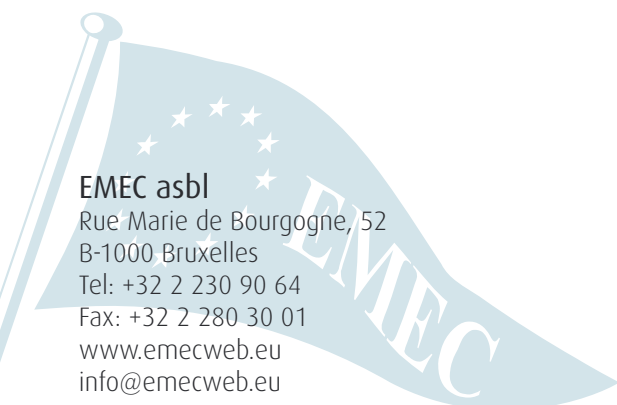
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