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Mutual recognition of class certificates: a step to increased safety and efficiency in the marine industry

For further information, please contact:
W. M. van Gulpen, Chairman of EMEC
mobile + 31 622462766
P. Lancellotti, Secretary General of EMEC
Mobile +32 498228216



EMEC welcomes the EU-proposal to establish an international recognised set of harmonised rules and requirements for the certification of marine equipment. EMEC believes that a set of harmonised rules, based on the highest safety level, will be the most effective tool to guarantee safety at sea and the protection of the marine and coastal environment. Mutual recognition is an agreed principle in the European Union. It is a fundamental prerequisite for the Internal Market. Equipment in other transport sectors like - automotive, rail and aviation has extensively been benefiting from this principle.

The lack of internationally harmonized and recognized safety standards for marine equipment has long been a weakness in the system, since manufacturers have been forced to comply with an unreasonable number of different class rules and requirements. Additionally, the pricing for the certification services by the Classification Societies is not complying with common business practices. Too many resources are presently used to comply with different rules and requirements: these efforts are producing little value and no added safety. In the context of harmonised rules and standards, the resources now employed for multiple certification could more effectively be used to further develop technologically advanced solutions and improve the quality of equipment, and thereby the safety of ships.

IACS, in a press release last December, is claiming that mutual recognition of equipment certificates issued by class will reduce safety. IACS claims that this view is supported by a number of other organisations.

EMEC does not see how mutual recognition properly applied could have safety implications and is aware that other important organisations share the same view. Particularly as the principle of mutual recognition is already in force for safety products on board European flagged ships under the Marine Equipment Directive (MED). It appears clearly that equipment on board a ship certified under the MED by one concerned classification society, other than the society classifying the ship, does not affect at all safety conditions for the ship. There is absolutely no evidence that, under the MED system, safety at sea is in any way compromised.



EMEC asbl
Rue Marie de Bourgogne, 52
B-1000 Bruxelles
Tel: +32 2 230 90 64
Fax: +32 2 280 30 01
www.emecweb.eu
info@emecweb.eu

In the same vein, mutual recognition of certificates based on the highest safety level will not jeopardize the safety of ships. On the contrary, it will increase it, since new resources will be made available for research and development. To the knowledge of EMEC neither shipowners nor yards have been experiencing any problems accepting this practise of divided responsibility, within the MED context, as this is not causing any sort of dilution of responsibility.

In order to further improve the safety of ships and protection of the environment is it important that the EU-Commission, together with EMSA and the Member States, continues its efforts to ensure that the services performed by the Recognised Organisations, meet the highest quality and safety standards.

Safety, related to design, manufacturing, installation and certification of products and systems as part of the building process is one part of the safety issue. The other is safe handling and maintenance of ships and systems on board over the life cycle.

Close cooperation with shipowners and yards have put European equipment manufacturers in the forefront developing innovative solutions and products which are manufactured with high quality and with a view to ensure safe operations and low life cycle costs. The work carried out by manufacturers is important to enhance safety and preserve the environment.

It is the belief of EMEC that a cooperation with IACS, as a consequence of the EU-initiative, will be in the benefit of all parties in the marine community, as it will be an important step in further enhancing the safety level in shipping.

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, the majority 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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