

Citizen's summary

Commission proposal for a Directive on the recognition of professional qualifications in inland navigation and repealing Council Directive 91/672/EEC and Council Directive 96/50/EC

WHAT'S THE ISSUE?

Inland waterway transport (IWT) is a cost and energy efficient transport mode that contributes to the Union's economic and industrial development. Still, the EU's share of IWT within long distance freight transport amounts to only 7%, compared to 33% for road transport. Considering that by 2050 freight transport is expected to grow by 80% Europe's congested road networks stands to benefit significantly from the development of IWT.

Today difficulties in terms of labour mobility, persistent vacancies and skills mismatches prevent the sector to achieve its full potential. Workers in the IWT sector face difficulties having their qualifications recognised in other Member States. This is impacting negatively on the development of IWT, particularly because of its cross-border nature.

The existing EU legislative framework is limited to the mutual recognition of boatmasters operating on inland waterways outside the Rhine river.

WHAT'S THE SOLUTION?

The proposed solution is to extend the scope of recognition of professional qualifications beyond the level of boatmasters to all crew involved in the operation of vessels, including on the Rhine river. In order to instil the necessary confidence between the Member States authorities which is a prerequisite for such recognition, this initiative also proposes to base the recognition of the professional qualifications on the competences which are needed for the operation of vessels.

This would enable system for mutual recognition of professional qualification in the EU IWT sector, which is more effective in terms of mobility, whilst ensuring a high level of safety of navigation and the protection of human life. More precisely, the directive includes provisions aiming at:

- Setting common standards for certificates for boatmasters and other persons involved in the operation of a vessel navigating on EU inland waterways
- Laying down common criteria and procedures for the assessment of required competencies
- Setting criteria ensuring that requirements related to the knowledge of specific situations on specific inland waterway stretches are proportionate to their safety goal

WHO WILL BENEFIT AND HOW?

Employees: By lowering entry barriers and by establishing a common scheme for the mutual recognition of professional qualifications in IWT sector, this directive will enhance labour mobility and provide new career prospects for employees.

Enterprises: The private IWT sector is almost exclusively composed of SMEs and micro-enterprises. Increased labour mobility will help SMEs to recruit staff from across the EU, thereby reducing labour shortages. Competence-based qualifications will increase safety and reduce accident costs. Increased attractiveness of the profession will help SMEs to expand their business.

The public: Improving labour mobility in the IWT sector will make it a more efficient way to ship goods across Europe. As a result, it will help decongest the European road networks. Moreover, encouraging a cleaner mode of transport will have positive effects on the environment.

WHY DOES ACTION HAVE TO BE TAKEN?

By its very nature, IWT is a cross-border industry. In order to realize the potential of IWT, it is necessary to establish common rules ensuring a smooth functioning of the sector. To this end, action has to be taken by the EU. This will contribute to improve legal certainty and labour mobility, which will make the sector more attractive both for enterprises and employees.

WHEN WOULD IT COME INTO EFFECT?

Mid-2017 – earliest date by which the European Council and Parliament are expected to adopt the Directive.