

## TRANSPARENCY – ESSENTIAL FOR A QUALITY SHIPPING CULTURE

The Equasis database, established in May 2000, contains safety-related information about more than 66 000 vessels – the entire world fleet of merchant ships of over 100 gross tonnage.

Arising from the Quality Shipping Campaign, Equasis began as an initiative of the European Commission and the French government. The database now operates under the joint supervision of the maritime administrations of Spain, France, the UK, Japan, Singapore, the United States Coast Guard and the European Commission, which in May 2000 signed a memorandum of understanding to set up the service. They considered transparency of information to be crucial for safe operation and an important contribution to international efforts to eliminate substandard shipping. As a free source of comprehensive and objective safety-related information, Equasis is an essential component of a genuine quality culture in the shipping industry.

Available on-line, the Equasis database includes information about:

- ship characteristics
- inspection reports, including port State controls
- classification and other certification, including ISM certificates
- insurance, including P&I cover
- manning
- trade and other association membership
- other vessels operated by the same manager
- up to five years' history of inspections.

Equasis is managed by a supervisory committee comprising the seven signatories and, as a permanent observer, the International Maritime Organisation (IMO). An editorial board also includes representatives of more than 20 information providers, as well as organisations involved in ship-owning, insurance, classification, private vetting inspections, and seafaring unions. A management unit is in charge of day-to-day operation, and a technical unit of France's Information System Department (DSI) operates and maintains the information system.

Equasis makes no attempt to 'rate' ships, but provides users with all the information they need to make their own judgements about the safety performance of the ships and shipping organisations with which they deal. The goal is for charterers to consult Equasis as an automatic first step, when deciding whether or not to do business with a particular ship or operating company.

Click here: [www.equasis.org](http://www.equasis.org)



Equasis – freely available, detailed safety-related information on over 66 000 ships

The European Commission's Directorate-General for Energy and Transport develops and carries out EU policy in these closely linked areas. The 2001 White Paper, *European transport policy for 2010: time to decide* sets out 60 practical measures designed to bring about significant improvements in the quality and efficiency of transport in Europe by 2010, and to break the link between economic growth and growth in the demands on transport systems. Maintaining and strengthening the safety and environmental performance of shipping is a vital component of this overall strategy.

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## MARITIME SAFETY



r a i s i n g   s t a n d a r d s

**S**ea transport is less polluting per tonne-kilometre than other modes. Its safety record is also excellent – the rate of passenger casualties is 1/70<sup>th</sup> of that on the roads. But shipping accidents, though few in number, cause large-scale pollution and loss of life. Rapid increases in numbers of passengers and volumes of high-value cargo make it essential that the industry continues to improve standards of safety and environmental protection.

The growth of shipping as an alternative to road transport is a central element of the strategy for achieving a clean, safe and efficient European transport system set out in the Commission's 2001 White Paper, *European transport policy for 2010: time to decide*. And, as the White Paper makes clear, tougher rules on maritime safety and the strict enforcement of existing international standards are prerequisites for that growth.

### maritime safety

- sea transport is already the safest and least polluting mode
- a few 'bad apples' do disproportionate damage

### the challenges

- raising standards and tightening controls requires concerted efforts
- weakly or patchily enforced regulations distort competition

### the goals

- uniform application of international standards for all ships in EU waters
- no single-hull oil tankers by 2015

### Community action

- tougher powers for port States
- increased safety and environmental standards for all ships
- a European Maritime Safety Agency to monitor inspection and control



# A WAKE-UP CALL FOR EUROPEAN SHIPPING

**W**hen the oil tanker *Erika* broke apart off the coast of Brittany in December 1999, 20 000 tonnes of heavy fuel oil were washed ashore along 400 km of the French coastline. The environmental impacts of the spill, and the huge costs of the clean-up operation and of compensation to the fishing and tourism industries, shocked both the general public and politicians – and immediately led the Commission to propose new measures to improve maritime safety.

## Rapid and determined response

The *Erika* incident demonstrated the scale of the dangers posed by old and poorly maintained vessels, and the urgency of strengthening and harmonising European maritime safety requirements. In particular, it highlighted the need to review and, where appropriate, reinforce procedures for the regular inspection

of ships. It also prompted demand for the rapid introduction of double-hull tankers and other ship designs of greater inherent safety.

Today, new maritime safety requirements, adopted in record time by the European Union, provide the shipping sector with a platform for its revitalisation as a clean, safe, reliable and cost-effective alternative to road transport. Together, they provide for the removal of sub-standard 'dustbins of the sea' from European waters. But the rapid implementation called for by the Commission will require all parties to act with determination.

## The 'Erika I' package

In March 2000, the European Commission published a package of proposals known as '*Erika I*', which addressed the most serious gaps in EU law revealed by the oil spill of December 1999.

- First, it **strengthened the existing directive on control of ships by port States**. Ships repeatedly found to be in a bad condition will be black-listed, and refused access to EU ports. Over 4 000 vessels considered to represent particular risks will be subject to mandatory structural inspections each year. All ships passing through EU waters must be equipped with 'black boxes' by 2007.
- Second, it **strengthened the existing directive governing the activities of classification societies**, which conduct structural checks of the ships they class. A new sanction has been created to allow temporary or, if necessary, permanent withdrawal of Community approval where inspections are found to be deficient. In future, approval will be conditional on good performance. Quality standards will be tightened.
- Third, it **brought forward the timetable for the worldwide phasing out of single-hull oil tankers, which will be banned from EU waters by 2015 at the latest** – as they will in American waters by the same date under the US Oil Pollution Act of 1990.

These three measures were adopted by the European Parliament and Council in December 2001, and will come into force when they have been transposed into Member State law. This will be by mid-2003 at the latest, but the European Council has requested their earlier introduction.



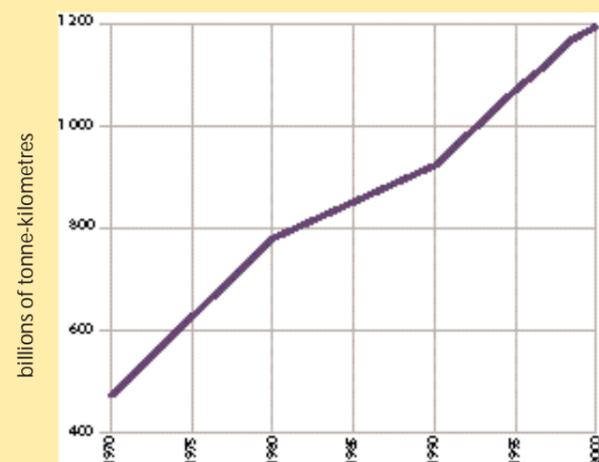
## The 'Erika II' package

The effectiveness of the new Community legislation on maritime safety depends on its correct application by the Member States. The Commission has published a second package of proposals, '*Erika II*', which includes provisions for the practical structures and procedures needed to implement and monitor the '*Erika I*' rules.

- First, it calls for the creation of a **European Agency of Maritime Safety (EMSA)** to monitor the effectiveness of EU maritime safety rules. Member States and candidate countries are under pressure to apply a number of new safety requirements, and to harmonise their inspection and control procedures. The new agency will support their efforts by collecting information, maintaining a maritime safety database, auditing classification societies, and organising inspections of port State control in the Member States. It will also facilitate exchanges of good practice between Member States and provide technical assistance to the Commission in all fields relating to maritime safety and the prevention of marine pollution.
- Second, it proposes a directive to implement a **notification system** for improved monitoring of traffic in, or passing through, European waters. Member States will be given strengthened powers to intervene when there is a threat of accident or pollution. Ships in EU waters will be required to fit automatic identification systems and voyage data recorders (black boxes) to facilitate accident investigation. The directive will improve procedures for the shared use of data about dangerous cargoes, and allow ports to prevent the departure of ships in extreme weather conditions. It will also require each maritime Member State to establish places of refuge for ships in distress.
- Third, it proposes to improve the current mechanism for the **payment of compensation to victims of oil spills**. It will substantially raise the upper limits on the amounts payable in the event of major spills in European waters, and impose penalties on those who cause pollution damage by negligent behaviour.

'*Erika II*' is currently under consideration by the Parliament and Council, and the measures are expected to be adopted during 2002.

Growth of domestic and international intra-EU sea transport, 1970-1999



A total of 90% of all oil trade with the European Union is seaborne, while almost 70% of total EU imports pass the shores of Brittany and the English Channel. Enlargement of the Union and the consequent extension of its coastline will increase the economic significance of maritime transport for the Union, and the need for more effective monitoring and accident prevention measures.

