Opinion on the proposal for a Council Directive on statistical returns in respect of carriage of goods and passengers by sea [1]

(94/C 397/03)

On 12 October 1994 the Council decided to consult the Economic and Social Committee, under the second paragraph of Article 198 of the Treaty establishing the European Community, on the abovementioned proposal.

The Section for Transport and Communications, which was responsible for preparing the Committee's work on the subject, adopted its Opinion on 9 November 1994. The Rapporteur was Mr Kielman.

At its 320th Plenary Session (meeting of 23 November 1994), the Economic and Social Committee adopted the following Opinion, with one abstention.

1. Legal basis for the proposal

1.1. The European Commission has submitted a proposal for a Council Directive [COM(94) 275 final] on the subject of statistical returns in respect of the carriage of goods and passengers by sea.

1.2. The proposal is based on Article 213 of the Treaty establishing the European Union; it will be adopted after the European Parliament and the Economic and Social Committee have been consulted. The Statistical Programme Committee, set up by Council Decision 89/382/EEC, Euratom, is to be consulted in respect of the implementation of the Directive.

1.3. The European Commission has consulted the bodies dealing with maritime transport statistics, such as the Coordinating Committee on Transport Statistics, the European Community Shipowners' Association (CSA), the European Shippers' Council (ESC), the Community Ports Group and Eurostat.

1.4. Article 15 stipulates that the Directive shall enter into force on the twentieth day following its publication in the Official Journal of the European Communities.

2. Aims of the proposal

2.1. Statistics currently available in the Member States are incomplete and data are not comparable as between the various Member States.

2.2. The aim of the proposal is to secure statistics based on harmonized data in respect of the carriage of goods and passengers by sea.

2.3. Harmonized statistics are necessary for the purpose of establishing, monitoring, checking and assessing EU policy on maritime transport so as to ensure comparability with the available data in respect of other transport modes.

2.4. The proposal is designed to help secure free and fair competition policy in the supply of transport services and the monitoring of such policy.

2.5. A EU instrument is the only way of providing an effective frame of reference for compiling the necessary data. The Statistical Programme Committee will provide a detailed definition of the data required.

2.6. It will then be the responsibility of the Member States to ensure that the necessary data are compiled (subsidiarity principle) and forwarded to Eurostat; this data will include data required under Regulation (Euratom, EEC) No 1588/90, adopted by the Council on 11 June 1990.

2.7. The availability of accurate data will enable the Commission, the national authorities, the EU enterprises concerned and socio-economic bodies to base their decisions on a better understanding of the factors involved.

2.8. It is also absolutely necessary to have this data available when decisions are being taken as to which environmentally-friendly transport modes should be allocated increased capacity.

3. General observations

3.1. In order to enable the data concerned to be channelled smoothly and quickly to the intended beneficiaries, the right tools, systems and telematics networks should be used when processing the data. With this aim in view, care should be taken to ensure that data suppliers are not over-burdened.

3.1.1. Moreover, further consultation should take place with representatives of the national statistical services of the Member States regarding the detailed requirements in the Annexes and the duration and extent of the derogations under Article 10 so as to ensure that a proper balance is achieved between the value of the

[1] OJ No C 214, 4. 8. 1994, p. 12.

statistics and the cost to Governments and the maritime industries involved in their collection — especially until Electronic Data Interchange techniques are generally available.

3.2. In this context it should be noted that detailed information about the nature of the goods transported is not required during the proposed transition period.

3.3. The reason is that the cost of compiling the data is at present out of all proportion to their importance.

3.4. Against this background the starting date of 1 January 1995 proposed in Article 14 seems unrealistic.

4. **Specific comments**

4.1. The meaning of 'commercial port' is not clear. A suitable definition should be drawn up.

4.2. In Annex VIII to the proposal, the lower limit (100 gross tonnes) should be indicated in the case of class 01 vessels.

5. **Conclusions**

5.1. The Committee is convinced that the Commission needs to have good, comparable statistics at its disposal in order to be able to carry out its tasks under EU maritime transport policy. The draft Directive under review provides for the establishment of such statistics and we therefore welcome it.

Done at Brussels, 23 November 1994.

The President

of the Economic and Social Committee

Carlos FERRER