

Registration of persons on board passenger ships

While EU waters ranks among the safest in the world for travellers, in case of an emergency, search and rescue authorities must know immediately the number of people missing. To facilitate this, the European Commission proposed to digitalise the registration of passengers on ships operating to and from EU ports. The proposal is part of a broader review of the EU passenger ship safety legislation, which aims to simplify the existing rules and cut administrative costs, while keeping sea travel safe.

Background

Under the current [Directive 98/41/EC](#), passengers and crew must be counted and registered before a ship's departure. For longer voyages, further passenger data is recorded and stored in the shipping company's system. This means, however, that in an emergency, the search and rescue authority has to contact the company, losing precious minutes. Moreover, the data do not include information on nationality, which can complicate the provision of assistance to victims and their relatives. In addition, the directive does not reflect new technologies such as the [SafeSeaNet](#) system and the [national single window](#) reporting tool, giving rise to double reporting.

European Commission proposal

The Commission [proposed](#) that instead of storing passenger information, the shipping company's registrar would record the data in digital form in the national single window. Alternatively, the number of persons on board could be transmitted to the designated authority only, through the ship's Automatic Identification System (AIS). The data would be directly accessible within 30 minutes, at the latest, after the ship's departure, and should include information on passengers' nationality.

European Parliament position

On 11 April 2017, the Committee on Transport and Tourism (TRAN) adopted its [report](#). Endorsing the rules for the digital reporting of passenger data, it added a further option for operators on shorter routes to report the number of persons on board via a local electronic system, provided it is approved by the Member State. Next to the information on nationality, it proposed to collect the date of birth, a contact number in case of emergency, as well as information on special care or assistance. Moreover, the period for recording passenger information should be shortened and the personal data destroyed immediately after the voyage, or any investigation required after an incident.

Outcome of the trilogue negotiations

Trilogue meetings between the EP and Council [concluded](#) on 14 June 2017. It was agreed that the number of persons on board should be reported to the national single window (a European single window in the future) or to the designated authority through AIS within 15 minutes of the ship's departure. Subject to conditions, Member States can grant exemptions to short regular services. Moreover, for a transitional period of six years, the current systems of reporting to the company's passenger registrar or to the shore-based company system can continue. Personal data, including nationality and date of birth, will be erased automatically once the ship's voyage or any incident investigation is completed. Member States will have two years to introduce the new rules into their national legislation. The TRAN Committee approved the compromise text on 11 July 2017 and it is now due for a vote during the October I plenary session.

First-reading report: [2016/0171\(COD\)](#); Committee responsible: TRAN; Rapporteur: Izaskun Bilbao Barandica (ALDE, Spain). For further information, see our ['EU Legislation in Progress'](#) briefing.

