

## Maritime Safety Agency

The Parliament's Committee on Transport will be tabling only a few amendments to the common position the EU Council of Ministers adopted on the setting up of a European Maritime Safety Agency.

The Council finally accepted the bulk of the amendments the Parliament had tabled in first reading. Further, in the light of public opinion, MEPs take the view that two years after the sinking of the *Erika* oil tanker the draft Regulation should be approved without further delay.

The proposal for a Regulation on the establishment of a European Maritime Safety Agency is part of the second wave of measures proposed by the European Commission as a result of the December 1999 *Erika* oil tanker disaster (see also *Environmental Policy & Law*, Vol. 31 (2001) No. 6 at page 300). These also include creating a European information system for shipping traffic and a European compensation refund for oil spills. The new Agency will provide the Member States and the European Commission with the necessary technical and scientific support in order to apply EU shipping safety legislation and prevent pollution. It will monitor the implementation of legislation and assess the rules of the measures in force.

The amendments that Parliament will be recommending in plenary are based on a report adopted on 22 May. The main points covered by the amendments are as follows:

- *The procedure for adopting the Agency's work programme.* The MEPs hope to set a two-month deadline for the Administrative Board's adoption of the programme in the event of a disagreement with the European Commission. The aim is to avoid a situation where the Agency remains without a work programme for a long period of time.
- *The confidentiality of certain items on agendas for the Administrative Board meetings.* The Parliament believes this confidentiality should not be decided solely by the President as the common position proposes but by all Members.
- *The appointment of an Executive Director for the Agency.* MEPs recommend a change to the majority support required. This should be a three-quarters majority rather than the four-fifths majority as set out in the common position. (MJ)

