

The European Union acknowledges progress in raising standard of training of Filipino Seafarers

Progress is acknowledged but issues remain to be resolved.

The European Commission's Directorate General for Mobility and Transport (DG MOVE) on 23 April 2014 presented the EU Member States with an overall assessment of the Philippine maritime education, training and certification system. This assessment was based on the inspection reports of the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) and the follow-up measures that the Philippine authorities have put in place to address deficiencies identified.

According to the report, it appears that the Philippine authorities have made appreciated efforts to bring their system in line with the requirements of the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW). The efforts were supported by several EU Member States which provided technical assistance to the Philippine authorities.

However, there are still concerns and the Philippine authorities need to demonstrate that the audit plans in place are actually being carried out and that they have all the necessary technical qualified human resources to monitor the numerous maritime education and training institutions operating in the Philippines.

The EU has requested the Philippine authorities to provide by end of July 2014 the necessary evidence to demonstrate that all outstanding deficiencies have been resolved and that they have fully implemented the requirements of the STCW convention. Failure to resolve any remaining issue may result in the loss of EU recognition.

A further EMSA inspection is envisaged for October 2014 to verify on the spot the implementation of the measures taken.

The European Union has invited the Philippine authorities to consider bringing the matter to the attention of the International Maritime Organisation as well as seeking further technical assistance from the international community as has been the case in the past.

EU Ambassador Guy Ledoux said *"The EU has long recognised The Philippines as an important maritime nation whose many seafarers on European vessels are much appreciated. Meanwhile recent events continue to remind us of the importance of ensuring high standards for the officials at the helm of our vessels in the interests of the safety of passengers, seafarers, merchandise and the maritime industry as a whole."*