

Bid to introduce waterway regulation

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Boats on the Elbe: if passed, the regulation would oblige carriers to take out insurance of around €300,000 per passenger.

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EUROPEAN parliament transport committee chairman Paolo Costa is making a last-ditch attempt to enforce the Athens convention on passenger liability to at least part of the inland waterways trade.

The Italian Euro MP, who has campaigned personally for the proposed regulation to be extended to all rivers — as opposed to just journeys at sea — says member states should be able to apply the convention on inland waterways on a voluntary basis.

His amendments follow a rejection of the idea by both the Strasbourg parlia-

ment and the EU council of ministers.

If passed, the amendments would make the regulation applicable if a vessel enters a river on at least part of its voyage. "This regulation shall apply to all ships providing international or national carriage by sea which have to operate a part of the journey by inland waterways; and to all ships providing carriage by inland waterways which have to operate a part of the journey by sea," one amendment reads.

Another says: "Member states may apply this regulation to any carriage by inland waterways," although according to the position taken in the council of ministers, a majority of member states do not want to.

A third amendment urges member states to "co-operate actively in negotiations on applicable inland waterways conventions in order to obtain equivalent protection for passengers on European inland waterways".

The regulation, if passed, would oblige carriers to take out insurance or a guarantee to cover liability of around €300,000 per passenger. There have been doubts as to the availability of cover.

"Do we have to wait for an accident on the Danube before everyone agrees on this inland waterway measure?" Mr Costa asked last year.

Separately filed amendments seek to extend Athens convention coverage to domestic, as well as international, trips.