

Europe barge owners win liability exemption

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EUROPE'S barge industry scored a surprise victory against Brussels plans to include them in the latest European Union passenger liability legislation yesterday, writes Justin Stares in Brussels.

Euro MPs meeting in a plenary session in Strasbourg voted to exclude inland waterways from the scope of a proposal seeking to enforce the Athens convention throughout the EU.

The victory, by a small majority, was described as "satisfactory" by the European Barge Union, which had led the lobbying campaign.

"We have successfully defended the right of the industry to seek an alternative solution," said EBU secretary general Theresia Hacksteiner.

The parliament's biggest bloc, the European People's Party, backed the Union's amendment, while the other large parties, the Socialists and the Liberals, were split internally. The industry had argued that inland waterways should not be treated like the maritime industries, and that the insurance regime suggested by the commission was too onerous.

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