



European Commissioner Karmenu Vella has ruled out delaying the end-of-year deadline which will prevent owners scrapping European Union flag ships in most of the Indian sub-continent. Photo: European Commission

European Union flag scrapping deadline to stay, says commissioner

Belgian politician quizzes Karmenu Vella as concerns persist over approved yards list capacity

August 6th, 2018 10:14 GMT
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Published in **SHIP SALES**

European Commissioner Karmenu Vella has ruled out delaying the end-of-year deadline which will prevent owners scrapping European Union flag ships in most of the Indian sub-continent.

Vella in a written reply to a question from Belgian Member of the European Parliament, Hilde Vautmans, said it was not “appropriate” to consider postponing implementation of the European Union Ship Recycling Regulation (SRR).

The commissioner for environment, maritime affairs and fisheries gave various reasons, including the regulation’s purpose to ensure the dismantling of vessels in “sound environmental conditions.”

He pointed to the common practice of ships being reflagged so they can avoid the Waste Shipment Regulation and be recycled in non-Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development countries such as India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.



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Vautmans’ European Parliament question focused on the fact that from 31 December 2018, EU-flagged vessels will have to be scrapped at facilities on an EU approved list which currently comprises only 21 European facilities, none of which are involved in the regular scrapping of large commercial vessels. There are none from third countries.

“As from 2019, it will no longer be possible for shipowners to recycle their ships under European



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flags,” warned Vautmans. “They will have to flag out in order to recycle.”

She asked Vella how he intends to “establish an effective and realistic SRR with sufficient facilities on the European list” and whether he was prepared, as a “fallback arrangement,” to postpone implementation until a solution is found?

In response, the commissioner said additional yards from member states and possibly Norway may be included soon.



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The EC was also assessing applications from 26 non-EU yards, with on-site inspections having taken place of three of them recently. More inspections are planned this year.

Vella said the EC should be in a position to update the EU list by the end of 2018 based on its “evaluation of several non-EU yards.”

The commissioner’s comments, however, have drawn criticism from Nikos Mikelis, architect of the IMO’s Hong Kong Convention for the Safe and

Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships (HKC) and currently a non-executive director of GMS, a cash buyer of vessels for demolition.

He said the EC has had three years since it first invited applications from non-EU yards to be included on the approved list but has still not completed its assessments.

“They have sat on their hands,” he claimed.

“This is preposterous,” said Mikelis. European facilities are generally familiar only with recycling small ships and fishing tonnage.

He pointed out that the 21 EU yards already on the list were approved not by the EC but individual member states.

Even a planned set of EC guidelines never materialised and in its place a ‘frequently asked questions’ document which “has no legal value.”

The three yards visited recently by the EC are said to be two in Turkey and one in the US. Mikelis says he has been “shouting the from the rooftops” asking why bother with the US as the market there pays low prices and the Toxic Substances Control Act limits the import of vessels for scrapping.

“It is a waste of taxpayers money,” said Mikelis.

There is talk that as early as November a committee of member states dealing with recycling may give final approval for the US and two Turkish yards.

Mikelis said India has improved conditions greatly in the last few years but the EC, he claims, remains “stuck on anti- South Asia.”

Sources said, however, that a meeting with member states has been told that the intention is to approve an India recycler early in 2019.

Mikelis said he would be delighted if this happened after the raging controversy over beaching of ships. Various yards are now said to have concrete areas beyond the beach for cutting.

All HKC certificated yards have non-permeable floors, said Mikelis. GMS regularly scraps ships in India so has a vested interest in yards there being on the EU approved list.

Mikelis questioned Vella’s comment that the EU shipping industry could use concerns over insufficient scrapping capacity in Europe to reflag vessels to third countries so they can dismantle in non-listed yards.

He accused the commissioner of passing “blame” back to the owners.

Source: <http://www.tradewindsnews.com/shipsales/1548471/european-union-flag-scrapping-deadline-to-stay-says-commissioner>