

IUMI Policy Agenda

5. EU Recognised Organisations and Mutual Recognition

Brief description

Article 10 of EU Regulation No. 391/2009 on common rules and standards for ship inspection and survey organizations states that “Recognised organisations shall, in appropriate cases, agree on the technical and procedural conditions under which they will mutually recognize the class certificates for materials, equipment and components based on equivalent standards, taking the most demanding and rigorous standards as the reference.”

The EU Recognised Organisations (ROs) have established procedures and technical requirements for Mutual Recognition (MR) and coordinate their work through an Advisory Board supported by a Technical Committee. A hierarchy of six safety levels has been agreed between the ROs. Levels I and II include products with no/very low impact on safety and are uncontroversial. Level III products are currently under consideration, and the most recent MR Technical Requirements were published on 1 January 2019 (Tier 7). In May 2020, the EU RO MR Group published a summary report of their activities from 2015-2019 to furthering the implementation of the MR scheme.

Insurers expect the surveys of safety critical materials, equipment and components to be carried out by the RO classing the vessel. Classification has an important role in ensuring a certain level of safety to the vessel and its equipment, and there is usually a requirement under most individual insurance conditions that the vessel shall be classed with a classification society approved by the insurer before cover commences. Should any RO be allowed to certify and approve components and equipment for a vessel at all safety levels and regardless of which society will be responsible for classing the vessels, neither the classification society nor owners or underwriters will be able to assess a vessel’s quality, or the quality of components that have gone into them. To allow MR on safety critical materials, equipment and components would undermine the significance of ship classification as a key component of today’s safety regime at sea and is a major cause of concern among underwriters.

There is also a question related to the acceptance of the EU RO regime by third party flag states. The sovereignty of the flag state under which a vessel operates is at the core of international maritime regulations and widely supported by the global marine insurance industry.

Based on a study from the University of Strathclyde, the European Commission (EC) reported on the status of the implementation to the European Parliament and the Council at the end of July 2015.

The EU RO MR Group released an alternative Product Evaluation Process (PEP) model as well as a PEP Instruction Manual and PEP Guiding Questions in June 2020.

In September 2024, the EU RO MR Group organized a workshop for all stakeholders involved in Hamburg. During the workshop, IUMI emphasized the historically grown effective and trusted cooperation between insurers and classification societies, the importance of safety from an insurer's perspective, and IUMI's preference for the MR scheme to cover only non-safety critical parts. For safety-critical parts, IUMI suggested that the classification should be conducted by the Recognized Organization (RO) that is classifying the vessel. IUMI confirmed their position recommending that mutual recognition be clearly limited to materials, equipment and components of proven low safety criticality. The scope of the MR should not go beyond further analysis and consideration of Level III products. IUMI emphasized the importance of a reliable system and warned that any dilution will conflict with insurance matters.

In February 2026, the new European Industrial Maritime Strategy aimed to enhance the current EC position and to strengthen the safety but also the competitiveness and global leadership of the EU marine equipment industry. The Commission intends to assess whether the scope of the Marine Equipment Directive or existing mutual recognition arrangements should be extended to additional equipment, with a view to simplifying approvals and improving access to international markets. IUMI and other industry stakeholders fear that this may lead to an inclusion of "safety critical parts" such as ship engines and propellers, and – although the Commission ensures that safety is paramount - a different understanding of safety criticality may lead differences.

Relevant authority / organisations and documents

- European Union – Article 10.1 of EU Regulation (EC) No 391/2009 of 23 April 2009 on common rules and standards for ship inspection and survey organisations.
- EU RO Mutual Recognition Group
 - EU RO Mutual recognition group report 2015-2019, May 2014.
- IMO – Proposed Code for Recognized Organisations (RO Code) and related amendments to SOLAS chapter XI-1 and the 1988 Load Lines Protocol, and resolution MEPC.237(65).
- IUMI
 - Letter to Commission 30 October 2013 & reply letter 6 December 2013.
 - Response to questionnaire from Strathclyde University 8 December 2014.
- University of Strathclyde



- Study report to the EC 29 May 2015.
- Workshop report October 2015.

Timeline / important dates

- RO Code in force from 1 January 2015.
- EC report to Parliament (EP TRAN) on 21 December 2015.
- EU RO MR workshop, Hamburg, 5 September 2018.
- Meeting with EC DG MOVE, Brussels, 8 March 2019
- EU RO MR workshop, Hamburg, 4 September 2024.

IUMI will:

- Recommend that mutual recognition is clearly limited to materials, equipment and components of proven low safety criticality. Scope of the MR should not go beyond further analysis and consideration of Level III products.
- Participate in workshops and consultations as appropriate.