



2026/712

26.3.2026

COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING DECISION (EU) 2026/712

of 24 March 2026

authorising Belgium to derogate from technical requirements of Annexes II and V to Directive (EU) 2016/1629 of the European Parliament and of the Council for a tugboat 'HAVENSLEEPBOOT 21'

(notified under document C(2026) 1910)

(Only the Dutch and French texts are authentic)

THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,

Having regard to Directive (EU) 2016/1629 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 September 2016 laying down technical requirements for inland waterway vessels, amending Directive 2009/100/EC and repealing Directive 2006/87/EC ⁽¹⁾, and in particular Article 25(1), point (b), thereof,

After consulting the Committee established by Article 7 of Council Directive 91/672/EEC of 16 December 1991 on the reciprocal recognition of national boatmasters' certificates for the carriage of goods and passengers by inland waterway ⁽²⁾,

Whereas:

- (1) On 29 April 2021, Belgium notified the Commission of its intention to derogate from certain technical requirements of Annexes II and V to Directive (EU) 2016/1629 for a tugboat 'HAVENSLEEPBOOT 21'. The tugboat has only recently become operable which is why it is appropriate to adopt the implementing decision which allows the issuing of a Union certificate for that craft.
- (2) The proposed derogation concerns the use of dual-fuel internal combustion engines for the tugboat 'HAVENSLEEPBOOT 21'. Those engines serve as the propulsion of the vessel and combust methanol and marine gasoil as fuels up to a ratio of 70 % methanol and 30 % marine gasoil.
- (3) Using dual-fuel methanol / marine gasoil engines for the vessel's propulsion is a promising technology in the context of deploying clean energy and alternative fuels for vessels, reducing greenhouse gases and potentially pollutants.
- (4) The proposed derogation encourages innovation and enables the use of new technology through the pilot implementation of dual-fuel methanol / marine gasoil engines in inland navigation. Such pilot implementation of dual-fuel methanol / marine gasoil engines is part of the technology deployment, which is the only way to initiate the possible serial production phase.
- (5) Technical requirements for inland navigation vessels are laid down in the European standard set up by the European committee for drawing up Standards in the field of Inland Navigation ('CESNI'). This standard is referred to as ES-TRIN. At the time the tugboat was conceived and constructed, the applicable ES-TRIN, as set out in Annex II to Directive (EU) 2016/1629, did not include specific provisions for the use of dual-fuel methanol / marine gasoil in the vessel's propulsion engines. Based on the insights gained by the development of the pilot vessel at hand, dedicated rules for the usage of methanol onboard of craft have been included in ES-TRIN 2025/1 ⁽³⁾ which only became applicable by reference in Annex II to Directive (EU) 2016/1629 on 1 January 2026.
- (6) In the absence of regulatory provisions for the combined use of methanol and marine gasoil for the vessel's propulsion engines, especially at the time when the vessel is conceived and constructed, it is necessary to ensure an adequate level of safety of the proposed use of a propulsion system.

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 252, 16.9.2016, p. 118, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2016/1629/oj>.

⁽²⁾ OJ L 373, 31.12.1991, p. 29, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/1991/672/oj>.

⁽³⁾ European Standard laying down Technical Requirements for Inland Navigation vessels, see https://www.cesni.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/ES_TRIN_2025_signed_de.pdf.

- (7) The technical documentation submitted with the request to derogate ('the technical documentation') has been prepared by Lloyd's Register, which is a recognised classification society for inland waterway vessels under Article 21 of Directive (EU) 2016/1629. Those technical specifications were developed taking into account the relevant provisions of Chapter 30 of ES-TRIN 2023/1 (Special provisions applicable to craft equipped with propulsion or auxiliary systems operating on fuels with a flashpoint equal to or lower than 55 °C) and Annex 8 to ES-TRIN 2023/1 (Supplementary provisions applicable to craft equipped with propulsion or auxiliary systems operating on fuels with a flashpoint equal to or lower than 55 °C).
- (8) Based on the technical documentation, the Working Group on technical requirements of CESNI ('Working Group') examined the combined use of methanol and marine gasoil as fuels for the vessel's propulsion engines and the safety measures in the proposed derogation. The results of that technical examination are set out in the technical specifications annexed to this Decision which is based on the document CESNI/PT (20) 21 rev. 3.
- (9) The conclusion of the technical examination by the Working Group was that the operation, bunkering and maintenance of the system can be safely undertaken having regard to the planned measures and procedures set out in the technical documentation. It is, therefore, possible to state that an adequate level of safety referred to in Article 25(1), point (b), of Directive (EU) 2016/1629 is ensured, provided that the conditions set out in the Annex are met. Therefore, the proposed derogation can be granted.
- (10) However, in order to support the development of possible future provisions for the type-approval of internal combustion engines running on methanol, in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2016/1628 of the European Parliament and of the Council⁽⁴⁾, and in addition to the reporting requirements laid down in point 8 of document CESNI/PT (20) 21 rev. 3, reports on formaldehyde emissions should also be provided. As practical experience with formaldehyde emissions of such type of engines is lacking, Belgium should in that context take into account its obligations arising from Council Directives 89/391/EEC⁽⁵⁾ and 98/24/EC⁽⁶⁾ and Directive 2004/37/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council⁽⁷⁾.
- (11) The proposed derogation concerns issuance of a Union inland navigation certificate for trial purposes incorporating new technical specifications that derogate from Annexes II and V to Directive (EU) 2016/1629. Such derogations are to be granted only for a limited period, which in this case should be five years as from the adoption of this Decision,

HAS ADOPTED THIS DECISION:

Article 1

Derogations from technical requirements of Annexes II and V to Directive (EU) 2016/1629 for a tugboat 'HAVENSLEEPBOOT 21' with a unique European vessel identification number 06503824 regarding the issuance of a Union inland navigation certificate for trial purposes incorporating new technical specifications are allowed to the extent and subject to the conditions set out in the Annex to this Decision. Those derogations are without prejudice to Union's occupational safety and health legislation, in particular to the obligations stemming from Directives 89/391/EEC, 98/24/EC and 2004/37/EC.

⁽⁴⁾ Regulation (EU) 2016/1628 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 September 2016 on requirements relating to gaseous and particulate pollutant emission limits and type-approval for internal combustion engines for non-road mobile machinery, amending Regulations (EU) No 1024/2012 and (EU) No 167/2013, and amending and repealing Directive 97/68/EC (OJ L 252, 16.9.2016, p. 53, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2016/1628/oj>).

⁽⁵⁾ Council Directive 89/391/EEC of 12 June 1989 on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health of workers at work (OJ L 183, 29.6.1989, p. 1, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/1989/391/oj>).

⁽⁶⁾ Council Directive 98/24/EC of 7 April 1998 on the protection of the health and safety of workers from the risks related to chemical agents at work (fourteenth individual Directive within the meaning of Article 16(1) of Directive 89/391/EEC) (OJ L 131, 5.5.1998, p. 11, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/1998/24/oj>).

⁽⁷⁾ Directive 2004/37/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on the protection of workers from the risks related to exposure to carcinogens, mutagens or reprotoxic substances at work (Sixth individual Directive within the meaning of Article 16(1) of Council Directive 89/391/EEC) (OJ L 158, 30.4.2004, p. 50, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2004/37/oj>).

Article 2

This Decision shall apply for 5 years after its adoption.

Article 3

This Decision is addressed to the Kingdom of Belgium.

Done at Brussels, 24 March 2026.

For the Commission
Apostolos TZITZIKOSTAS
Member of the Commission

ANNEX

Following Belgium's request for a derogation for the tugboat HAVENSLEEPBOOT 21, registered in Belgium under the unique European vessel identification number 06503824, from Annexes II and V of Directive (EU) 2016/1629, the technical documentation prepared by Lloyd's Register and submitted by Belgium was examined and revised by the Working Group on Technical Requirements of the European Committee for Drawing up Standards in the Field of Inland Navigation (CESNI). The assessment, set out in document CESNI/PT (20) 21 rev. 3, concluded that the operation, bunkering and maintenance of the dual-fuel system can be carried out safely, taking into account the planned measures and procedures described in the technical documentation.

Based on this assessment, the use of methanol as a fuel is therefore deemed to be adequately safe, provided that the following conditions are met at all times:

- (1) The retrofitting of the propulsion system requires the modification or addition of the following systems and components: a methanol tank, a bunkering station, an inert gas system, a pump room, the propulsion engines and the ventilation system.
- (2) A risk assessment in accordance with Annex 8 of the ES-TRIN is available for the vessel (version Lloyd's Register of 6 February 2020) – Annex 1 of CESNI/PT (20) 21 rev. 3.
- (3) The additional and different construction and equipment requirements have been satisfied on the vessel as per:
 - (a) the safety concept (revised version of 1 December 2020) – Annex 2 of CESNI/PT (20) 21 rev. 3;
 - (b) the ventilation system – Annex 6 of CESNI/PT (20) 21 rev. 3:
 - Note 1 (revised version of 12 June 2020),
 - Note 2 (revised version of 29 July 2020);
 - (c) the hazardous areas – Annex 7 of CESNI/PT (20) 21 rev. 3:
 - general hazardous areas (version of 12 February 2020),
 - hazardous areas breather pipe (min.) DN50 (revised version of 29 July 2020),
 - hazardous areas breather pipe (max.) DN90 (version of 29 July 2020),
 - hazardous areas breather pipe DN150 (version of 12 June 2020);
 - (d) arising from Chapter 30 and Annex 8 of the ES-TRIN and the risk assessment.
- (4) Methanol bunkering must comply with the procedures as laid down in the bunkering procedure (version of 13 February 2020) – Annex 3 of CESNI/PT (20) 21 rev. 3.
- (5) The propulsion system must be serviced in compliance with the manufacturer's instructions, possibly Anglo Belgian Corporation nv. The instructions are to be retained on board.
- (6) All crew members are to be instructed in the dangers, use, servicing and inspection of the dual-fuel propulsion system in accordance with the content specified in the technical documentation concerning training of the crew and staff members (version of 13 February 2020) – Annex 4 of CESNI/PT (20) 21 rev. 3.
- (7) All the data on the use of the dual-fuel propulsion system is to be recorded by the operator and retained for not less than five years. The data is to be sent to the competent authority upon request.
- (8) An annual evaluation report containing all the captured data will be sent to the CESNI Secretariat for distribution to Member States. The evaluation report is to contain at least the following information:
 - (a) System failure;
 - (b) Leakage;
 - (c) Bunker data (methanol);

- (d) Nonconformities, repairs and modifications of the dual-fuel propulsion system;
 - (e) Operating data;
 - (f) Emissions report based on the Dutch standard reference methods (SRM) or PEMS measurements as per the Prominent Study 'D3.3, M12, Assessment of options for monitoring and enforcement' dated 3 October 2016. Formaldehyde emissions need to be additionally covered in line with recognised methodologies.
- (9) The vessel complies with project description, plans and diagram – Annex 5 of CESNI/PT (20) 21 rev. 3:
- (a) Project description (version of 22 April 2020);
 - (b) General layout (revised version of 6 August 2020);
 - (c) Tank system (version of 12 February 2020);
 - (d) PID diagram (version of 11 February 2020).
- (10) The pilot takes into account the gap analysis of ES-TRIN Chapter 30 and Annex 8 (version of 1 December 2020) – Annex 8 of CESNI/PT (20) 21 rev. 3.
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