

Summary of the points made by Ms Edwige Belliard,
President of the CCNR, in her address to the EBU Seminar

Ms Belliard, starting her term of office as President of the Rhine Commission, took the opportunity to share a number of ideas that the CCNR has for the next two years, particularly regarding relations between the Central Commission and the various institutions responsible for river transport in Europe. The following points were emphasized.

The Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine has a recognised experience and skill in river transport matters. It has been capable of carrying out new tasks imposed by the evolution of river transport on the Rhine, as well as throughout Europe. In pursuing these objectives it constantly initiates collaboration with the institutions active in the sector in a host of different forms.

As an example the Central Commission had been developing for many years the ADN regulation covering the transport of dangerous goods. Collaboration was then set up with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, with a view to extending the geographical perimeter of these norms. Today the ADN Convention governs the matter at the European level. A “Safety Committee”, which is run jointly by the Secretariats of the CCNR and the UNECE, has been created within this framework in order to provide administrative monitoring.

The close relations that the CCNR maintains with the Danube Commission and its member States are another telling example. Serbia is the 11th State that has obtained observer status at the CCNR.

Cooperation with those States includes the mutual recognition of the qualification documents of professionals. A wider issue is that of qualifications in a sector that has a growing need for well-trained personnel. A working group has just been constituted, and will work with observer States as well as non-governmental organisations.

Lastly, in the legal field, a number of States that do not border the Rhine are involved in the work on revising the Convention on the Limitation of Liability in Inland Navigation, the “CLNI”. It is hoped that the new agreement will be concluded in 2012. It will constitute an important step towards the harmonisation, on a European scale, of liability regimes.

As regards the relations between the Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine and the European Union, the following remarks were made.

Thanks to the mechanisms for cooperation that have gradually been developed, legal norms are making progress at the same pace both on the Rhine and throughout the European Union. Within the joint working group or “JWG”, the two organisations work together on drawing up the technical prescriptions for vessels.

The market observation unit which was set up within the organisation, in cooperation with the European Commission, also seems a very promising project. Here again, it will associate all the partners involved, both institutional and professional, in a broad European context.

There is room however for making further progress with this collaboration. We should ask ourselves, therefore, whether it would not be appropriate to place existing common structures on more solid legal foundations, to generalise the JWG method or at least to extend it to new matters of common interest, and to think about a standing body for concertation that would be open to the other navigation commissions elsewhere in Europe. The acting President of the CCNR expressed the desire on the part of the Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine to make progress with these objectives, and her personal availability for a thorough discussion of the content of an Agreement aiming at improving the cooperation between the two organisations.

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