

AUTUMN 2019 PLENARY SESSION OF THE CCNR

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Strasbourg, 04 December 2019 - The Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine (CCNR) held its autumn plenary session on 04 December 2019. Chaired by Mr Achim Wehrmann, the head of the German delegation, the CCNR took stock of the past two years and discussed various trailblazing proposed resolutions. Representatives of the European Commission, Danube Commission, Moselle Commission, Luxembourg and of the Czech Republic attended this plenary session as observers.

CHANGE AND CONTINUITY: HANDOVER OF THE CCNR PRESIDENCY

The regular changeover in its presidency at the end of this year afforded the CCNR the opportunity to take stock of its extensive commitments in 2018 and 2019. The CCNR Congress “150 years of the Mannheim Act – the driving force behind dynamic inland navigation” on 17 October 2018 emphatically highlighted the CCNR’s importance as a centre of excellence for the European IWT sector. The [Mannheim Declaration](#) by the transport ministers of the CCNR Member States, setting the CCNR ambitious goals and clear assignments, is a powerful boost to a forward-looking development of Rhine and inland navigation. The CCNR is seamlessly linking this policy declaration to the successful implementation of its [Vision 2018](#).

In the past two years, the CCNR has done critical groundwork on digitalisation and automation in the IWT sector. This paves the way for a real-world development of its regulations in a way that is open to innovative new technologies. The CCNR used high-profile workshops in the infrastructure field to tackle the pressing issues of low water and moorings on the Rhine. The EU initiatives on “Good Navigation Status” (GNS) and on the Rhine-Alpine TEN-T corridor were supported on the CCNR side with constructive contributions.

Further progress was made in the collaboration between the CCNR and the European Union during the German presidency of the CCNR. For example, the joint European standardisation body [CESNI](#) (European committee for drawing up standards in the field of inland navigation) received a sustained boost through the expansion of its remit to include inland navigation information services. The CCNR emphasised however that the stepping up of collaboration with the European Union must remain on its agenda.

However, the discussion and decision-making process within the CCNR as well should always be subjected to critical scrutiny. The reorganisation of the CCNR’s plenary session and Consultative Conference and the closer involvement of the approved non-governmental organisations are important steps in this.

The Belgian CCNR presidency-designate outlined its objectives and priorities for the next two years. From the perspective of the Belgian delegation headed by Mr Michel-Etienne Tilemans, greening, automation and the digitalisation of the IWT sector, together with the stepping up of collaboration with the European Union will continue to be [key areas of the CCNR’s work in 2020 and 2021](#).

STUDY INTO THE FINANCING OF THE ENERGY TRANSITION

How and with which financial tools can the European IWT sector cope with the energy transition to zero-emission navigation? The study on “The financing of the energy transition for a zero emissions European inland navigation sector”, commissioned by the CCNR, as agreed in the spring of 2019, is intended to provide answers to this important question. This study is intended – as are additional Dutch and Swiss-sponsored analyses on the polluter pays principle in the IWT sector and on technological issues – to feed into the CCNR’s implementation of the Mannheim Declaration. The findings of the main study should be available in October 2020.

REVISION OF THE REGULATIONS FOR RHINE NAVIGATION PERSONNEL

It is nothing less than a “new era” in the qualification system in inland navigation: After several years of joint endeavours, the CCNR’s specialised bodies have developed detailed proposals for the complete revision of the Regulations for Rhine Navigation Personnel ([RPN](#)). The proposals aim to modernise this set of rules for the Rhine within the European framework and in particular to integrate the [competence-based approach to the qualification system](#). The CCNR is aiming to reach a decision at its spring session 2020 after concluding consultations with the European Commission and other partners.



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The amendment of the Regulations for Rhine Navigation Personnel aims to:

- maintain high safety standards on the Rhine;
- create a harmonised European legal framework and ensure the unity of the Rhine regime as well as paving the way for integration of the CESNI standard;
- ensure the continuation of integrated administration by the Rhine authorities, e.g. in the field of inspections and possible measures;
- ensure that inland navigation personnel can continue to enjoy efficient Rhine navigation procedures (e.g. the issuing, amendment or renewal of certificates of qualification, service record books and medical certificates);
- provide a basis for implementation of directive (EU) 2017/2397 at national level and for international recommendations and regulations, e.g. the river commissions and UNECE.

CCNR COLLABORATION WITH THE EUROPEAN UNION

After a brief review of the most recent extensive results of the [CESNI's work](#) and market observation findings, the CCNR and EU Commission representative expressed their broad satisfaction with the collaboration between the two institutions. For example, in addition to its tried-and-tested support for the CESNI's activities, the CCNR has been actively involved in the discussions on the planned EU action programme 2021 – 2027 for the IWT sector. In so doing its contribution has been consistent with the EU Council's calls for the future development of inland waterways as a mode of transport at European level. Regular meetings between the CCNR and EU Commission ensure a constant lively dialogue on ongoing activities, strategic European inland waterway transport policy issues and on bilateral issues such as the prospects for their collaboration beyond 2021.

The participation of the European coordinator for the Rhine-Alpine TEN-T corridor, Mr Pawel Wojciechowski, in this plenary session was a further step towards reinforcing the role of inland navigation in this corridor.

CCNR'S COLLABORATION WITH INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

The CCNR expressed its satisfaction with the ongoing and constructive collaboration with other river commissions, the UNECE, the ICPR and the CHR, the Observer States, the approved non-governmental organisations and all the significant inland navigation stakeholders both at the European and international level. Compelling evidence of this collaboration is the active participation of the approved organisations in the Consultative Conference, last held on 8 October this year.

FUTURE MEETINGS AND EVENTS

The next plenary session of the CCNR will take place on 04 June 2020 at the Palais du Rhin in Strasbourg. The meeting in June will coincide with the holding of the first joint plenary session with the Consultative Conference involving approved non-governmental organisations.

2020 will also see the CCNR celebrating the 100th anniversary of its presence in Strasbourg, 1920 having witnessed the Organisation's first plenary session at the Palais du Rhin. Several highlights are planned, with communication activities developed by the CCNR and several local partners. Additional information will be communicated in the forthcoming months.

ABOUT THE CCNR

The Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine (CCNR) is an international organisation that exercises an essential regulatory role in the navigation of the Rhine. It is active in the technical, legal, economic and environmental fields. In all its areas of action, its work is guided by the efficiency of transport on the Rhine, safety, social considerations, and respect for the environment. Many of the CCNR's activities now reach beyond the Rhine and are directly concerned with European navigable waterways more generally. The CCNR works closely with the European Commission as well as with the other river commissions and international organisations.



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EXTENSION OF THE ELECTRONIC REPORTING OBLIGATION ON THE RHINE

At its autumn plenary session 2019, the CCNR resolved to extend the electronic reporting obligation to all vessels subject to the reporting requirements and special transports as of 01 December 2021. This initiative is intended to further improve the safe navigation of the Rhine while at the same time reducing the administrative burden.

In accepting this resolution, the CCNR is pursuing two objectives:

- The shipping industry is being informed in a timely fashion of the date of the extension of the electronic reporting obligation to vessels and special transports that fall under section 12.01(1)(a) and (d) to (h) of the Police Regulations for the Navigation of the Rhine (RPR) – namely with effect from 01 December 2021. This enables the shipping industry to make the best possible preparations.
- The Police Regulations Committee is being instructed to make the necessary regulatory changes with a view to the planned extension of the electronic reporting obligation and to support the industry during the preparatory activities.

ECONOMIC SITUATION OF INLAND NAVIGATION IN EUROPE

In partnership with the European Commission, the CCNR published its [annual Market Observation report](#) (see previous [press release](#) following the spring plenary session 2019) and its [biannual Market Insight report](#) in November 2019.

The Market Insight/November 2019 provides abundant information on the situation of European inland navigation in the 1st and 2nd quarter of 2019 and contains detailed quantitative information on inland waterway transport in the Rhine and Danube basins and in the major European inland navigation

countries, as well as data on vessel load factors, freight rates, turnover and container transport. The report also contains specific information on inland navigation in Germany.

The first half year of 2019 saw a strong uptake of inland waterway transport in all EU countries, compared to the second half of 2018 marked by the prolonged low water period which strongly affected transport activity in Europe. Indeed, with a value of 37.5 billion tonne-kilometres in Q1 2019, transport performance was 30 % higher than in Q4 2018. The transport performance in the EU in Q1 2019 was also 5.5 % higher, compared to the same quarter one year earlier (Q1 2018).

Regarding the five EU countries with the highest transport activity on inland waterways (Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Romania), Romania registered the strongest year-on-year growth rate of transport performance in Q1 2019 (+ 43 % compared to Q1 2018).

A focus chapter on Germany reveals that this country's share in EU inland waterway transport performance was 36 % in Q1 2019, compared to 35 % in the year 2018. For container traffic taken separately, this share is 39 %. Although transport performance in Germany increased by 62 % between Q4 2018 and Q1 2019, its level in Q1 2019 was 1.5 % lower than in the same quarter one year earlier.

Regarding the traditional Rhine, it has not yet been able to reach the same level as it was at the same time in 2018. Although the inland navigation freight transport volumes on the Rhine reached the same level as in the first quarter of 2018, with 46.3 million tonnes recorded in the first quarter of 2019, it fell again in the second quarter of 2019.

With water levels normalising in the first half of 2019, inland navigation vessels once again reached higher loading degrees, which in turn had an effect on transport prices: transport prices fell, especially on the spot market for deliveries from the ARA

region (Amsterdam - Rotterdam - Antwerp) to destinations in the Rhine hinterland (Germany, France, Switzerland).

Although data on freight transport are not yet available for the second half of 2019, a trend can already be established, indicating that the annual result of Rhine traffic for the whole of 2019 will be higher than that of 2018. However, it is unlikely that the 2017 level will be reached, due in particular to the deterioration in water level conditions in the 3rd quarter of 2019, as well as to persistent structural problems in the transport of dry bulk goods. In addition to the above factors, the moderate downward trend in container transport and the slowdown in the global economic situation also play a role in this outlook.

The CCNR's resolution adopted in the plenary session incorporates the main findings of the new Market Insight report. As for the CCNR's annual and biannual reports, they can be downloaded in PDF format in French, German, Dutch or English at <https://www.ccr-zkr.org/13020800-en.html> or viewed directly online at <https://www.inland-navigation-market.org/>.



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CCNR CONFIRMS PROPOSAL FOR APPROPRIATE GOALS FOR THE GOOD NAVIGATION STATUS OF RIVERS AND CANALS

At its autumn plenary session on 04 December 2019, the CCNR confirmed the proposals by the European “Correspondence Group for supporting the achievement of Good Navigation Status and for developing appropriate goals for rivers and canals” for the Rhine. The proposals developed by the Correspondence Group for what is known in specialist circles as Good Navigation Status or GNS are in line with the CCNR’s belief that an international waterway such as the Rhine can only be developed on a cooperative basis. The proposals are in the spirit both of the Mannheim Act principle of maintaining and improving the Rhine waterway and in the spirit of the [Strategy for the CCNR](#), as well as being in line with the goals of the Mannheim Declaration.

The CCNR delegations emphasised that it makes no sense to prescribe the availability of infrastructure as an important element in good navigation on a one-size-fits-all basis for Europe; it should instead be achieved flexibly on a corridor-specific basis in the appropriate international collaborative mechanisms such as river commissions. There would also have to be the facility within such a corridor to set different performance indicators for availability. The CCNR also welcomed the proposed proscription on deterioration, the aim of which, by analogy with comparable requirements in the Water Framework Directive, is to prohibit the condition of waterways from deteriorating compared with a current as-is state.

The European Union’s guidelines for developing a trans-European transport network (Regulation (EU) 1315/2013) were adopted back in 2013. Inter alia, this policy, also known as the TEN-T Regulation, sets targets for rivers and canals to be achieved by 2030. This also includes achievement, and subsequent maintenance, of a Good Navigation Status. However, the Regulation does not contain any definition of, or other information about, Good Navigation Status. This prompted the European Commission to commission the “Study on support measures for the implementation of the TEN-T Core network related to sea ports, inland ports and inland waterway transport” in 2015. The study, published in January 2018, provided the first input to Good Navigation Status. However, it was already apparent at the two pan-European expert group meetings on the development of the study, in Rotterdam and Brussels, that the representatives of the EU Member States had different views about the goals proposed in the study for rivers and canals.

In order to arrive at a realistic appreciation capable of commanding a consensus, in 2017 the CCNR set up the Correspondence Group, in which experts from nine EU Member States together with



representatives of the Secretariats of the CCNR, the Danube Commission and Sava Commission developed proposals for appropriate goals for Good Navigation Status for both free-flowing and impounded rivers and canals. The deliverables submitted by the Correspondence Group in the spring of 2019 are an important basis for further work by the NAIADES expert group and NAIADES GNS subgroup. They constitute the core of the recommendations by the NAIADES GNS subgroup on the further implementation of Good Navigation Status and were confirmed by the NAIADES expert group at its meeting in October 2019.

This extremely successful initiative demonstrates that the CCNR is capable of providing effective support for the development of inland navigation policies at European level, including the inland navigation infrastructure arena, thanks to its expertise and good contacts with other international organisations.

REVISION OF THE REGULATIONS FOR RHINE NAVIGATION PERSONNEL

The CCNR’s Committee on social questions, employment and training and its working group has been engaged in far-reaching activities to completely revise the Police Regulations for the Navigation of the Rhine (RPR) since 2017. It is nothing less than a “new era” in the qualification system in inland navigation.

Preparatory work has been done in close collaboration with all delegations to modernise this set of rules for the Rhine within the European framework and especially to integrate the competence-based approach to the qualification system. The plenary session of the CCNR has taken note of this preliminary draft to be sent to the European Commission and the CCNR’s partners with a view to exchanging ideas. The aim is to reach a decision for the spring session 2020.

The aim of this comprehensive revision is:

- maintain high safety standards on the Rhine;
- create a harmonised European legal framework and ensure the unity of the Rhine regime as well as paving the way for integration of the CESNI standard;
- ensure the continuation of integrated administration by the Rhine authorities, e.g. in the field of inspections and possible measures;
- ensure that inland navigation personnel can continue to enjoy efficient Rhine navigation procedures (e.g. the issuing, amendment or renewal of certificates of qualification, service record books and medical certificates);
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As far back as 2006, in the [CCNR ministerial statement in Basel](#), the CCNR advocated collaborating with the European Commission on harmonised European regulations to counter the prevailing labour shortage and make job profiles in the inland navigation sector more attractive. The [recognition on the Rhine of boatman and radar certificates, service record books and logbooks and selected training courses](#) from seven third countries was a particularly important step forward, marking the CCNR's emergence as a pioneer in European harmonisation. The CCNR ministers reaffirmed the objectives of international collaboration and increasing sector attractiveness in the Mannheim Declaration of 2018.

As a logical consequence of this "integration policy" the holders of qualifications and certificates already recognised on the Rhine are given the opportunity to convert these into Rhine qualifications, thereby reducing the overall administrative burden and making for a high degree of user-friendliness.

The new regulations are a step in the direction of "digital administration", which will be centred on the ECDB or – in plain English – the electronic register of professional qualifications. It is of paramount importance to the CCNR that this register also includes Rhine qualifications and that all CCNR delegations can act as equal partners.

A number of additional proposals were adopted as part of the revision that aim at amendments or additions to the existing requirements without reference to the EU directive.

These include:

- the mandatory possession of a licence for recreational craft (of 20 m and more in length instead of 15 m and of 15 horsepower instead of 5 horsepower) and
- the ability, for vessels with particular innovations aboard benefiting from a one-off approval by the CCNR, to allow a crew that diverges from the requirements of the RPR crew table to undertake trips. Discussion of local sector knowledge and the methods for testing it is still ongoing.

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