

SPRING 2020 PLENARY SESSION OF THE CCNR

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Owing to the current COVID-19 pandemic, the Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine (CCNR) held its Spring session on 4 June 2020 by video conference. The CCNR thereby demonstrated that not only does it adapt to social developments through the collective achievement of legislative outcomes and the development of a modern inland navigation policy but that it also adapts as an organisation to specific situations and developments. The session was chaired by Mr Michel-Etienne Tilemans, President of the CCNR (Belgium). Representatives of the European Commission, Danube Commission, Moselle Commission and of the International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine (ICPR), and of Austria, Luxembourg and the Czech Republic, attended this plenary session as observers.

The beginning of the meeting, given over to the Covid-19 pandemic and its impact on inland navigation, was attended by representatives of numerous approved non-governmental organisations (CEFIC, CEMT, EDINNA, ERSTU, ETF, IVR, ESO, SEA Europe, UECC, and EBU). The non-public part of the session was then an opportunity to address other important issues, such as the extension of mandatory electronic reporting, ongoing work on boatmaster and crew licences, technical requirements for vessels, and the economic situation of inland navigation in Europe.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND ITS IMPACT ON INLAND NAVIGATION

The plenary session was the opportunity for important discussions on the effects of the pandemic on inland navigation on the Rhine and elsewhere in Europe. The exchange of views between participants focused on the impact of the health crisis on inland navigation and on the responses that need to be developed in terms of managing and exiting from the crisis. In particular, the required thinking will have to take account of the freedom of navigation guaranteed by the Act of Mannheim and the Rhine as a key transport artery and central corridor within the TEN-T network. In this context, the "Waterborne" Director at DG MOVE, Mrs Magda Kopczynska, informed the plenary meeting about the several actions the European Commission have taken so far to support the sector all over the EU to cope with the Covid crisis. She also insisted on the need to have a strong coordination at EU level to maintain the

sector operating smoothly in Europe. The plenary meeting of the CCNR was thus an excellent forum for dialogue and cooperation between the leading inland navigation players, being also an opportunity for the approved organisations to participate in the debate.

The meeting was also an opportunity to recall the exceptional measures taken by the CCNR as early as 23 March 2020 and to broach a second resolution adopted during the session.

The [CCNR resolution of 23 March](#) and the prompt implementing measures taken at national level to mitigate the negative effects of the pandemic were widely welcomed by the profession. It will be recalled that under the terms of this resolution, which will remain in force until 23 September 2020, the Member States of the Central Commission agreed in particular, subject to certain conditions, not to penalise exceedance of the validity period of certificates, attestations and other documents issued in accordance with Rhine Vessel Inspection Regulations, Regulations for Rhine navigation personnel and the Rhine Police Regulations. Furthermore, during the same period, the Secretariat of the CCNR also created an inventory of national and international measures concerning inland navigation by means of a [dedicated webpage](#) and weekly newsletter.

The objective of the 4 June 2020 resolution was to enable the CCNR to learn as many lessons as possible, both from the crisis and its management, to mitigate its adverse effects as far as possible and to best prepare itself and navigation on the Rhine and inland waterways for other possible crises. This important resolution, which addresses all the areas in which the CCNR is active (vessels, crews, infrastructure, environment, river police, economic and other analyses), contains key information for the CCNR's Committees and Secretariat, which will need to work in consultation with other inland navigation players. The Central Commission welcomed the excellent reception given to this new resolution.

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.

EXTENSION OF MANDATORY ELECTRONIC REPORTING ON THE RHINE

Under its resolution 2019-II-19, the CCNR approved the extension of mandatory electronic reporting to all vessels referred to in article 12.01(1) of the Rhine Police Regulations (RPR) and informed the navigation profession of the relevant date, namely 1st December 2021.

At the same time, the CCNR invited in its Police Regulations Committee, via its RP/G Working group and with the participation of the navigation profession and its RIS/G Working group, to submit specific proposals for the required amendments to the RPR in early 2020 and other supporting measures, if appropriate. Resolution 2020-I-12 contains the required amendments to the RPR, as well as editorial qualifications to ensure the new regulations are intelligible and accessible. The latter will come into force on 1st December 2021.

The use of electronic reporting helps significantly reduce the administrative burden, greatly reducing the use of radio telephony. Moreover, there is no longer any need for manual entry by the competent authorities of the data currently communicated by radio telephone.



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WORK ON BOATMASTER AND CREW LICENCES

The discussions on boatmaster and crew licences focused on the progress of the STF Committee's work, and on the submission of the draft revision of the Regulations for Rhine navigation personnel (RPN) to the European Commission in December 2019 and the subsequent exchanges. Possible adoption of the resolution revising these CCNR Regulations could be considered in December 2020. The CCNR has set itself the following objectives:

- Adaptation of the CCNR's and EU's regulatory frameworks.
- Incorporation of the "ES-QIN" standard (European Standard for Qualifications in Inland Navigation) developed by the CESNI (European Committee for drawing up Standards in the field of Inland Navigation),
- Shared use of the European database (ECDB).
- Simultaneous entry into force of Directive (EU) 2017/2397 and of the RPN on 18 January 2022.

It continues to be essential for the CCNR to ensure the unity of the Rhine regime and to guarantee the safe and orderly navigation of the Rhine.

WORK ON TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS FOR VESSELS

The Inspection Regulations (RV) Committee notified the adoption on 29 April 2020 of the following [interpretation](#) of the CCNR resolution of 23 March: "Concerning the application of (2) of the resolution "Exceptional measures by the Central Commission in relation to the Covid-19 epidemic" of 23 March 2020, the Inspection Regulations Committee makes the following observation: inspection certificates that have expired in the circumstances defined by the aforementioned resolution will be renewed, applying the transitional provisions provided for in chapter 32 of the ES-TRIN".

The CCNR, via its RV Committee, also confirmed its role in supporting innovation by adopting derogations for vessels constructed using innovative materials derogating from the current technical requirements.

ECONOMIC SITUATION OF INLAND NAVIGATION IN EUROPE

In partnership with the European Commission, the CCNR published its first [thematic report](#) on river-sea transport in January 2020 (see the dedicated [press release](#)) and its [biannual Market Insight report](#) in April 2020 (see also the dedicated [press release](#)).

The new 2020 annual Market Observation report on inland navigation in Europe will provide an exhaustive overview of the market situation and developments in inland navigation in Europe during 2019 and will be published in September 2020. The general macro-economic conditions have made it difficult to increase transport volumes in 2019. Moreover, the Covid-19 crisis in early 2020 has had a major impact on the sector. This important subject, although not relevant to the 2019 data, will also be addressed in the 2020 annual report. Furthermore, the publication will focus on future trends in the inland navigation sector, be it the anticipated impact

of the energy transition on existing market segments, opportunities for new market segments or future prospects for important inland navigation sectors such as steel, agricultural products and building materials. Finally, the report will provide, inter alia, information on the demand for transport by inland navigation vessel, container transport, freight rates, the fleet, employment, river cruises and river transport in inland and maritime ports.

The CCNR resolution adopted in the plenary session incorporates the main findings of the new 2020 annual Market Observation report and will be available on the CCNR website in July. As a reminder, the CCNR's full annual, biannual and thematic reports can be downloaded as a PDF in German, French, Dutch or English at <https://www.ccr-zkr.org/13020800-en.html> or consulted directly online at: <https://www.inland-navigation-market.org>.

COOPERATION BETWEEN THE CCNR AND THE EUROPEAN UNION AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

The meeting on 4 June was an opportunity to address the cooperation between the CCNR and the European Commission (DG MOVE), whether specifically in the context of the current European contract (2019-2021) or of the CESNI, or in terms of general policies.

Notwithstanding the adverse circumstances of recent months and their impact on the achievement of various tasks featuring in the contract, the CCNR's and the CESNI's work has generally continued as planned. The last meeting of the CESNI took place online on 30 April, chaired by Mr Vojtech Dabrowski, representing the Czech Republic. The Committee, set up in 2015, and its working groups were therefore able to continue their work and ensure the highest possible degree of continuity. Finally, a [letter](#) from the Committee's President and Executive Secretary, recommending i) that the Member States of the CESNI, Observer States and Third Countries do not penalise any expiry of certificates during the crisis and ii) that the sector and inspection bodies continue and/or resume inspections and certifications at the earliest opportunity, was sent on 20 May. The outcome of the [CESNI meeting on 30 April 2020](#), which was the subject of a detailed report at the plenary session in June, is available in full on the CESNI website.

DG MOVE highlighted the need for further coordination between the CCNR and the EC on measures taken to support the sector and reiterated the need for the EU Member States of the CCNR to be coordinated at EU level for any legally binding resolution.

Furthermore, the CCNR again welcomed the constructive and ongoing collaboration, especially with the other river commissions, the UN-ECE and ICPR, specifically in the context of the current Covid-19 crisis.

FUTURE MEETINGS AND EVENTS

Barring unforeseen circumstances, the next plenary session of the CCNR will take place on 03 December 2020 at the Palais du Rhin in Strasbourg. The meeting in June was to have coincided with the holding of the first joint plenary session with the consultative conference on approved non-governmental organisations. As the latter could not take place according to the announced format, it should be postponed until the next plenary session in the autumn. It was also decided to hold the CCNR's next Spring plenary session on 1st and 2nd June 2021 in Hasselt (Belgium), again under Belgian presidency.

As previously announced, the CCNR is also celebrating the 100th anniversary of its presence in Strasbourg in 2020, 1920 having witnessed the organisation's first plenary session at the Palais du Rhin. As the Covid-19 health crisis has severely affected the communication activity schedule for this anniversary, the few activities planned by the CCNR, in cooperation with several local partners (City and Eurométropole of Strasbourg, Lieu d'Europe, Departmental archives of the Bas-Rhin, DRAC Grand Est, Port of Strasbourg, Voies navigables de France, DREAL Grand Est, Prefecture of the Bas-Rhin and of the Grand Est region, etc.), will be postponed to the second half of 2020, to the greatest extent possible.



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