

THE CCNR PUBLISHES ITS MARKET INSIGHT / APRIL 2024

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The new report on European inland navigation, drafted by the Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine (CCNR) in partnership with the European Commission, has just been published. The executive summary of the report may be found below. The full report can be downloaded in PDF format in English or viewed directly online at <https://inland-navigation-market.org/>.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Transport demand saw a downward trend in the first half of 2023. In the two countries with the highest transport performance, Germany and the Netherlands, there was a decline in transport performance by 8.5% and 7.7% respectively.

With regard to the different types of cargo, the strongest decrease in percentage terms was observed for container transport, followed by dry cargo transport. This was a consequence of the decline in world trade and industry production.

Cargo transport on the entire Rhine reached 131.7 million tonnes in the first half year of 2023 (-10.8%). Also, with regard to the Rhine, container transport and dry bulk transport were the hardest hit by the recession and the slowdown in world trade. On the Danube, dry bulk product segments (coal, iron ore, grain, etc.) were amongst the cargo segments that suffered the most. Overall, the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine continued to impact considerably freight transport on inland waterways in the first semester of 2023.

In terms of the number of cruise vessels passing locks on the Rhine and Danube, the recovery of passenger transport from the pandemic was confirmed, by reaching values slightly above the first half year of 2019. Capacity utilisation was however still below pre-pandemic levels, as is validated by the figures for the Danube.

Freight rates in cargo transport showed a decline in the first half year 2023. A main reason is the normalisation of water levels. Dry bulk spot market prices in particular were on a downward trend, reflecting the end of the coal boom in dry cargo transport and the end of the low water period.

Fuel prices in IWT also declined, following the decrease in oil prices. The reasons were mainly demand-driven, as the disruptions in trade and transport created a downward movement in oil and fuel demand. The outlook for fuel prices for the year 2024 points to a level of around 80 Euro per 100 litres.

The last part of the report highlights inland waterway transport in Belgium. Both in Flanders and Wallonia, the largest goods segment is sands, stones, gravel and building materials. This goods segment has a share of 37% of the entire transport volume in Flanders and a respective share of 44% in Wallonia.

In Belgium, most of the container transport occurs in Flanders. Data from the Flemish waterway administration point to a positive trend until the year 2021 but after that to a more negative trend.

The explanation for this pattern is the development of maritime container transport. Indeed, for ports in the North Range, including Belgian seaports, maritime container transport decreased between 2021 and 2023. The reason for this decrease is the decline in world trade that stems from the geopolitical crisis.

We wish you an enjoyable read!

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.

ABOUT THE MARKET OBSERVATION AND MARKET INSIGHT

The Market Observation and Market Insight reports are respectively annual and biannual publications by the CCNR dealing with the European inland navigation market. The CCNR also publishes thematic reports, the theme of which is defined in consultation with the European Commission. These analyses of the economic situation, which are free of charge, aim to assist strategic decision making in this sector in Europe, by both the profession and firms as well as in terms of transport policy and within administrative authorities. The gathering and analysis of this data by the CCNR has been co-financed by the European Commission since 2005. This fruitful collaboration has enabled the CCNR to extend this activity, which historically it has been carrying on for almost two centuries, beyond the Rhine region to cover all Europe's navigable waterways.



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