

## PLENARY SESSION SPRING 2026

Ref: CC/CP (26)05

On 11 June 2026, the Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine (CCNR) held its spring plenary session in Strasbourg. A number of resolutions were adopted, relating to the economic situation of inland navigation, the Regulations for Rhine Navigation Personnel (RPN), the Rhine Police Regulations (RPR), the International Safety Guide for Inland Navigation Tank-barges and Terminals (ISGINTT) and matters concerning the Rhine waterway.

### THE ECONOMIC SITUATION OF THE RHINE WATERWAY

The volume of goods transported on the Rhine in 2025 was 281.9 million tonnes, marking a slight decrease of 0.9% compared with 2024. In addition to geopolitical instability and a backdrop of relatively weak economic growth, this slight decline can be attributed to weaker industrial demand and adverse hydrological conditions. As in previous years, performance across the various segments was mixed.

The three main freight segments saw a slight fall: -2.9% for petroleum products, -2.0% for chemical products and -0.5% for construction materials. Container transport remained more or less stable, dropping by -0.3%. Volumes transported increased by +8.1% for coal, +1.4% for agricultural and food products and +1.6% for metals. There was a more significant drop in the volume of iron ore, which fell by -14.4%. These trends reflect both the structural changes in European industry and the short-term dynamics of the economy and the energy market. Looking ahead, the outlook for the main inland waterway transport markets remains uncertain, as moderate global growth, geopolitical tensions and climate-related challenges are expected to continue to affect transport demand, although some sectors are showing signs of possible stabilisation<sup>1</sup>.

The adopted report draws on new tools for analysing freight rates and costs which provide a deeper understanding of these trends. According to this analysis, costs have risen more sharply than freight rates, particularly in the dry bulk sector. The analysis shows once again that the inland waterway sector generates virtually no profit margin, except during periods of low water.

The report is based on new econometric models which identify the main factors influencing demand for the transport of petroleum products and iron ore on the Rhine and confirm certain relevant trends, such as the structural decline in the transport



of petroleum products as a result of the energy transition. These advances will make it easier to anticipate future developments in the inland waterway transport market.

### RPN: A MORE FLEXIBLE MEDICAL MONITORING SYSTEM

The Regulations for Rhine Navigation Personnel (RPN) have been amended. The principal change is to the medical certificate for the inspection of fitness in inland navigation, in order to bring the applicable rules into line with the updated CESNI model. This will allow doctors to limit the validity period of a medical certificate in the case of certain progressive conditions, such as obesity. This change is intended to improve safety on board by enabling medical monitoring that is better suited to changes in crew members' health. The amendment will come into force on 1 January 2027.

### AMENDMENTS TO THE RPR RELATING TO TGAIN AND BUOYS

A number of amendments to the Rhine Police Regulations (RPR) have been adopted. The first relates to the use of yellow buoys to mark certain areas as either prohibited to navigation or subject to particular regulations. The scenarios identified include, in particular, construction zones and sections of the Rhine reserved for recreational navigation. Although yellow buoys are already in use in some countries, the way they are deployed varies. The aim is therefore to standardise their use, while leaving it up to the relevant authorities to decide whether or not to use them.

In December 2025, the CCNR adopted temporary regulations concerning the use of a Track Guidance Assistant for Inland Navigation (TGAIN). Following on from this, on 11 June 2026 the CCNR approved definitive regulations governing their use,

with the primary aim of ensuring safe passage through locks. This resolution is primarily in response to two serious accidents, in Iffezheim and Müden (Moselle), in which the use of a TGAIN was identified as a contributory factor. In particular, these regulations lay down the following requirements:

- The boatmaster must be present in the wheelhouse and ensure that the Awareness Monitoring System is activated when the TGAIN is in use.
- The boatmaster must confirm his presence in the wheelhouse every five minutes.
- The TGAIN must be deactivated before entering a lock approach. It may only be reactivated once the vessel has passed through the lock and left the lock approach.

With these amendments, the CCNR is reaffirming its commitment to continuously updating its regulations in order to address new challenges in inland navigation and to ensure a high level of safety on the Rhine in the long term.

### AUTOMATED NAVIGATION

Two recommendations were adopted, relating to the vessels PROGRES and FREIENSTEIN. In line with the six



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<sup>1</sup> This information will be set out in detail in the [Market Observation Annual Report 2026](#).

adopted in December 2025, these two recommendations concern vessels operated remotely, while retaining a full crew on board. In this context, the boatmaster on board remains in full charge and can take over control at any time.

These two recommendations are the first to involve remotely operated vessels carrying dangerous goods. Feedback from these pilot projects will provide very useful information for future changes to regulations. With recommendations like these, the CCNR is fulfilling its role as a pioneer in promoting innovation and contributing to the digitalisation of inland navigation. This work is in line with both the Mannheim Ministerial Declaration and the priorities of the Swiss Presidency.

### THE VALUE OF ISGINTT

The Oil Companies International Marine Forum (OCIMF) and the inland navigation sector, with the support of the CCNR, have collaborated with a number of European organisations to produce the second edition of the International Safety Guide for Inland Navigation Tank-barges and Terminals (ISGINTT). This guide brings together the best practices recommended by relevant industry organisations to enhance the safety of the carriage of dangerous goods at the interface between inland waterway tankers and onshore facilities, particularly terminals. The guide is now available in French, Dutch, German and English.

### MATTERS RELATING TO THE RHINE WATERWAY

At its plenary session, the CCNR approved various construction projects on the Rhine and its Dutch tributaries:

- Construction of a new bridge over the Pannerden Canal.
- Maintenance work on the lock-dam complexes on the Nederrijn and the Lek, and also at Amerongen.
- Conducting geotechnical surveys for the construction of berths for cargo vessels in Marckolsheim.
- Repair of the concrete cladding at the port of Colmar Neuf-Brisach and construction of a mooring facility with dolphins to protect it.
- Removal of the gantry crane at the container terminal in Ottmarsheim.
- Refurbishment of the mooring area at the existing gravel handling facility belonging to the firm F.+J. Minthe GmbH & Co. KG.
- Transport by barge and installation of the movable section of the Merwede bridge near Gorinchem.

- Construction of the Merwede bridge on the A27 highway crossing the Boven-Merwede.

On 16 April 2026 the CCNR also adopted a resolution by written procedure: this concerned the renovation of the movable section of the bridge over the Beneden-Merwede at Papendrecht.

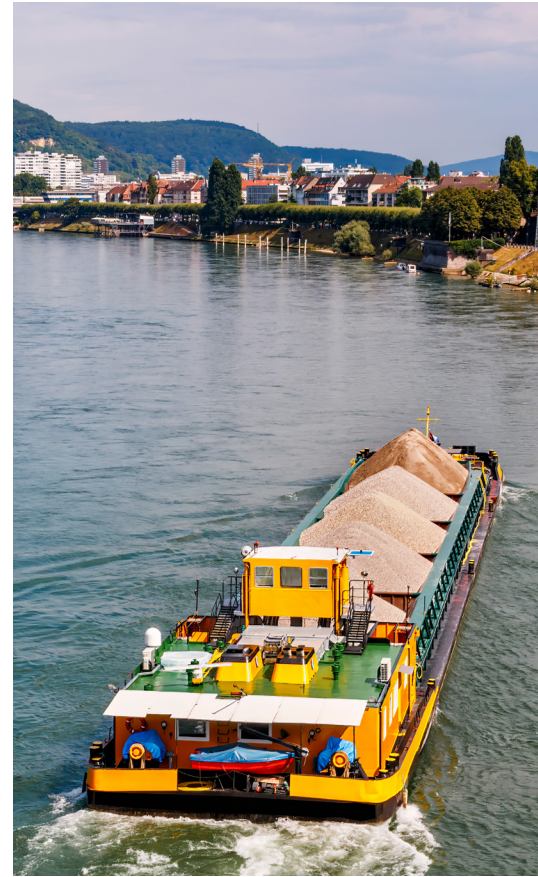
The CCNR also took note of the report relating to changes in water levels in 2025 in the vicinity of the Iffezheim lock and on the stretch of river downstream.

Further, the CCNR welcomes the measures designed to improve conditions for navigation on the Rhine: the supply of bedload at Iffezheim; on the Middle Rhine and the Lower Rhine: the stabilisation of the riverbed downstream of Iffezheim and at Bockum-Krefeld; and the dredging on the Upper Rhine and the Middle Rhine (Mainz-Weisenau).

### NEXT PLENARY SESSION

The next plenary session of the CCNR will be held in Strasbourg, on 3 December 2026.

**From mid-July 2026, all the resolutions adopted at the plenary session will be available on the CCNR website at: <https://www.ccr-zkr.org/13020400-en.html>.**



### 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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