CCNR PLENARY SESSION - SPRING 2015

Ref : CC/CP (15)02

The Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine (CCNR) held its 2015 spring plenary session on 3 June 2015, exceptionally in Rotterdam; the session was chaired by Ms Gijsbers, Head of the Dutch Delegation.

The public debate organised at the occasion of the celebrations marking the CCNR's bicentenary at Rotterdam's City Hall.

CELEBRATIONS MARKING THE CCNR'S BICENTENARY

2015 sees the 200th anniversary of the creation of the CCNR. To mark the occasion, and at the invitation of the Dutch Presidency, the organisation's spring plenary session was held exceptionally in Rotterdam on Wednesday, 3 June 2015 on board the former cruise ship ss Rotterdam. A solemn event was also held on Thursday, 4 June 2015 at Rotterdam's City Hall, in the presence of the Mayor of Rotterdam and many international names and stakeholders in European inland navigation.

The celebrations highlighted the past, the present and also the future of the oldest international organisation in existence. A historical work compiled by a number of well-known historians from the CCNR's five Member States, covering the 200 years of the institution's history, was previewed by Mr Jean-Marie Woehrling, former Secretary General of the CCNR and the book's coordinator[1].

A public debate on the future of inland navigation was held, based on the reflections of Professor Bernd Scholl (ETH Zurich) and moderated by Mr Jean-Louis Vandevoorde. Speakers included Ms Désirée Oen, Deputy Chef de Cabinet to the European Commissioner for Transport, Mr Gunther Jaegers, CEO of Jaegers shipping company, Ms Catherine Trautmann, European Coordinator for the TEN-T North Sea - Baltic Core Network Corridor, Mr Herbert Eichelkraut of the management of Thyssenkrupp Steel Europe, Mr Eric Van Hooydonk, and Mr Hans-Peter Hadorn, President of the EFIP.

The discussion focused on the challenges and prospects of this constantly developing mode of transport and presaged a mission for the near and more distant future that is just as relevant and ambitious as the mission entrusted to the CCNR by its founding fathers.

The celebrations of the CCNR's bicentenary will continue with an international historical colloquy to be held on 18 and 19 June at the BNUS library in Strasbourg (open to the public; more information available at : www.200years-ccnr.org).

EUROPEAN COMMITTEE FOR DRAWING UP COMMON STANDARDS ON THE FIELD OF INLAND NAVIGATION ("CESNI")

At its plenary session, the CCNR adopted a Resolution creating a European committee for drawing up common standards in the field of inland navigation (Comité Européen pour l'Élaboration de Standards dans le Domaine de Navigation Intérieure - CESNI). This Resolution promotes the development of uniform, modern, user-friendly requirements and takes into account the CCNR's "Vision 2018" for the sustainable development of inland navigation.

The creation of this new working body is in line with the desire of the CCNR, shared by the European Union, to reinforce governance at the European level, particularly in the field of regulations governing inland navigation. An Administrative Arrangement on this was concluded in 2013 by the Director General for Mobility and Transport and the Secretary General of the CCNR.

The purpose of the new committee is to bring together experts from the Member States of the European Union and the CCNR and representatives of international organisations with an interest in inland navigation. The various stakeholders and professions in navigation in Europe will be well represented.

In creating the committee, the European Commission – as well as the CCNR – is looking to simplify procedures in the field of regulating inland navigation, so that the experience acquired by the CCNR can be made fully available to all the institutional partners and stakeholders concerned.

The CESNI will be involved in drawing up standards for the technical requirements for inland navigation vessels and the demands made of crew members, and in the various implementing measures in the regulatory fields concerned.

The regulatory frameworks of the European Union - new directives are currently been discussed - and of the CCNR - the Rhine Vessel Inspection Regulations and the Regulations for Rhine navigation personnel - will in future refer to the standards developed by the CESNI.

The inaugural meeting of this new CESNI committee is scheduled for 17 June 2015, in Strasbourg.

The functioning of the committee and it procedures will be assessed before the end of 2017.

[1] The book, entitled "The CCNR: 200 years of history", will be on sale to the general public from 20 June, on the website at www.200years-ccnr.org

CCNR
CENTRAL COMMISSION
FOR THE NAVIGATION OF THE RHINE

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE LEGAL CONDITIONS TOR USING LIQUEFIED NATURAL GAS (LNG) FOR NAVIGATION ON THE RHINE AND INLAND WATERWAYS

Like other transport sectors, particularly road transport, inland navigation is looking to alternative fuels. Of the available alternatives, liquefied natural gas (LNG - natural gas liquefied at a temperature of 161° C) is the most suitable for inland navigation, because it is less of a hazard than, for example, hydrogen, and because it offers higher energy density than compressed natural gas (CNG). After an analysis of what has been learned from operating inland navigation vessels already testing the use of LNG, the CCNR adopted supplements to its regulations for Rhine navigation in order to create a legal framework which would allow the regular use of LNG as a fuel for inland navigation in Europe. The regulatory framework also makes demands of the skippers and crew members of vessels fuelled by LNG: they must undergo additional training, approved by the competent authorities, and pass an examination.

Thus once again the CCNR is fulfilling its mission to promote by its actions and its regulations both safety and innovation in inland navigation on the Rhine and throughout Europe.

ECONOMIC SITUATION OF RHINE NAVIGATION

Very slow economic development throughout Europe and lethargic industrial production in the region prevented any clear increase in the transport of goods on the Rhine in 2014. A total of 193.3 MT were transported on the traditional Rhine in 2014, compared with 193.4 MT during the same period the previous year.

The sectors of the transport of ores, metals, and metal products increased nevertheless, as did building materials and chemicals. In the course of the year there was also a noticeable increase in demand for the transport of containers, both for sea trade and in inland navigation.

In 2014, the construction of new vessels, for both dry bulk and tanker transport, continued to decline; there is nevertheless still considerable overcapacity for tanker transport. The situation of cruise vessels, on the other hand, is very different. A record was reached in 2014, and it is expected that the fleet of cruise vessels in the European Union will top the 300 mark in 2015.

In the first half of 2014, the trend in the evolution of turnover for the transport of goods was still slightly upward, but the situation deteriorated in the second half of the year. Here again, the situation of the transport of passengers was very different from that of goods, and in Germany there was a two-figure increase in turnover in 2014.

The prospects for demand for transport in 2015 are positive overall, except for the transport of coal; growth forecasts in the various transport sectors range from 1 to 3%.

The plenary session was held exceptionally on board of the former cruise ship ss Rotterdam.

POSSIBILITY OF RECOGNITION OF NON-RHINE LOGBOOKS

The CCNR has made it possible to recognise on the Rhine logbooks which comply with the CCNR model although they have been issued by a non-member State. Recognition may be granted at the request of a State which is not a member of the CCNR on condition that the procedure is guaranteed to be reciprocal.

Keeping a logbook is a basic contributing factor to safety of inland navigation. It makes it possible to check that crew members' navigation times and rest times have been observed, and that the necessary crew members have been present on board.

RECOGNITION ON THE RHINE OF CATEGORY A BOATMASTER'S CERTIFICATES ISSUED BY AUSTRIA AND SLOVAKIA

In addition to category B boatmaster's certificates, the CCNR recognised, at its spring plenary session, the validity of Austrian and Slovakian category A boatmaster's certificates on the Rhine. This will enable holders of such certificates to skipper vessels on the Rhine, on condition that they have the relevant sector knowledge and the necessary certificates of physical and mental fitness.

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 Central Commission's activities now reach beyond the Rhine and are directly concerned with European navigable waterways more generally. The Central Commission works closely with the European Commission as well as with the other river commissions and international organisations.

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CCNR
CENTRAL COMMISSION
FOR THE NAVIGATION OF THE RHINE

ATTACHMENTS (FOR THE SPECIALIST PRESS)

Ref : CC/CP (15)02

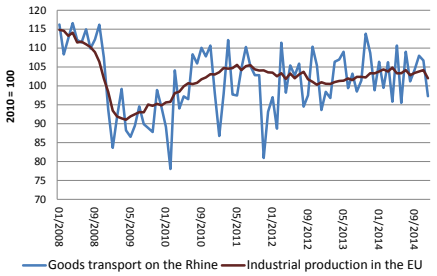
ECONOMIC SITUATION OF RHINE NAVIGATION / ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

General conditions

The following graph shows that the transport of goods in general, and in particular on the Rhine, is very closely linked to industrial production and hence to the economic problems being experience in the euro zone. Industrial production is not dynamic at the moment, and this is preventing any clear increase in the transport of goods on the Rhine.

On the basis of current forecasts, no more than a very slight increase in the transport of goods on the Rhine is expected in 2015 and 2016.

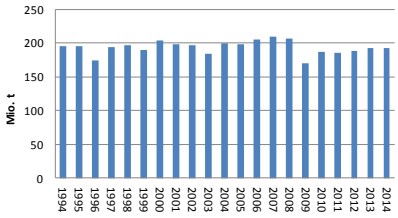
Monthly volume transported on the traditional Rhine and industrial production in the EU (2010 = 100)



transport of goods on the Rhine Source: Destatis, Eurostat

A total of 193.3 MT were transported on the traditional Rhine in 2014, compared with 193.4 MT in the previous year: the transport of goods therefore stagnated in 2014. The following graph shows that over the past six years the transport of goods on the Rhine has still not managed to return to its pre-crisis level of the 2005-2008 period.

Annual transport of goods on the Rhine (1994 - 2014)



Source : Destatis, CCNR calculation

Freight rates

With volumes transported increasing only slightly, the relationship between supply and demand continues to feature overcapacity. The considerable competition in terms of price that is evident in the Rhine region is preventing any increase in the level of freight rates. In 2014, freight rates therefore remained stagnant, or at the most showed a minimal increase.

Prospects pour 2015

Demand for transport of dry bulk by inland waterway

Regarding the evolution of volumes transported, prospects are globally slightly positive, with the iron and steel industry continuing its upswing and the transport of foodstuffs and animal feed, quarried products, and building materials expected to continue their positive trend. Quantities transported are expected to fall in the energy sector (coal), however, as a result of the mild winter and the growing replacement of coal by energy from renewable sources for the production of electricity and heat. Overall, demand for transport on the traditional Rhine ought to increase slightly in 2015, by about 1 to 3%. Inland navigation in the Netherlands also expects to see a 1 to 2% increase in volume in 2015.

Nevertheless, given both the keen competition on the Rhine market and existing overcapacity, this progress will not be enough to produce a substantial increase in freight rates.

Demand for transport of tanker goods by inland waterway

The increase expected in the oil products sector will have a positive effect on demand for transport. The drop in oil prices ought to trigger an upswing in the transport of domestic heating oil and fuels.

The chemical industry will also have the advantage of slightly better general conditions, following a drop in costs as a result of the evolution of the market for oil. The scale of the increase in the demand for transport will probably remain limited, nevertheless, scarcely exceeding 3%. Given the existing overcapacity, it is expected that there will be virtually no increase in freight rates.

THE CCNR IS CREATING THE LEGAL CONDITIONS FOR INLAND NAVIGATION ON THE RHINE AND THROUGHOUT EUROPE TO USE LIQUEFIED NATURAL GAS (LNG)

Currently, diesel oil is almost the only fuel used by European inland navigation. The European Union (EU) and the Member States of the Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine (CCNR) are in favour of introducing alternative fuels for inland navigation, as is the case for other modes of transport. In a number of national and European research and development projects, liquefied natural gas (LNG) has been identified as being totally appropriate for inland navigation, because its cost per unit of energy is low, its energy density is high, and its combustion is relatively environment- and climate-friendly. The CCNR supports the introduction of liquefied natural gas (LNG) as an alternative fuel for inland navigation. In its Vision 2018, it looks to the promotion of innovations in favour of alternative fuels and sources of energy, particularly liquefied natural gas (LNG).

The safety risks involved in using natural gas as a fuel (for example in the form of liquefied natural gas (LNG)) are greater than for using diesel oil, which is why inland navigation on the Rhine and throughout Europe has not been allowed to use any form of natural gas or other fuel with a flashpoint of or below 55° C. In order to determine whether LNG could be used safely, the CCNR authorised its use by 15 vessels temporarily for testing purposes, and on condition that a long list of technical and operational requirements were met. Five of these fifteen vessels are currently in operation. Their operators have been reporting back regularly to the CCNR, which has concluded that the use of liquefied natural gas (LNG) as a fuel is possible in inland navigation, on condition that specific requirements are met in terms of both the construction and operation of the vessels concerned and the training of their crew members. The CCNR has therefore decided to amend its regulations in order to allow the use of liquefied natural gas (LNG) as a fuel for Rhine navigation n condition that certain requirements are met. The CCNR will not, however, be looking into the possibility of using any other alternative fuels in the near future.

Because of the technical complexity of using liquefied natural gas (LNG) and the wide-ranging implications for inland navigation, the CCNR felt it was necessary to associate the inland navigation profession and technical experts who already

have experience in the use of liquefied natural gas (LNG) closely in its work. Consolidated proposals for amending the regulations were also presented to the association in the economic sectors concerned, and to experts in administrations, classification companies, and other institutions at a hearing. The parties present at the hearing approved the proposals overall. The additional observations they made at the hearing were taken into account by the competent bodies of the CCNR in the ensuing decision-making procedure.

The Resolution now adopted supplements the Police Regulations for Navigation of the Rhine (RPNR) by incorporating requirements concerning

- markings on vessels fuelled by liquefied natural gas (LNG),
- passing through locks for vessels fuelled by liquefied natural gas (LNG),
- safekeeping and surveillance,
- bunkering liquefied natural gas (LNG)

The requirements concerning bunkering demand that a checklist be used. The list is being drawn up and will as far as possible be identical to the checklist drawn up for bunkering liquefied natural gas (LNG) in seaports. The aim is for this checklist to be made public in October 2015 as a CCNR standard in the languages of Rhine navigation and in English. There is also provision for a specific reporting obligation for vessels fuelled by liquefied natural gas (LNG). The corresponding requirements are set out in the separate CCNR Resolution on the new wording of Article 12.01 of the RPNR on the "Reporting obligation".

The Regulations on Navigation Personnel on the Rhine (RPN) now includes a new Chapter 4bis on "Additional provisions concerning the expertise of crew members of inland navigation vessels fuelled by liquefied natural gas (LNG)". This Chapter includes requirements:

- stipulating that the skipper and crew members involved in the bunkering procedure shall be subject to an obligation of expertise, and
- laying down the content of training courses and examinations.

The RVBR will be supplemented by a Chapter 8ter including specific provisions applicable to vessels fitted with propulsion systems or auxiliary systems using fuels combustibles with a flashpoint of or below 55° C, and by an Annexe T on liquefied natural gas (LNG). The extremely complex work this requires is well advanced but not yet complete.

The European Commission has hailed the CCNR's work on establishing a legal framework for the use of liquefied natural gas (LNG) in inland navigation, and has indicated its intention to copy the amendments and additions to the CCNR regulations into the corresponding European regulations as far as possible.

USE OF ANCHORING POSTS (ARTICLE 7.03 OF THE RPNR)

Many vessels are currently fitted with anchoring posts. The use of anchoring posts may however create a dangerous situation and the risk of damaging the infrastructure. The CCNR has therefore decided to regulate their use, starting on 1 December 2016. They may be allowed or banned, depending on the section. A new sign (E.6.1) has therefore been included in the Police Regulations for the Navigation of the Rhine (RPNR); it indicates sectors where the use of anchoring posts on the side of the waterway where the sign is placed is permitted.

EXTENSION OF THE ELECTRONIC REPORTING OBLIGATION AND MODIFICATION OF THE REPORTING OBLIGATION (ARTICLE 12.01 OF THE RPNR)

Since 1 January 2010, an electronic reporting obligation has been in force on the Rhine for vessels and convoys transporting more than 20 containers or one or more containers of dangerous goods. This has made it possible to reduce the administrative work of skippers and staff at the sector traffic centres while ensuring a high level of safety for Rhine navigation. In the light of the advantages of electronic reporting that are evident now the system is fully operational, the CCNR has therefore decided to extend the obligation to all vessels and convoys transporting a container starting on 1 December 2015.

Additionally, the wording of Article 12.01 has been clarified: the list of data to be transmitted under the reporting obligation has been supplemented and modified, and additional safety-related data has been added. This covers the number of containers of dangerous goods or the position of the containers according to the loading plan. This information will be particularly helpful in managing incidents involving container-carrying vessels. Also, for containers, in addition to the number of containers on board already being announced currently, skippers will be required to indicate for each container its size, type, and load status (laden or empty). This information will make it possible to improve incident management – a container falling overboard, for example. Lastly, the list of data has also been reorganised: the list begins with data relating to the vessel and ends with data relating to the cargo.

MAXIMUM SIZE OF VESSELS (ARTICLE 11.01 OF THE RPNR)

Article 11.01 of the RPNR lays down the maximum dimensions for vessels. The current wording lays down the maximum length of 135 metres as a general rule, with restrictions on certain sections. More specifically, vessels longer than 110 metres are only allowed to navigate downstream in the Gebirge section if they have special authorisation when the water level noted at the Kaub scale is less than 0.85 metre or more than 4.60 metres (flood mark I).

These arrangements will change on 1 December 2016. Paragraph 1 i of the new wording of Article 11.01 states that vessel length may not exceed 135 m, and that width may not exceed 22.80 m. In the two sectors bellows, vessel width may not exceed:

a) 17.70 m in the sector between Bingen (km point 528.50) and Sankt Goar (km point 556.00), or

b) 15 m in the sector between Pannerden (km point 867.46) and the Lekkanal (km point 949.40).

Navigation in these two sectors is possible for wider vessels subject to special navigation authorisation issued by the competent authorities. This authorisation is not dependent on the height of water noted at the Kaub scale, as is currently the case. This new wording of Article 11.01 lightens the administrative procedures without affecting the safety of navigation in any way. The test journeys carried out so far by the Wasser- und Schifffahrtsamt in Bingen with water heights of less than 0.85 metres and more than 4.60 metres (flood mark I) at the Kaub scale have shown that limiting width to 17.70 m makes it possible for vessels 135 m long to navigate safely, irrespective of the height of the water in the sector.