

CCNR WEEKLY NEWSLETTER – N°1

Rhine navigation in the context of COVID-19

Given the exceptional situation in relation with the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as its impacts on the Rhine and European navigation, the Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine (CCNR) wishes to share relevant information via a “Weekly newsletter”. This newsletter is the first in a series. It will be published every week on the [CCNR dedicated webpage](#) “Information regarding Rhine navigation in the context of COVID-19”.

Insights from the industry on the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on inland navigation in Europe

The spread of the COVID-19 virus in Europe is expected to have strong impacts on the economy overall, as well as on the entire transport chain, including inland navigation. Some transport segments were immediately hit by the crisis and with great strength. In inland navigation, this is the case for passenger transport (both river cruises and day-trip cruises) which is going through a dramatic situation, with all vessels at a standstill. It also had an immediate impact on goods transport related to sectors directly affected by lockdown regulations (such as construction, steel, mobility sectors, etc.). For other inland waterways transport (IWT) segments, it is “the calm before the storm”, which means they are not yet affected but will be with a delay or as a result of a “domino effect”. For instance, container transport currently continues to operate, albeit with reduced volumes, but is expected to suffer from the full effects of the crisis in the coming weeks (reduced import volumes mainly from Asia, empty containers hardly available). Some sectors, considered as essential for the survival of our economy and the population, such as the agricultural sector, continue to operate. While the effect of the crisis will not be felt in the same way from one sector to another, as well as from one country to another, there is no doubt that, at some point in time, all sectors will be impacted by this unprecedented health crisis, resulting in financial, economic and social consequences.

To learn more about the economic impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on European inland navigation, a dedicated analysis is available on the following CCNR webpage: <https://www.ccr-zkr.org/13070000-en.html>. This analysis will be updated regularly.

In order to cope with the economic consequences of this crisis, support measures of various nature will need to be taken. Four main type of measures can already be identified:

- Measures to **enable inland navigation companies which can still operate to continue their activity** in the best conditions possible. Such measures should allow **more flexibility** in the application of existing regulation, in particular those related to employment, working conditions, mobility of crew members. They should also **enable continuity of navigation**, for instance, by ensuring the operation of inland waterway infrastructure, good conditions for fuel supply of vessels, the access to seaports and major cities, crew members’ access to vessels, etc...
- **Strong and immediate financial support measures during the crisis**, to avoid the bankruptcy of inland navigation companies and to prepare for its aftermath. In addition, coordination in the application and availability of such measures should be ensured, with the support of the European Union decision-makers, for the benefit of all inland navigation companies and the entire fleet in Europe.

- **Creative, large-scale and ambitious measures to restart the inland navigation sector after the crisis.** Such support measures should compensate for the loss of activity as a consequence of downsized production, revive demand and support production, particularly for those segments which are essential to the sector. Measures to rebuild the trust of users, particularly in the passenger sector, will be essential.
- **Communication measures to strengthen the visibility of the inland navigation sector and to highlight its essential nature,** during and after the crisis. An inland vessel can carry thousands of tonnes of goods with very few crew members on board, very far in the hinterland. With health risks close to zero, inland waterway transport can therefore play a strategic role during the crisis.

Night-time closure of locks on the Upper Rhine owing to the Covid-19 pandemic

As a result of the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic from which France and especially Alsace are currently suffering, the locks on the Upper Rhine will be closed at night when there is less traffic. This measure has been taken to protect the health of lock personnel and to ensure that lock operations can be maintained over the longer term because, notwithstanding rigorous precautionary and organisational measures, lock operational personnel on the Upper Rhine have become ill and are currently unavailable to operate the locks.

Given this situation, the lock operators on the Upper Rhine, *Wasserstraßen- und Schifffahrtsverwaltung des Bundes (WSV)*, *Voies navigables de France (VNF)* and *Électricité de France (EDF)*, have agreed to cease lock operations at night when there is less traffic, namely between 21:00 and 05:00. Night closure will commence on the night of 01 to 02 April. Locks will reopen at night once special protective measures for lock personnel are no longer required and sufficient lock operating staff are available again. All locks between Kembs and Iffezheim are affected by this measure. The traffic control centres and reporting points on the Rhine on the other hand will remain in operation at all times. The lock operators will ensure that sufficient berths are available for vessels arriving at the locks during the night.

The measure is consistent with the spirit of the CCNR resolution “Special measures by the Central Commission relating to the Covid-19 pandemic” of 23 March 2020.

Special measures by the Central Commission relating to the Covid-19 pandemic

The CCNR has taken exceptional measures in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure a good performance of Rhine navigation and that the supply chain continues to operate.

The resolution adopted this Monday, 23 March 2020, came into force immediately. In addition to infrastructure management and the validity of certificates and attestations, this resolution provides for measures ensuring free movement of crew. A crew member certificate of attestation will be provided in the annex to the resolution: <https://www.ccr-zkr.org/13070000-en.html#00>

Keep safe and healthy!

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.