

CCNR WEEKLY NEWSLETTER – N°3

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 will be published every week on the [CCNR dedicated webpage](#) “Information regarding Rhine navigation in the context of COVID-19”.

Message from our Secretary General

Dear Readers, dear Friends,

We hope first that you and your loved ones are safe and healthy and that the long Easter weekend has brought you calm and comfort to move forward. Like you, we firmly believe that in these painful and uncertain times, our sense of belonging to the great inland navigation community is more important than ever. As such, we will continue to provide you with relevant information on Rhine and inland navigation in Europe via this newsletter and future editions. We would also like to invite you to write to us and share with us and all readers your experiences and good practices in dealing with the many challenges and harsh consequences of the covid-19 pandemic.

Despite the exceptionally adverse context, I would like to assure you that the Central Commission, its delegations and the various administrations and bodies of its Member States continue to make every effort day in day out to keep the waterways as operational as possible and to facilitate administrative procedures to enable shipping operators, ports and terminals, as well as companies using the waterways, to maintain a high, safe and sustainable level of freight transport.

As you can imagine, however, our primary concern remains protecting the health of the many stakeholders and keeping them safe. This applies, of course, to the general public, but also to vessel crews, port and terminal personnel, as well as all colleagues involved in the operation of the waterways. These are all individuals who are essential to ensure as far as possible the resilience of inland navigation in the face of the current crisis, who are required to work in very difficult and not risk-free environments, and whom I would like once again to warmly congratulate and thank here.

The fewer people are infected with the virus, the less we will have to fear interruptions of vital services, including inland navigation.

The absolute number of people infected with coronavirus continues to rise in the CCNR Member States. Unfortunately, this does not allow us to already relax the measures put in place to reduce the spread of the virus and each of us must continue to focus on the best ways to manage the effects of the current pandemic, both privately and professionally.

That said, we also need to look ahead and begin to think about the next stage where we may experience lower but permanent levels of contamination. To do so, we will have to learn from this crisis. I have therefore already asked our Secretariat team to identify some important lessons for our own future functioning and, more specifically, for the future of Rhine and European inland navigation. When the time comes, I will take the liberty of approaching you and seeking your advice and recommendations on how best to prepare and organise this next phase.

In the meantime, some of you may wish to provide welcome distraction from our daily struggle of the past few weeks by sharing some interesting and encouraging stories that might appeal to a wider audience.

Looking forward to the better days ahead, and wishing all of you and your families the best for the times in front of us, I would like to thank you warmly for your own countless efforts and total commitment to the service of inland waterway transport in these very demanding times.

Take care, stay fit and in good spirits!

With best regards,

Bruno GEORGES

Netherlands: Financial support for inland navigation

The *Centraal Bureau voor de Rijn- & Binnenvaart* (CBRB) reports that the Dutch government has expanded its TOGS (*Tegemoetkoming Ondernemers Getroffen Sectoren*) program. This program aims at providing financial support for entrepreneurs with a maximum of 250 employees from sectors that are strongly affected by governmental measures against the COVID-19 pandemic. It now also includes the passenger IWT (Inland Waterways Transport) sector, as well as service activities incidental to water transportation, and renting and leasing of water transport equipment such as vessels. Starting from 15 April 2020, entrepreneurs from these sectors can apply for a tax-free one-time payment of 4,000 € in case their fixed costs exceed 4,000 € in a time period of three months, and they have not been supported by public funds with more than 200,000 € in the two previous tax years. ([CBRB](#), "*Binnenvaart (passagiersvaart en veerdiensten) ook onder de regeling Tegemoetkoming Ondernemers Getroffen Sectoren (TOGS)*", 08/04/2020)

According to a *Schuttevaer* report, however, there is still a problem regarding this financial aid as the regulation requires entrepreneurs to have a business address that is different from their private address. Since this is often not the case in passenger IWT, the CBRB is in talks with the responsible ministry about this topic. It is highlighted that the cargo shipping industry cannot make use of the TOGS scheme because the government does not seriously restrict cargo transport. ([Schuttevaer](#), "*TOGS-uitkering open voor passagiersvaart en veerdiensten*", 14/04/2020)

However, other financial support measures might also be applicable to this sector. An overview of relevant measures can be found on the [website of the CBRB](#). They include wage subsidies of up to 90 % depending on the size of the decrease in turnover, which must amount to at least 20 % over the course of three months. Furthermore, independent entrepreneurs have access to non-means tested income support up to the social minimum income for a maximum of three months, as well as to a loan for working capital of up to 10,517 € at an interest rate below the market level. Other measures also aim at facilitating access to liquidity for owners of small businesses, which are customary in Dutch inland navigation. ([CBRB](#), "*Overzicht steunmaatregelen overheid*", 09/04/2020)

Germany: Modest signs of recovery for container shipping

The Port of Hamburg assesses the development at the terminals in the west of Germany as slightly positive. The positioning of empty equipment by shipping companies at the container terminal Dortmund, which is linked to the Port of Duisburg and the Rhine via the Dortmund-Ems Canal and the Rhine-Herne Canal, is seen as the effects of the restart of the Chinese industry arriving in the Ruhr region. Regional producers as well have announced that they will increase imports and exports from the current week onwards. Other terminals and ports, however, are sending mixed signals. While Cologne expects an increase in import and an unclear export development, the city of Minden announces that large shippers stopped their business. In Hannover, the liner service in IWT was reduced from 4 to 2.5 departures, although manufacturing companies already expect an increase in imports soon. ([Ports of Hamburg](#), "*Inland terminals hit by the corona crises differently*", 07/04/2020)

France: Alsatian ports in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic

- The Port of Strasbourg is the second largest inland port in France behind the Ports of Paris. In 2019, container traffic in this port was 380,000 TEU, of which 60 % was road transport, 20 % rail traffic and 20 % inland waterway traffic. Ms. Fischer from Rhine Europe Terminals declares that since mid-March, a slow-down of the activity of the container terminal is felt.
- In March 2019 the number of containers handled at the terminal was in the range of 4,000 to 4,500 containers per week (all modes). In March 2020, this number stood at only 3,700 containers per week.
- The mode of transport that is impacted most is road transport, with a reduction by 20 % of activity in the first week of confinement. 60 % of road traffic in the port is related to local companies which have been closed temporarily.
- A lot of containers coming from China and Asia have to be stored at the port, as the destination of the container are companies that are currently closed.
- The Port of Colmar is an Upper Rhine port in Alsace with a total traffic volume of around 1.5 million tonnes per year. Road, rail and inland waterway transport each have a share of around 1/3 in total transport.
- According to port information, waterside traffic has slightly increased since the period of confinement, while road and rail transport has been reduced.
- In general, companies from the food sector have increased their activity, while many other have reduced it.

([Le Journal des Entreprises](#), "Coronavirus : Les ports alsaciens, chevilles ouvrières du maintien de l'activité économique", 07/04/2020)

France: Interview with Mr. Thibault Fruitier, Managing Director of Novatrans and CEO of Greenmodal and Lille Dourges Containers Terminal

In an interview with *Navigation, Ports & Intermodalité* (NPI), Mr. Fruitier says that all of his company's terminals throughout the whole of France are currently open and 100 % operational. High hygienic standards and contact limitations have been imposed. Schedules have been modified to adapt to reduced activity due to lower volumes. Greenmodal's activity on the Seine, being impacted by the closure and saturation of warehouses and problems with the supply of empty containers for export, reaches about two thirds of its usual level. Navigation on the Rhône has resumed after more than a month of interruption caused by an accident at a lock. It has already reached about half its usual level with the goal of increasing it to two thirds in the next days. However, Mr. Fruitier fears that volumes might not return as quickly as they left, although there are signs of customer loyalty. ([NPI](#), "Le fluvial et le ferroviaire à la disposition des clients pendant la crise", 10/04/2020)

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.