

CCNR SYMPOSIUM ON THE LNG STRATEGY FOR INLAND NAVIGATION AND PORTS: MORE THAN ONE HUNDRED PARTICIPANTS OUTLINE THE PROSPECTS AND FORTHCOMING MILESTONES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF LIQUEFIED NATURAL GAS

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At the initiative of the Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine (CCNR) and its partners (National LNG platform, LNG Masterplan, Pro Danube, Port of Antwerp, Port of Rotterdam, Energy Valley, LNG Initiative Northwest, Mariko), an international symposium on the LNG (liquefied natural gas) strategy for inland navigation took place this Thursday 8 October at the Maison de la Région Alsace in Strasbourg.

This more environmentally friendly alternative fuel does indeed appear to be capable of playing a vital role in supporting innovation, sustainable development and the competitiveness of inland waterway transport. However, investment in LNG technology is currently being held back both in terms of the fleet and infrastructure. As such there seem to be grounds for organising a debate to promote the putting in place of enhanced collaborative mechanisms aiming to boost the momentum of this new technology.

Introduced by an inspiring speech by the European coordinator for the RTE-T Rhine-Alps corridor, Mr. Pawel Wojciechowski, this symposium attracted more than 100 participants from numerous European countries concerned by the issue of the use, carriage and supply of LNG for inland navigation and ports. The debates were an opportunity for representatives of the worlds of politics and the economy alike to exchange ideas. Three panel discussions, moderated by Mr. Benjamin Hofman from the University of St Gall, provided a platform for exploring thinking, initially on supply infrastructure and regulation-related issues, then on market and commercial strategy-related issues and finally on collaboration and the financing of activities relating to the development of innovative projects using LNG.

Participants urged greater coherence in the support provided by the European Union for the development of LNG, and in particular a strengthening of legal certainty in the context of the new regulations on emissions by non-road mobile machinery, currently being discussed within the European Union. Indeed, the development of LNG must be accompanied by ambitious emissions limits, as well all test cycles that are more representative of real operating conditions, without however requiring additional investment in the form of post-treatment systems. Excessively onerous emissions limits pose a serious risk of halting investment and innovation in the inland navigation arena.

Shipowners reported at first hand on their experience with LNG-propelled vessels. Even if the current market situation was assessed as being difficult on account of the steep fall in the price of oil, the global oversupply of LNG could be a good medium to long-term leading indicator of the future competitiveness of LNG. Taking advantage of potential cost reductions as regards LNG equipment, especially tanks, and progress in setting up the supply chain could further accelerate the introduction of LNG in inland navigation. Important impetus might also come from China, which represents the biggest sector for inland navigation in the world and which reckons as well on the introduction of LNG as fuel.

It was pointed out that the CCNR has played an active role in developing a regulatory framework governing the use of LNG as a fuel by inland vessels, thus supporting the profession's efforts to reduce both pollution and greenhouse gas emissions by the inland navigation sector and its operating costs. Following an initial regulatory package adopted in June, the entire body of regulation applicable to

vessels using LNG as a fuel will be adopted by the end of the year, ensuring high safety standards and, at the same time, the necessary legal certainty for investors. In particular, those taking part in the symposium emphasised their interest in stable technical requirements for vessels and a harmonised bunker checklist.

À PROPOS DE LA 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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