

NEW BELGIAN PRESIDENCY AND ITS PRIORITIES FOR 2020 AND BEYOND

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With effect from 01 January 2020, Belgium will be assuming the presidency of the Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine (CCNR) for a two-year term. The office of President will be held by

Mr Michel-Etienne Tilemans

Belgian Coordinator for the Benelux Union, Secretary for Belgium of the Belgo-Luxembourg administrative commission and Head of the Belgian delegation to the CCNR.

Mr Tilemans will act as the CCNR's President until 31 December 2021. During this period, the Vice Presidency of the CCNR will be assumed by France, the office of Vice President will be held by

Mr François Alabrune

Director of Legal Affairs at the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs and head of the French delegation to the CCNR.

The future president introduced the new CCNR Presidency's priorities at the CCNR's last plenary session in December 2019. They encompass seven topics:

COLLABORATION CCNR/EU/CESNI/UNECE

The creation of the [CESNI](#), a joint body for coordinating and standardising European inland navigation, has profoundly changed the European inland navigation landscape. Among other things, between now and 2022 this cooperation agreement between the CCNR Secretariat and the European Commission will ensure the standardisation of European certificates of qualification, service record books and logbooks and the introduction of stringent training requirements in the EU member states and Switzerland.

The objective will be to give concrete expression to future cooperation between the CCNR and the European Commission for the post-2021 time frame, by considering other more sustainable forms of collaboration.

Close cooperation with the UNECE will be continued, especially concerning police regulations, the TEN-T, the Good Navigation Status and greening.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT – FINANCING GREENING

The CCNR has set itself ambitious targets for the sustainable environmental, social and economic development of inland navigation.

With a view to implementing the [Mannheim ministerial Declaration](#) of 17 October 2018, a study will be carried out on the possibility of creating a fund for facilitating and acting as a framework for the greening of inland navigation.

Achieving zero emissions in the inland navigation sector by 2050 will require a detailed description of the best way both of raising awareness within, and convincing and supporting it to make appropriate investments.

The study will be submitted by the end of 2020 and its subsequent implementation will be a priority.

The Belgian presidency also wishes to organise a workshop on the greening of inland navigation in May 2020, which will pay particular attention to alternative fuels.

DIGITALISATION OF TRANSPORT DOCUMENTS – ADMINISTRATIVE SIMPLIFICATION

The CCNR's objective is to bolster the role of inland navigation as an economically relevant, sustainable means of transport with high potential for development and innovation, and to integrate inland navigation into digital and multimodal logistics chains.

(Digital) data quality and reliability are essential in this respect. Interactions between traffic management and logistics planning ashore, and the essential on-board processes, are increasingly common.

The CCNR will continue to play a key role in developing regulations governing the exchange of mandatory electronic reporting by vessels, on-board documentation and certificates of qualification.

NEW TECHNOLOGIES AND INNOVATION – AUTOMATION OF INLAND NAVIGATION

The CCNR is currently witnessing the emergence of new technologies that hint at promising advances. Test projects exploring block chain technology, alternative propulsion systems, automated vessels and "intelligent" communication systems will make inland navigation greener and safer.



ABOUT MICHEL-ETIENNE TILEMANS

A career diplomat, Mr Michel-Etienne Tilemans has successively held posts and roles in Belgium's embassies and permanent representations in Warsaw (1994-1996), at NATO (1997-2000), at the United Nations (UN) in New York (2000-2004), in Brazzaville (2007-2009), at the EU's Political and Security Committee (2012-2016) and in Tunis (2016-2019). Within the Federal Public Service of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Belgium, he headed the department responsible for the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) (2004-2007) then the Human Rights and Humanitarian Law Department (2009-2011). He was also Vice President of the 5th Committee of the UN General Assembly (2002), a member of the UN Committee on Contributions (2002) and a member of the Committee on Budget and Finance of the International Criminal Court (2003-2008). Apart from the presidency of the CCNR, he is currently the Belgian Coordinator for the Benelux Union and Secretary for Belgium of the Belgo-Luxembourg administrative commission.



CCNR

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In the past, the CCNR proved to be a driving force in amending regulations in the light of new technological developments. That being so, the Belgian presidency intends to do everything it can to achieve the creation of a “legal” framework enabling [automated navigation](#) and responding to technological innovations.

The CCNR needs to address the four pillars of automated navigation: intelligent vessels, intelligent infrastructure, intelligent communication and intelligent regulation, and specifically the way in which these four pillars relate to one another. This can only increase the reliability and attractiveness of the inland navigation sector.

WATERWAYS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The waterways of the CCNR’s member states are Europe’s busiest. As such, maintaining and improving the infrastructure is crucial. Given the considerable costs involved, it is essential to think about future financing and technological challenges and about possible infrastructure changes.

Specifically, the CCNR notes that container vessels are becoming ever bigger and that communication between the vessel and shore-side equipment is becoming increasingly automated. This technological progress affords scope for increased efficiency but the CCNR will need to ensure that it responds to and, if necessary, anticipates trends that change current inland navigation practices. River infrastructure must be prepared for these changes.

To achieve this, the CCNR also seeks to cooperate with other organisations such as the UNECE, the river commissions and the European Commission.

INTERNAL FUNCTIONING OF THE CCNR – ENHANCING CONTENT

Recent years have seen a debate on the possibility of energising plenary sessions and stepping up the interaction between the CCNR’s various committees. This debate will continue.

As far as possible, therefore, the Belgian presidency wishes to promote the diversity of the sessions and workshops. In the process, it will be possible to combine more of the conclusions of the CCNR’s activities and make them available externally. Likewise, there will be continued support for ever closer NGO involvement in the CCNR.

The Belgian presidency will also adhere to a mechanism aiming to build on current topics carefully chosen by well-prepared workshops.

SPECIFIC EVENTS

Throughout 2020, the CCNR will be celebrating the hundredth anniversary of its presence in Strasbourg by developing various initiatives in partnership with other institutions.

The plenary session in the spring of 2021 will be held in Belgium.

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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