

SPRING 2021 PLENARY SESSION OF THE CCNR

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The Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine (CCNR) held its Spring session on 2 June 2021, by videoconference. The session was chaired by Mr Michel-Etienne Tilemans, the President of the CCNR (Belgium). Representatives of the European Commission, Danube Commission, Moselle Commission and the UN-ECE, and of Luxembourg, the Czech Republic, and Ukraine also attended this plenary session as observers. Among the principal topics addressed during the meeting were the energy transition of the inland navigation sector, digitalisation, matters pertaining to the Rhine waterway, and the market observation.

CCNR STUDY ON THE ENERGY TRANSITION TO A ZERO-EMISSIONS INLAND NAVIGATION SECTOR

The energy transition is an existential challenge for Rhine and European navigation. However, it is necessarily accompanied by technological adaptations, the costs of which are considerable, and can only partially be borne by the profession. In this context, the CCNR has noted the findings of the study on the financing of the energy transition to a zero-emissions inland navigation sector, conducted in consultation with the principal actors within the sector. The study investigates the role that a European subsidy and financing mechanism might play in supporting the energy transition. Such a mechanism should be accessible on the same conditions to all CCNR member state vessel owners. It is important to note that the study's findings do not prejudice the positions of the central Commission and of its member states.

Possessing as it does a European dimension, the study is also a major plank in the implementation of the [Mannheim Declaration](#). Indeed, the latter had emphasised the need for new financial mechanisms in order "as far as possible to eliminate emissions of greenhouse gases and other pollutants by 2050" and had tasked the CCNR with taking the initiative in developing them. Moreover, this study feeds into the CCNR roadmap for the overall reduction in greenhouse gas and pollutant emissions by 2050, currently under development. The CCNR's intention in drawing up the roadmap is to lay the foundation

for a common approach to the energy transition and emissions reduction by all stakeholders. A revised version of the roadmap was resubmitted at the beginning of June for consultation with stakeholders, with adoption of the final document expected in December 2021.

The conclusions of the study represent a major input to the discussions at Rhine, European and international level on a European subsidy and financing mechanism for the energy transition. The CCNR reiterated its willingness to take part in these important discussions. Following confirmation of publication at the June plenary session, the study will be published at the beginning of July 2021 on the [CCNR's website](#).

DIGITALISATION FRONT AND CENTRE OF THE CCNR'S ACTIVITIES

In its [resolution 2021-I-10](#), the CCNR decided to authorise the presence on board of certificates and other shipboard documents in electronic form. This is a first step in the development of digitalisation in Rhine navigation, which will be manifested in an increasing shift to certificates and other shipboard documents in electronic form.

This policy decision also enables several objectives to be addressed:

1. send a strong signal to the inland navigation profession by permitting the presentation of certain shipboard documents in electronic form;
2. allowing certain shipboard documents to be presented in PDF format at any time with no additional level of authentication;
3. making life easier for the profession, but also for the authorities responsible for applying the regulations, in the event the inspecting authorities;
4. lightening the administrative burden on the navigation of the Rhine without making it any less safe.

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.

Article 1.10 and annex 13 of Rhine Police Regulations ([RPR](#)) have been amended accordingly. This is an important step which aims, with effect from 1 June 2022, by analogy with hard copy documents, which will remain valid, to allow certain shipboard documents to be presented in electronic form alone, with no additional level of authentication.

ALIGNMENT OF THE RPR BE TAKE ACCOUNT OF THE ES-RIS 2021/1

At its meeting on 15 April 2021, the European Committee for drawing up Standards in the field of Inland Navigation ([CESNI](#)) adopted a first edition 2021/1 of the European standard for river information services ([ES-RIS](#)).

The ES-RIS defines the technical specifications for river information services (RIS) with a particular view to ensuring complete interoperability on the Rhine and the European Union's waterways. Available in 4 languages (English, French, German, Dutch), the first edition of the ES-RIS comprises the following RIS standards: the Inland ECDIS Standard, the VTT Standard, the NtS Standard, the ERI Standard and the CESNI's test Standard for Inland AIS.



CCNR

CENTRAL COMMISSION
FOR THE NAVIGATION OF THE RHINE

Palais du Rhin

2, place de la République - CS10023
F - 67082 Strasbourg Cedex

Tel. +33 (0)3 88 52 20 10

Fax +33 (0)3 88 32 10 72

ccnr@ccr-zkr.org

www.ccr-zkr.org

During its plenary session, the CCNR adopted a resolution to align the Rhine Police Regulations (RPR) and refer to the ES-RIS 2021/1. The CCNR has made this policy decision to pursue several goals:

- contribute to harmonised implementation of RIS on the Rhine and on the entire network of inland waterways in the European Union;
- ensure the interoperability of systems using data from RIS;
- update the current requirements in the RPR with those of the ES-RIS, which contains the latest additions of the RIS standards.

This resolution will come into force on 25 January 2022. The CCNR is thus ensuring complete harmonisation with European Union law.

RHINE WATERWAY-RELATED ISSUES

At its spring plenary session, the CCNR adopted the updated international alert and communication procedure as an additional pandemic management information tool. For information, the international alert and communication procedure established by [resolution 2009-II-9](#) is currently applied in the event of an accident or the unavailability of infrastructure for technical reasons. The update aims to ensure that even in the event of a pandemic, information is immediately exchanged between the sector's traffic centres, and that inland waterway transport is notified of any infrastructure operating restrictions throughout the Rhine corridor. This procedural amendment will help bolster yet further the reliability of the Rhine as a navigable waterway.

In parallel, the CCNR also approved three construction projects (new water intake structure on the Upper Rhine, the construction of set offs on the banks of the Rhine at Seltz, and demolition of the arch bridge across the Lek in the vicinity of Vianen) at its plenary session. The central Commission noted that neither the work, nor the measures planned cause any significant impediment to navigation.

NEW PUBLICATIONS ON THE INLAND NAVIGATION MARKET IN EUROPE

In partnership with the European Commission, the CCNR published its second [thematic report](#) on the labour market in January 2021 and its [biannual Market Insight report](#) in April 2021.

In particular, the new 2021 annual Market Observation report will provide an exhaustive overview of the inland navigation situation in Europe in 2020, and its developments, and will be published in September 2021. The CCNR resolution adopted in the plenary session incorporates the main findings of the new 2021 annual Market Observation report and will be available on the CCNR website in July.

2020 was marked by an exceptional economic crisis arising from the Covid 19 pandemic. Our society's economic behaviour was heavily impacted by it, as was the entire transport sector, including inland navigation. As a result, EU GDP contracted by 6% in 2020, namely a greater contraction than was experienced during the 2009 financial crisis (-4%). Freight transport by navigable waterway, however, held up better than during previous crises. The percentage decline of freight transport on the Rhine was thus -8.4% in 2020, against -18.3% in 2009. For the period 2021-2024, the overall prospects point to a recovery in freight transport. This is primarily attributable to an anticipated recovery in industrial output in the principal markets driving inland navigation: steel and chemical production, refining activity and demand for petroleum products, construction activity. Economic activity should however remain below the levels achieved at the end of 2019 and this will persist into 2022. As for passenger transport, it came to a complete halt in March 2020 owing to the pandemic and was subject to severe restrictions throughout 2020. The outlook for passenger transport in 2021 and beyond will chiefly depend on the pandemic situation at the end of 2021 and in 2022, and on how health measures develop.

As a reminder, the CCNR's full annual and biannual reports and fact sheets can be downloaded as a PDF in French, Dutch, German, or English at <https://www.ccr-zkr.org/13020800-en.html> or consulted directly online at: <https://www.inland-navigation-market.org>.

CCNR-EU PARTNERSHIP, CESNI ACTIVITIES AND COLLABORATION WITH TRADITIONAL PARTNERS

The plenary meeting on 2 June was once again an opportunity to address the cooperation between the CCNR and the European Commission (DG MOVE), whether specifically in the context of relations spanning the period 2019 -2021 or of the post-2021 future partnership, or of the CESNI. The full results of the meeting of the European Committee on 15 April 2021, which was the subject of a detailed report at the plenary session, is available on the [CESNI website](#). Among many other areas of mutual interest, the CCNR also pointed to the value of enhanced cooperation on databases, as well as the need to ensure access to them by all Central Commission member states.

The increasing importance of cooperation with the European Parliament, which is displaying considerable interest in an environmentally-friendly, digitalised inland navigation sector that is better integrated with transport chains, was emphasised yet again.

Furthermore, the CCNR again welcomed the constructive and ongoing collaborative undertakings with its other traditional partners, and in particular with the other river commissions and the UN-ECE. These traditional cooperative undertakings were particularly evident, recently, in the joint participation in events and meetings by web conference and in the discussions on regulations and associated activities, and in contributions to the work on the market observation, and in the context of the Covid-19 crisis. The CCNR thanked all its partners for the pleasant and productive discussions, which help the navigation of the Rhine and European inland waterways thrive and develop in a sustainable way.

Finally, the plenary session was the opportunity briefly to report on how work is progressing on the PLATINA3 project, which got off to a good start in January 2021 and is proceeding on schedule. After a first "stage event" organised by the Danube Commission on 7 and 8 April 2021, the CCNR will host the next event, which will be held next October.

NEXT PLENARY MEETING

The health situation permitting, the next autumn plenary session of the CCNR will take place on a face-to-face basis on 9 December 2021, in Hasselt (Belgium). This will be the last plenary session chaired by Belgium before the French Presidency begins (2022-2023).



Palais du Rhin
2, place de la République - CS10023
F - 67082 Strasbourg Cedex

Tel. **+33 (0)3 88 52 20 10**
Fax +33 (0)3 88 32 10 72

ccnr@ccr-zkr.org
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