

## CCNR CONFERENCE: “THE MANNHEIM DECLARATION - 5 YEARS ON”

Ref: CC/CP (23)09

The Mannheim Ministerial Declaration, adopted in 2018, reiterated the CCNR’s Member States’ commitment to the Mannheim Act, as well as their determination to promote Rhine and European navigation. At its plenary session on 6 December 2023, under the French Presidency, the CCNR adopted a progress report on the Declaration. During the conference which followed the meeting, delegations and partners presented an overview of the progress achieved and the work carried out in a wide range of areas, in the last few years.

Before focusing on the Mannheim Declaration, a presentation by Didier Léandri (French delegation) offered participants the opportunity to learn more about the Olympic Games due to be held in Paris in 2024. This global sporting event will give pride of place to waterways and river navigation, particularly during the opening ceremony. The presentation given by Nicole van der Sman (Dutch delegation) highlighted the challenges facing inland navigation in its quest for increased sustainability. The question of new technologies, alternative fuels, appropriate regulation and suitable financial instruments are essential elements of the CCNR’s strategy. Labour market issues formed another core aspect of the discussions. Florian Röthlingshöfer (Swiss delegation) raised the challenges presented by ageing and the shortage of personnel in the inland navigation sector. Digitisation and automation may help to render the sector more attractive, together with the promotion campaigns developed by Member States. The CCNR is also working towards modern, harmonised regulations at a European level. In his presentation, Willem Vuylsteke (Belgian delegation) highlighted the possibilities offered by automation – particularly with regard to the challenges mentioned above. He outlined the different [levels of automation](#) defined by the CCNR, which constitute a framework for the development of new technologies. He emphasised the importance of experimenting with navigation and remote operation. After all, the navigability of the Rhine and preserving that navigability are essential for transport across Europe, the supply of raw materials and delivery to the end consumer. In this connection, Markus Grewe (German delegation) raised the problem of low water levels. The increased frequency and duration of low water events and an inland navigation system ever more vulnerable to its effects require a joint effort by all parties, as set out in the CCNR discussion paper “[Act now!](#)”. During all the presentations and discussions, cooperation emerged as key to tackling the many challenges. In this sense, the CCNR is an ideal platform for dialogue.



*“Another of the CCNR’s strengths is that it works in close synergy with the economic sector and its partners, for whom the Rhine is part of their daily lives and who know the opportunities, the market, the activity, and the people on and along the river.”*

*Diégo Colas, Chair and Head of the French delegation.*

The conference concluded with a round table discussion with stakeholders from the sector: Benoit Blank (BASF), Chris Kornet (Concordia Damen), Claire Merlin (Port autonome de Strasbourg), Daisy Rycquart (CITBO) and Rolf Vogt (Birsterminal AG). The speakers shared the challenges they face in terms of the energy transition, the development of new technologies, the labour market and low water. They were able to present the solutions they have developed at local level, and also to articulate their needs and expectations of the CCNR.

*“Over the years, or even the centuries, the CCNR has always adapted to new circumstances, focused on new challenges and proved its ability to play a valuable innovative role.”*

*Lucia Luijten, Secretary General of the CCNR*

Five years ago, the ministers for transport of the Member States reaffirmed the key role of the CCNR, by highlighting the major challenges facing inland navigation and adopting the Mannheim Declaration. They confirmed the importance of the Mannheim Act and the CCNR for sustainable inland navigation and a strong economy. They also agreed to provide the CCNR with the resources and the support needed to carry out its work, in cooperation with its many partners. The CCNR took up this challenge and has provided strong support to the sector through its expertise and skills. It will continue to do so, offering a flexible response to the needs of its Member States and the industry. This also emerged from the report

submitted officially to the representatives of the Member States and which offers an overview of the progress achieved in meeting the aims of the Declaration.

**The progress report, together with the programme, the presentations and photos of the conference are available on the CCNR website: <https://www.ccr-zkr.org/13020158-en.html>.**

### 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.*



# CCNR

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