

CCNR: A DUTCH PRESIDENCY READY TO FACE THE CHALLENGES

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From 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2025, the Netherlands will hold the Presidency of the Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine (CCNR). Switzerland will hold the Vice Presidency.

President: Michiel van Kruiningen, Director of Maritime Affairs at the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management, head of the Dutch delegation

Vice-president: Paul Seger, Ambassador, head of the Swiss delegation

The rotating presidency of the CCNR, with a term of two years, assures fair representation for all Member States and allows particular attention to be paid to key areas.



STRENGTHENING COOPERATION WITH THE EUROPEAN UNION

The Dutch delegation will continue the efforts undertaken by the CCNR within the framework of cooperation with the European Commission. These efforts are essential, particularly with regard to the competences of the CCNR on the one hand and the EU on the other.

These relations with the European Commission raise a number of key issues, such as the adaptation of various directives, coordination procedures and the operation of CESNI (European committee for drawing up standards in the field of inland navigation). The negotiations on the revision of the TEN-T regulations are a good example of this. The issues addressed (waterway infrastructure, sustainable development, adaptation to climate change and digitisation) have a direct impact on the activities of the CCNR and CESNI.



PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The Netherlands sees energy transition as a key issue, with two priorities: energy taxation and financing the energy transition.

At present, no excise duty is levied on navigation on the Rhine, with regard to fuels. While the 1952 decree prohibits excise duties, the EU is working on a directive on energy taxation, which will affect inland navigation fuels in particular.

The second priority concerns the CCNR's commitment to financing the energy transition of European inland navigation. The CCNR and the EU are planning to put an end to greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. Achieving these objectives will require major investment. In order to support the sector, it is essential to have aid funding for inland navigation. The Netherlands, together with the CCNR, would like to exchange views with the EU with a view to improving current regulations and, if possible, creating a fund dedicated to inland navigation.



ADAPTING TO CLIMATE CHANGE

During its Presidency, the Netherlands also intends to focus on adapting to climate change. While waterways are already subject to natural phenomena such as drought and flooding, climate change is expected to intensify extreme events.

Ensuring the reliability of inland navigation makes adapting waterways to climate change an urgent and complex task. A number of programmes and initiatives have been implemented, both in the Netherlands (Climate-proof Networks/Main Waterways Network and Integrated River management) and Germany ("Rhine low water" action plan). The aim of these programmes is to consider the consequences of climate change and to develop ways in which waterways can adapt.

Adapting to climate change is a task that must be tackled at international level as waterways are not bound by national borders.



DEVELOPING SMART SHIPPING

The Dutch delegation welcomes the actions taken recently by the CCNR with regard to automated navigation and remote operation. In its vision published in 2022, the CCNR stated that these developments would contribute to the safety, sustainable development and competitiveness of navigation on the Rhine. It has also taken the steps necessary to allow derogations from the regulations to be granted to pilot projects.

It goes without saying that the Dutch delegation embraces these recent developments with great confidence and enthusiasm and hopes that they will lead to in-depth development and continuity in this area. In its vision for the future of inland navigation, the Dutch Presidency sees digitisation and automation as priority areas.



ABOUT MICHIEL VAN KRUININGEN

After completing his university studies in transport economics at Erasmus University Rotterdam, Michiel van Kruiningen began his career at the then Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management. There, he held a number of policy advisory positions in the field of passenger and freight transport policy. Via a short secondment at the Lower House of the States-General as registrar of the permanent parliamentary committee, Michiel worked for 18 years at the municipality of Rotterdam before starting in his current position (February 2023). At the municipality, he held a number of management positions in the fields of urban development, business operations and social development, among others. Michiel is Director of Maritime Affairs at the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management and is responsible for inland shipping and waterways, shipping, sustainable shipping, seaports and multimodal goods transport and pipelines.



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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



COOPERATION ON THE LONG-TERM TRANSITIONAL PROVISIONS

The Dutch delegation wishes to pay particular attention to the issue of the long-term transitional provisions and their expiry.

When new technical specifications relating to inland navigation vessels are adopted by the CCNR, transitional provisions may be put in place to allow for the gradual adaptation of the existing fleet. Thus, existing vessels are able to benefit from additional time to comply with these new technical specifications. This period is usually several years, or even decades. In spite of these transitional provisions, for some vessels achieving compliance is not technically feasible or would involve disproportionate expense. On the basis of a recommendation agreed by the CCNR, derogations from these specifications may be granted for a specific vessel. The “safeguard clause” is thus applied.

With the transitional provisions due to expire when the certificates are renewed in 2035/2041, there is an increased risk of bottlenecks for certain categories of vessel. In some cases, the safeguard clause may offer a solution. Furthermore, collective solutions that could be envisaged at international level (CCNR/CESNI) may also offer a possible solution. Preparatory work on possible collective solutions for small vessels is ongoing in the Netherlands.

The Dutch delegation is keen to continue the cooperation and exchanges on this subject.

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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