

PLENARY SESSION SPRING 2024

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On 13 June 2024, the Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine (CCNR) held its spring plenary session in Strasbourg. Mr Michiel van Kruiningen, head of the Dutch delegation, chaired the meeting. At the plenary meeting, a number of resolutions were adopted, relating to the economic situation of inland navigation in Europe, Rhine navigation personnel, police regulations and matters concerning the Rhine waterway. In addition, the German and Dutch delegations each gave a presentation on adapting the Rhine to climate change.

THE ECONOMIC SITUATION FOR INLAND NAVIGATION IN EUROPE

The volume of goods transported on the Rhine in 2023 was significantly affected by the deterioration in the macroeconomic situation. The decline is due primarily to slower growth in world trade, a drop in worldwide demand as a result of inflation, Russia's large-scale war of aggression against Ukraine and other geopolitical conflicts. As a result, the volume transported in 2023, which amounted to 262 million tonnes, was still lower than the figure for 2022 (-10.4 %). This drop relates particularly to the transport of dry goods and container transport. However, the largest category of goods in terms of volume – petroleum products – recorded the same result in 2023 as in the previous year. Iron ore was the only freight category to achieve a relatively positive result, with a moderate increase in 2023 in comparison with 2022.

Looking at the various categories, the near future points to a moderate but uncertain recovery in the main inland navigation markets. In the steel sector, initial indications suggest that global demand for steel will start to rise again in 2025. In addition, container transport could see an improvement compared with previous years. Indeed, the volumes transported in April 2024 are comparable to those of April 2023, and growth in maritime container transport should stabilise at around +3% per year from 2024 onwards.

The CCNR's annual, biannual and thematic reports on the economic situation are available online at <https://inland-navigation-market.org/>.



HARMONISATION OF RHINE AND EU LEGAL FRAMEWORKS FOR PERSONNEL

A number of amendments to the Regulations for Rhine navigation personnel (RPN) were adopted during the spring plenary session. A first amendment allows CCNR Member States to offer two ways to obtain a certificate of qualification as a passenger navigation expert: either by following a continuous training programme and passing the final exam, or by simply passing an administrative exam.

A second amendment to the RPN relates to the inclusion of the updated European Standard for Qualifications in Inland Navigation (ES-QIN 2024/1). A new version of ES-QIN was adopted by CESNI (European Committee for drawing up Standards in the field of Inland Navigation) on [11 April 2024](#). The main change is intended to improve training for the command level. The aim is to better prepare boatmasters to navigate and manoeuvre in the vicinity of seagoing vessels. The CCNR and the EU are coordinating the introduction of ES-QIN 2024/1 with effect from 1 January 2025.

Finally, a further amendment is intended to complete the model medical certificate (Annex 1 to the RPN). The amendment seeks to tackle the practical problems encountered by Member States with regard to the documentation linked to visual acuity. Holders of an existing boatmaster's certificate will now be deemed fit if the following two conditions are met:

- They have a colour vision anomaly with a quotient of between 0.7 and 3.0.
- The boatmaster's certificate was issued before 1 April 2004.

These amendments will enter into force on 1 January 2025.

TRAFFIC REGULATION UPDATES: SIDE LIGHTS AND ELECTRONIC REPORTING

The Police Regulations for the Navigation of the Rhine (RPR) were amended with regard to the position of side lights for single motorised vessels under way. At present, the side lights must be placed at least 1 m aft of the masthead light: thus, they may be placed either at the forward or the aft end of the vessel. If the lights are at the forward end, it is difficult for boatmasters on other vessels to see the full length of the vessel at night. This may make certain manoeuvres, such as entering or leaving port or crossing in narrow passages, more complicated. The amendment adopted at the meeting therefore explicitly lays down that side lights must be systematically placed at the aft end of the vessel. It also sets out exceptions to this obligation: for example, it does not apply to certain passenger vessels, pleasure craft or to certain traditional boats or their replicas. The other provisions relating to side lights remain unchanged.



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A second amendment to the RPR concerns mandatory electronic reporting, which has been introduced gradually since 2010. Electronic reporting facilitates the exchange of data between vessels and control posts in the sector and allows better management of traffic and incidents. This further extension will apply to vessels longer than 86 m with one or more holds for the transport of goods. It will also apply to vessels using fuels other than diesel or liquefied natural gas (LNG) for propulsion (such as methanol, gaseous hydrogen and accumulators with a combined capacity greater than 500 kWh). Day trip vessels may be granted a derogation from mandatory reporting by the competent authorities.

These two amendments will enter into force on 1 December 2026.

MATTERS RELATING TO THE RHINE WATERWAY

At its plenary session, the CCNR approved various construction projects on the Rhine:

- the extension of the floating facility for small craft at AWSC water sport club at Altenheim;
- the construction of groundwater discharge facilities at Vogelgrun and Geiswasser.

The CCNR also authorised a project to lower the water level on the Upper Rhine for the purposes of inspection. The inspection concerns the side walls of the dams in the Strasbourg, Gerstheim, Rhinau and Marckolsheim reaches. These inspections take place every 5 years for safety reasons. A notice to shipping will confirm and give details of the proposed schedule. It will be communicated in the second quarter of 2024, prior to the water level being lowered.

Finally, the CCNR welcomes the measures intended to improve navigation conditions on the Rhine and the Waal: the supply of bedload downstream of Iffezheim, the stabilisation of the riverbed downstream of Iffezheim and at Bockum-Krefeld; and the dredging of the navigable fairway of the Waal.

None of these changes in water levels hinder the navigation of the Rhine. On the contrary, these measures adopted by the CCNR help to ensure the prosperity of Rhine and European navigation and a high degree of safety both for navigation and its environment.

COOPERATION WITH CTIF, THE ASSOCIATION SPECIALIZING IN FIRE PREVENTION AND EXTINCTION

The CCNR has granted the status of approved organisation to the CTIF (the International Association of Fire and Rescue Services). The CTIF is an international technical organisation whose goals are to promote safety, innovation and excellence in fire and rescue services. Established with the aim of encouraging international cooperation and the exchange of knowledge, the CTIF consists of a worldwide network of fire and rescue professionals and organisations.

Given the developments in Rhine navigation, most notably the challenges linked to new propulsion technologies and new fuels, a formal collaboration between the CTIF and the CCNR will be of very great benefit. It will ensure improved safety through the prevention of fires, and also increase the efficiency of fire and rescue operations. The CTIF is invited to participate in the work of the CCNR relating particularly to police regulations, technical requirements, training, professional qualifications, the transport of dangerous goods, automation and infrastructure.

NEXT PLENARY SESSION

The next plenary session of the CCNR will be held in Strasbourg, on 5 December 2024.

From mid-July 2024, all the resolutions adopted at the plenary session will be available on the CCNR website at: <https://www.ccr-zkr.org/13020400-en.html>.

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Source: CCNR, Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine



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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