

WORKSHOP ON BERTHS AS ELEMENT FOR A FUTURE ORIENTED INLAND NAVIGATION

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There are few inland navigation topics that have dominated the media in recent months as much as inland navigation vessel berths. Be it in relation to the loss of existing attractive inner-city berths, the shortage of car dropping locations, the impact of noise and pollutant emissions by vessels at berth on local residents and inner-city air quality, or in relation to future requirements such as the mandatory use of shore power at individual berths.

It was to discuss this that representatives from 10 European countries and inland navigation associations met in Vienna from 8 to 9 November 2018. Hans-Peter Hasenbichler, viadonau's Managing Director and Gerhard Kratzenberg, in his capacity as Chair of the CCNR Infrastructure and Environment Committee, opened the workshop and used their welcoming addresses to outline the challenges the inland navigation sector will face in the years ahead, such as climate change, low water and competitiveness. Gerhard Kratzenberg emphasised the importance of an adequate number of high-quality berths for the entire inland navigation system and its future viability. Hans-Peter Hasenbichler stressed that inland navigation is and will remain the best means of transport for many goods. But the challenges need to be actively confronted.

The experts then exchanged their experiences in establishing the requirement for berths, in planning and equipping berths and car dropping locations and in new berth management techniques, gathered information about national berth strategies and held detailed, lively and robust discussions on the high-quality contributions.

SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Kai Kempmann of the CCNR Secretariat began by highlighting the importance of berths to the concept of socially sustainable inland navigation. He said that adequate numbers, both of berths with good local transport connections and car dropping locations were needed to strike a good work and family life balance and maintain the future attractiveness of inland navigation as a career option. Another important aspect, he said, is that existing berths need to be well appointed. For example, equipping berths with shore power could reduce noise and pollutant emissions by inland waterway vessels, especially in inner-city areas, thereby helping to improve the acceptance of inland navigation, and social cohesion with it.

Erik Schultz, representing the European Barge Union (EBU) and European Skippers' Organisation (ESO), touched on these aspects in his speech on the inland navigation sector's recommendations and highlighted the danger of social isolation in the event of any further decline in inner-city berths, and the risks of lying at anchor adjacent to the navigable channel. André Städtner of the Transport Association pointed to the important and often overlooked medical and social aspects of berths. Lying at anchor adjacent to the navigable channel often resulted in psychological stress as a result of sleep deprivation or disturbed sleep.

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BERTH LOCATION AND EQUIPMENT

viadonau's Ulf Meinel presented the guiding principles behind a berth development programme in Austria based on need. The important thing, he said, is not just an adequate number of berths, especially public ones, but also good quality and equipment levels. The implementation of the concept was explained using practical examples of berths in Vienna and Linz.

Experts from Germany, the Czech Republic and the Netherlands reported on berths both planned and under construction and explained the river commissions' role in this. This included a presentation of the concept for determining the requirement for berths on the Rhine jointly devised by the Netherlands and Germany within the CCNR's Infrastructure and Environment Committee. In this concept the requirement is driven by traffic intensity, namely the number of vessels in a waterway sector multiplied by a factor for duration of stay and an irregularity factor. This model was used to review the number of berths on the Rhine. It was found that there is a sufficient number of berths. However, and all participants agreed on this, there is still more that can be done to improve the quality of the existing berths.

The explanations of the complexity of the various national planning and approval procedures also yielded important insights for the industry representatives. Including planning and approval, it might well take 10 years to build a berth. Given the number of berths imminently approaching completion, the national representatives asked the industry to be patient for a while longer. But they also explicitly pointed out that the inland navigation industry must at all costs speak with one voice in the public discussion about berths in attractive, inner-city locations if it is to be heard.

SHORE POWER

Roelof Weekhout (Rijkswaterstaat) presented the legal basis for the use of shore power as well as data on its availability in the Netherlands. A 2011 study by the University of Delft shows that the use of shore power can also make economic sense for vessel operators. It showed that the on-board generator was only cheaper for power consumption in excess of 3 kWh, which however is typically only achieved for 2 to 3 hours a day.

The inland navigation industry representatives discussed the advantages and disadvantages of shore power and pointed out, for example, that laying cables in winter, laying cables across other vessels or over a stair tower posed major problems, and that occupational safety aspects also had to be considered. Alternatively, many vessels already have enough battery capacity to tide them over the time spent at berth without having to connect to the shore power network. An additional obstacle is the electricity tariff. The inland navigation sector does not pay the industrial tariff but the higher domestic tariff, although a not inconsiderable portion of the electricity is for industrial purposes. The industry sees the need here for government action.

BERTH MANAGEMENT/RIVER INFORMATION SERVICES (RIS)

Roelof Weekhout (Rijkswaterstaat), Jürgen Trögl (viadonau) and Roland Blessinger (Swiss Rhine ports) presented RIS berth management applications. Roelof Weekhout explained that the inland navigation berth information system (BLIS) works by automatically analysing both AIS data and radar data. Calculating the occupancy level is currently still in development and is being further improved. The industry expressly welcomed these new systems, in particular the ability to display the occupancy situation. Given the psychological stress in the workplace, this would also, it is said, relieve tension in everyday working life.

CONCLUSION

A central statement of the workshop is that people must be put back more in the spotlight within the inland navigation system. In this context all participants were aware that this workshop can only be a prelude to a series of further activities to improve the berth situation in the navigation sector, that further initiatives are required and that this topic needs to be given greater prominence, including in the Danube region.

Most of the required measures however can only be achieved by the relevant waterway administrative bodies as it is they who are originally responsible for the construction and operation of public berths. Improving the situation of private berths requires further discussion with the European Federation of Inland Ports (EFIP) of possible concepts such as the dual use of terminals as berths.

Link: <https://www.ccr-zkr.org/13020150-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.

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