

Mannheim Declaration

“150 years of the Mannheim Act – the driving force behind dynamic Rhine and inland navigation”

Report on progress, 6 December 2023

On 17 October 2018, the ministers responsible for inland navigation from the five Member States of the Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine adopted the "Mannheim Declaration". With this Declaration, they expressed their commitment to the sustainable development of Rhine and inland navigation and reiterated the importance of the Mannheim Act and the CCNR. The ministers of the Member States invited the CCNR to report in 2023 on the progress made in achieving the objectives of the Declaration.

Presented at the CCNR colloquium "The Mannheim Declaration - 5 years on", this progress report responds to the Member States' invitation. By taking up the elements of the 2018 Declaration, it makes it easy to grasp the main achievements.

1. *WE acknowledge the Mannheim Act and the principles enshrined therein and emphasise the fundamental importance of the Act to the prosperity of the economy and of inland navigation in the Rhine river basin.*

WE affirm the central role of the Mannheim Act in the fruitful collaboration on Rhine and inland navigation matters between the Riparian states and Belgium within the framework of the Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine (CCNR) and are prepared to furnish the CCNR with the appropriate financial resources.

WE welcome the CCNR's leading and pioneering role as a centre of excellence for Rhine and inland navigation in Europe and wish to build on this.

For over 200 years, the CCNR has played an essential role in ensuring the safety and promoting inland navigation and the economy in the Rhine basin. And although the nature of the challenges has changed over the decades, the Mannheim Act continues to provide the necessary tools to support Rhine and inland navigation as a sustainable and reliable mode of transport. Appropriate financial resources are a precondition to enable the CCNR to meet current and future challenges and to develop its role.

The CCNR supports inland navigation with a view to today's major challenges, such as sustainability (point 4), digitalisation (point 5), economic issues (point 6) and crews and professional qualifications (point 7). It does this by bringing stakeholders together, encouraging the sharing of experience and developing regulation where necessary.

Adaptation to climate change is an issue that has become increasingly important since 2018. The CCNR analyses the available information from various sources, including the International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine (ICPR) and the International Commission for Hydrology of the Rhine Basin (CHR), and assesses the consequences for navigation on the Rhine. In addition, the CCNR brings together all the stakeholders who work together to adapt inland navigation to changing conditions. In 2023, the CCNR published the third edition of the "Act now!" reflection paper on low water, based on the workshops held in 2019 and 2023.

Another example of CCNR's role as a centre of excellence for European IWT is the publication of its yearly reports on economic developments, of which the Market Observation is the most important. These reports play an important role in providing policy makers, banks and entrepreneurs with actual and reliable economic data. The Market Observation activities of the secretariat allow CCNR Member States and other users to monitor impact of developments like war in Ukraine, energy supply and impact of inflation, etc.

2. *WE support constructive collaboration between the CCNR and the European Union (EU), the other river commissions, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, the associations recognised by the CCNR and all other inland navigation players.*

WE commend the valuable contributions all participants have made to the sustainable ecological, social and economic development of inland navigation.

The challenges faced by inland navigation have led the CCNR and the EU, whose objectives converge, to develop pragmatic cooperation. In this context, the CCNR is exercising its regulatory powers in full compliance with European regulation.

Regarding IWT's current challenges, the CCNR cooperates intensively with all stakeholders. The roadmap for reducing inland navigation emissions is a good example of this. Developed with the participation of the CCNR's approved organisations, it has been presented on numerous occasions at national and international level, for example at a meeting of the Rhine-Alpine corridor. The CCNR also played an active part in the "Connecting Europe Days" in 2022. In addition, the CCNR contributed to a UNECE workshop on low water and exchanged views with the European Commission on the definition of "Good Navigation Status" as part of the revision of the TEN-T regulation. In the area of Market Observation, the CCNR intensified its collaboration with the Danube Commission. The partnership with the Oil Companies International Maritime Forum (OCIMF) has resulted in the publication in 2023 of the second edition of the International Safety Guide for Inland Navigation Tank-barges and Terminals (ISGINTT).

The CCNR's cooperation with other international organisations is mainly based on bilateral agreements. The importance of this cooperation has been reiterated since the signing of the Declaration. In 2022, the cooperation arrangement with the Moselle Commission was renewed. In 2021, the partnership with the CHR was confirmed by the signing of a document in which the two commissions reaffirmed their cooperation. This cooperation concerns activities to adapt to climatic conditions.

3. *WE emphasise the central role of the European committee for drawing up standards in the field of inland navigation (CESNI) as an innovative, efficient and practical body, and welcome the sought-after extension of its remit.*

WE are endeavouring to achieve a lasting partnership between CESNI and the EU based on long-term joint financing.

CESNI is the result of fruitful cooperation between the CCNR and the EU. Since 2015, this committee has been working on the development of standards for inland navigation to ensure international harmonisation of regulations. The approved organisations representing the sector are actively involved in the creation of CESNI standards. In addition to the standards for technical requirements for vessels (ES-TRIN) and for professional qualifications (ES-QIN), a standard has also been published in 2021 for river information services or RIS (ES-RIS). Accordingly, in 2019, a new permanent working group dealing with information technology has been set up by CESNI. The standards are accompanied by practical guides or FAQs to facilitate their day-to-day implementation.

Cooperation between the EU and the CCNR in the framework of CESNI has been renewed for a period of six years, with a new contract running since 2022. Sufficient funding must also be ensured in the future for the drawing up of adequate standards which are essential to promote innovation in inland navigation. Developments such as the use of new energy sources, digitalisation and automation require the standards mentioned to be continually updated. By developing these standards, CESNI plays an essential role in the support of inland navigation in its innovation challenges, as demonstrated in the paragraphs below, thus showing the importance for the CCNR and EU to join forces.

4. *WE emphasise the need for up-to-date, workable and harmonised environmental and safety regulations in Rhine and inland navigation.*

To further improve the ecological sustainability of inland navigation, we task the CCNR to develop a roadmap in order to

- *reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 35% compared with 2015 by 2035,*
- *reduce pollutant emissions by at least 35% compared with 2015 by 2035,*
- *largely eliminate greenhouse gases and other pollutants by 2050.*

WE point to the need for new financial instruments to achieve these environmental objectives and entrust the CCNR with the task of leading this development.

A first step was taken in 2019, with the launch of an in-depth study by the CCNR on "Financing the energy transition towards a zero-emission European inland navigation sector". This study culminated in 2021 in the publication of a series of reports on the various elements of the energy transition for inland navigation (technical, economic aspects and financing of measures).

The studies also served as a basis for drawing up the roadmap for reducing inland navigation emissions. Adopted in 2021, this strategic document outlines transition paths for the fleet and identifies a number of potential financial, regulatory and voluntary measures. These are based in particular on the standards adopted by CESNI to enable the safe use of alternative energy sources and thus support their development. In the same vein, around ten vessels using alternative energy sources have obtained international exemptions from the Rhine Vessel Inspection Regulations, enabling initial experiments to be launched on the Rhine and other EU waterways. The CCNR has thus fully played its role in terms of innovation. It has enabled the implementation of pilot projects, the feedback from which will be invaluable in refining the regulatory framework and testing their economic and environmental sustainability. The CCNR has also organised a workshop on alternative energy sources for electric propulsion systems in inland navigation in 2021.

5. *WE call on the CCNR to press ahead with development of digitalisation, automation and other modern technologies, thereby contributing to the competitiveness, safety and sustainability of inland navigation.*

Here again, the CCNR has adopted several decisions supporting these developments, by amending its regulations. Certain documents, such as the Rhine Patent, can now be presented in electronic form in the event of a control. And certain information necessary for the safety of inland navigation is now required to be transmitted electronically for a growing number of vessels. The CCNR is therefore continuing to implement River Information Services on the Rhine, based in particular on CESNI standards.

In the field of automated navigation, an international definition of levels of automation was adopted in 2018 and updated in 2022, which has become a reference document for institutions and players in inland navigation. In addition, a legal framework as well as suitable structures and procedures have been put in place to allow derogations from all CCNR regulations for pilot projects involving automated or remotely operated vessels. Several requests for derogation are currently being examined and the first trials are scheduled for 2024, confirming the avant-garde role of the Rhine fleet. Finally, these new technologies go hand in hand with the necessary work on cyber security. The results of this work are directly usable by the Member States.

The Rhine Police Regulations have also been amended to incorporate these new technologies and further enhance the safety of navigation on the Rhine. This work in cooperation with the industry has led to the modernisation of certain nautical rules.

6. *WE wish to reinforce the role of inland navigation as an economically relevant means of transport with a high potential for development and innovation.*

WE therefore request the CCNR,

- in conjunction with the Member States, to ensure faster and more efficient inland vessel cargo handling in seaports,*
- to accelerate the integration of inland navigation into digital and multimodal logistic chains,*
- to work towards better coordination between national development programmes and provide transparent information about them.*

The CCNR continues to act as a platform for exchanges between its Member States and inland navigation stakeholders, on subjects such as logistics chains linking seaports and the hinterland. This enables valuable exchanges of best practice, for example on reducing congestion in the seaports of Rotterdam and Antwerp, particularly in relation to container vessels.

In 2020-2023, the CCNR also participated in the research work of the PLATINA3 project aimed at better integrating inland navigation into logistics chains.

In addition, the CCNR is constantly taking stock of Member States' national support programmes and the industry's suggestions on the subject. The CCNR continues to reflect on improvements to be made, particularly with a view to financial instruments tailored to inland navigation on the European level.

7. *WE are aware of the importance of well-trained shipboard personnel and the challenge of having to replace increased age-related departures in the near future.*

WE task the CCNR

- with developing up-to-date and flexible crew regulations that also take account of social issues and rapidly changing working conditions aboard and ashore as a result of new technologies,*
- with contributing yet further to enhancing the attractiveness of careers in inland navigation, for example through targeted advertising campaigns.*

With the entry into force of the new Regulations for Rhine Navigation Personnel (RPN) on 1 April 2023, the CCNR has introduced a competence-based system for professional qualification in inland navigation. This is harmonised at European level with regard to the acquisition of professional qualifications for crew members on board inland navigation vessels and is based on the CESNI standards. At the same time, as mentioned under the previous point, the CCNR has introduced for the first time the possibility of derogating from the manning rules for innovative vessels. The approval of personnel for vessels sailing with alternative energy sources and personnel involved in automated or remotely operated vessels is a topic which is extremely important especially for CESNI, but also for the CCNR.

With the new RPN, the CCNR is also facilitating the integration of people from the maritime sector who change career to work in the inland navigation industry. The RPN also speeds up promotion opportunities for crew members on board inland navigation vessels. The CCNR's work in the field of Market Observation shows that the Member States' staff recruitment campaigns and aid schemes for training must be continued.

Conclusions

The Mannheim Declaration gave impetus to essential work. Significant progress has been made, and yet many challenges remain. The CCNR is ready to meet them, drawing on its 200 years of experience in the service of inland navigation. There is no doubt that CCNR is best placed to respond due to its 360° knowledge and its ability to react quickly to any policy need. The expertise of its Member States and its cooperation with all stakeholders enable the CCNR to find the best possible solutions to current and future challenges.

The CCNR will also make sure that it remains an organisation that is agile, adaptable and focused on the challenges of the present and of the future, with a view to best possible cost effectiveness.

The CCNR will exercise the regulatory powers entrusted to it by the Mannheim Act and, with the support of its Member States, will build on its commitment to promote prosperous, safe and environmentally friendly inland navigation on the Rhine and beyond.

The CCNR will continue to assess the responses to current and future challenges permanently and to report regularly, in particular through the end of Presidency reports presented every two years, on the progress achieved in the implementation of the Mannheim Declaration.