

European Barge Union Seminar

Strasbourg, 17 January 2012

Address by the deputy Secretary General of the CCNR, Mr Hans van der WERF

Madame la Présidente, Monsieur le Président, Madame la Secrétaire Générale,
Au nom de la Commission centrale et de son secrétaire général, M. Jean-Marie Woehrling, je vous souhaite la bienvenue au siège de notre organisation à l'occasion de ce séminaire. Malheureusement M. Woehrling est dans l'incapacité de se trouver parmi nous aujourd'hui. Je souhaiterais souligner qu'il va bien et qu'il vous prie de bien vouloir l'excuser pour son absence.

The Central Commission has maintained close links with the inland navigation sector since the nineteenth century. Such cooperation does not often exist within inter-State institutions, but the CCNR sees it as one of the pillars of its effectiveness. It is therefore perfectly symbolic that the EBU should have chosen Strasbourg and the headquarters of the CCNR for celebrating this anniversary, and the CCNR is very honoured.

The representatives of the sector, especially of the EBU, are closely involved in the working organs of the CCNR, so much, so that in some respects we may speak of a kind of co-management by representatives of both the authorities and the profession. Obviously, this is only possible because the professional associations in inland navigation, particularly the EBU, have a vision of their interests that is neither narrow nor short-term, but takes the general interest into account and as a result is readily compatible with the concerns of the representatives of the public authorities. The representatives of the authorities and the shipping industry speak the same language – that of responsibility in terms of both progress and quality.

The industrial representatives are able to feel quite at home here in this building, where they know that their concerns are taken seriously. Many of the CCNR's activities illustrate its wish for working in close collaboration with the profession.

Naturally, it sometimes happens that the CCNR and the industry do not in all respect share the same views, however, it seldom happens that we are not on the same wavelength. There have been some very difficult discussions on safety measures for passenger vessels. The very ambitious positions adopted by the CCNR on standards for vessel engine emissions have not been totally accepted by the profession. The industry sometimes feels the Commission's regulatory work is over-detailed.

These differences are both normal and necessary. They also provide an opportunity each time to test our working methods. In other words, they allow progress to be made in the quality of our relations and in the conscientiousness of our activities.

To mention just one recent issue: the recommendation easing the application of the hardship clause was implemented during the crisis at the request of and in cooperation with the profession. It is also at the request of the profession that a certain number of transitional provisions are being re-examined to check that they are suitable to the intended objectives and that the constraints they create are not excessive.

At the start of this new year, I would like to point out that the CCNR is embarking on a new two-year period, this time under the presidency of France, which has laid down its priorities. New working programmes for its committees and working groups have been adopted. There are important items on our agenda, and we hope to be able to associate closely the professional organisations in inland navigation, and in particular the EBU, in this new stage. I will just mention the most important topics included in these programmes:

- The modernisation of the system of qualification of personnel in inland navigation.

On the basis of the work that has made possible the mutual recognition of a large number of boatmaster certificates and service record books of non-CCNR member states, we now need to make access to the profession easier by developing new types of careers, taking more account of the new technologies, in particular simulators. A working party is to be set up on this, involving the CCNR and its various partners.

- The CCNR will be adopting and subsequently implementing its strategy on RIS.

It is important to ensure simultaneous, concerted implementation of the RIS all the length of the Rhine, particularly regarding traffic management. The profession has been intensively involved in the development of the strategy and the latest hearing has just taken place next door.

- Reinforcing the “green” dimension of inland navigation,

which must continue to affirm itself as a sustainable means of transport. This topic includes work on reducing CO2 emissions, taking into account the effects of climate change, the introduction of LNG in inland navigation, and the management and reduction of other emissions, including waste (in the context of the CDNI). Since the nineteenth century, the CCNR has been in the vanguard of action in favour of clean inland navigation, and it will maintain this position in the future, you may count on us.

- Guaranteeing the security and reliability of the waterway.

Inland navigation is a safe means of transport but, as the *Waldhof* accident demonstrated, constant work is needed to take account of new challenges, particularly in relation with the sophistication of the transport by inland waterways and the economic optimization of the vessels and working methods. Although the regulatory framework seems, also in the case of these dramatic accident, to be in line with the particular circumstances that might occur, we all are aware of the need to pay careful attention to the way in which the various rules are applied and taken into account in daily practice. In the same time, we all, authorities and industry, are aware of the vulnerability of inland navigation and the need of continuity of the logistic services in the case of accidents on the main corridors. The impact temporary blockades may have on the image of this mode of transport and the guarantees to be offered to the market parties in view of required reliability of the logistic services to be provided, should inspire us to develop technics and procedures enabling a rapid response, in particular in more complicated situations. The initiatives in this respect already taken by the German authorities are explicitly welcomed.

- Improving our system for collecting and analysing data on inland navigation.

The CCNR has always constituted an observatory for collecting and analysing data on river transport, in terms not only of infrastructure but also of fleets and personnel. On the basis of the experience acquired in the course of the market observation developed jointly with the European Commission and the sector, the CCNR would like to develop with these partners a European observatory of inland navigation.

At the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the EBU, some words should of course be devoted to the merely general aspects of European transport policy and the representation of the inland shipping industry in that respect.

As I have stated before, the CCNR is convinced that the effectiveness of her action depends on the quality of the cooperation that we develop with our partners, the European Commission, the other river Commissions, the UNECE, and above all the professional stakeholders and hence the EBU, together with its counterpart, the ESO.

Indeed, since the creation of the EBU 10 years ago on the basis and as the continuation of the dual structure of IBU, on the one hand and the International Rhine Shipping Consortium, the so called “Internationale Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Rheinschiffahrt”, on the other hand, the representation of the European shipping industry with the institutions in Europe has been greatly improved.

In the same time an initiative was taken to reinforce the presence of inland navigation on the European level in respect of the promotional activities by means of the creation of Inland Navigation Europe (INE).

The new EBU-structure, comprising a permanent and professional secretariat as well as competent bodies for the treatment of various and specific issues, enabled the industry to play its role when it comes to commenting and advising on proposals for measures with a direct or indirect effect on inland waterway transport and the shipping industry.

The CCNR may witness to this on the level of all its main areas of concern: technical, environmental, economic and legal.

In the context of the themes discussed during the first decade of this century, the actual constellation proved to be adequate and satisfactory. But transport policy is developing in line with the societal priorities; the individual modes are the more and more confronted with issues related to the integrated system of European transport, demanding to take into account a multitude of aspects and situations. The incorporation of measures within the regulatory frameworks of the modes, that origin from more abstract and global political strategies, is taking a greater stake in the overall technical-political activity of all modes.

The sustainable development of the transport sector constitutes a common denominator for a rapidly increasing scheme of themes, issues and projects, on national, regional and European level, challenging the modes of transport in a competition of greening. Therefore, the general character of the coming representation might be defined as pro-active instead of re-active, and might need to be based on clear engagements from the market players. The mission of the representative organisations will be accordingly.

In other words, the landscape has changed since the EBU was created. And will continue to change substantially during the on-going decade.

Therefore, I would like to combine the sincere congratulations of the CCNR secretariat at the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the EBU with the wish that the unquestioned success of this organisation might inspire further steps towards a reinforcement of the international representation and if possible, why not, a consolidation of the permanent representative IWT-bodies.
