

Open letter of the Chairperson and the Executive Secretary of CESNI

Dear Representatives of Members of the European Committee for drawing up Standards in the field of Inland Navigation (CESNI),

Dear Representatives of Observer States, International Organisations, and approved non-governmental organisations of CESNI,

The unprecedented crisis caused by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, which Europe and the world are currently facing, has created dire economic and social difficulties for the European inland navigation sector. This is the same sector that - like many others – is on the frontline in maintaining the proper functioning of logistics chains and the supply of populations and enterprises, in particular for vital products.

This crisis will last at least several more months and some certificates (including attestations, licences and other official documents) will expire during this period. Owing to travel restrictions and reduced and/or impaired administrative services, it is likely that many such certificates cannot be extended or renewed before they expire.

In response to the crisis, the Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine (CCNR) considered it necessary to take urgent and exceptional measures to ensure good Rhine navigation performance and supply chain continuity (resolution of 23 March 2020). Some States and other River Commissions also adopted specific measures to maintain inland navigation during the coronavirus pandemic. After the European Union/European Commission had already taken a series of measures, the EU legislators have recently developed a Regulation providing for the extended validity of certain certificates.

At the last CESNI meeting on 30 April 2020, the CESNI Members and Observer States, River Commissions and International Organisations, as well as approved non-governmental organisations expressed the urgent need to put in place a coordinated approach regarding measures to support the European inland navigation sector during the crisis to the greatest extent possible, while safeguarding the safety of navigation on inland waterways and the protection of the environment in the framework of inland waterway transport.

Therefore,

- building on deliberations on the effects of the crisis, in particular with regard to the functioning of national administrations, competent authorities and bodies in charge of issuing and controlling official documents for vessels and crews,
- considering the measures already taken by national, EU and international authorities, as well as regulatory bodies,
- and without prejudice to future adaptations of the relevant European and international legal frameworks, in particular by the European Union and the CCNR, for the purpose of providing exceptional extensions of certificates, attestations and other official documents,

the Chair and the Executive Secretary of the CESNI

call upon CESNI Members, Observer States and Third States,

for the duration of the crisis, not to impose penalties should the validity periods of certificates, attestations and other documents be exceeded, provided that

- a) the said certificates, attestations and other documents were still valid on 15 March 2020 and
- b) the safety and operational continuity of inland navigation and inland waterways are not endangered.



and

call upon the sector and inspection bodies,

as best they are able, to continue with or resume inspection and certification processes to avoid an administrative backlog and the interruption of vital business for ship repair enterprises to the greatest extent possible.

Yours sincerely,

Vojtech Dabrowski,
Chair of the CESNI

Bruno Georges,
Executive Secretary of the CESNI