

IVR General Assembly 17.5.2024 M.S. Merian

Report by the Secretary General

Distinguished guests,
Dear members,
Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning and a warm welcome to all of you today on board of the M.S. Merian for the **83rd General Assembly** of our association. As we gather here today in the vibrant city of Frankfurt, the birthplace of our esteemed association, it is with great pride that I present the annual report of the Secretary General. Nestled along the picturesque banks of the River Main, Frankfurt serves as a fitting backdrop for our deliberations, symbolizing the rich history, cultural diversity, and economic vitality of the European inland navigation sector.

During the next part of the General Assembly we reflect on the progress made, challenges faced, and opportunities seized in our collective efforts to foster the goals of our association.

The year under review today, the year 2023, was a very successful year for our association as we closed the year very successful on several levels.

Within the described context the IVR committees have intensely continued the work and consultations in their respective fields in order to achieve the objectives of the association. The chairs of our committees will inform you in detail about their activities following this speech. Of course, you have been already informed about many of their activities during the year by receiving and reading the monthly IVR reports. From this we can take that they have been very successful in realising their goals for which I would like to express my sincere thanks to the chairs and committee members. But I also want to express my sincere gratitude towards the colleagues of the IVR secretariat. Without the tireless efforts of my colleagues we would not be able to gather here in Frankfurt. Please give them a warm applause.

I also want to introduce to you today our newest addition to the IVR secretariat, ms. Donate Bruins. Donate will join us on board during the first stop.

It was only last year during the 82nd Assembly in Amsterdam that we touched upon the upcoming milestone, being the 150th anniversary of our association this year. In our anticipation of celebrating the 150th anniversary of our association this year, recent historical research has brought to light an important clarification. Contrary to previous understanding, it has been revealed that our association was not established in 1874 as previously believed, but rather in 1877 (and more specific on 10th April). Therefore, we are not celebrating the 150th anniversary this year as originally anticipated. While this

discovery may alter our plans for commemoration, it does not diminish the rich legacy and achievements of our association over the past 147 years. As we look ahead to the future, let us continue to honor the traditions and values that have defined our association since its inception, while embracing the opportunities for growth, collaboration, and innovation that lie ahead.

Today, I would like to share a little historic background about the founding of our association.

The Congress of Vienna of 1815 established the principle of freedom of navigation on international waterways. On this occasion, the Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine (CCNR) was also established. Several treaties on Rhine navigation followed. These include the Rheinschiffahrtsakte or Act of Mainz of 1831, which, in addition to abolishing tolls and stacking dues, also stipulates that all barges on the Rhine must be inspected at least once a year to ensure their soundness. In the Mannheim Act of 1868, the 1831 act is revised and adapted to the times, read: further liberalization of shipping. The inspection of Rhine vessels was also tightened. Important to all these regulations is the international character of the cooperation between the different Rhine states with the goal, unhindered navigation with uniform rules.

Establishment in 1877

The tightened control of Rhine vessels in 1868 was not sufficient for seventeen German, Swiss and one Austrian (from Trieste, then Austrian) transport insurance companies. In 1877 they meet in Frankfurt am Main to reach an arrangement regarding the insurance of Rhine ships. This leads to the establishment of the Rheinschiffs Register Verbands on **April 10, 1877**. The Frankfurt insurance company Providentia takes charge and runs the association's secretariat. The purpose of the association is to establish a Rhine Ship Register. The member companies draw up regulations that vessels should meet in order to qualify for a certain premium. Experts from the Rheinschiffs Register Verbands, based in twelve cities along the Rhine, would examine these vessels for their quality and if they met the set requirements, issue certificates, called "Certificates of Virtue" or "klopbrief". Vessels in possession of such a letter were entered in the Rhine Ship Register. Before the first register was completed, the association first drew up an accident register in 1878, containing 2031 accidents covering the period 1873-1877. But the primary goal of the association is the creation of a Rhine Ship Register, which gradually includes ships without a knock-off letter. It is interesting to learn that IVR at was already way before her time with initiatives like an accident register and ship register. As well know today, data/information is key.

Interesting fact: in the first IVR register 2.365 vessels were included, amongst these 224 steam vessels. How much have changed since 1879. This brings me to the following paragraph.

Unique Vessel Database

As just explained, one of the cornerstone activities of our association is the development and maintenance of a comprehensive vessel database encompassing over 20,000 European inland vessels. This unique repository serves as a valuable resource for stakeholders across the sector, providing vital information on vessel characteristics, ownership, operational status and many more. With our database we are able to monitor the fleet development of all European Inland Barges.

Fleet Development of European Inland Barges

The fleet development of European inland barges stands as a testament to the resilience and dynamism of our sector. Over the past year, we have witnessed notable advancements in the modernization and expansion of the European inland barge fleet, bolstering its capacity, efficiency, and environmental performance. For example, last year the first hydrogen inland vessel was christened. Key trends include the adoption of cleaner propulsion technologies, such as Hydrogen and electric propulsion, to reduce emissions and enhance air quality along our waterways.

With **125** newly built vessels in 2023 (32 Dry Cargo, 47 Tank Cargo, 21 Passenger Vessels, 6 Push/Tug Vessels and 19 Other) the fleet is still growing (compared to 28 scrapped vessels). The amount of 125 vessel is relatively higher compared to the year 2022 where only 91 new vessels were added to the European fleet.

However, if we look along the horizon, we still have a very long road to go if we want to have zero emissions in 2050.

When we have a closer look at Green House gas emissions, the Emission Calculation Tool was successfully launched last year and now available in the Dutch and English language. This year, we are working on the development of a new tool to calculate the “Day Engine Value”. I am happy to show you a short demonstration.

One of the unique points of our association is our broad European network. I think it is greatly demonstrated also in Frankfurt with members from **11** different European countries and sectors. This allows the exchange of experiences between the various sectors and industries involved. It is my goal to keep expanding our European IVR family and to include more related sector to broaden and enhance our network. With 4 new members joining IVR this year already, I am happy and proud that we keep expanding our network and hereby offering our existing members an even more extensive network.

Cooperation with International Institutions

Ever since our founding in 1877 and re-establishment in 1947 our association has forged enduring partnerships with international institutions such as the Central Commission for Navigation on the Rhine (CCNR). Just as the River Main converges with other waterways to form a seamless network of inland navigation routes, so too do we collaborate with the CCNR and other global bodies to harmonize regulations, enhance safety standards, and promote sustainable practices across borders.

Besides IVR has been strongly involved in the elaboration of international agreements under the umbrella of the CCNR in the field of private law aspects, mainly the Budapest Convention on the Contract for the Carriage of Goods by Inland Waterway (CMNI) and CLNI 2012, the Strasbourg convention on the limitation of liability in inland navigation. But also recently with respect to CDNI and its relevant documents. The ban of degassing which we have learned during yesterday's workshop is something that directly follows from the international convention CDNI. A huge milestone!

To the benefit of its members IVR is promoting the ratification of these conventions by the very states. Thanks to the specialist know-how and extensive experience IVR is able to maintain a database of publications on relevant international conventions and decisions with respect to the international conventions CMNI and CLNI.

Challenges and Opportunities

Despite our considerable achievements, we are not immune to challenges that lie ahead. Chief among these is the imperative to navigate regulatory frameworks effectively, ensuring alignment with international standards while preserving the competitiveness of European inland navigation. Moreover, climate change poses a formidable challenge, requiring proactive adaptation measures to safeguard the resilience of our infrastructure and mitigate the impacts of extreme weather events. Furthermore, the digital transformation presents both opportunities and challenges, necessitating investments in cybersecurity, digital literacy, and workforce development to harness the full potential of digital technologies while addressing associated risks.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the European Inland Navigation Sector stands at a pivotal juncture in its evolution. Through strategic collaboration with international institutions like the CCNR, the further development of our unique vessel database including the new Engine Day Value Calculation, we have made significant strides towards a more sustainable, efficient, and resilient inland navigation sector. As we confront the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead, let us remain steadfast in our commitment to cooperation ensuring that IVR continues to thrive for generations to come.

Thank you for your attention.