

The Central Commission in Strasbourg

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The Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine (CCNR) is often described as the oldest international organisation in the world, since its origins go back to the Congress of Vienna and it held its first session in Mainz in 1816. After the First World War, the Treaty of Versailles moved its seat to Strasbourg and reorganised its membership. Switzerland, which had previously had no seat, became a member under the provisions of the peace treaty and has participated in the Commission since 1920.¹ Its present members are Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland, while several other states hold observer status.

The CCNR has three principal functions. It adopts regulations that are binding on the member states, among them the police regulations for navigation on the Rhine, the inspection rules for vessels and the rules on crews. It decides on appeals from the Rhine navigation courts through its Chamber of Appeals. It also observes the market of inland navigation and publishes analyses that are used by the industry and by governments.² For Switzerland, membership in the Commission is one of the few contexts in which the country participates as an equal member in the making of binding transport rules together with EU states.

The relationship between the CCNR and the European Union has evolved since the 1990s. The EU has its own legislation on inland navigation, which applies on the Rhine to vessels of EU states, while the CCNR remains responsible for the regime of the Mannheim Act. To avoid divergent rules, the two sides created the European Committee for drawing up Standards in the field of Inland Navigation (CESNI) in 2015, a body under the umbrella of the CCNR in which EU member states and the CCNR members develop common technical standards that both systems then incorporate into their law.³ Switzerland participates in CESNI through its membership of the CCNR, which allows it to influence standards that would otherwise be shaped solely within the EU.

1 Notes

1. On the history of the CCNR, its first session in Mainz in 1816, the transfer of its seat to Strasbourg under Article 355 of the Treaty of Versailles of 28 June 1919, and the admission of Switzerland, see the publications of the CCNR and HLS, article "Zentralkommission für die Rheinschiffahrt". Article and dates to be verified. ↩
2. On the functions of the CCNR, including its regulatory powers under the Mannheim Act, the Chamber of Appeals and the annual market observation reports published jointly with the European Commission, see the CCNR website. To be verified. ↩
3. On the establishment of CESNI in 2015 and its role in developing common standards incorporated into EU law and CCNR regulations, see the CCNR and European Commission publications. To be verified. ↩

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