

### Notices to Skippers:

Notices to Skippers (NtS) are one of four River Information Services (RIS) key technologies designed to improve the safety and reliability of inland navigation by means of information technology. NtS provide information on long-term and short-term obstructions along the fairway, weather information, current and future water levels at gauges, restrictions caused by ice or floods, regulations and other relevant data.

NtS are usually issued by waterway authorities and/or RIS operators and provided via different channels such as websites, E-Mail and standardized Web Services; depending on the country/region, additional distribution channels might be available.

Notices to Skippers provide the facility to issue the following messages in a standardized format:

- ‘Fairway and traffic related message’ provides information for a fairway (section) or an object, and it is used for the following purposes:
  - ‘Warning’: relevant for safety  
The warning contains at least one limitation that results in direct and concrete endangerment of persons, crafts or facilities, e.g. welding works on a bridge producing sparks, inspection cage/workers hanging from a bridge, obstacle in the fairway,
  - ‘Announcement’: relevant for voyage planning or safety  
The announcement contains limitations, e.g. blockage of a lock chamber due to maintenance works, dredging on the fairway,
  - ‘Info service’: general information that is not directly linked to voyage planning or safety such as e.g. local rules of traffic, availability of an Inland ECDIS Update.
- ‘Water level related message’ provides values or predictions for the water level, the least sounded depth, the vertical clearance, the barrage status, the discharge, the regime. Usually, water related information is created and published automatically based on data received from sensor equipment (e.g. tide gauge), systems (e.g. water level model) or infrastructure (e.g. barrage status). There may be different triggers for publication, e.g. periodical publication or reaching certain values.
- Ice message provides information about the actual or predicted ice conditions for a fairway (section). Ice related information is usually generated by competent personnel based on local observation and professional assessment.
- Weather related message provides information about (dangerous) weather conditions for inland navigation.

The content of the messages is encoded in a machine readable XML-file. This file can be used by software applications like voyage planning or Inland ECDIS on board of a vessel or by internet sites. The encoded information can be used directly for calculations, as for example in voyage planning, or be translated to the language of the user and displayed. The reference tables of the standard contain 21 languages of the member countries of the European Union, and additional 3 languages, namely Croatian, Serbian, and Russian language, and guarantee, that a skipper is able to read and understand the notices to skippers for all the major European waterways (facilitating safety of navigation). The NtS Web Service enables language-independent exchange of information between different applications for the sake of information provision to the end-users.

### **Notices to Skippers regulations and recommendations:**

The NtS standard is published by the following organisations:

- European Commission (EC)
  - Notices to Skippers means the international standard for the distribution of notices to skippers on inland shipping routes as established by the Commission Regulation (EC) 416/2007 of 22 March 2007 concerning the technical specifications for Notices to Skippers as referred to in Article 5 of Directive 2005/44/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on harmonised river information services (RIS) on inland waterways in the Community with the objective to support the safety of navigation and voyage planning.
- Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine (CCNR)
  - Notices to Skippers International Standard - Edition 3.0
- United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)
  - International Standards for Notices to Skippers - Resolution No. 80
- Danube Commission
- Sava Commission

### **Notices to Skippers Expert Group:**

The RIS Expert Groups are international technical platforms ensuring the harmonized development and maintenance of RIS standards in Europe. The Expert Groups provide the above-mentioned commissions with proposals for their regulations.

The NtS Expert Group consists of members organised by delegations. A national competent authority of a Member State may nominate a governmental delegation. The governmental delegations may nominate a non-governmental delegation, such as representatives of Inland navigation user groups or private companies that are involved in the development of Notices to Skippers related software.

Representatives of the European Commission, river Commissions, the UN/ECE and other interested international bodies may participate in the NtS Expert Group as observers.

Anyone who is involved in the drafting of Notices to Skippers or the development of Notices to Skippers related software and representatives of user groups, RIS providers and RIS operators can participate in the Notices to Skippers Expert Group as observers.

The NtS Expert Group is headed by the chairperson of the NtS Expert Group. Proposals for amendments to the NtS standard (change requests) shall be sent - together with an explanation, why the amendment is needed - to the chairperson of the Notices to Skippers Expert Group. The chairperson shall distribute the proposed change requests to the members of the NtS Expert Group. The NtS Expert Group decides on the adoption of proposed change requests.

Proposals for amendment of the NtS standard based on consolidated adopted change requests are transmitted to the European Commission, the UNCE and other commissions by the chairperson.

The commissions will proceed with the amendment of their regulations in accordance with their procedures.

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