

Press release

March 6, 2024

EBU, ETF and IG RiverCruise sign framework agreement to improve working conditions in river cruise industry

On March 6, during the ITB in Berlin, EBU, ETF and IG RiverCruise signed a binding framework agreement to improve the working conditions on board of river cruise vessels as well as to ensure a level playing field for the sector.

The negotiations for a framework agreement started after the signing of a declaration of intent in the summer of 2019, in which parties jointly agreed to address a number of issues in the river cruise industry. After some fruitful meetings, all negotiations had to be suspended in 2020 due to COVID.

Negotiations were restarted in the fall of 2022 and have not only resulted in a binding framework agreement, but also in a common understanding of the complexity in the river cruise industry and in a good working relation between the river cruise industry on one hand and the trade unions on the other.

The goal of the framework agreement is to achieve a socially sustainable river cruise sector with a level playing field for operators; in the interests of both employers and employees in the sector. The agreement deals with the fundamental rights of workers in the European river cruise industry, social security, salaries, health and safety requirements, crewing agents' fees, contract & travel documents, access to vessels and complaints procedures.

EBU, ETF and IG RiverCruise are proud of the achieved result.

"We are very pleased by the way we have worked together towards a common goal: improvement of the working conditions for employees on board of river cruise ships. After all, both the employers and the employees benefit from a socially sustainable river cruise sector.", Theresia Hacksteiner, Secretary General of EBU, said.

Arno Reitsma, President of IG RiverCruise, added *"We are delighted that today we can open a new chapter in our cooperation, which is based on the understanding that the crew on board passenger ships is the foundation for the success of our industry."*

According to Jacques Kerkhof, Chair of the ETF Inland Waterways Section, this agreement is a first important step for the improvement of the livelihoods of thousands of workers. *"In particular, the ETF welcomes the reconfirmation of the applicability of social security rules,*

health and safety, harassment-free environment as well as the freedom to join a trade union and access of unions to the workplace. We do hope to continue to build a fair European river cruise sector and mutual trust with our employer counterparts through the implementation of this agreement.”

Press contacts:

EBU:

- Theresia Hacksteiner, secretary general EBU, t.hacksteiner@ebu-uenf.org
- Maira van Helvoirt, passenger shipping committee, m.van.helvoirt@binnenvaart.nl

ETF:

- Jacques Kerkhof, chair of the ETF Inland Waterways Section, jacques.kerkhof@btb-abvv.be
- Rodrigo Rivera, ETF, r.rivera@etf-europe.org

IG RiverCruise:

- Daniel Buchmüller, board member IG RiverCruise, daniel.buchmueller@riveradvice.com
- Arno Reitsma, president IG RiverCruise, arno.reitsma@scylla.com



About EBU

The European Barge Union (EBU) represents the European inland navigation industry in both freight and passenger transport. Its members are the national associations of barge owners and barge operators of 9 European inland navigation countries (Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Luxemburg, Netherlands, Romania and Switzerland). Besides it represents the interests of a number of international organisations dealing with IWT and Short Sea Shipping. www.ebu-uenf.org

About ETF

The European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF) is a pan-European trade union organisation which embraces transport trade unions from the European Union, the European Economic Area and Central and Eastern European countries. The ETF was created in 1999, but we have our roots in pan-European transport trade union organisations that stretch back over 60 years. Today, the ETF represents more than 5 million transport workers from more than 200 transport unions and 38 European countries. These workers are found in all parts of the transport industry, on land, sea and in the air. We are a recognised EU-level social partner in 7 sectoral social dialogue committees, including inland waterways. We are also a proud member of the ETUC and the ITF family. www.etf-europe.org

About IG RiverCruise

IG RiverCruise was founded in 2000 by three Swiss shipping companies. In the meantime, IG RiverCruise has become a registered association with headquarters in Basel and represents about 90% of the European ship operators. As well as representing the members' common, fundamental interests and concerns relevant for river cruises towards third parties, IG RiverCruise sees itself at the same time as a contact and representative of the European river cruise sector. Other tasks include promoting and developing the image of the river cruise sector, taking into special account the topics of training, safety and environmental protection, and keeping in contact with organizations, institutions, umbrella associations, and associations closely related to the sector.

Further information: info@igrivercruise.com, www.igrivercruise.com