



Professional qualifications in inland navigation - new European law

[European IWT Platform](#)

[Social and Education Committee](#)

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1 Introduction

1.1 Welcome!

Are you looking for information on Directive (EU) 2017/2397 on the recognition of professional qualifications in inland navigation - what is new and what you need to prepare for?

Are you interested in knowing more about the European professional qualifications in inland navigation, a training or a lateral entry?

In the following pages, we have compiled relevant information to help you:

- *if you are working in inland navigation and are looking for information on what will happen to your existing qualification and which options you might need to consider,*
- *if you are interested in training in inland navigation,*
- *if you want to start a practical career in inland navigation without a training,*
- *if you want to switch to inland navigation as a career change from maritime shipping or other professional field.*

You will find useful information on the scope of the Directive; on all the qualifications it regulates, including the Rhine; on the different ways to obtain these qualifications; on the validity and exchange of existing qualifications; and on the related documents and medical fitness.

In addition, further information – where currently available and applicable - is collected in the annex part at the end of this brochure. It contains, for example, direct links to relevant regulations and to other websites with information on professional qualifications, lists of inland waterways with maritime character, inland waterway stretches with specific risks and links to the national training programmes.

Enjoy reading the brochure!



1.2 What is the brochure about?

In a nutshell:

From 18 January 2022, uniform requirements for the acquisition and recognition of professional qualifications in inland navigation, as well as for the service record books and logbooks will apply across the EU. The new law harmonises qualifications, promotes comparability of training and examination, and creates uniform documents.

By 17 January 2022, [the Directive \(EU\) 2017/2397 on the recognition of professional qualifications in inland navigation and repealing Council Directives 91/672/EEC and 96/50/EC](#), must be transposed into national law.

According to Article 1, subject matter of the Directive are “the conditions and procedures for the issue of certificates and the recognition of such qualifications in the Member States”.

1.3 Provisions of the new law

From **18 January 2022**, the uniform requirements will apply in the entire EU for issuing and recognition of professional qualifications in inland navigation, as well as for the service record books and logbooks. Uniform standards will ensure that the minimum requirements for various qualifications are comparable in all the Member States.

This directive and the fact of having identical minimum requirements on rivers such as the Rhine and the Danube, therefore supports overall mobility in inland navigation professions, facilitates access to labour markets, and at the same time ensures a high level of safety and good training throughout Europe.

Last but not least, the new law removes a multitude of different documents, that frequently in the past had been challenging and difficult to oversee, not only for entrepreneurs and employees in inland navigation sector, but also for the controlling authorities.

All EU certificates of competency, as well as service record books and logbooks are valid on **all** inland waterways of the European Union, including the Rhine, in accordance with Art. 10. The same applies to certificates of competency issued in accordance with [the Rhine Personnel Regulation \(RPN\)](#) if it complies with the requirements of the Directive.

The Recognition of EU qualifications also applies in the Member States that are not connected to the waterways of another Member State, or where inland navigation is possible only to a limited extent.

The recognition of EU qualifications in third countries, as well as the qualifications from third countries, is possible insofar as these countries comply with the requirements of the Directive and in turn recognise the EU qualifications (Art. 10).



1.4 Importance of monitoring national laws

In a nutshell:

Please, monitor carefully the national laws transposing the Directive. The national law contains the regulations that are binding in the respective Member State.

This brochure provides an overview of the content of [Directive \(EU\) 2017/2397 on the recognition of professional qualifications in inland navigation and repealing Council Directives 91/672/EEC and 96/50/EC](#), its delegated acts and on the corresponding law on the Rhine, as it will be reflected in the EU Member States implementing the Directive.

A directive is **not** directly applicable in the Member States, but it has to be implemented. Along this process, certain modifications and alternations may occur. For example, approved training programmes in which the qualifications can be acquired might look different from one Member State to another. Or the Member State might determine its respective equivalent in relation to an existing qualification – of course, taking into account minimum requirements of the Directive.

Therefore, anyone who wants to acquire a new professional qualification in inland navigation, as well as those who already have a qualification and want to change it, should - first and foremost - inform him/herself about the specific national regulations that will apply to him/her.

Links to the national regulations and further information can be found [in the Annex](#).

1.5 What does it mean...? Terminology explained.

Delegated and implementing acts

According to [Art. 290 TFEU](#), the Commission has the competence to adopt delegated and implementing acts under certain conditions. These serve *to further develop a legal act*, such as the Professional Qualifications Directive, and *to specify details for its implementation*.

[The Directive \(EU\) 2017/2397](#) has been the subject of **two delegated acts** and **one implementing act**:

- [Delegated Directive \(EU\) 2020/12](#) sets standards for qualifications, for the practical examinations, for the approval of simulators and for medical fitness.
- [Delegated Regulation \(EU\) 2020/473](#) lays down the characteristics and conditions for the use of the databases for EU certificates of competency, service record books and logbooks.
- In the [Implementing Regulation \(EU\) 2020/182](#), you will find the models for uniform certificates of competency, certificates of practical examinations, service record books and logbooks.



CESNI

CESNI (*Comité Européen pour l'élaboration de standards dans le domaine de la navigation intérieure*) is **the European Committee for the Elaboration of Standards in Inland Navigation**.

CESNI was established in 2015 as a joint working body between the EU and the Central Commission for the Navigation on the Rhine ([CCNR](#)). Main tasks include developing technical standards for inland waterways in various fields: vessels, information technology and crew; in particular those that the regulations of the EU and the CCNR can refer to. CESNI has drawn up a number of standards, which are to be found in the Annex to the above-mentioned delegated and implementing acts, as well as in the RPN.

The experts with an interest in inland navigation from the Member States of the EU and the CCNR, as well as the representatives of relevant international organisations are all appointed to the Committee. [EBU](#) and [ESO](#) are among the recognised Associations that are represented at CESNI.

ES-QIN

The European Standard for Qualifications in Inland Navigation ([ES-QIN](#)) is a European frame of reference for qualified personnel. The latest 2019 edition contains the standards of competence, as developed by the CESNI and incorporated in [the Delegated Directive \(EU\) 2020/12](#). For more information on ES-QIN, [click HERE!](#)

1.6 Main novelties and changes

In a nutshell:

The new law brings several changes in comparison to the previous national regulations and the RPN. Some regulations are new for everyone concerned, while for some others parts it depends how the prerequisites were previously regulated in the national laws. What is already familiar to one person is new to another, and vice versa.

What are the most important parts of the new regulations to be aware of as of 18 January 2022?

- The Union certificate of qualification for boatmasters is a "*basic patent*" that entitles its holder to navigate the EU's inland waterways. However - unlike the Rhine patent that includes, for example, navigation on certain sea waterways - the qualification for navigation on waterways with a maritime character must be acquired as an explicit authorisation.
- Boatmasters must take *a practical exam*, which may be carried out on a ship or at the simulator.



- Boatmen must pass *the examination* for operational level. It is no longer possible to acquire the qualification by simply sailing time. Those who do not pass this examination remain deckhands.
- A minimum of *360 days* of sailing time is required to obtain the qualification of a boatman. The quickest way to become a boatman is for a lateral entrant with the professional or with seagoing experience in 9 months' time approved training programme that includes at least 90 days of sailing time.
- Deckhands must complete *a basic safety training* in accordance with the national requirements before a service record book can be issued.
- All holders of the Union certificate for members of the deck crew shall provide evidence of *medical fitness*, at least every five years from the age of 60 and every two years from the age of 70. According to the RPN, the same applies to a machinist, however, some assistance with regard to the eyesight is applicable.
- The Member States shall compile *the data* on certificates, service record books and logbooks in two databases maintained by the European Commission. The Union database contains the certificates and service record books, while the European Ship Database (EHDB) contains the logbooks.
- For members of the deck crew - other than a boatmaster - the certificates of qualification and the service record book shall be combined in one document.
- The Union certificates of qualification for boatmasters, liquefied natural gas experts and passenger navigation experts may be issued in an electronic form.
- Ferries that move independently are covered by the scope of the Directive. The personnel working on such ferries must hold a Union certificate of qualification. The sailing time required for the Union certificates can also be acquired on ferries moving independently.

1.7 Scope of the new law

In a nutshell:

The Directive applies, in principle, to all inland waterways of the EU, on all ships of 20 metres or more in length (except for the pleasure / recreational craft), to all members of the deck crew and the experts.

To whom does the Directive apply?

The Directive applies to all members of a deck crew, who sail on board of a vessel on the EU waterways, including the Rhine:

- apprentices and deckhands (*entry level*),
- boatmen, able boatmen, helmsmen (*operational level*),
- boatmasters (*management level*),
- as well as for passenger navigation *experts* and for liquefied natural gas *experts*.



The Directive applies not only to those who want to acquire a new qualification, but also to those who already hold a qualification. It contains regulations for an exchange of existing qualifications to the Union certificate and its corresponding transition periods.

On the Rhine and the Danube, there are additional regulations for machinists, first aiders and breathing apparatus wearers.

On which vessels does the Directive apply?

According to Art. 2 Para. 1, the Directive applies to all vessel which length is 20 metres or more; to vessels of length, breadth and draught volume that is 100 m³ or more; to passenger vessels; as well as to other specific types of vessels described in more detail, such as tugs and push boats or floating equipment. It does not apply to the navigation of waterways for sports and recreational purposes, to ferries not moving independently and, for example, to vehicles of the armed forces, public order vessels or emergency services.

On which waterways does the Directive apply?

The Directive applies, in principle, to activities on all inland waterways of the European Union.

Unlike [Directive 91/672/EEC](#) and [96/50/EC](#), which will be repealed with effect from 18 January 2022 in accordance with Art. 37, *the Rhine is included in the scope of the Directive.*

According to Art. 2 Para. 3, it does **not** apply to persons who carry out journeys on waterways of the Member States that have no connection with the waterway network of another Member State, provided that these are limited journeys of local interest, where the distance to the point of departure is not more than 10 km, or only seasonally.

For the national waterways that are not connected to the waterway network of another Member State, Member States also have the possibility under Art. 7 to allow exemptions for the holding of the Union certificate of qualification for all members of a deck crew, for passenger navigation experts and liquefied natural gas experts, for the requirement of specific authorisations and for the obligation to record sailing times and journeys in the service record book or logbook.



2 Important regulations on certificates of competency, documents and medical fitness

2.1 Union certificates of qualification and specific authorisations

In a nutshell:

The new law makes a distinction between the certificates of qualification for deck crew members, the certificates of qualification for specific operations and specific authorisations. The Member States must ensure those are accordingly held and carried.

The Member States must **ensure** that the EU and the CCNR certificates of qualification are issued in accordance with Art. 11 for the deck crew members and for specific operations; or that the recognised certificates of the Rhine Personnel Regulation (RPN) or from the third countries are carried. A boatmaster must as well hold the required specific authorisations.

The Union certificates of qualification for members of a deck crew (Art. 4) are the qualifications contained in the service record book:

- deckhand,
- apprentice,
- boatman,
- able boatman,
- helmsman, and

the certificate of qualification as a boatmaster.

The Union certificates of qualification for specific operations (Art. 5) are related to:

- expert for passenger navigation, and
- expert for liquefied natural gas (LNG),

both already known from the RPN.

Specific authorisations (Art. 6) that the boatmaster may acquire in addition to the patent, are authorisations for:

- sailing on inland waterways of a maritime character,
- sailing on inland waterways with specific risks,
- sailing vessels under radar,
- sailing vessels using liquefied natural gas,
- sailing in large convoys (product of total length and total width of a pushed vessel 7000 m² or more).



2.2 Inland waterways with specific risks

In a nutshell:

Just as the sector has been so far required, special authorisations for inland waterways with special risks designated by the Member States will also be required in the future.

In principle, the Union boatmaster's certificate can be used to sail on all inland waterways of the EU.

An exception is made for inland waterways with *special risks*, for which a *special authorisation* is required in accordance with Art. 6.

Which inland waterways have special risks?

Art. 9 stipulates that the Member States may designate specific sections of their inland waterways that have special risks. So far, this corresponds to the sector's knowledge related to the conditions of such sections. The Member States must however notify the European Commission of the designated sections, and the Commission will further make them public.

In the Annex, there is a list of inland waterway sections with special risks.

Obtaining the specific authorization:

The qualification to receive a specific authorization, as well as its requirements, is determined by the respective Member State in accordance with Art. 20(1). These may be oral, written or practical examinations and voyages carried out on the concerned stretch.

The Member States shall **ensure** that publicly accessible tools are being made available to facilitate boatmasters to obtain this qualification. If the Member State that is responsible for a stretch agrees, the specific authorisation may also be obtained in another Member State.

2.3 Inland waterways with a maritime character

In a nutshell:

To sail on inland waterways with a maritime character, a specific authorisation is required, which must be held in addition to the patent.

In principle, the Union boatmaster's certificate can be used to sail on all inland waterways of the Union.

The exceptions include the sections of inland waterways of a maritime character, for which a specific authorisation is required, in accordance with Art. 6a.



Which inland waterways are these?

Art. 8 regulates the criteria under which the Member States **classify** inland waterways of a maritime character. The Member States notify these inland waterways to the European Commission, which makes a list of inland waterways of a maritime character publicly available.

This list can be found in the Annex.

Obtaining the specific authorisation:

The standards of competence for navigating waterways of a maritime character are regulated in Annex 1 III of [the Delegated Directive \(EU\) 2020/12](#) and in [ES-QIN](#).

Knowledge is demonstrated by passing an examination in accordance with Art. 17(2). This can be an examination under the responsibility of an administrative authority or an examination within the context of an approved training programme. A specific type of examination is not prescribed. This depends on the respective regulations in the Member States.

2.4 Issuing, validity and renewal of certificates of qualification

In a nutshell:

The requirements for issuing, validity and renewal of certificates are harmonised within the new law.

Issuing:

The European Union certificates for members of a deck crew and for specific operations, and the specific authorisations shall be subject to *the same formal requirements* for issuing.

The applicant shall provide the evidence of identity, of meeting the minimum requirements related to age, competence, administrative compliance and hours of sailing time, as laid down in Annex I and, where appropriate, the evidence of medical fitness.

Applicants for the specific authorisation to sail on inland waterways with specific risks shall comply with these requirements to the competent authority of the relevant Member State, and shall also demonstrate that they meet the standards of competence of the specific risks of the section of the inland waterway concerned, for which the authorisation is required.

The European Union boatmaster's certificate shall include the specific authorisation. According to Art. 12 Para. 5, the specific authorisation for vessels operating on liquefied natural gas is an exception. This is issued as a European Union certificate of competency for liquefied natural gas experts.



Validity:

The European Union certificates for members of a deck crew terminate *not later than the date of the next medical examination or as specified in the individual case*.

The European Union certificates for boatmasters are valid for a maximum period of 13 years.

The European Union certificates of qualification for specific operations (expert passenger navigation and liquefied natural gas) are valid for a maximum of five years.

The validity of a specific authorisation (e.g. for maritime waterways, sections of inland waterways with special risks, radar, large convoys) ends when the validity of the Union certificate of qualification expires.

Renewal:

The European Union certificates for members of a deck crew shall be renewed if identity and medical fitness are demonstrated.

The same applies to the specific authorisations with the exception of the specific authorisation for crafts operating on liquefied natural gas.

For the renewal of Union certificates for specific operations, proof of identity and of the minimum qualification requirements of Annex I are required.

Attention!

Renewal of the certificate of qualification in **passenger navigation** is the subject to a new administrative examination or a new approved training programme.

Renewal of the certificate of qualification in **liquefied natural gas (LNG) experts** requires either a proof of sailing time (180 days during the five previous years, or at least 90 days during the previous year), or a compliance with standards of the competence for LNG.

2.5 What about existing patents and specific authorisations?

In a nutshell:

The exchange of a patent is required when its validity expires, but no later than 18 January 2032. Existing entitlements are to be protected for as far as possible.



Validity and transitional periods:

Existing patents issued before 18 January 2022 remain valid.

This applies for a maximum of 10 years after 18 January 2022.

Therefore, please, pay attention how long your existing patent is still valid!

Even if the originally registered validity date goes beyond **18 January 2032**, it is only valid until this date. If the validity ends before this date, it must be exchanged at an earlier date.

To which patents are those transitional periods applicable?

- Boatmasters' certificates according to [the Directive 96/50/EC](#) (certificates issued by the Member States in accordance with this Directive).
- Certificates according to Art. 1 para. 6 of [the Directive 96/50/EC](#) (national boatmasters' certificates mutually recognised by [the Directive 91/672/EEC](#))
- The Rhine navigation licenses, according to Art. 1 para. 5 of [the Directive 96/50/EC](#).

Exchange:

In case of exchange, the European Union boatmaster's certificate or the Rhine patent shall be issued to the holders of the above-mentioned patents.

The Member State that had issued the existing patent is responsible for its exchange.

For an exchange, the new law also prescribes that when issuing the European Union certificates, the Member States shall safeguard all previously acquired entitlements to the greatest degree possible, in particular, with regard to the *specific authorisations* mentioned in Art. 6.

The specific authorisations mean sailing:

- On inland waterways with a maritime character,
- On inland waterways with special risks,
- With the aid of a radar,
- Crafts powered by liquefied natural gas, and
- In large convoys.

It means you do not have to feel concern about losing your already existing authorisations!

Sector knowledge and patents acquired before 18 January 2022, will remain valid on the inland waterway sections for which they have been issued. This applies **until 18 January 2032 at the latest**.

If the European Union certificate of qualification is exchanged, the acquired sector knowledge and patents will be registered as well.

The same applies to the specific authorisation for sailing on waterways with a maritime character.



2.6 What about the existing qualifications of members of a deck crew others than boatmasters?

In a nutshell:

Existing certificates will remain valid for a maximum of 10 years, while for the ferry crew members for 20 years - under certain conditions.

Similar to the case of a boatmaster, other qualifications for members of a deck crew acquired before 18 January 2022 and recognised by one or more of the Member States may still be used on the European Union's waterways for a **maximum of 10 years**, i.e. until **18 January 2032**.

However, even before this date, an application to the competent authority can be made for issuing the European Union certificate of qualification or the certificate of qualification in accordance with the RPN if the prerequisites (e.g. identity, medical fitness) are accordingly met.

Special regulation related to ferries:

A special regulation applies to ferries, in accordance with Art. 38(5). Provided that the crew members of ferries:

- Hold national certificates,
- Which do not fall within the scope of [the Directive 96/50/EC](#), and
- Were issued *before 18 January 2022*

These certificates will remain valid for a **maximum of 20 years**, i.e. until **18 January 2042**, on the inland waterways on which they were previously valid.

2.7 Logbooks and service record books

In a nutshell:

Navigation time and journeys are recorded in the service record book or the logbook. Existing service record books and log books can be used for a maximum of 10 years.

The logbook shall record the journeys made by a craft and its crew.

The service record book is a detailed personal record of the crew member's work history, in particular navigation time and journeys carried out.

It is a responsibility of the Member States to ensure that the navigation time and journeys are recorded in the logbook.



Navigation times and journeys recorded in the logbook *must be validated by the competent authorities* after checking the authenticity and validity of the records. Only journeys and navigation times made **up to 15 months before** the application can be validated.

For all crew members, except for the boatmaster, the European Union certificate of qualification and the service record book are combined into one document. This means that the certificate of qualification is included in the service record book.

Models of the service record books, the service record book combined with the certificate, the logbook and other documents can be found in [the Implementing Regulation \(EU\) 2020/182](#) and in [ES-QIN](#), which also contains models for the documents, according to the RPN.

Validity of existing service record books and logbooks:

Existing service record books and logbooks that were **not** issued in accordance with the new law may continue to be used for a maximum of 10 years after 18 January 2022.

2.8 Medical fitness

In a nutshell:

A prerequisite for issuing or renewal of the European Union certificate of qualification is the proof of medical fitness, which must be provided at the time of initial issue and then periodically from the age of 60 years old.

The proof of medical fitness is a prerequisite for issuing and renewal of the European Union certificates of qualification for all members of the deck crew. This also applies to the machinist (RPN).

A valid medical certificate must be presented to the competent authority. It shall be:

- Issued by a medical practitioner that is recognised by the competent authority,
- After a successful completion the medical fitness examination.

The medical certificate of fitness shall not be older than three months' at the time of application for the European Union certificate of qualification.

When does a medical certificate of fitness need to be renewed?

After issuing the European Union certificate of qualification for the first time, the holder must - in principle - renew the medical fitness examination when reaching the age of **60 years old**.

Thereafter, medical fitness must be demonstrated at least every five years.

From the age of *70 years old*, medical fitness shall be demonstrated every two years.



When there are objective indications that a deck crew member no longer meets the medical fitness requirements before its formal expiration date; the employer, the boatmaster or the authorities of the Member States may require the deck crew member to demonstrate medical fitness.

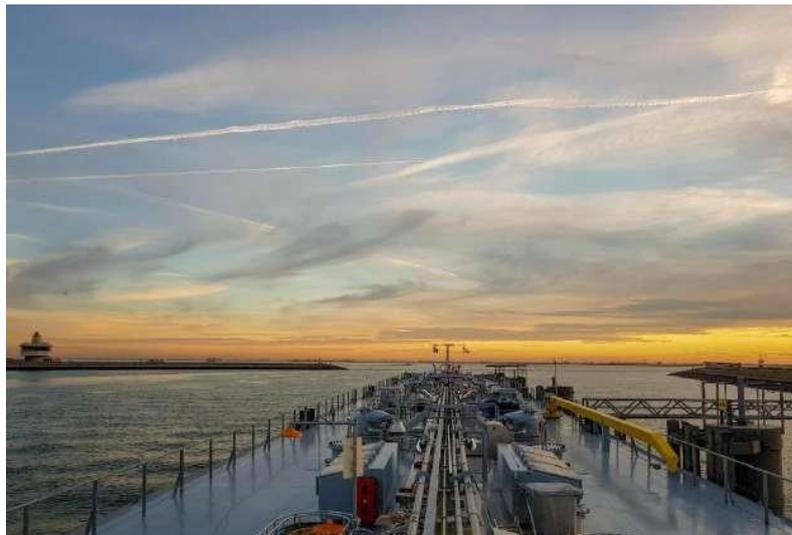
Medical fitness requirements:

The basic requirements for a medical fitness are set out in Annex III. The criteria of [ES-QIN](#) are also based on those requirements.

Medical fitness includes *physical and psychological fitness*. There shall be no diseases or disabilities that could prevent a crew member to:

- Execute the tasks necessary to operate a craft,
- Perform assigned duties at any time, or
- Perceive their environment correctly.

The detailed provisions on the medical fitness examination to be carried out can be found in [the Delegated Directive \(EU\) 2020/12](#) and [ES-QIN](#), which sets out the standards for medical fitness in Annex IV, and lists a variety of possible health disturbances, as well as possible mitigation measures and restrictions.



3 Obtaining various qualifications

3.1 How to become a deckhand or an apprentice ?

In a nutshell:

There are prerequisites for the entry-level qualifications.

A deckhand is *a member of the deck crew and performs the entry-level functions*. This means that he/she does not (yet) have the operational level qualification, because he/she does not yet have the navigation time required for the boatman qualification, and/or has not yet passed the examination required for the operational level.

Apprentices in inland navigation - similar to deckhands - work at the entry-level. In order to be able to take-up activities on board, both need a service record book, in which the qualification of deckhand and apprentice is entered.

Further requirements for the qualification at the entry-level are set out in Annex I to the Directive.

For a **deckhand** (No. 1.1):

- A minimum age of 16 years old, and
- Basic safety training according to the national requirements.

For an **apprentice** (No. 1.2):

- A minimum age of 15 years old, and
- Signed apprenticeship agreement that provides for an approved training programme, as referred to in Art. 19 of the Directive.

3.2 How to become a boatman ?

In a nutshell:

You can become a boatman via a training programme and the examination; via sailing time and the examination; or as a lateral entrant with a shortened training programme and the examination - in each case at the operational level.



The requirements in detail:

The requirements, as well as the competences and examinations for the boatman, are derived from Art. 17 and 18, and Annex I of [the Directive \(EU\) 2017/2397](#) and Annex I of [the Delegated Directive \(EU\) 2020/12](#).

Important!

Passing the examination at operational level is mandatory for acquiring the qualification of boatman. Those who have not passed this examination remain deckhands.

The competencies of a boatman must comply with the standards of competence for the operational level. They can be found in Annex I of [the Delegated Directive \(EU\) 2020/12](#) or in the [ES-QIN](#).

The Directive does not specify whether the examination should be theoretical or practical.

According to Annex 1 No. 2.1 of [the Directive \(EU\) 2017/2397](#), the qualification of a boatman can be acquired in various ways:

Via a **training programme** (No. 2.1.a):

- A minimum age of 17 years old,
- Two-year training programme at the operational level,
- Examination at the operational level,
- 90 days sailing time as part of the training programme.

Via **sailing time** (No. 2.1.b):

- A minimum age of 18 years old,
- Examination at the operational level,
- 360 days sailing time in inland navigation, or 180 days in inland navigation and 250 days of experience on a sea-going-ship.

As a **lateral entrant** (No. 2.1.c):

- Five years of (any) professional experience or 500 days of experience on a sea-going-ship or at least three years of (any) training programme as entry requirement,
- Nine-months training programme at the operational level, and
- 90 days sailing time as part of the training programme.

3.3 How to become an able boatman?

In a nutshell:

You can become an able boatman either by an approved training programme, including navigation time, or by navigation time only if you are already a boatman.



The Qualification of an able boatman can be acquired in two ways, according to Annex 1 No. 2.2 of the Directive:

By a training programme (No. 2.2.b):

- Three-year training programme at the operational level (including exam),
- 270 days of navigation time as part of the training programme.

By a navigation time (2.2.a):

- 180 days of navigation time as a boatman.

Competences and exam:

The prerequisites and the requirements for competences and exams for an able boatman are based on Art. 17 and 18 and Annex I of the Directive and Annex I of [the Delegated Directive \(EU\) 2020/12](#).

The competences of an able boatman must correspond to the standards of competence for the operational level. They can be found in Annex I of [the Delegated Directive \(EU\) 2020/12](#) or in the [ES-QIN](#).

The Directive does not specify whether the examination should be theoretical or practical.

3.4 How to become a helmsman?

In a nutshell:

You can become a helmsman via a training programme and the examination at operational level; via navigation time; or as a maritime captain with the examination at operational level.

The prerequisites in detail:

The prerequisites and the requirements for competences and examinations for the helmsman are derived from Articles 17 and 18 and Annex I of [the Directive \(EU\) 2017/2397](#), and Annex I of [the Delegated Directive \(EU\) 2020/12](#).

The competences of a helmsman must be in line with the competency standards for the operational level. They can be found in Annex I of [the Delegated Directive \(EU\) 2020/12](#), or in the [ES-QIN](#).

The Directive does not specify whether the examination should be theoretical or practical.



According to Annex 1 No. 2.3 of [the Directive \(EU\) 2017/2397](#), the competence of helmsman can be obtained in various ways:

Via **training** (No. 2.3.b):

- Three-year training programme at the operational level,
- Qualification examination at the operational level,
- 360 days navigation time as part of the training programme,
- A valid radiotelephone certificate.

By **navigation time** (No 2.3.a):

- 180 days navigation time as an able boatman,
- A valid radiotelephone certificate.

Lateral-entry as a maritime captain (No. 2.3.c):

- 500 days navigation time as a maritime captain,
- Qualification examination at the operational level,
- A valid radiotelephone certificate.

3.5 How to become a boatmaster?

In a nutshell:

You can become a boatmaster via a training programme and the examination; via sailing time and the examination; or as a lateral entrant with a shortened training programme and the examination - in each case at the management level.

The requirements in detail:

The requirements, as well as the competences and examinations, for the boatmaster are derived from Art. 17 and 18, and Annex I of [the Directive \(EU\) 2017/2397](#), and Annexes I and II of [the Delegated Directive \(EU\) 2020/12](#).

Each examination consists of a theoretical and a practical examination.

The practical examination consists of two parts: the journey planning part and the journey execution part, which can be conducted on a ship or at the simulator.

For prospective boatmasters who have neither undergone a training programme nor passed the examination for the operational level, an additional module with content of the operational level standards of competence is added in the practical examination.



According to Annex 1 No. 3.1 of [the Directive \(EU\) 2017/2397](#), the boatmaster qualification can be acquired in various ways:

Via a **training programme** (No. 3.1.a):

- A minimum age of 18 years old,
- Three-years training programme at the management level,
- Examination at the management level,
- 360 days sailing time as part of the training programme,
- A radio operator's certificate.

Via **sailing time in inland navigation** (No. 3.1.b):

- A minimum age of 18 years old,
- 180 days of sailing time as a helmsman,
- Examination by the administrative authority at the management level,
- A radio operator's certificate.

Via **sailing time in inland navigation and maritime navigation** (No. 3.1.ba):

- A minimum age of 18 years old,
- 540 days of sailing time, or 180 days of sailing time and 500 days of work experience as a member of the deck crew on a sea-going-ship,
- Examination by the administrative authority at the management level,
- A radio operator's certificate.

As a **lateral entrant** (No. 3.1.c):

- Five years of (any) work experience, or 500 days experience as a member of the deck crew on a sea-going-ship, or any completed three-year vocational training programme as the entry requirement,
- Training programme of 1,5 years at the management level,
- Examination at the management level,
- 180 days sailing time as part of the training programme, and
- A further 180 days of sailing time thereafter,
- A radio operator's certificate.



4 Training programme, examinations, navigation time, standards of competence

4.1 Approved training programme

In a nutshell:

The Directive provides that the Member States may approve training programmes for obtaining all competences.

All qualifications are referred to in Articles 4, 5 and 6, i.e.:

- The European Union certificates of qualification for members of the deck crew (*boatman, able boatman, helmsman and boatmasters*),
- The European Union certificates of qualification for special activities (*passenger navigation experts, liquefied natural gas experts*), as well as
- Specific authorisations (*waterways of a maritime character, inland waterway sections with special risks, sailing with the aid of radar, sailing vessels using liquefied natural gas, sailing large convoys*).

The Member States may establish training programmes in accordance with Article 19(1). These training programmes must be approved and meet the requirements set out in Art. 19(2).

Within the framework of an approved training programme, the examination required for the respective qualification may also be carried out, if applicable.

The establishment of approved training programmes is **not mandatory** for the Member States. Therefore, it may be that not all Member States have approved training programmes for obtaining all qualifications.

The Member States shall notify the European Commission of approved training programmes in accordance with Article 19(5). The Commission draws up a list and makes it publicly available.

More information is to be found in the Annex.

4.2 Examination by the competent authority

In a nutshell:

Examination may be organised under the responsibility of an administrative authority.



Where the examination is required for obtaining of a standard of competence, it may be organised under the responsibility of an administrative authority in accordance with Art. 17(2)(a) and Art. 18.

These examinations will be particularly important for those who acquire their competences not in an approved training programme, but through *practical learning* by navigation time or by privately organised courses.

The Member States shall designate the competent authorities to be responsible for the organisation of examinations and inform the European Commission, that subsequently shall make this information publicly available.

Such competent authorities and/or the link to the European Commission's publication is to be found in the Annex.

4.3 Obtaining navigation time

In a nutshell:

For the members of a deck crew, a certain amount of navigation time recorded in a service record book is a prerequisite for obtaining qualifications. Navigation time can be partly replaced by work experience on a sea-going vessel.

According to the definition in Art. 3 No. 22, the navigation time is:

- *"Time measured in days,*
- *that members of a deck crew have spent aboard a vessel during a journey on inland waterways, including loading and unloading activities for which active vessel navigation is required,*
- *validated by the competent authority".*

The navigation times are recorded in a service record book in accordance with Art. 22 Para. 1.

This means that only those navigation times that meet these requirements are **recognised** for *obtaining a certificate of qualification*.

Validation by the competent authority:

Navigation times entered in a service record book, which are to be validated by the competent authority, i.e. confirmed after verification of the authenticity and validity of the entries, must not be older than 15 months at the time of application, in accordance with Art. 22(2).

According to Art. 22(2), not only the navigation times on all inland waterways of the European Union are taken into account, but also on inland waterways that do not run entirely within the territory of the European Union, as well those on sections that run outside (for example on *the Danube*).



Different minimum navigation time is prescribed for obtaining the qualifications of boatman, boatmaster, helmsman and boatmaster; depending on whether you want to obtain the qualification as part of an approved training programme, or without a training programme but in practice onboard a ship.

For example: someone who wants to become a boatman and does not participate in an approved training programme, will need - according to Annex 1, 2.1.b - in addition to the minimum age of 18 years old and the assessment of his competence by a competent authority, a navigation time of at least 360 days.

Experience in maritime navigation:

Experience in maritime navigation is also recognised as navigation time to a certain extent and with different requirements for the individual qualifications.

For example: the above-mentioned boatman only needs 180 days of navigation time in inland navigation if he can prove having 250 days of professional experience acquired on a sea-going vessel.

4.4 Standards of competence

In a nutshell:

The standards of competence for all qualifications, describing the relevant knowledge and skills, can be found in Annex I of the Delegated Directive (EU) 2020/12.

The Directive takes a competence-based approach, i.e. the requirements for the respective competence are based on the requirements from Annex II of the Directive and the competence standards contained in Annex I of [the Delegated Directive \(EU\) 2020/12](#), from which the relevant knowledge and skills are derived in detail.

The "Standards of Competence for the operational Level"

can be found in Annex I under I. They cover the competences required for obtaining the qualifications of boatman, able boatman and helmsman. It is a one standard that applies to all three qualifications. The professional requirements for obtaining these qualifications further differ mainly in the amount of navigation time required in each case.

The "Standards of competence for the management level"

contain the required competences for the boatmaster. They can be found in Annex I under II.

Furthermore, in Annex I, you will find:

- "Standards of competence for sailing on inland waterways with a maritime character" (III),
- "Standards of competence for sailing with the aid of radar" (IV),



- "Standards of competence for passenger navigation experts" (V), and
- "Standards of Competency for Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) Experts" (VI).

4.5 Standards for practical examinations

In a nutshell:

The Directive requires a practical examination for a total of four qualifications, which standards are regulated in Annex II of the Delegated Directive.

For obtaining:

- the Union certificate of qualification as a boatmaster,
- the specific authorisation for sailing a vessel with the aid of a radar,
- the Union certificate of qualification as a liquefied natural gas expert, and
- the Union certificate of qualification as a passenger navigation expert.

the Directive requires a practical examination in Art. 17(3).

The standards for these practical examinations can be found in Annex II of [the Delegated Directive \(EU\) 2020/12](#).

Practical Boatmaster's Examination:

The practical boatmaster examination is divided into *two parts*: the journey planning part and the journey execution part. The journey planning part may be conducted on a vessel as defined in Art 2, or at the simulator that meets the standards for approval as set out in Annex III.

Whether the examination is held on a ship or at the simulator, or whether there may be a choice, it shall be determined by the Member State concerned.

For candidates who have neither passed an approved training programme on operational level nor passed an examination of competence with the administrative authority, an additional module is prescribed. It is to test the competences required to give instructions and to supervise the tasks that must be carried out at the deck level.



5 Annexes

5.1 EU Regulations and ES-QIN

- **Directive (EU) 2017/2397**

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32017L2397&from=DE>

- **Delegated Directive (EU)2020/12**

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32020L0012&from=EN>

- **Implementing Regulation 2020(182)**

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32020R0182&from=EN>

- **Delegated Regulation (EU) 2020/473**

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32020R0473&from=EN>

- **ES-QIN 2019**

https://www.cesni.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/ES-QIN_2019_en.pdf

5.2 National regulations transposing the Directive and its delegated acts

Below you will find the national legal acts:

- **Transposing the Directive (EU) 2017/2397**

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/NIM/?uri=CELEX%3A32017L2397>

- **Transposing the Delegated Directive (EU) 2020/12**

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/NIM/?uri=CELEX%3A32020L0012>

To be completed according to the progress of implementation in the Member States.



5.3 Approved training programmes

[List of approved training programmes.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)

5.4 Competent national authorities according to Art. 26(2)

[list of competent authorities.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)

5.5 List of waterways with a maritime character

[List of inland waterways with a maritime character.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)

5.6 List of stretches of inland waterways with specific risks

[Stretches of inland waterways with specific risks \(europa.eu\)](#)

5.7 List of third countries referred to in Art. 10(9) whose documents have been recognised as valid in accordance with Art. 10(2) and (3)

To be completed according to the progress of implementation in the Member States.

Information by EU Commission:

[Social dimension \(europa.eu\)](#)

