

25th anniversary of ERSTU - the outcome of the 48th Executive Committee and the XXVI. General Assembly of ERSTU

The European River-Sea-Transport Union e.V. (ERSTU) celebrated its 25th anniversary on the occasion of its XXVIth General Assembly in Berlin at the 31st of May, 2022.

On June 24, 1997, ERSTU was founded in Berlin on the river Spree on board the passenger ship "PANNONIA". At that time, the founding members included 10 shipping companies active in inland shipping and river-sea shipping from the five European countries of Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, the Czech Republic and Russia. In the 25th year of its existence, ERSTU unites 62 members from 12 European countries.

The XXVIth General Assembly on May 31, 2022 in the NH Hotel Berlin was also a historic conference in the history of ERSTU. On the one hand, the 25th anniversary of the founding of the association was celebrated, on the other hand, on this day, the General Assembly had to decide on the proposal of the "President's strategy group" of January 25, 2022 to dissolve the ERSTU according to "§ 14 Dissolution" of the statutes.

In the focus of this meeting of "President's strategy group" was to develop a "Position paper on the future of the ERSTU up to the year 2030".

The following five variants were examined, taking into account the real framework conditions:

1st variant: Strengthening of the ERSTU by recruiting high-performing active members and rejuvenation of the association. Win-win situation through projects that are important for the members to strengthen their companies.

2nd variant: Cooperation of the ERSTU with other European associations in the industry while maintaining independence to strengthen the position and enforce demands.

3rd variant: ERSTU merges with other European associations in the branch and active participation of interested ERSTU members in existing structures of other associations.

4th variant: Organization of loose, non-association forums for the exchange of information and experiences in the form of "captains round tables" or "regular round maritime tables" of interested ERSTU members with changing moderators/organizers.

5th variant: Dissolution of the ERSTU according to "§ 14 Dissolution" of the statutes of the ERSTU from 04.10.2017.

The "President's strategy group" analyzed these individual variants with their pluses and minuses and gave sound reasons for the proposed decision.

The "President's strategy group" proposed to initiate the dissolution of the ERSTU and submitted a written application to the ERSTU Executive Committee to dissolve the European River-Sea-Transport Union eV on December 31, 2022.

92.86% of the ERSTU members who took part in the survey will miss the ERSTU. After the dissolution of the ERSTU, interested parties should use variant 4 to create a loose forum "Maritime round table" for the exchange of information and "Best Practises".

The application for the dissolution of the ERSTU was accepted by the general assembly of the ERSTU on December 31, 2022 with 88,89 % of the voices of the quorum.

In the 25th anniversary year of its founding, ERSTU will cease its activities.

The President of ERSTU once again evaluated the successes achieved in the 25 years of ERSTU, but supported the strategy group's proposal because it follows the realistic framework conditions for the further development of the association in the coming years.

In the 25 years of its existence, the ERSTU has worked as an association of European companies, their national organizations and umbrella companies that belong to the shipping transport system or are connected to it, on the implementation of the following tasks:

- Promotion of inland waterways, river-sea shipping and short sea shipping for the purpose of more effective integration of the different regions of Europe and securing a high standard of efficient, safe and environmentally friendly transport on which growing trade depends.
- Promotion of mobility and sustainability through network and intermodality as well as cross-system cooperation and innovations.
- Representation of the interests of the members in all relevant business areas in the European and international organizations as well as towards the national governments and authorities.

The advantages of the ERSTU compared to other associations were the interdisciplinary, cross-modal structure of the members, their internationality with a strong Eastern European presence, especially from Russia, the deep networking with other associations and a high voluntary commitment of the company members. Without this commitment, ERSTU would not have been able to function with the limited budget.

Despite the limited financial resources, the ERSTU has been able to implement a wide range of tasks to promote inland navigation, river-sea shipping and short sea shipping in the 25 years of its activity in cooperation with other associations. This was highlighted by members in the discussion. ERSTU was the only trade association in Europe to have close ties to Russian shipping companies and ports as well as their trade associations and maintained an intensive exchange of experience and information with them until the start of the COVID pandemic.

The participants of the XXVIth General Assembly of ERSTU underlined the significant progress made by ERSTU in supporting the development of river-sea shipping and short sea shipping, and the representation of the industry in the pan-European and international framework, the development of cooperation and the contribution to implementation of the objectives and targets for shipping (in particular the ministerial declaration "Inland navigation in a global context" adopted on 18 April 2018 in Wrocław, Poland).

Since 2006, ERSTU has been actively involved in the activities of the UNECE Inland Transport Committee and its working groups, in particular the Working Group on Inland Navigation, the Working Group for the Harmonization of Technical and Safety-Relevant Requirements in Inland Navigation, the ADN Safety Committee. The important contribution of ERSTU to the work of the UNECE Inland Transport Committee in the field of river-sea shipping and the implementation of the European Agreement on the Main Inland Waterways of International

Importance (AGN) as well as to the ongoing work on current topics of shipping such as greening and Inland navigation automation, fleet renewal and climate change impacts.

In the sessions of SC3./WP.3 of UNECE ERSTU informed about the CCNR Thematic Report „RIVER-SEA TRANSPORT IN EUROPE“ published in January 2020 in partnership with ERSTU, the international online conference „Greening of Inland Navigation, River-Sea Shipping and Short Sea Shipping“, the „EMMA Project“ etc..

A lively exchange of opinions on the many experiences in the consultations and meetings of the ERSTU in the 25 years of its existence was conducted by the members during a trip on the historic steam icebreaker „ANNA“ through historic and modern Berlin and over dinner together in the 'Marinehaus'. On June 1st, 2022 the interested ERSTU members visited the old and new ship lift in Niederfinow with great interest.

The last Executive Committee Meeting and General Assembly of the ERSTU will take place on November 23rd and 24th, 2022 in Duisburg.

The members, partners and friends of ERSTU hope that the contribution that ERSTU has made to the development of Inland Navigation, River-Sea and Short Sea Shipping over the 25 years of its existence will take its deserved place in the history of the European Shipping.