



Explanatory notice for the CESNI standards for practical examinations

1. Introduction

In November 2018, the European Committee for Drawing up standards in the field of inland navigation (CESNI) adopted standards for practical examinations in line with Art. 16 and 17 of Directive (EU) 2017/2397 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the recognition of professional qualifications in inland navigation and repealing Council Directives 91/672/EEC and 96/50/EC¹. These requirements are designed for integration in other international and national/river basin regulatory frameworks (e.g. Rhine regulation).

According to Art. 17(3) of Directive (EU) 2017/2397, practical examinations are mandatory for obtaining:

- a) a certificate of qualification as a boatmaster,
- b) a specific authorisation for sailing with the aid of radar,
- c) a certificate of qualification as a liquefied natural gas (LNG) expert and
- d) a certificate of qualification as a passenger navigation expert.

With a view to side entrants wishing to obtain a certificate of qualification as a boatmaster, CESNI adopted standards with additional elements of examination in a module for management level applicants who have not passed an examination at operational level in order. These additional standards aim to assess the skills of a boatmaster to instruct other deck crew members and supervise the tasks they exercise on operational level, implying adequate abilities to perform these tasks.

Also according to Art. 17(3),

- practical examinations for obtaining a certificate of qualification as a boatmaster or for obtaining a specific authorisation for sailing with the aid of radar **may take place on board a craft or on a simulator**;
- practical examinations for obtaining a certificate of qualification as a liquefied natural gas (LNG) expert or as a passenger navigation expert shall may take place **on board a craft or at appropriate onshore installation**

The CESNI Secretariat has worked out an explanatory notice to document the methodology as well as the consequences associated with the definition of the standard. This notice is for documentary purposes only.

¹ Directive (EU) 2017/2397 of 12 December 2017, OJ L 345, 27.12.2017, p. 53

2. Methodology

CESNI standards for practical examinations set out the elements of examination and their importance for passing the exam as well as requirements related to examination environment.

a) Elements of examination, scoring system

All CESNI standards of competence contain a detailed list of knowledges and skills². For practical examinations, skills are more relevant than knowledge which can be part of a theoretical examination. Therefore, skills required for specific competences listed in the standards for competence are listed as elements of practical examination.

However, not all skills required for a competence can be tested in a practical examination for legal, practical and time reasons. This is why CESNI experts have selected **specific competences and determined the conditions to be tested in order to ensure a level playing field in all examinations**, regardless of the fact if these are organised under the responsibility of an administrative authority or as part of an approved training programme.

CESNI experts have identified **two categories of elements of examination**. Category I elements have to be passed with at least 7 out of 10 points. Not passing an element of examination of category I cannot be compensated by excellent performance in another element of examination. Elements of examination of category II require a minimum total score allowing to compensate a lower score in one element of examination by a higher score in another element of examination. As an exception, the practical examination for obtaining a specific authorisation for sailing with the aid of radar includes only category I elements.

In this context, **the individual test scenarios may be designed by examiners** so that the different means examiners use and their various concrete experience is taken into account.

b) Suitable examination tools

Considering the requirements set out by Article 17(3) of Directive (EU) 2017/2397, CESNI experts agreed that only craft falling within the scope of the directive can be used for practical examination. Pleasure craft or craft used by armed forces, can't therefore be used for practical examinations.

For simulators, experts agreed on **technical and functional requirements that allow the demonstration and assessment of all relevant elements of examination**³.

Concerning onshore installations, the standards for practical examinations contain a detailed list of equipment that is needed to assess the essential competence requirements.

The directive allows **different tools of examination**. Although they are not mutually exclusive, they represent true individual alternatives. CESNI experts have therefore taken into account that some elements of examination may be assessed more easily than others in a specific assessment environment (e.g. traffic density, failure of device in a simulator or splicing wires aboard a craft).

² See ES-QIN 2018.

³ See separate standards for the approval of simulators (ES-QIN, part IV).

The CESNI standards reflect this when defining the elements of examination. This is why the standards for the additional module on supervision in the context of the practical examination for obtaining a certificate of qualification as a boatmaster allow examiners to test only 20 out of 25 category I elements.

3. Impact on inland navigation

Mandatory practical examinations are new for applicants for certificates of qualification in inland navigation, except for LNG experts and for sailing with the aid of radar. Practical examination for certificates of qualification as a boatmaster has been carried out in France, Austria, Croatia and since 2012 - for lateral entrants - in the Netherlands.

Consequently, **appropriate assessment facilities** (craft, simulator or onshore installation) **have to be operable as from 18 January 2022. Examinations will have to be reorganised according to the standards and will have to have content and tools of the examination recognised according to standards.**

3.1 Needs addressed by new standards

Harmonised elements of examination and scoring systems facilitate labour mobility as applicants can demonstrate compliance with harmonised competence standards in all countries applying the CESNI standards. **Moreover, standards for practical examinations guarantee a similar level of safety as harmonised parts of examination lead to a more uniform assessment of applicants' competences all over Europe, contributing to a level playing field** which so far has not existed due to a lack of practical examination or practical examination only with the aid of one of the possible tools.

Examiners – apart from the exam for radar - can still focus on some of the harmonised elements as not all elements of category I and category II are mandatory in each individual examination. Examination could – at a later stage – be further harmonised by drafting common standards also for practical examination at operational level or for the theoretical elements of examination. Examiners still have the freedom to design the practical examination to the specific needs of inland navigation in the area examiners and the applicant operate, taking into account characteristics of the inland waterways or the fleet.

3.2 Possible alternatives to the adopted version of the standards

As it was decided for sailing with the aid of radar, all skills of a competence standard could have also been identified as mandatory elements of examination for boatmasters passing the examination at management level and experts passing examination for a specific operation. This would however have made practical examination very difficult or impossible in some countries, as examination for boatmasters would take more than a day. This would lead to a multiplication of the workload of examination commissions. It would be impossible to cope with such a situation, especially in countries currently assessing most candidates for certificates of qualification as a boatmaster (164 new certificates of qualifications as a boatmaster delivered in the Netherlands and 97 in Germany in 2017), with unknown number of candidates who did not pass the examination. In both countries, the same examination commissions often also assess applicants wishing to sail on stretches with specific risks (283 authorisations passed in Germany and 63 in the Netherlands in 2017).

Instead, CESNI experts focused on two parts of the examination: i) preparation of the journey and ii) execution of the journey with more category I elements in the execution part. Experience gained in the implementation phase of the standards and in parallel CESNI work drafting standards for evaluation of examination may lead to further update and harmonisation in practical examination.

Another option would have been not to harmonise elements of examination with a view to category I and II.

This would have given more freedom to examiners. However, CESNI experts felt that some newly introduced competence requirements are so important that they shall be part of a practical examination as well e.g. the competence to communicate in elementary English for the passenger navigation expert whose competence is, for the first time, not only regulated at national or regional/river basin level but also at European level.
