Discussion Document

EUROPEAN NAVIGATION CONFERENCE COLLABORATIVE FRAMEWORK: DISCUSSION DOCUMENT

ABSTRACT

To start a discussion at May 2020 EUGIN Council
towards a stronger European Navigation Conference

1 GENERAL

1.1 SCOPE & APPLICABILITY

The audience of this paper is European Group of Institutes of Navigation (EUGIN) members only.

The European Navigation Conference (ENC) programme is well established but is facing challenges in a changing world.

The objective of this paper is to stimulate discussion among EUGIN members: to confront the issues and consider options for a collaborative approach to strengthen and grow ENC into the next decade.

2 BACKGROUND TO THIS DOCUMENT

The ENC is well established but, generally, is not growing and is smaller than it once was. Running conferences profitably is getting harder. Risks are higher than they were. Many people believe there are now too many conferences. Yet, at the same time, the value of conferences remains strong: including to bring like-minded experts together; to build relationships; to enable ideas and innovation.

It is right that Europe should have a strong and growing navigation conference. The best conferences are doing well and growing at present.

This has raised the question, then, of how to make ENC stronger in the future. This document is intended to provide the basis for a discussion on this question.

3 ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

Recently ENC has not been growing. Comparing to growing and larger conferences, this may be because:

   i.   There is no continuity of organisation year-on-year
      A new team, website, contact list, payment portal, abstract portal etc is required each year.

   ii.   The identity and "brand" of ENC varies year to year
      The logos, colours, messaging – in other words, the "brand" and expectation – of ENC changes each year. Delegates are confused. Pricing also varies year to year.

   iii.   Some Institutes offer "competing" events with ENC.
      For example, RIN organises the International Navigation Conference each year.

   iv.   The host Institute has to take all the financial risk for INC.
      This is difficult for all Institutes, not only the smaller Institutes.

   v.   Each Institute has only a "one-in-ten-years" chance to host ENC and hence be directly involved in the key European navigation conference.
      Many Institutes need to be involved regularly to enable value to their members and to deliver their objectives.

4   ROOT CAUSES OF ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

It is not easy to be precise or quantitate here. However, the following are likely to contribute:

i.   Lack of continuity in organisation and brand for ENC
Delegates and organisations try to judge each ENC rather than support the series without question. There are different people to contact each time.

ii.   Each ENC is a "start-up"
This adds to risk and stress for organisers, as well as reducing success due to inexperience and lack of key resources such as promotional lists and IT tools required.

iii.   Running larger conferences which deliver a surplus financially is becoming more difficult.
Delegates have a lot of choice; venues are becoming more commercial and expensive.

5   PRINCIPLES TO MOVE FORWARD

It is proposed that a strong ENC is good for Europe and good for the Institutes of Navigation.

Some key principles to ensure might include:

i.   Continuity of organisation and infrastructure[1] year-to-year.

ii.   Continuity of branding and messaging year-to-year[2].

iii.   Inclusive participation of all Institutes that want to be involved.

iv.   Governance model to enable participation in relation to financial contribution and/or risk sharing.

It is believed that the above principles could form a basis to design an approach to address the issues and, most importantly, would enable expectations to be set and delivered consistently to ENC participants. No single institute would take all the risk. ENC would benefit more by active support and participation from major "supporter" Institutes as well as those Institutes wanting to be involved at perhaps a lower level.

6   NEXT STEPS

Discussion of perspectives and ideas at EUGIN Council meeting, May 2020.

Further steps to be decided.

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[1] Including web site, database, social media accounts, booking portal, payment processing.
[2] Including an agreed ENC logo, colours and style