



## Single Market and industry policy

### *EBI position paper*

The recreational boating industry is a beneficiary of the Single Market, which has helped Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) and larger companies grow and trade across the EU and beyond. The Recreational Craft Directive was, for instance, established in the early 1990s to harmonise requirements for recreational boats between 2,5m and 24m. This led to a positive development and growth opportunities for industry, while growing employment for coastal and peripheral regions, as well as along inland waterways where companies are primarily located.

The boating industry in Europe is now a dynamic and competitive sector and a significant contributor to the European economy. The industry is made up of boatbuilders, engine manufacturers, equipment manufacturers, trade and service providers and consists of approximately 32,000 companies, directly employing over 280,000 people. Over 95% of companies are SMEs.

EBI supports the promotion and deepening of the Single Market in the recreational boating industry to extend its benefits. This paper outlines the key actions needed to extend the benefits and support growth in the recreational boating industry over the current legislative period<sup>1</sup>.

#### **1. Skills and qualifications**

Manufacturing in the boating industry still predominantly takes place in the EU. Despite growth in the boating industry over the past years, many companies are struggling to find skilled employees. The service sector of the boating industry is also heavily reliant on staff, which often has a strong seasonal element for marinas and charter companies. Part of the reason is a lack of qualified employees needing to be addressed by educational institutions and insufficient knowledge of the career opportunities.

A key issue for the service sector is the availability of skippers for small commercial vessels. Currently, these are heavily impeded in their ability to take advantage of the freedom of movement. Skippers can only work on boats flagged by the country corresponding to their qualification. This has severe effects on the mobility of skippers who are restricted from skippering identical boats due to the different country flags. This situation affects charter skippers, marine service staff who move boats professionally in or between ports, delivery skippers and dive boat skippers who ferry their customers to and from diving spots. Charter companies, in need of skippers able to work at short notice struggle to find staff, particularly during peak seasons. This sector of the industry is growing and forecast to continue to do so over the coming years.

EBI calls for a clear and simple framework for the mutual recognition of skipper qualifications for small commercial vessels at EU level. This should be based on a stand-alone legal framework. It is estimated that this action alone could generate up to €120 million of additional revenue for charter companies

---

<sup>1</sup> For EBI's position on related and interconnected issues, the individual position papers should be consulted: Trade, VAT and Environment.



each year and substantially increase employment. The work carried out under the EU-funded TCC-SCV project identifying common core modules between national frameworks can provide the basis for this system of mutual recognition.

In addition, private boating licenses are not harmonised across Europe. This leads to issues for consumers when wanting to practice water sports or boating outside the country of their license. The wider acceptance of the International Certificate of Competence (ICC)<sup>2</sup>, already recognised by some countries, across all EU Member States could facilitate this issue.

### **EBI recommendations**

- Clear and simple legal framework for mutual recognition of skipper qualifications for small commercial vessels
- Mutual recognition of private license requirements by EU Member States (such as the ICC)
- Support for tackling workforce challenges through promotion of careers in the blue economy and nautical tourism sector

## **2. Market surveillance**

A crucial element of completing the Single Market is effective market surveillance by EU Member States for the Recreational Craft Directive and other harmonised legislation (such as Personal Protective Equipment). This is crucial to ensure safety and consumer protection, principles at the heart of the boating industry and the legal framework. Different degree of market surveillance, as currently the case, can lead to a distortion of the Single Market. This requires sufficient resources for market surveillance authorities and implementation of best-practices<sup>3</sup>.

### **EBI recommendations**

- Implementation of best-practices in market surveillance and allocation of sufficient resources by Member States
- EU support for national market surveillance authorities, as well as monitoring of activities

## **3. Harmonised standards**

The European standardisation system is an important element in implementing the requirements of harmonised legislation into practice and ensuring the free movement of goods by removing technical barriers to trade and to build a Single Market. This is crucial for the boating industry in relation to the Recreational Craft Directive and other relevant legislation (such as Personal Protective Equipment).

---

<sup>2</sup> Issued under the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Inland Transport Committee Working Party on Inland Water Transport Resolution 40

<sup>3</sup> These include 1) Visits to boat show as first step of market surveillance, 2) Focus on imports, including online orders of equipment and smaller boats, 3) Incorporation of good practices from Member States, and 4) Focus on components and engines.



Unfortunately, the European Standardisation System currently does not fully deliver these benefits due to delays in the publication of harmonised standards in the Official Journal of the European Union. EBI believes it is essential to improve and speed up the process for the publication of harmonised standards, as well as eliminate the backlog of harmonised standards. Standards are currently published at irregular intervals making planning for companies very difficult. A regular publication schedule (e.g. twice a year) would significantly improve this, as well as provide standardisation bodies fixed timeframes for their work.

#### **EBI recommendations**

- Quicker publication of harmonised standards in Official Journal of the EU
- Application of regular publication of harmonised standards under the Recreational Craft Directive (twice per year)

#### **4. Research and investment**

Given the composition of the boating industry and importance of SMEs, access to finance and investment in Research & Innovation is crucial. This relates particularly to the environmental transition that is of paramount importance to the boating industry, as well as digitalisation and infrastructure (coastal and inland waterways). The EU should play a key role in this through its new Research Framework Programme Horizon Europe and regional development funds, as well as other programmes. This can take address some of the key future-facing elements for the recreational boating industry.

#### **Annex: Public funding opportunities for a green and digital transition**

##### **Green transition**

- ✓ **Investment support for renovation and environmental transformation** of marinas through renewable energy installations (e.g. wind, tidal, solar), for electricity needs of marinas and charging of increasing number of electric boats, car parks and shore power, power storage, circular approach to waste disposal and use of water through small-scale desalination plants
- ✓ Adaptation of marinas to the **impacts of climate change** and the expected increase in extreme weather through investment in a more resilient infrastructure
- ✓ Development and renovation of **local and regional nautical tourism infrastructure** in coastal areas and on inland waterways (marinas, docks, locks, waterways)
- ✓ Roll-out of **eco-friendly permanent mooring solutions** in marine protected areas and areas of high ecological value as alternatives to anchoring and existing permanent mooring solutions
- ✓ **Research and innovation investment:** circular economy, recycling of existing boat building materials, use of new materials (including bio-based), low-emission engines and alternatives (electric, hybrid, hydrogen)

##### **Digital transition**

#### **European Boating Industry**

Square de Meeûs 35 – 1000 Bruxelles (Belgique)

[office@europeanboatingindustry.eu](mailto:office@europeanboatingindustry.eu) – [www.europeanboatingindustry.eu](http://www.europeanboatingindustry.eu)



- ✓ **Digital transformation of marinas** through roll-out of 5G, Wi-Fi and digital infrastructure allowing for connected boating, smart marinas, improved land-sea connectivity, Internet of Things, digital connectivity and automatised customer interaction technology
- ✓ **Research and innovation investment:** connected boats, autonomous boats, and improvement of on-board safety, citizen science, smart marinas
- ✓ **Investigation and pilot projects** between universities, research institutions and marinas as means to develop new projects in close connection with experts (equally valuable for environmental transformation)

**A shift towards sustainable tourism**

- ✓ **Diversification of nautical tourism** offer through schemes decreasing seasonality, attracting new audiences and removal of barriers
- ✓ **Promotion of regional and European nautical tourism** through dedicated campaigns at EU level in cooperation with stakeholders targeting new audiences

### **About European Boating Industry (EBI)**

European Boating Industry (EBI) represents the recreational boating industry in Europe. It encompasses all related sectors, such as boatbuilding, equipment manufacturing, marinas and service providers. The industry is a significant contributor to the European economy, representing 32,000 companies that employ over 280,000 people directly. Most of the sector is made up of Small- and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs). It is a key contributor to tourism and has a global trade perspective. EBI is an established stakeholder at EU level, defending and promoting the interests of its members on key issues ranging from Single Market legislation to blue growth, tourism and trade policy. More information here: [europeanboatingindustry.eu](http://europeanboatingindustry.eu)

**European Boating Industry**

Square de Meeûs 35 – 1000 Bruxelles (Belgique)

[office@europeanboatingindustry.eu](mailto:office@europeanboatingindustry.eu) – [www.europeanboatingindustry.eu](http://www.europeanboatingindustry.eu)