



# **Navigating Tomorrow: A vision for a sustainable boating industry #MadeInEurope**

**EBI Calls for the period 2024-2029**

## Introduction

Boating and water sports contributes to Europe's economic prosperity, its cultural and societal fabric, physical and mental well-being. It allows Europe's citizens to experience the continent's great seas and inland waters. Nautical development along coastal and inland waters help boost quality tourism, facilitate access to nearby waters, and preserve local maritime heritage. The boating industry offers a strategic advantage that Europe can and should build on to create enhanced and high-value tourism, leisure and manufacturing.

**“The building, maintenance and refit of recreational boats is also a sector in which the EU is leading globally with production having remained and grown in Europe.”**

Transition pathway for the EU mobility industrial ecosystem, European Commission 2024

The recreational boating industry is a key economic sector within the blue economy and tourism sector, contributing to Europe's industrial success through manufacturing #MadeInEurope. The industry is a frontrunner on sustainability, innovation and new technology and its products are recognised worldwide, putting Europe as a synonym for quality. It is also a hugely important element of Europe's leisure and touristic offer, offering an antidote to mass tourism and providing access to the sea for all citizens building environmental awareness and ocean literacy.

**32,000** companies

**280,000** people in direct employment

**97%** small and medium enterprises

Over **6 million** boats

Over **10,000** marinas

**48 million** regular water sports users

The aim of the industry is to advance a digital, sustainable, globally competitive and future-proof boating and nautical tourism industry #MadeInEurope. **This requires a concerted effort by industry to innovate and invest and policy-makers to set the right regulatory path in the next five years.** EBI thus calls on the EU institutions to place a strategic focus on the boating and nautical tourism industry to enhance its benefits and support its push for sustainability in the period 2024-2029 based on the following objectives:

1. **Advance environmental sustainability and circularity**

2. **Renew European industrial competitiveness**

3. **Facilitate European-based tourism across borders**

4. **Renew Europe's inland and coastal infrastructure**

5. **Reduce administrative burdens**

# Five proposals to future-proof boating and the boating industry for the 2024-2029 period

## 1 A comprehensive approach to reducing environmental impact



Through the **Recreational Craft Directive**, the EU has a globally leading legislation that should now be revised to take into account innovation and the EU's climate targets. In the boating industry, the only way to achieve the EU's ambitious targets is through **reducing emissions across the entire lifecycle of the boat**. Due to the very limited yearly use hours (35-50 hours per year), the impact comes not just in the use phase of the boat. All levers to advance sustainability in design, materials, manufacturing, use and end-of-life all need to be made use of. Further there is a need to include innovative products in the legislation, minimise administrative burden and advance digitalisation.

## 2 Open up Europe's internal borders for boaters and skippers



European citizens are used to drive their cars across Europe with their driving licenses, but exasperated that they **cannot sail across borders with their boating license**. A clear gap in the Single Market, it also negatively impacts leisure and tourism businesses. A simple tool already exists through the International UNECE Certificate of Competence, that can easily be transferred into EU law. Professional skippers of small commercial vessels experience the same issue and contribute to a growing skill and workforce challenge. **Mutual recognition of both boater and skipper licenses** should be achieved in the next five years.

## 3 Enable the circular economy in the boating industry



The boating industry is taking significant steps towards ensuring the circular economy of materials in boat-building, by increasingly using new sustainable materials and pushing for dismantling and recycling systems. In cooperation with the European Commission, stakeholders and Member States, EBI put together a **Roadmap<sup>1</sup> to address the issue of end-of-life boats**. It shows the key **changes that are needed in European waste legislation, design requirements and funding** to make the circular economy happen. The next mandate should therefore foresee a full implementation of the Roadmap.

## 4 Future-proofing Europe's marinas



Marinas are at the intersection of water and land and face the sustainability challenge. Increasingly, they need to **provide alternative fuel and charging infrastructure**. They also need to reduce their own environmental footprint and adapt to climate change where they are particularly at risk in inland and coastal environments. **Lack of capacity in marinas** is also preventing growth of the boating industry in many regions. These multiple challenges require large amounts of funding, which as SME businesses, are difficult for many marinas. **Targeted funding for their transition and accessibility should be made available to future-proof Europe's marinas.**

<sup>1</sup> <https://europeanboatingindustry.eu/about-the-industry/studies-and-reports>

## 5 Creating a level VAT playing field in the tourism sector



Currently the EU VAT Directive differentiates between accommodation on-water and on-land: **hotels and caravan sites can benefit from reduced VAT rates at national level whereas marinas and charter boats cannot.** There is thus an unfair treatment of sectors, which in the perspective of the consumer are identical and competitive. This places nautical tourism at a significant disadvantage compared to other forms of tourism that needs to be urgently addressed in a revision of the VAT Directive where on-water accommodation needs to be added.

Horizontal  
measure

### Harmonise boat registration information



A key cross-cutting concern is the lack of comparable data at EU level, which hinders effective policy-making across all areas mentioned above. To achieve better EU-level data, a common approach to boat registration should be implemented, collected and published annually by the European Commission. For countries that have a boat register or are developing it, the data should be collected uniformly.

# About European Boating Industry (EBI)

## Our members



HUP  
Hrvatska udruga poslodavaca



THEFOILING.ORGANIZATION



EBI represents the recreational boating industry in Europe. It encompasses all related sectors, such as boatbuilding, equipment manufacturing, marinas and service providers. The mission of EBI is to advance and represent a sustainable boating and nautical tourism industry #MadeInEurope. More information on EBI's website:

<https://www.europeanboatingindustry.eu>

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/european-boating-industry/>

## Get in Touch with our Team!

If you have any question regarding the proposals laid out in our manifesto, feel free to reach out to our Brussels-based policy experts:

[office@europeanboatingindustry.eu](mailto:office@europeanboatingindustry.eu)

