

## **European Commission Consultation on the European Water Resilience Strategy**

Response by European Boating Industry (EBI)

The recreational boating sector with its 32,000 companies and over 280,000 direct employees is a critical and globally competitive component of the European industry in many regions. Boating provides an essential link between citizens and the sea, with over 48 million participants using more than 6.5 million boats across Europe every year, as well offering high-value tourism in inland and coastal environments. The sector is primarily composed of SMEs (over 96%) and family-owned businesses.

EBI welcomes the EU's commitment to enhancing water resilience and ensuring long-term sustainability of European water bodies. Boating and water sports necessitates clean water without being a consumptive or polluting activity. Boaters are natural allies and beneficiaries. The industry has made significant progress in adopting sustainable technologies and practices in the past years. Further investment into research and innovation in this sector should be supported.

The water resilience strategy should consider extractive sectors as its primary target, but continue to ensure access to recreational navigation in inland and coastal environments. The strategy and any actions should include proportionate and evidence-based measures that do not unfairly restrict access to water bodies for recreational boating and water sports. This requires consideration of non-consumptive sectors.

The sector is also at risk from extreme weather scenarios, such as in inland environments from flooding and drought. This is also the case for waterway and marina (pleasure port) infrastructure. There can be substantial negative impacts on the industry and jobs when insufficient water levels stops boating from taking place, and water level management is therefore crucial to protect local water-based tourism and leisure. Support and funding for climate change adaptation is therefore crucial. The EU should support upgrading of marinas and boating facilities with sustainable water management solutions, as well as investments in eco-friendly infrastructure.

EBI supports the principles of the European Water Resilience Strategy and urges the Commission to ensure that policies recognise recreational boating as a key activity and stakeholder, as well as support infrastructure development and innovation. Consistent regulation across the EU would be beneficial.

**European Boating Industry**