

European Oceans Pact

EBI position paper

European Boating Industry (EBI) welcomes the European Commission's initiative on the European Oceans Pact and its ambition to ensure sustainable governance of oceans while boosting the blue economy. With recreational boating playing a vital role in Europe's maritime economy, EBI urges the Commission to adopt an approach that integrates economic growth and environmental sustainability.

The recreational boating sector with its 32,000 companies and over 280,000 direct employees is a critical and globally competitive component of the blue economy #MadeInEurope, yet it has been underrepresented in previous EU blue economy strategies. Boating provides essential access to marine environments, supporting high-value tourism, economic activity, and citizen engagement with the sea. Boating plays a key role in Europe's economic prosperity, boosts local economies, cultural heritage, physical and mental well-being. The sector is primarily composed of SMEs (over 96%) and family-owned businesses, which have a substantial impact on coastal and inland communities. Given its cross-sectoral nature, the industry falls into several subsectors from shipbuilding to tourism.

The industry is a leader in sustainability and innovation, increasingly using Life Cycle Assessment to improve environmental performance of its products from climate to biodiversity¹. Boating and water sports - with over 48 million yearly participants in Europe – are direct, highly visible and engaging activities that can bring the Oceans Pact closer to citizens, ensuring greater awareness and participation. These should be the pillars of the Ocean Pact. Real action is needed to get buy-in from the sector, particularly regarding regulatory adjustments to ease regulatory burden and financial incentives to make the green transition a success.

Proposed actions for the Oceans Pact

- A. Under Objective II: Boost a competitive, resilient, and sustainable EU blue economy, including fisheries.
 - **New simple regulation on the mutual recognition of licenses** of skippers of small commercial vessels that are currently burdened by red tape and lack of a Single Market approach (Example: same boat, but different flag = no recognition of license and no business) that would add an estimated € 150 million in value for the charter sector alone, boost skills and worker's mobility in the European tourism sector.
 - **Investment fund for 1) innovation** in manufacturing of recreational boats, implementation of new technologies, materials and production processes to capture the twin transition based on technological neutrality **2) infrastructure** for marinas and waterways for climate change adaptation, regeneration, greening of operations, digitalisation, provision of alternative fuels and growth in high-demand regions.
 - **Adapting legislation to accelerate circular economy** (e.g. Waste Framework Directive), based on recommendations in European Roadmap on the implementation of the circular

¹ <https://europeanboatingindustry.eu/eu-affairs/lca-blue-boat-horizon>
European Boating Industry

economy for end-of-life recreational boats² developed by stakeholders in a process led by DG MARE and EBI.

- **Recognising recreational boating within EU maritime policies**, such as Maritime Spatial Planning, ensuring that it considers the needs of boating and water sports to maintain and promote the public's access to water.
- To create a **level playing field between on-water blue economy tourism and on-land tourism sector**, with on-water tourism accommodation (e.g. in marinas and on charter boats) must be included in the list of reduced VAT rates.

B. Under Objective 3: Consolidate, simplify, and extend the EU's marine knowledge framework.

- Recognising the boating sector's growing role in marine data collection and citizen science, such as those underway by JPI Oceans European Marinas Network³, LandSeaLot⁴, SOOP programmes⁵ and competitive sailing⁶.
- Ensure blue economy statistics can display the economic contributions and split it from other sectors, in particular for boat manufacturing and marinas.

At the level of the blue economy, a structured dialogue led by DG MARE with all maritime sectoral actors and stakeholders on one side and all relevant Directorate-Generals should be put in place at political level to ensure coherence and follow-up.

EBI urges the European Commission to fully integrate the boating, water sports and nautical tourism sectors into the European Oceans Pact with a specific mention to ensure sector buy-in. Ensuring a fair, sustainable, and innovation-driven approach is crucial to harnessing the full potential of our oceans while securing a competitive and resilient blue economy.

² https://europeanboatingindustry.eu/images/Reports/EBI%20roadmap_03_24.pdf? t=1711641194

³ <https://jpi-oceans.eu/en/european-marinas-network-0>

⁴ <https://landsealot.eu/>

⁵ <https://www.soop-platform.earth/>

⁶ <https://www.theoceanrace.com/en/racing-with-purpose/science>