

# **EU Dialogue on End-Of-Life of Pleasure Crafts: Final Report**

## **Overview of the day**

### **1. Introductory speeches**

#### **Belgium, Minister for Mobility and Transport – Georges Gilkinet**

- How do we address the situation that more and more pleasure boats come to the end of their lifespan?
- Environmental perspective: accumulation of abandoned or neglected boats harms aquatic life, diminishes the natural beauty and recreational value of our waters.  
End-of-life pleasure boats can pose safety hazards, as abandoned boats may become hazards to navigation, leading to accidents and endangering both waterway users and the environment.
- Action is needed:
  - Sustainable solutions
  - Responsible stewardship
  - Implementing measures regarding disposal, recycling and reusing
  - Collaboration among stakeholders, sectors and industries
- Belgium's work:
  - Preliminary study
  - Legal study
  - Roadmap
- Event is opportunity to exchange ideas and search for solutions

#### **European Commission, Director, DG MARE – Delilah Al Khudhairy**

- 2018: EC started framework of stakeholder's group on EOL recreational boats with EBI. Valuable network of stakeholders discussing all range of issues, including legal aspects, dismantling, recycling, disposal and partnering with other composite industries.
- Today: no common approach towards disposal, dismantling or recycling
- Merit of a common EU approach:
  - Reduce volume of waste generated by abandoned boats
  - Reduce amount of litter in seas and on coasts
  - Providing a more attractive environment for tourism or coastal economic activities
  - Push composite industry to join forces and find viable recycling solutions
  - Through recycling, re-use, conversion or upcycling, the parts or materials extracted from end-of-life boats could be reinjected into the economy as spare-parts or for other activities, with obvious economic returns.
- Not an easy transition. Circularity stretches beyond recycling and waste management.

- The European Commission is committed to driving forward the dialogue

### **European Boating Industry (EBI), President – Robert Marx**

- Crucial step that discussion is part of the official Belgian Council Presidency Programme; topic is of high importance for EBI and the boating industry.
- Developing an industry standard and tool for Life Cycle Assessment to allow manufacturers to take smart eco-design decisions.
- We also thank the European Commission DG MARE for the cooperation in last years to develop the roadmap on end-of-life boats. We hope that this becomes a priority for the next European Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Environment
- Key message is that industry is committed and ready, the recycling technology is ready and we now need the political support.

## **2. Presentations**

### **Belgium – Legal Study**

#### Removal of abandoned recreational boats

- Legislation present on all possible levels:  
Federal, regional and international. Only minimal in the Brussels region.
- Suggestions:
  - Standardized **definitions** of :  
Recreational boats  
Derelict vessels  
Wrecks  
  
A standardized definition of « disabled vessel » (link with waste) ?
  - Standardization of **legal procedures**:  
Between the regions and the federal government + implementation regulation  
Between the Member States ?

#### The introduction of a circular economy for recreational boats

- Division of competences in Belgium:
  - Several Levels of Competence
  - International – EU – Federal
- Suggestions:
  - **Revision of Directive 2013/53 on recreational craft and personal watercraft.**

- The requirements set out in the Directive could be extended, to include stricter manufacturing, import, compliance and environmental standards, to define a framework for the circular economy of future recreational craft.
- Importance to define obligations for importers and European manufacturers
- **Revision of the Waste Framework Directive ?**
- **Regional regulations**
- **A specific legal framework for recreational crafts** in the decrease on waste
- **Possible system of circular economy for recreational boats**
  - Every boat produced in or entered the EU must be manufactured with sustainable and recyclable materials
  - Creation of a financial fund for ship dismantling/recycling, with funding that can be individualised per ship;
  - Financing of the Fund: eco-tax on purchase or import; annual retribution; obligation on the last owner to bear the remaining recycling costs + minor contribution for historical deficit

## Belgian Roadmap

Implementation roadmap to set-up the conditions for this value chain to emerge articulated in 4 areas :

- Circular Economy industry/market  
Includes deliverables like:
  - **Technical and operational specifications** arising from **the stimulation of the circular economy** (eco-design, life extension & end-of-life recovery)
  - Identification of players aiming at building industrial capacities (supply, logistics, recycling...)
  - Identifying and onboarding other sectors with same type of in flow to manage to implicate in this processes to optimize efficiency (e.g EOL windturbines)
- Registration & follow-up processes  
Includes deliverables like:
  - Design and implement link with **registration** and control processes
  - Design and implement processes to **follow-up** boats maintenance state
  - Design and implement incentive actions to maintain or transfer vessel's ownership to avoid pollution and extend life duration
- Governance & solution model (incl. financing)  
Includes deliverables like:
  - Identify potential **governance models** (considering regional, national competencies, possibly with a broader scope at EU level with collaborations between countries on some aspects)
  - Define best model (obligation for boat owner/manufacturers) vs incentive and financing schemes
  - Designing and deploying **the implementation regulatory environment**
- Communication  
Includes deliverables like:

- **Communication approach** to sensitize and mobilize the stakeholders along the implementation roadmap
- Developing content and material in the different implementation milestones
- Communication on milestones and progress in creative, study, evaluation and deployment

### **3. Break-Out Sessions**

#### **BO 1 – Material / Industrial aspect**

- Composites are essential for the decarbonization of our society + Composites are circular materials
- Expand the knowledge base: Continue to build knowledge on recycling and reuse (LCA, costs...) + Identify barriers in the supply chain (logistics, standardization, waste codes...)
- Cross-industry cooperation for the critical mass (windmill blades, gas bottles, piping...) & encourage stakeholder cooperation (KiMuRa project & EuCIA)
- Promote actions to drive sustainability and net zero (EuCIA)

#### **BO 2 – Financial aspect**

- Who should contribute to financing: producers/importers, boat owners/users, public authorities
- System in every Member State needed, otherwise market disturbed
- Management of EOL today is a cost, not a revenue raising system, so financial injection from the side needed
- Need of a common EU vision, to avoid regulatory shopping risk

#### **BO 3 – Collaboration**

- Importance of user responsibility
- Harmonization depends on Member States' willingness, stressing the need for national political will before EU action
- Data sharing needed to build a business model
- Discussions on the need for cooperation on ecodesign and standardization
- Potential standard on dismantling (based on existing Italian standard)
- The European Boating Association emphasizes the need to move from planning to implementation, suggesting involvement from various EU Directorates-General, including DG ENV, alongside DG MARE and DG GROW. The Waste Framework Directive is highlighted for setting targets for composite material reuse and recycling.

The three break-out sessions have highlighted the following challenges and opportunities:

- Challenges
  - Collection and recycling are costly processes
  - Legislation is not covering it
- Barriers

- Communication between owners-authorities-recyclers-industry is not in place to facilitate the process
  - Collection system – who pays for the transport (high transport costs) to the recycling facility remains unsolved even in FR where they are more advanced in the recycling of end-of-life boats
  - Craft registration obligations are very different across EU (so difficult to track boat and boat owners)
  - Several recycling pathways exist, currently low in terms of waste hierarchy (energy valorisation, poor level of re-use, inflow for cement but not full CE practices)
  - Finance remains critical (who would pay along the boat life cycle?)
  - Ecodesign is not yet developed or worked on
  - A difference in pace among EU Member States to move forward on circular economy for pleasure craft : some countries are more voluntarist like FR and GE, Nordic countries
- Opportunities
    - Cross-industry collaboration, common dismantling
    - Extended Producer Responsibility-schemes were mentioned as a solution
    - Ecotax in FR can be shared as an example to other countries (APER)
    - Financial injection is needed, innovation to be financed for the recycling output (Cost can be shared among the parties involved)
    - Harmonising registration of boats – perhaps an EU solution
    - Collaboration with wind energy sector to manage fiber glass EOL feedstock
    - Shared vision on the need to act and to define some actions to move forward
    - Shared vision on the need to foresee some collaboration at EU level

#### 4. Presentations

##### **WindEurope**

- Windmills mainly in DK and DE reaching end of life, ie 30y+. BE, NL, FR, 15-20y
- Pleasure boats EOL about 30kt of polyester – today more than EOL windmills but % of EOL windmills will increase
- Technologies for recycling are maturing but need to bring puzzle together (small project in Slovakia, other in FI, other in FR.....)
- Making business case is the challenge (competition with very cheap markets is difficult for recycling industries)
- Five steps to unlock industrial-scale recycling:
  - **Revise the European Waste List** to create dedicated waste codes for composite material waste from decommissioned wind turbine rotor blades and boats.
  - **Revise the Waste Framework Directive** to set progressive targets for the reuse and recycling of composite material waste from decommissioned wind turbine rotor blades and boats

- **Develop an EU-wide model for separate waste collection** of composite material waste from decommissioned wind turbine rotor blades and boats.
- **Revise the Landfill Directive** to set a landfill ban on composite material waste from decommissioned wind turbine rotor blades and boats
- **Revise the Waste Shipment Regulation** ensure composite material waste from decommissioned wind turbine rotor blades and boats is subject to the Green control procedure of the Basel Convention.

## **EBI – European Roadmap on the implementation of the circular economy for the end-of-life recreational craft**

- **Development of roadmap**

- > Stakeholder group led by EC DG MARE and EBI
- Joint development between public and private sector
- Series of hearings with experts from industry, users, academia, recycling companies and related industries
- Official submission of Recommendations to Commissioner Virginijus Sinkevičius in December 2022 and publication in 2023

**Strategic approach to solve issue by 2030 by tackling major bottlenecks with European and cross-sectoral approach.**

- **5 areas:**

- Financing: Country specific with EU support
- Dismantling & transport: permits for onsite dismantling and provision of composite waste codes
- Recycling: cross-sectoral cooperation
- Research & innovation: EU R&I funding, potential revision of EU r-Recreational Craft Directive
- Implementation: through EU network on EOL boats

**Commitment of industry: Phase-out of landfilling and energy recovery of composite waste by 2030**

- **What has happened since at national and industry level?**

- Innovation towards implementation of new materials and processes in boat-building
- Developments in many EU countries towards structured approach towards dismantling
- Life cycle approach becoming guiding line for industry sustainability roadmap
- Joint action and sustainability assessment of technologies across composite industries

**Critical to continue momentum at national and EU level as part of next EC priorities.**

## **5. Panel Discussion**

**European Boat Association (EBA) - European Boating Industry (EBI) – Federal Public service Mobility and Transport DG Shipping - Association pour la Plaisance Eco-Responsable (APER)**

The management of end-of-life recreational craft presents various challenges, hindering progress. Key stakeholders from the European Boat Association (EBA), European Boating Industry (EBI), Federal Public service Mobility and Transport DG Shipping and Association pour la Plaisance Eco-Responsable (APER) address these challenges and propose solutions to accelerate progress.

Addressing end-of-life recreational craft has a multifaceted nature. The main challenges to make further progress consist mainly of:

- regulatory support taking into account different levels of lawmaking (national, regional, EU)
- the discussion on financial responsibility and ensuring that costs don't burden users
- manufacturer responsibility (ecodesign)

Key stakeholders who took part in the event outline strategies to accelerate progress in managing end-of-life recreational craft.

- APER's approach focuses on establishing dismantling sites, initially serving as a point of contact for disposal inquiries and later developing legal frameworks. They highlight the financial challenge of dismantling.
- EBA emphasizes manufacturer responsibility and fostering a recycling culture among boat users.
- EBI proposes investment in research and simplifying assembly processes. The complexity of dismantling and financial constraints underscore the need for collaborative solutions and robust legislative frameworks to drive progress in the management of end-of-life recreational craft.

Partnerships among industry, associations, and regulatory bodies are crucial in advancing the management of end-of-life recreational craft.

- The Federal Public service Mobility and Transport DG Shipping emphasizes the importance of data sharing and EU-level agreements, advocating for ecodesign and collaboration across borders.
- The European Boating Industry (EBI) calls for international definitions and EU-wide registration standards. However, concerns arise regarding abandoned boats and potential increases if disposal charges are imposed. They suggest a common EU approach to address these challenges.

Looking ahead, stakeholders express their expectations and aspirations for the management of end-of-life recreational craft.

- The European Boating Industry (EBI) emphasizes the need to address both collection and dismantling challenges, advocating for collaboration with other industries to find innovative recycling solutions. They propose establishing disposal facilities across key nautical regions and implementing a common solution for the EU.
- The Federal Public service Mobility and Transport DG Shipping prioritizes resolving the issue of abandoned boats, urging continued governmental engagement to drive progress.
- APER stresses the importance of proactive measures, anticipating challenges and promoting the widespread presence of disposal facilities tailored to national circumstances.

## **6. Closing speech**

Bart Van Hooreweghe, president Belgian Sailing Federation

- Emphasise one more point of view: the boat users, the members of my federation, both clubs and boat owners. They're also asking for a solution
- Belgium: sorting domestic waste diligently, but we don't know where to get rid of our old boats
- Jump into action!
- What I conclude from the expert's presentations:
  - Recycling (or upcycling) is possible and makes sense.
  - Let us not overestimate the numbers of boats and the amount of composite material.
  - Cooperation should be created with existing recycling companies to create recycling capacity. For dismantling boats, you need expertise how boats are built.
  - Provide sound financing is a key issue
  - A lot of coordination and consultation between all stakeholders is needed
  - **Who takes the lead?**
  - **What is our timing?**

### **The way forward**

The Belgian event demonstrated the large support and interest to find solutions towards a circular economy for pleasure craft. Momentum was created with all stakeholders involved to move forward and to keep the topic high on the agenda for the years to come.

More work is needed in the field of legislation on pleasure craft as well as on waste management and recycling.

Cooperation and coordination on and between the industry, national and EU-level are needed.

The above will only be successful if the topic of Circular Economy for pleasure craft is maintained and put forward on both the future national and European agenda.