



First-ever European COVID impact study shows mixed impact on industry in 2020, with optimism for coming years

Brussels/Düsseldorf/Cologne, 29 April 2021 – The first-ever study by European Boating Industry, Bundesverband Wassersportwirtschaft e.V., and boot Düsseldorf offers a unique insight into how the recreational boating industry in Europe fared in 2020 given the COVID-19 pandemic. Presented at the International Breakfast Meeting on 20 April and now published, the study shows a mixed impact on the industry in 2020 with a positive outlook for the next years and some clear trends.

The study, led by two graduates of the Jade University Wilhelmshaven in Germany (Amelie Cesar & Natascha Zwenke) is the result of a unique cooperation between European Boating Industry, Bundesverband Wassersportwirtschaft e.V. and boot Düsseldorf. The study analyses the impact of the pandemic in 2020 on a number of key indicators and the outlook of the industry. It is based on the responses of companies within EBI's membership that were surveyed in late 2020 following the end of the summer season, as well as interviews with experts among EBI's full members.

The study shows a varied picture of the impact of COVID-19 and the various restrictions at national level for 2020, with some countries and some sub-sectors more impacted than others. Some markets however also did exceptionally well with revenues increasing. A clear picture emerges for 2021 and beyond, showing a positive outlook for companies. It also demonstrates the need for political support measures at national and European level.

Some key messages from the study:

- Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs): Over 96 % of companies that responded were SMEs, and almost half were micro-SMEs.
- Revenue: A third of companies indicated an increase while more than half recorded a drop in revenues. Companies with their main activity in tourism and production have been hit harder than companies in the distribution sector and service sectors.
- Employment: 23 % of companies had to lay off employees while 22% increased employment. The impact on employment may be more significant in the long-term.
- Future trends: The interest in boating is seen as increasing in the short- and the long-term. Companies increasingly focus on digitalisation and partly also on environmental sustainability. Investments had to however be postponed in 2020 given the pandemic.
- Government support: In all countries, governments supported companies in difficulty. Government support however remains necessary on a national and European level with a focus on financial support, effective legislation, and promotion.
- Industry outlook: The outlook for businesses in the boating industry is perceived as positive for 2021 with only 23% seeing it as poor.

The full results of the study and analysis are available for members of EBI, BVWW and the network of boot Düsseldorf. A limited version and executive summary can be downloaded [here](#).



Commenting on the study **Petros Michelidakis, boot Düsseldorf Project Director**, said: *“The result of this study is also essential for the further development of boot Düsseldorf. The international boating industry and the entire water sports have enormous potential. We will use this for boot Düsseldorf and continue to offer the water sports community a show that is unique worldwide and will be the reflection of the market. I am very pleased that we will already prove this at boot 2022, because the industry's interest in taking part and present to its audience again is very high.”*

Karsten Stahlhut, **Managing Director of BVWW** commented *“The study shows the great potential of the water sports industry. Together, we should do our utmost to always remain future-proof and innovative, also with regard to digitalisation and the upcoming technical transformation”*

Philip Easthill, EBI Secretary-General, stated: *“It is encouraging to see that our industry has been able to hold up well in 2020 and companies are positive for the future. This shows the resilience of our industry and hard work over the last year. Our industry is clearly very well positioned to take advantage of new consumer trends and benefit in the short- and long-term. Given the impact that the pandemic has nevertheless had, the study clearly shows the importance of effective policy at all levels of government to support recovery and help the industry return to growth in the next years.”*

About boot Düsseldorf

boot Düsseldorf is the biggest boat and water sports trade fair in the world with almost 250,000 visitors and is the place where all of the industry meets every January. About 2,000 exhibitors are presenting their interesting innovations, attractive new developments and maritime equipment with the next edition taking place from 22 to 30 January 2022. The market will be coming to Düsseldorf to provide an exciting insight into the entire water sports world for the nine-day exhibition covering 220,000 square metres in 17 different halls. There is something for every water sports enthusiast, with the main focus on boats and yachts, motors and engine technology, equipment and accessories, services, canoes, kayaks, kitesurfing, rowing, diving, surfing, wakeboarding, windsurfing, SUP, fishing, maritime art, marinas, water sports facilities, beach resorts and chartering. All necessary information can be found on boot Düsseldorf's website, [boot.com](https://www.boot.com).

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About Bundesverband Wassersportwirtschaft e.V.

The German Leisure Marine Federation (Bundesverband Wassersportwirtschaft e.v.) has been the voice of the German water sports industry for over 50 years and represents the interests of the industry at national and international level. More information can be found on www.bvww.org

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About European Boating Industry

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. The vast majority of the sector is made up of Small- and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs). More information on EBI's website: europeanboatingindustry.eu.

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