

Update on European Boating Association (EBA) activity

Future Recreational Craft Directive

Together with the European Boating Industry (EBI) the EBA is taking a proactive approach to a future revision of the RCD following the reports from the European Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the application of Directive 2013/53/EU on recreational craft and personal watercraft (RCD) and on the technical feasibility for further reducing the emissions of marine propulsion engines, introducing requirements for evaporative emissions and the impact of the watercraft design categories on consumer information and on manufacturers as set out in Article 52 of the RCD.

Representing the European industry (EBI) and users (EBA) the associations are preparing to approach the European Commission together on this important issue. The two associations consider the current RCD overall fit for purpose and are agreeing a joint position proposing a targeted approach to revision to adapt to technological developments and new market trends. This should ensure that the RCD remains relevant and world-leading this decade and beyond. Among the key aims should therefore be adaptation to the environmental transition, changing consumer and industry trends, as well as digitalization to ensure the continued strength and positive impact of the European recreational boating industry.

Inland Waterways infrastructure

The EBA is calling for the European Commission and all national and regional Governments to provide support and investment in inland waterways, recognising the waterways are an important part of European heritage and ensuring waterways remain navigable to the class of vessel they were built to serve.

The contribution recreational boating can make and the economic benefits of inland waterways tourism should not be overlooked. With the right infrastructure this sector can thrive. However, this will not be the case if the waterways are not maintained in a navigable condition.

Contributions from recreational boaters alone cannot fund the maintenance of the waterways. Navigable waterways have a much wider appeal than overgrown waterways with infrastructure in disrepair. The contribution made by recreational boaters therefore needs to be supplemented to ensure waterways can be maintained in a navigable condition.

In mainland Europe inland waterways do not stop at national borders and they can provide alternatives to sea passages for maritime vessels crossing Europe. Maintenance of the inland waterways network must be considered at the pan-European level to ensure that recreational

boaters of all nationalities can enjoy the waterways and that they are still available for future generations to experience.

Marine renewables

Ambitious targets for decarbonising national electricity grids, alongside increasing demand from the electrification of heating, transport and industry, are leading to a significant increase in renewable energy projects across Europe. Such developments include wind turbines (fixed or floating), floating solar, wave, tidal range, and tidal stream devices.

The EBA recognises the need to develop marine renewable technologies providing they take proper account of the right of safe navigation by recreational boaters. However, adequate consideration must be given during project development to the particular needs of recreational boaters, in line with the detailed guidance set out in the EBA's newly approved Marine Renewable Energy Developments Position Statement.

Any development should consider cumulative and in combination effects of existing and other proposed developments in the same area.

The direct impact of a development may be magnified by existing infrastructure, for example by increasing distances to safe harbours or time spent in deeper water. Considering a development in isolation from other current proposals may miss key risk factors.

As a minimum the EBA expects:

- Adequate consideration of navigational safety taking account of the particular needs of recreational and other small vessels
- Minimisation of impact on routes commonly taken by recreational boaters
- No imposition of operational exclusion zones except when required during installation, maintenance or decommissioning
- Suitable consultation during project development, and wide communication regarding device types, locations and safety marks

Boat registration

Resolutions which were originally developed for the inland waterways sector have, over the years, been implement nationally to also be of benefit and important to maritime recreational boaters. Both the International Certificate for Operators of Pleasure Craft (ICC) and the International Certificate (International Card) for Pleasure Craft (ICP) are the product of inland water transport resolutions.

At the 62nd session of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Working Party on the Standardization of Technical and Safety Requirements in Inland Navigation meeting in February 2023, Czechia raised concerns relating to the practical application of resolution No. 13, as Czechia had experienced difficulties with the recognition of ICP issued abroad.

Resolution No. 13 was originally intended to provide a solution where registration on the national register was not possible. The Resolution has been around for a long time and since it was written quite a lot of countries have made registration cheaper and easier or compulsory for more recreational boats. However, EBA Member organisations in a number of countries, most notably Sweden and the Netherlands, still consider Resolution 13 to be essential for recreational boaters.

The Working Party on Inland Water Transport will be discussing a proposed revision of Resolution 13 at its 67th session in October 2023, to resolve the concerns previously expressed by Czechia.

Transition of Boat Propulsion to Carbon Zero

The EBA notes the science of climate change and recognises the need for urgent emission reductions across all sectors.

However, the transition to this future is key. Prior to requiring recreational boats to stop using fossil fuels for propulsion, regulators need to ensure that alternative fuels and charging / filling points are available in commercial marinas and club harbours, on inland waterways and at the coast.

Boats built now, with fossil fuel propulsion, will last long after the deadline for net zero carbon. The legacy fleet will continue to grow as long as manufacturers fail to take action. The EBA encourages the industry to accommodate boaters' long-term interests when designing and selling new boats, and to move rapidly to develop net zero solutions.

As well as developing innovative ways to power newly designed recreational boats, solutions are needed for the legacy fleet to allow the millions of existing FRP boats to be decarbonised. As a priority, manufacturers of current mass production FRP boats must ensure that the design of the boat will allow for conversion to alternative fuels in the future.

Economic solutions for the legacy fleet must be available before regulators set dates beyond which recreational boats will no longer be able to use fossil fuel for propulsion, to ensure that millions of FRP boats are not forced out of use. The EBA would oppose the compulsory replacement of engines before they have reached the end of their serviceable life. The EBA

expects that some form of scrappage scheme will be required to fund the replacement of older propulsion units to extend the life of vessels and minimise their environmental impact both in carbon and waste terms. Future regulations must also take cultural-historical values into account.

For historic vessels, alternative fuels, such as HVO, synthetic fuels and eFuels, should be permanently available. This is likely to be in line with other historic users of fossil fuel technologies.

Government infrastructure plans for hydrogen and battery systems for transport need to include recreational boating within their scope to ensure boaters are able to play their part in the transition away from fossil fuels.

To support the transition of the legacy fleet, the EBA strongly supports the use of HVO, other bio-derived drop in replacement fuels, synthetic fuels and eFuels for our sector, which has particular challenges with regard to longevity of vessels and limited supply locations.

Alternative fuels, such as HVO, synthetic fuels and eFuels, need to be made readily available for recreational boats at the waterside during the transition to zero carbon, including at club harbours, and fuel supplies and solutions need to take into consideration the variety of duty cycles and differing ways recreational boats are used.

The market for new technologies is changing rapidly, and standards processes are slow to respond. Industry urgently needs to agree safety and performance standards for new propulsion methods that allow for on-going innovation.

Related to standards is the need to simplify post-construction assessments for conversion of existing boats to zero carbon propulsion to minimise the cost to owners and to encourage the transition to net zero.

End-of-life boats

Alongside the European Commission, the European Boating Industry published a roadmap on the implementation of the circular economy for end-of-life recreational boats in February 2023. This was the product of the work of the Stakeholders' Group on end-of-life recreational boats set up in 2018 by the European Commission (Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries). The report recognises a key concern of the EBA, the need for the implementation of a financing system to allow setting up a permanent structure and fund to collect, treat and dismantle end-of-life boats. The report notes that a key consideration should be that the last owner of a boat usually cannot afford the high costs of

proper disposal and affordable solutions are therefore needed to incentivise proper dismantling.

Port Reception Facilities for Waste from Ships

The EBA expressed concerns regarding the definition of a “port” used in Directive (EU) 2019/883 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 April 2019 on port reception facilities for the delivery of waste from ships. The Directive is now being brought into force in national legislation and through its members in EU member states, the EBA is monitoring the Directive’s implementation. Although it was clearly not the Commission’s intention that the Directive should apply to private houses, the definition was sufficiently wide to include any private water-front house that happens to have a jetty or pontoon on the premises. The EBA is collecting information from its members to understand any impact on commercial marinas and club harbours in EU Member States.

Maritime Accident Investigation Directive

Directive 2009/18/EC on accident investigations is being reviewed. The current Directive does not apply to marine casualties and incidents involving only pleasure yachts and pleasure craft not engaged in trade, unless they are or will be crewed and carrying more than 12 passengers for commercial purposes. The EBA is monitoring in the review, in case any changes to the scope of application are made.

Carol Paddison, EBA Secretary, 10 October 2023

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