Action Required: IR Commission members are invited to note the relevant EBA activity. Requests to World Sailing will be reviewed and discussed during the meeting.

Update on European Boating Association (EBA) Activity

Introduction

The EBA now has 23 members in 15 countries as Bulgarian Yachting Association (BYA) joined the EBA in 2026.

The EBA conducted a member satisfaction survey which showed that most EBA members believe the EBA addresses relevant topics valuing the European-level influence, regulatory foresight, knowledge exchange, and collective action and representation. Generally, membership of the EBA was seen positively and as good value for money.

A new President took office at the end of the last EBA General Assembly meeting. Peter L. Larsen of Norges Seilforbund was appointed in the role for a four-year term of office. One of his first responsibilities will be to lead the development of a new Strategic Plan for the association for adoption by the EBA General Assembly at its meeting in April 2027.

1. Position statement review – Alternatives to flares

The EBA has agreed a revised position on alternatives to flares. This position advances the suggestion that, "In light of the research and resulting decisions that have been reached in the USA, the EBA believes that it is now time for the international community to review Annex IV COLREG and include EVDS as an internationally recognised signal for indicating distress."

This change is essential to enable European associations to seek changes through national regulators to reduced carriage requirements for pyrotechnic flares.

Request to World Sailing: I have been asked by the EBA General Assembly to forward the EBA's revised position statement to World Sailing and to seek World Sailing's support to advance the proposal the EVDS should be recognised as a signal for indicating distress in Annex IV of COLREG through IMO.

2. Position statement review – Aquaculture

The EBA's position statement on Aquaculture was subject to the routine 5-yearly review. Amendments designed to increase emphasis on cumulative impacts, while making no substantive change to policy were approved.

3. GPS/GNSS Jamming

Concerns in relation to GPS/GNSS jamming have been raised by EBA members. Ongoing GPS jamming activity in the Baltic Sea has become a persistent issue with the Member from Finland reporting that GPS can no longer be relied upon there. The risks of over-reliance on electronic navigation and the importance of maintaining traditional navigation skills, including paper charts, visual navigation and compass work, and cross-checking electronic positions against other sources

were highlighted. These increasing reports of GPS disruption reinforced the importance of navigation resilience and the educational role of boating organisations.

4. Electronic charts

A need for affordable approved electronic charts which enable a small craft (e.g. a yacht) to navigate safely is emerging. The EBA is therefore in the process of developing a position outlining the need for approved electronic charts for recreational boats.

A recent survey among EBA members demonstrated a clear desire among recreational boaters to navigate safely using electronic charts. Unofficial electronic charts are increasingly being used as the primary navigation tool by maritime recreational boaters and national requirements for the carriage of paper charts vary significantly from country to country.

However, the electronic charts currently available for yachts and other small craft often bear a 'not suitable for navigation' warning and generally do not provide any information to allow the user to distinguish between official hydrography office supplied data and unofficial data (which while very useful and informative needs to be treated with a degree of caution).

Electronic Navigation Charts (ENCs) intended for use by ships with ECDIS often do not provide the detail needed for maritime navigation of small craft – particularly close to shore or when approaching a marina or harbour – they are also unaffordable for many sub-ECDIS recreational craft.

A specific solution to facilitate navigation using electronic charts for sub-ECDIS recreational craft is needed and it is becoming clear that if we do not act internationally, we face the risk that solutions will be developed in isolation at the national level or just for a sub-set of the craft that actually need a viable and affordable alternative to ENCs.

Request to World Sailing: The EBA is therefore keen to understand whether World Sailing is engaged with International Hydrographic Office (IHO) regarding a standard for electronic charts for the sub-ECDIS market.

5. Recreational Craft Directive

Evaluation of the Recreational Craft Directive
The development of new horizontal legislation covering the standardization and the framework for product rules and market surveillance has led to a delay in the publication of the report resulting from the evaluation of the Recreational Craft Directive 2013/53/EU.

Major Craft Conversion within the Recreational Craft Directive
The Administrative Cooperation Group of market surveillance authorities in the RCD field (RCD ADCO) has published its Guide on Risk Assessment for Recreational Craft. The EBA maintains the view that modifications should only be classed as a Major Craft Conversion if they are within the current agreed interpretation of the Directive as published in the Blue Guide and the RCD Application Guide. One of the reasons for this position is the responsibilities placed on the owner by the Directive, if they lodge an application for a post-construction assessment of the product with a notified body.

6. EU VAT and customs status for recreational boats

EBA and the European Boating Industry (EBI) have been working jointly for a number of years to address, with the European Commission, the need for clearer, more practical and harmonised interpretation of EU customs rules affecting recreational craft. These issues have long created uncertainty for boat owners and businesses, particularly in cross-border cruising, second-hand boat sales and vessels returning to the EU after time spent abroad.

As a direct result of that work the Commission has published a guidance document https://taxation-customs.ec.europa.eu/document/download/8c62e3be-807f-4607-bb1e-9ff46db7d97e_en?filename=Guidance_pleasure_craft.pdf

The guidance represents an important step towards greater certainty for boat owners, dealers, marinas and the wider recreational boating sector. The document clarifies some areas of uncertainty, but it doesn't go far enough. It doesn't fully resolve the structural issue of missing historical documentation or establish a uniform EU-wide proof mechanism, leaving consumers exposed to legal uncertainty and administrative burden.

The EBA and EBI therefore met with European Commission officials in September and presented the longstanding concerns that recreational boaters have no practical means of demonstrating the customs status of their boats. In particular, the problem that customs officials can demand documents that have never existed was highlighted. Although no immediate solution was identified, EBI and EBA were invited to provide specific examples of difficulties encountered to the European Commission for further consideration.

Request to World Sailing: Your help to gather this evidence would be appreciated. We need detailed examples of any cases involving, for example, incorrect demands for payment of VAT or failed purchases due to missing VAT (or customs) documentation. Evidence from across the EU is needed to build a case to demonstrate that this is an EU-wide issue which needs action by the European Commission, rather than something that can be resolved by individuals through the relevant Member State. Please send any examples directly to the EBA Secretary using the email address carol.paddison@rya.org.uk.

7. Anchoring and seagrass

The protection and restoration of seabed habitats, particularly seagrass ecosystems, were recently discussed. This followed a presentation on the ecological importance of seagrass, including biodiversity support, carbon storage and fisheries benefits and the impacts of anchoring and traditional mooring systems. Members discussed installation costs, maintenance implications, local implementation experiences, funding models, user charging systems and technical design considerations.

Examples from Denmark and the United Kingdom were shared, along with experiences relating to habitat restoration, stakeholder engagement and voluntary no-anchor zones. There was strong emphasis on the importance of consultation with boaters, education, communication and balancing environmental protection with continued access for recreational boating.

8. Inland Waterways

We continue to seek clarification from the European Commission in relation to the application of Regulation 2016/1628 (NRMM) for recreational craft falling within ES-TRIN Chapter 26 and the longstanding concerns expressed by the EBA to the European Commission regarding the 100 cubic metre rule in Directive (EU) 2016/1629. Some progress has been made in the last year but this remains work in progress.

9. European Committee for drawing up standards in the field of inland navigation (CESNI)

The EBA successfully resisted the application in full of Chapter 30 and Annex 8 (technical requirements for recreational craft equipped with propulsion or auxiliary systems operating on LNG, methanol or gaseous hydrogen) of ES-TRIN in Chapter 26.

Regulators had identified a safety gap, and the proposed solution was to apply the regulations for large commercial inland waterways vessels to all vessels to which ES-TRIN applies. This would have been a disproportional step which would have prevented any novel development of recreational craft using LNG, methanol or gaseous hydrogen.

The result is that the use of LNG, methanol or gaseous hydrogen by recreational craft must be approved through a derogation process. This will have the added benefit of regulators being able to learn what more general regulations might say in the future, while working with the small number of novel craft that are likely to seek to use these fuels to provide approval under the derogation process. This comes into force with ES-TRIN 2027.

10. International Certificate for Operators of Pleasure Craft (ICC)

Revision 5 of resolution no. 40 has been published to provide an official consolidated version of the resolution including recent amendments and updates to Annex 4, which details where resolution no. 40 has been implemented and names the applicable competent authorities and the approved bodies.

A single publication which brings together current documents relevant to resolution no. 40. has been published in the three official languages of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) – English, French and Russian.
https://unece.org/transport/publications/international-certificate-operators-pleasure-craft-facilitating-pleasure

11. International Card for Pleasure Craft

It has been agreed that Resolution No.13 on the International Card for Pleasure Craft needs to be modernised. The EBA has been invited to put forward a proposal for consideration by the Working Party on the Standardization of Technical and Safety Requirements in Inland Navigation in April 2027. Resolution 13 is understood to be used in a number of countries with EBA Members.

12. Network of Stakeholders on End-of-Life Recreational Boats and Composites

The second meeting took place in April 2026 and was hosted jointly by the European Boating Industry (EBI) and the European Commission.

Over 50 participants joined in person and online, bringing together EU Commission departments, national authorities, users and industry stakeholders from both the boating and composites value chains.

This meeting builds directly on the 2023 Roadmap on end-of-life boats, developed by EBI with DG MARE, and focused on how to move from strategy to implementation. Key discussions covered:

The upcoming Circular Economy Act (expected Q4 2026) and its implications for boats and composite materials.

Alignment with broader EU initiatives, including the Industrial Maritime Strategy and EU Ports Strategy.

Practical challenges in setting up collection, dismantling and recycling systems across Member States.

Industry and cross-sector input on composites circularity and regulatory gaps.

EBI has been working on this topic for several years, including facilitating EU-level dialogue and developing a roadmap to support implementation and will continue to work with the EU Commission to ensure that the Circular Economy Act delivers for the boating sector.

13. Water Framework Directive Navigation Task Group Meetings

The strongest messages from the WFD Navigation Task Group are that navigation is now being better recognised within EU drought planning, dredging may become eligible for sustainable funding support, and upcoming EU water resilience and environmental funding policies could have significant long-term implications for boating access, marina infrastructure and navigability across European waterways.

14. EBA General Assembly dates for 2027

The EBA holds two General Assembly meetings a year, bringing members together, in person, to complete the association's routine business and discuss issues of concern. In 2027 EBA members will meet on 9-10 April and 8-9 October.

13. EBA Position Statements

Agreed EBA position statements can be found on the EBA website at: https://eba.eu.com/about/position-statements/. However, at the time of writing the minutes of the latest EBA General Assembly meeting had not been published. Updated position statements had therefore not been uploaded.

The new position statement on alternatives to flares has been supplied by email with this report.

Carol Paddison, EBA Secretary, 30 October 2026
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