



EBI Newsletter

February 2026

World Boating Day 2026

World Boating Day is a global, non-profit open-day initiative led by the Superyacht Life Foundation, offering the boating industry a shared moment to welcome the public and showcase the people, skills and innovation behind leisure boating. In 2026, the official day will take place on 23 May, with events running throughout the week of 18–24 May.

Participation is open to marinas, shipyards, brands, schools and boating businesses. Activities can be tailored to each host, from open days and guided tours to talks, workshops or on-water experiences, and are promoted through the World Boating Day platform. Organisations interested in taking part can register [here](#).



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EU News

EU report highlights major potential for advanced biofuels by 2030

A new European Commission report highlights that a multi-fold increase in EU industrial capacity for advanced biofuels is possible by 2030, provided the right policy, investment and regulatory conditions are in place. Advanced biofuels will play a crucial role in decarbonising hard-to-electrify transport sectors, including maritime, by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and strengthening Europe's energy resilience through sustainable, domestically sourced solutions.

For the recreational boating sector, this development is particularly relevant. As EBI continues to advocate for pragmatic and technology-neutral pathways to decarbonisation, scaling up sustainable fuels such as advanced biofuels will be essential to support the transition of existing fleets and marina infrastructure. Ensuring availability, affordability and regulatory clarity will be key to making this transition workable for boating businesses and users across Europe.

For the full report, follow the [link](#).

EU-Mercosur agreement yields positive news for EU boating companies

The EU and Mercosur (Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay) signed its long-negotiated trade agreement in January 2026.

In a tight vote, the European Parliament requested the European Court of Justice to rule on whether the free trade agreement between the EU and Mercosur can be applied. However, the EU Commission confirmed at the end of February that the agreement will be provisionally applied in the meantime. The announcement comes after Uruguay and Argentina ratified the agreement in their respective parliaments. Paraguay and Brazil are expected to follow suit.

For the European recreational boating industry, it is very good news. For Mercosur-origin recreational boats entering the EU, tariffs are eliminated immediately on entry into force of the agreement but are already at very low rates. Current Mercosur tariffs for recreational boats are high, especially in Brazil and Argentina that offer potentially interesting markets. Tariffs, currently at 20% or up to 35%, will be reduced over a 10-15 year timeline to 0% for recreational boats.

EBI is continuing to analyse the trade agreement to provide a comprehensive overview to members.

UN Tourism road map for International Year of Sustainable and Resilient Tourism 2027

UN Tourism has launched a Road Map to prepare the International Year of Sustainable and Resilient Tourism 2027, following the United Nations General Assembly mandate for UN Tourism to lead its implementation.

UN Tourism's new Secretary-General, Shaikha Al Nuwais, presented the Road Map as a step to move from dialogue to delivery, positioning tourism as a sector that can contribute to wider post-2030 priorities, including sustainability and resilience. The Committee also welcomed the intention to start preparations early and translate shared commitments into more coordinated action.

The process towards 2027 will be anchored in the Committee on Tourism and Sustainability and guided by a Steering Committee of Member States, with input through consultations held within Regional Commission meetings and endorsement by the Executive Council.

HELCOM action on phasing out of biocidal antifouling in Baltic Sea

In February, a workshop was held within HELCOM on release of biocides from antifouling products used in recreational craft. EBI participated in the workshop in its role as observer at HELCOM.

The workshop was the starting point for implementation of one of the key actions of the Baltic Sea Action Plan with the aim to: *"Minimize the release of biocides from antifouling products to the marine environment, and preferably by 2027 replace the use of biocidal antifouling products with biocide-free alternatives on structures, equipment and recreational craft in cases not already subject to the International Convention on the Control of Harmful Anti-fouling Systems on Ships when available and environmentally and technically feasible."*

In the meeting, there was board support to prioritise recreational boats as the main source of biocide releases ahead of aquaculture or wind farms. Regulatory pressure is increasing at national level with Finland having already introduced strict limits on copper leaching and banned biocidal paints on boats under 7 m. Sweden is considering similar measures from 2026 onward. This signals a likely regional tightening of rules affecting product availability.

The workshop summarised that biocide-free alternatives are advancing, but not mature yet. Studies also flagged health and environmental risks from some biocide-free products (e.g. solvents, microplastics). Authorities are clear that alternatives will also be scrutinised, not automatically favoured. Legacy TBT remains an issue, as old underlying coatings on old boats may still release TBT during maintenance and cleaning despite TBT ban in 1989. According to studies from Sweden, this may be the case for 10-15% of boats. There was repeated emphasis that measures must be simple,

practical and user-oriented, and that boaters and industry need to be part of solution design - an explicit point raised by EBI.

Sweden is also pushing to change authorisation of antifouling products at EU level. Current EU rules allow results from a single marine area to be applied across all regions and Sweden will push for products to be tested in the Baltic Sea too in order to prevent “overly effective products” in the Baltic Sea.

Germany and Sweden are likely to co-lead a HELCOM task group on implementation with a recommendation and roadmap planned to achieve reduction/end of biocidal antifouling for recreational craft.

From the side of industry, there are several points of concern, including a risk of further fragmentation of rules across Europe, uncertainty for industry and boaters due to mixed evidence on alternatives and potentially fast-moving policy deadlines. There is also a growing focus on microplastics, in-water cleaning and secondary impacts, not just biocides, that may affect availability of non-biocide alternatives.

EBI will continue to be involved as official HELCOM observer, but also encourages members to discuss this with their national authorities and other stakeholders.

EBI in Action

EBI speaks at Bosphorus Boat Show panel in Türkiye

Fabio Planamente, EBI Special Representative for the Large-Yacht Sector, represented EBI on a panel at the Bosphorus Boat Show in Türkiye, organised by YATED. The session, “Growth in the yachting sector and the effects of regulatory frameworks”, provided a platform to exchange views on market developments and policy factors shaping the sector.

The panel brought together Orhun Senturk (Secretary General, YATED), Joe Lynch (CEO, ICOMIA), Tarik Sanli (Sales Operations Manager, Sirena Marine) and Fabio Planamente (EBI / Cantiere del Pardo). Discussions ranged from current global growth drivers and emerging customer segments to the business impact of regulatory and trade developments, including tariffs, and how these affect European and Turkish boatbuilders operating across international markets.

The exchange also highlighted the importance of continued dialogue and practical cooperation between the EU and Türkiye to support competitiveness and provide a predictable framework for investment and long-term growth in the yachting sector.

EBI thanks YATED and the Bosphorus Boat Show for the invitation and the opportunity to contribute, and Confindustria for its continued engagement through EBI's work.

EBI joins Active Tourism Coalition

EBI has joined the Active Tourism Coalition, a group of European associations representing cycling, walking, hiking and water-based activities, working jointly to contribute to the forthcoming EU Strategy for Sustainable Tourism.

The Coalition has published [proposals](#) calling for active tourism to be explicitly recognised in EU sustainable tourism policy, including inland and coastal boating and nautical tourism. For the recreational boating ecosystem, the proposals highlight the need to prioritise investment in the EU's next long-term budget for 2028–2034, strengthen inland and coastal waterway networks and associated infrastructure, and support marina-related facilities and services alongside tourism promotion.

Through this engagement, EBI will work with coalition partners and EU institutions to ensure boating and nautical tourism are properly reflected in the Strategy and in related EU work on infrastructure, connectivity and investment priorities. The Coalition brings together [20 organisations](#) and positions itself as a constructive partner for EU policymakers.

EBI invited to Stakeholder Dialogue on Tourism with Commissioner Tzitzikostas

EBI Secretary-General Philip Easthill took part in a high-level dialogue in Brussels with Commissioner Apostolos Tzitzikostas on the upcoming European Sustainable Tourism Strategy.

Commissioner Tzitzikostas, responsible for Sustainable Transport and Tourism, hosted the high-level meeting with the key sectoral representatives of the tourism sector. He highlighted the need to maintain Europe's global tourism leadership, bring a tourism perspective into all relevant EU policies, cut unnecessary red tape and support local businesses. He confirmed that the first European Strategy for Sustainable Tourism will be presented in June and invited stakeholders to submit concrete proposals in the coming weeks, with clear targets and a strong link between tourism, transport and mobility.

EBI presented nautical tourism as one of Europe's success stories: around 48 million people undertaking water sports each year, up to 20,000 marinas, more than 6.5 million boats, 32,000 mostly SME businesses and over 280,000 jobs, with a turnover estimated above €45 billion – and the vast majority of boats and equipment in European waters made in Europe. EBI stressed three core challenges the Strategy should address: investment in infrastructure for decarbonisation and growth,

fragmented and burdensome rules that limit mobility of boaters and workers, and tourism approaches that overlook active tourism such as boating and water sports. EBI also underlined that Europe’s coastline, inland waterways and maritime heritage offer a unique selling point for “Destination Europe” that no other region can match – if policy and investment recognise boating and nautical tourism as part of the solution.

EBI will follow up with further detailed input to the European Commission, working to ensure that boating, marinas and nautical tourism are clearly reflected in the forthcoming Strategy, its priorities and its implementation on the ground. It follows EBI's ongoing engagement with the EU institutions on the topic of tourism, including at the [breakfast debate](#) organised with ADAC and hosted by MEP Brnjac in November 2025 in the European Parliament.

EBI input to the future EU Vocational Education and Training Strategy

EBI has submitted its response to the upcoming European Strategy for Vocational Education and Training (VET), underlining that the green and digital transition of the recreational boating sector is also a skills transition. As a highly innovative and predominantly SME-based ecosystem within Europe’s blue economy, the sector increasingly faces shortages of skilled workers in areas such as alternative propulsion and sustainable materials.

Representing a sector that provides 280,000 jobs across 32,000 businesses in Europe, EBI calls for stronger alignment between VET policy and industrial and green transition objectives, better support for SMEs providing apprenticeships, and improved recognition of vocational skills across Member States.

Read the full position paper on the [EBI website](#).

EBI input to the EU Skills Portability Initiative

EBI has submitted its response to the [EU Skills Portability Initiative](#), highlighting the urgent need for improved mutual recognition of professional skipper qualifications for small commercial vessels under 24 metres. Nautical tourism is a key pillar of the EU Blue Economy, generating up to 280,000 jobs and €45 billion annually, yet fragmentation in qualification recognition continues to hinder labour mobility and the functioning of the Single Market.

EBI underlines that current recognition procedures are often lengthy, unpredictable and effectively require requalification, creating significant barriers in a highly seasonal and SME-driven sector. Building on existing EU-funded projects that have already identified common core curricula for skipper

training, EBI calls for a structured, proportionate and SME-friendly EU framework to ensure transparent and effective mutual recognition across Member States.

Read the full position paper on the [EBI website](#).

EBI responds to EU Commission call for evidence on European Ocean Act

EBI submitted a response to the EU Commission’s public call for evidence on the European Ocean Act. In parallel, the EU Commission also invited EBI to reply to a more detailed survey for selected stakeholders, reflecting the importance of recreational boating and nautical tourism in the discussions.

EBI’s response focuses on access to coasts and waters as a basic condition for water-based activities and for the sector’s ability to operate and grow, at a time when competition for sea space is increasing. It calls for the European Ocean Act to address this through the revision of the maritime spatial planning framework and through better coordination across borders and sea basins.

EBI supports keeping effective elements of the current Maritime Spatial Planning Directive, while proposing changes to make sure recreational boating and water sports are properly considered. This includes treating access to the sea for citizens as a core objective, introducing a clearer category for recreational and sporting activities alongside tourism, and using maritime spatial planning more consistently to anticipate infrastructure and connectivity needs, including for marinas and yards.

The response also stresses that SME-focused sectors need to be properly represented in decision-making structures and that simplification and reduced administrative burden should guide the revision process. Finally, it supports efforts to improve ocean observation governance and streamline reporting through standardised approaches and digital tools, provided requirements remain proportionate and practical for end users.

EBI in the News



[EBI joins active tourism coalition in EU policy discussions](#)

[Helsinki Boat Show 2026 records major increase in visitors](#)



[European Boating Industry \(EBI\) EU Spotlight](#)



[EFTTA and EBI underline the value of cross-sector collaboration](#)



[Boating Industry Joins EU Push to Boost Active Tourism Policy](#)



[European Union's Active Tourism Coalition, Led by the European Boating Industry, Advocates for Investment in Waterway Infrastructure, Sustainable Tourism, and Regional Economic Growth](#)



[Helsinki International Boat Show 2026 Sees Strong Visitor Comeback](#)

Funding

Innovation Fund: 2025 net-zero technologies call

- **Objective:** Supports highly innovative decarbonisation projects and clean-tech manufacturing to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Eligible activities include manufacturing of components for renewable energy, energy storage, heat pumps and hydrogen production, as well as

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projects of different scales. Projects coordinated and implemented only by SMEs can receive a dedicated bonus point in the evaluation.

- **Application deadline:** 23 April 2026
- **More information:** Find more information [here](#).

HORIZON-CL5-2026-05-D5-11: Ports of the future (ZEWT Partnership)

- **Objective:** R&I to develop and demonstrate “ports of the future” concepts, technologies and operational approaches supporting the waterborne transition.
- **Application deadline:** 14 April 2026.
- **More information:** Find more information [here](#).

HORIZON-CL5-2026-05-D5-12: Shipyards of the future (ZEWT Partnership)

- **Objective:** R&I on next-generation shipyard processes and technologies to support modernisation, competitiveness and decarbonisation.
- **Application deadline:** 14 April 2026.
- **More information:** Find more information [here](#).

HORIZON-CL5-2026-05-D5-13: Safety of renewable low and zero-carbon waterborne fuels in port areas (ZEWT Partnership)

- **Objective:** Risk assessment, regulatory framework work and practical guidance for safe bunkering, handling and storage of renewable low- and zero-carbon fuels in port areas.
- **Application deadline:** 14 April 2026.
- **More information:** Find more information [here](#).

The Work Programme also flags ZEWT-related topics planned for 2027, including onboard renewable energy and energy saving measures, autonomous vessels (short sea and inland waterways), environmental impact mitigation in marine and aquatic ecosystems, and enhanced electric operation and battery durability.

Oberhavel funding scheme: Charging infrastructure for water-based tourism

- **Objective:** The district of Oberhavel (Germany) has launched a local funding programme to support the installation of public charging points for electric boats in marinas. The initiative aims to promote climate-friendly infrastructure and enable the use of zero-emission vessels. Four charging stations are planned along the Havel River, creating a continuous charging

network between Berlin and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. Marina owners and operators based in Oberhavel are eligible to apply.

- **Application deadline:** Not specified
- **More information:** [Click here](#)

HORIZON-CL6-2026-01-ZEROPOLLUTION-01: Toward a comprehensive assessment of the disturbance of marine ecosystems by anthropogenic underwater noise

- **Objective:** Supports research and innovation actions to improve how anthropogenic underwater noise is monitored and assessed, including impacts of continuous and impulsive noise on marine organisms, ecosystems and related ecosystem services, and cumulative impacts with other pressures, taking regional differences into account. Projects are expected to develop new or improved methods, tools and indicators for comprehensive monitoring and assessment (including in line with EU-agreed approaches for good environmental status), and to investigate mitigation options and improve tools to measure their impacts and efficiency. The work should support implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and contribute to efforts linked to the High-Ambition Coalition for a Quiet Ocean.
- **Application deadline:** 17 September 2026.
- **More information:** Find more information [here](#).

HORIZON-MISS-2027-03-OCEAN-03: Green, circular and resilient harbours

- **Objective:** Supports innovation actions to test, deploy and upscale solutions that improve sustainability and resilience in ports and harbour communities under the Mission “Restore our Ocean and Waters”. Demonstrations should take place in at least four ports across the four sea and river basins, with strong involvement of public administrations and port managing authorities. The scope covers coastal and inland ports of any size and activity, including fishing, commercial and recreational ports and marinas, and can include solutions on pollution reduction, biodiversity restoration and nature-based solutions, circular economy, renewable energy and alternative fuels, and climate adaptation.
- **Application deadline:** 21 September 2027.
- **More information:** Find more information [here](#).

HORIZON-MISS-2027-03-OCEAN-04: Towards community-driven business models: coastal and freshwaters sustainable tourism

- **Objective:** Supports innovation actions to test and demonstrate community-driven sustainable tourism business models in coastal, river and lakeside areas, linking local livelihood opportunities with protection and restoration of marine and freshwater ecosystems. Projects should demonstrate initiatives in at least three areas in different Member States/Associated Countries, promote sustainable practices that reduce tourism pressures (e.g. pollution and waste), and include capacity building, training and skills actions for both local communities (entrepreneurship) and tourists (behaviour change). Proposals should focus on one Mission Sea/river basin “lighthouse” and include governance and financing approaches to support long-term viability and upscaling.
- **Application deadline:** 21 September 2027.
- **More information:** Find more information [here](#).

If you would like to promote your events, news or activities in the EBI newsletter, please reach out to the EBI Office (office@europeanboatingindustry.eu)

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