

# EU WATER-BASED TOURISM: DEVELOPING THE EU POLICY FRAMEWORK

A UNIFIED VOICE OF CONSUMERS AND INDUSTRY

## 1 SUSTAINABLE TOURISM STRATEGY

Nautical tourism is an EU success story, benefiting regions along waterways, coasts, and islands. It drives high-value, sustainable tourism and boosts EU manufacturing and quality jobs.

SUPPORT WATER-BASED TOURISM BY

-  Investing in the modernisation, expansion, and green operation of marinas, including alternative fuels, electric boating, digitalisation, and climate resilience
-  Implementing a simple and universally applicable system for EU-wide use of existing boater qualifications like the International Certificate of Competence and commercial skipper licenses (ICC), without harmonising national systems following DG MOVE recommendations for mutual recognition
-  Integrating blue tourism and investing in resilient, sustainable infrastructure must be central to future tourism strategies

## 2 SUSTAINABLE TRANSITION OF RECREATIONAL BOATING

The boating industry is investing heavily in low- and zero-emission and innovation throughout the lifecycle to improve environmental performance, as well advancing the circular economy by adopting sustainable materials and promoting boat recycling. Solutions are required for new and existing fleets, given boats' long lifespans and typically low annual usage.

SUPPORT WATER-BASED TOURISM BY

-  Strengthening policy and planning to accelerate the transition to clean energy in recreational boating, with targeted support
-  Reviewing the EU Recreational Craft Directive to promote innovation, digitalisation, and a technology-neutral, lifecycle approach to sustainability
-  Applying the recommendations of the EU Roadmap on end-of-life recreational boats into the Circular Economy Act, including composite recycling and harmonised registration data

## 3 VAT PACKAGE FOR TRAVEL AND TOURISM

The EU VAT legislation sets an unbalanced playing field for on-water compared to on-land tourism: hotels and caravan sites benefit from reduced VAT rates whereas charter and marinas cannot.

SUPPORT WATER-BASED TOURISM BY

-  Including nautical tourism in the list of tourism services eligible for reduced rates at national level in EU VAT Directive revision

Tourism policy in Europe is largely governed by the principle of subsidiarity. Policies should be carefully adapted to the diverse needs and specific characteristics of local contexts.

**ADAC**



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## CONSUMER PROTECTION AND INDUSTRIAL NEEDS – COMBINING FORCES FOR WATER-BASED TOURISM IN THE EU

There is a growing need to explore the synergies between consumer protection and industry requirements in the context of water-based tourism as complementary pillars of a resilient and future-oriented tourism strategy. Reframing the relationship between travellers, available services, and infrastructure requires a holistic approach that recognises the mutual benefits of each.

Dialogue between public authorities and private actors is crucial. Both consumer organisations and industry representatives are ready to actively contribute to these discussions. We also recognise that these issues are closely linked to broader debates, including sustainability, digitalisation, and climate adaptation.



### INDUSTRY

- **32,000** companies
- **280,000** people in direct employment
- **97%** small & medium enterprises
- **Over 10,000** inland & coastal marinas
- EU as growing global export leader



### CONSUMERS

- **Over 6.5** million boats in EU waters
- **48 million** regular water sports users
- **22.6 million** ADAC members
- **1 million** skippers are ADAC members
- **Over 100,000** recreational boats registered with the ADAC



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