



EBA Position Statement Access to Water

Executive Summary

Access to water is a necessity for people to participate in all forms of Recreational Boating¹. Anyone who cannot access water, cannot participate in recreational boating activities. Supporting steps to ensure that anyone wishing to participate in recreational boating can access the sea or a water body appropriate to the type of recreational boating they wish to participate in is, therefore, a key aim of the European Boating Association² (EBA).

Background

A fundamental right to be able to access the water exists in a number of European countries^a. That right might allow access to the sea, lakes, rivers and / or other inland waterbodies and is often additionally linked to a right to roam on land. Among recreational boaters who have benefited from such access, that right is considered to be non-negotiable. In countries where access to water has constraints, there is an aspiration to reduce those limits to a minimum and as completely as is possible.

Health and Wellbeing Benefits of Recreational Boating

Being close to the water is a relaxing and restorative pastime. A study by the University of Exeter Medical School found that those living close to or within 1 km of water are 22% less likely to experience symptoms of depression and anxiety.

^a That right is in addition to the freedom to navigate the High Seas enabled by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Vessels have a right to undertake a continuous and expeditious passage through Territorial Waters of another country, assuming they abide by international conventions and any applicable Coastal State laws and regulations, to ensure safe navigation, regulation of maritime traffic, protection of navigational aids, facilities, pipelines, and cables, conservation and preservation of the environment and the living resources of the sea (including fisheries laws) and to prevent against infringement of customs, fiscal, immigration or sanitary laws and regulations of the Coastal State.

In general, recreational boating is a good form of exercise. It also allows participants to spend time outdoors and to connect with nature. It provides participants with a break from our hectic everyday lifestyle and getting afloat can provide a much-needed change in perspective.

Learning a new skill allows you to momentarily leave your comfort zone and immerse your thoughts on the experience of being out on the water. Trying out new activities on the water is also a great way to join new social circles and form new friendships. Most recreational boating participants gain a sense of community from participation. Tight-knit communities form in boating clubs and marina and harbour areas. Socialising with other recreational boaters, exchanging knowledge, skills and experiences resulting in many lasting friendships.

People can only benefit from these health and wellbeing advantages if access to water is maintained.

The EBA Position on Access to Water

Access to water is vital for the EBA's members (and those people who they represent) to be able to continue their recreational boating activities and is essential if people are to enjoy the health benefits of recreational boating.

The EBA's aspiration is for all recreational boaters to have unrestricted access to navigable waters.

The EBA will resist proposals (at an international level) which could result in recreational boaters' access to water being removed, reduced or detrimentally impacted (whether through infrastructure developments, regulatory interventions or otherwise). The EBA will support its members in resisting such proposals at a national, regional or local level. Where there is an established public right for recreational boaters to access water, whether this is by law or through long term use, the EBA will support its members in upholding that right.

¹ Recreational Boating

The EBA is the European representative organisation for recreational boating.

There is no general consensus as to the terminology used to describe the types of boat used for "recreational boating", with expressions such as "recreational craft" or "private pleasure craft" being used to describe only subsets of such types of boat for the purposes of specific pieces of EU legislation. "Recreational boating" also includes the use of beach- or slipway-launched water toys such as wind surfers, sailing dinghies, inflatable boats and personal watercraft.

Boats used for "recreational boating" may be small or large, propelled by sail and/or power and used on inland waters and/or at sea. "Recreational boating" at sea can range from close-to-shore to trans-oceanic.

"Recreational boating" also includes the use of such boats privately owned and operated by the owner, hired (on bareboat or skippered charter) or used to provide a service (such as training or race participation).

In the context of this document, therefore, the EBA considers “recreational boating” to mean using boats that are designed or adapted for sport or leisure, whether propelled by sail and/or power, for the purposes for which they are designed or adapted.

Notes

² **European Boating Association**

The European Boating Association, Europäischer Sportschiffahrtsverband, Association Européenne de Navigation de Plaisance, is a civil, not for profit association of recreational boat users’ organisations, founded in 1982, and established as an Unincorporated Association whose members agree to be governed by its constitution. The EBA member organisations (see <http://www.eba.eu.com/participantorgs>) collectively represent in excess of 1.5 million recreational boaters and an estimated 20 million active participants.

The purpose of the EBA is to represent the mutually agreed common interests of national recreational boat users’ organisations in Europe, and in particular to:

- Coordinate and develop recreational boating activities in Europe by exchange of information, and action on matters of mutually agreed common interest.
- Promote the practice of all activities on the water, promoting and exchanging knowledge and experience between recreational boat users’ organisations in Europe.
- Represent EBA members in environmental, regulatory and technical matters affecting their safe enjoyment of recreational boating activities on the water.
- Encourage the safe, unhampered and environmentally sustainable use of recreational boats on all European waters.
- Provide the link between the European institutions and EBA Members for consultation and information on proposed EU directives and regulations.
- Provide the link between other relevant global and regional organisations and EBA Members.