

SELLING BOATS IN EUROPE?



Your quick guide to the Recreational Craft Directive (RCD) and CE marking for boats and components

...Your Company Name...		CE
...Your Model...		
Category	Max	
A		12
B		12
C		14
D		30
Max	+	= 9643 kg
Max		= 29 kw
HPI VS HPIVerificationServices		...Your Company Address...

What is the EU Recreational Craft Directive?

The Recreational Craft Directive (RCD) outlines the legal safety standards your vessel must comply with to be sold in Europe. This includes sales in the UK. It covers the design and manufacture of recreational boats and personal watercraft, but it does not regulate their operation. It applies to craft with hull lengths from 2.5m to 24m (8 ft 2 in to 78 ft 8 in).

The Directive applies to:

- All new craft
- Craft imported into the EU that has not previously undergone an RCD assessment, regardless of age
- Craft that has undergone a Major Craft Conversion
- Recreational craft previously used as commercial vessels





Manufacturers must assign a design category to each boat. This category sets targets for the craft's assessment.

The Recreational Craft Directive also identifies five groups of components that must receive CE marking before entering the market. These are:

- Ignition-protected equipment for use in petrol engine and tank spaces.
- Start-in-gear protection devices for outboard engines.
- Steering wheels, steering mechanisms and cable assemblies.
- Fuel tanks intended for fixed installations and fuel hoses.
- Prefabricated hatches and portlights.

The RCD is very similar to the Recreational Craft Regulations (RCR). The RCR can be used to demonstrate compliance for boats sold only in the UK.

Holding the right level of certification is a legal responsibility. It will help you to reassure potential buyers of your craft's capabilities, giving you competitive advantage, and is often a must-have for finance and insurance too.

CE marking: your passport to sell boats in Europe

When your vessel complies with the RCD it can display the CE mark. CE marking is a mandatory conformity mark indicating that a product complies with EU health, safety, and environmental legislation. It acts a bit like a passport, allowing products to be legally sold and moved throughout the European Economic Area. The CE mark is also used in other territories, including Australia.

How do I get my vessel certified?

To get your vessel CE certified, you need an EU Notified Body (INAB), like HPiVS, which is accredited to issue CE certificates for boats and components.

AMS works in partnership with HPiVS to provide on the ground support and official certification for small craft builders throughout Southeast Asia.

How much does CE certification cost?

There are common elements to the various international small craft regulations. If you are looking to sell boats in several markets, HPiVS can combine the surveys to reduce duplication, save you money, and get your product to market faster.

As we work closely with AMS, who carry out the surveys from their base in Southeast Asia, travel costs are also significantly reduced.

HPi Verification Services

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Requirements and regulations for installing lithium-ion batteries on small craft

In 2025, the first edition of ISO 23625 Small Craft: Lithium-Ion Batteries was published. This standard does not set any detailed requirements for the storage and ventilation of lithium-ion batteries. Instead, it requires only that:

“In case of a failure mode that results in a cell venting, the battery installation shall allow for cell venting such that the safety of persons onboard is not endangered.”

and

“The safety philosophy for the energy storage space (ESS) shall be documented.”

The standard does not prescribe, for example, if batteries may be installed in the accommodation or if they must be fixed in a metal box, vented to the exterior. These details are left to a documented safety philosophy, which we may call a risk assessment.

HPiVS is currently co-authoring ICOMIA's Guide on Risk Assessments for the small craft industry. This will be released in 2026. Until then, please approach HPiVS to discuss methods of risk assessment.

Exclusions to the RCD

Several exclusions remove the requirement to comply with the RCD. These include craft with unconventional modes of operation, such as hydrofoils. In these cases, HPiVS provides risk assessments to help you reduce liability and meet your insurance and funder requirements.

Do I need to comply with the RCD or RCR?

The Recreational Craft Directive (RCD) covers Europe and the UK. The Recreational Craft Regulations (RCR) covers only the UK. The CE mark (RCD) is the equivalent to the UKCA mark (RCR). It is possible to display both CE and UKAS marks if wanted. As an Accredited Notified Body for the EU and an Approved Body for the UK, AMS in partnership with HPiVS can issue both. This saves you duplication and costs.

How to read and understand the latest compliance standards

If you want to access copies of various essential marine compliance standards, use Rulefinder. This has been created by HPiVS to give marine industry professionals comprehensive access and unique insights into compliance. It provides the information you need to design, manufacture or assess products against EU and UK legislation including EN and ISO standards.

With specialist insights from the HPiVS expert team and live cross-referencing, Rulefinder is a powerful, time-saving tool. Go to www.rulefinder.net to find out more.



Can I self-certify or do I need to use a Notified Body like HPiVS?

The RCD provides a range of Conformity Assessment Modules that define the required documentation and the level of involvement from a Notified Body. AMS in partnership with HPiVS helps you choose the right module based on your vessel's risk level and design category to ensure full RCD compliance.

Even if your vessel does not legally require assessment by a Notified Body, you can choose this option to gain extra peace of mind and demonstrate reliability to potential buyers.

For vessels opting for self-certification, HPiVS offers CEproof, a specialist software which streamlines the process. CEproof guides you through submitting your CE marking applications in the correct format, saving time and helping your craft meet Recreational Craft Directive requirements efficiently. Please contact marine@hpivs.com to find out more.

Additional essential certification and surveys

As well as marine certification, HPiVS is an accredited European Notified Body for the EU Pressure Equipment Directive. This makes HPiVS the certification body of choice for boats with hydrogen systems. Projects include certifying Chase Zero, Emirates Team New Zealand's hydrogen powered, hydrofoil chase boat for the America's Cup in 2024.

HPiVS is also a recognized organization by World Sailing to carry out Structural Plan Reviews under the World Sailing Offshore Special Regulations (OSR) for boat hull construction.

Vessels sold in Saudi Arabia must comply with the Technical Regulation for Watercrafts (TRW). This essential certification means you can display the Saudi Quality Mark SASO. HPiVS is authorised to issue Technical Regulation for Watercrafts certificates through its collaboration with Intertek UK, Accepted Body #0071.

HPiVS is also licensed to carry out a comprehensive range of additional inspections, including American Boat and Yacht Council (ABYC) Compliance Reviews.

For more information contact

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