



## EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs

Construction, Machinery and Market Surveillance

**Machinery, Equipment & AI**

Brussels, 16<sup>th</sup> March 2026

### Explanatory Note

#### RCD 2013/53/EU Guidelines 3<sup>rd</sup> edition - March 2026

Dear colleagues,

During the RCD Expert Group meetings taking place since January 2022, it was decided to incorporate the decisions of the Expert Group members into the RCD 2013/53/EU Guidelines. At the same time, the outdated references were updated. Please find below the summary of the modifications.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of the guidelines is uploaded on CIRCABC in track changes version (to see the modifications in particular paragraphs) as well as in clean document version.

**1. Article 2.2(a)(ii) - Canoes and kayaks designed to be propelled solely by human power, gondolas and pedalos**

Addition of the text in red.

*This exclusion concerns canoes, kayaks, gondolas and pedalos, which by their design are incompatible with some of the essential requirements when propelled by human power. If canoes, kayaks, gondolas and pedalos are so designed and constructed that they can be fitted with **a propulsion system additional to human power (such as internal combustion engine, electric motor, sails, etc.)** ~~engine or with sails~~ and placed on the market and/or put into service as such, they are covered by the Directive.*

**2. Article 2.2(a)(vii) - Watercraft built for own use**

The wording 'member of the general public' is replaced by 'a person' as it better relates to the wording of the RCD.

*A **person** ~~member of the general public~~ building his own watercraft (in his garage or garden, for example), from materials bought on the open market is deemed to be "building a watercraft for his own use". This watercraft lies outside the scope of the Directive and does not require compliance with the essential requirements and thus CE marking. If for whatever reason this situation changes then the provisions detailed above would be seen to apply.*

**3. Article 3.7 – Definitions – Major craft conversion**

The explanation of meaning of 'new product' as stated in Blue Guide on the implementation of EU product rules 2022. Addition of the text in red.

*"The third part on alterations to the watercraft is intended to cover alterations to an extent that the craft should be considered as a new craft. The 'Blue Guide' on the implementation of EU product rules 2022 specifies that a product, which has been subject to important changes or overhaul after it has been put into service must be considered as a new product if: i) its original performance, purpose or type is modified, without this being foreseen in the initial risk assessment; ii) the nature of the hazard has changed or the level of risk has increased in relation to the relevant Union harmonisation legislation; and iii) the product is made available or put into service."*

#### **4. Article 3.13 – Definitions – Putting into service**

Addition of the text in red.

*Putting into service takes place at the moment of the first use of a product covered by the Directive in the Union territory by its end user for the purposes for which it was intended. It usually follows 'placing on the market'. However, in exceptional cases the Article 19 of the Directive enables 'putting into service' without previous 'placing on the market'. It is appropriate for scenarios such as:*

- *putting into service of watercraft built for own use*
- *privately imported watercraft*
- *watercraft after major craft conversion or modification*
- *former non-recreational craft changing its original intended purpose*

*In all other cases the placing on the market must always precede the putting into service.*

#### **5. Article 7.4 - Obligations of manufacturers**

Inclusion of text marked in red into Article 7.4

*.....accompany the product with instructions and safety information in the owner's manual as required by the Directive, in a language easily understood by consumers and other end-users, as determined by the Member State concerned. Instructions and safety information need to be provided, whether the product is intended for consumers or other end-users. It is for the manufacturer to determine the relevant information which should be included in the instructions and safety information. Manufacturers have to look beyond what they consider the intended use of a product and place themselves in the position of the average user of a particular product and envisage in what way they would reasonably consider to use the product. The Directive does not specify the form of the owner's manual. When deciding the form of owner's manual, the manufacturers must take into account the intended use of the product as well as the probable environment of use and type and possibilities of end users. Owner's manual should be easily understandable, ensure precise, up to date and comprehensive information and take into account the technological development and changes of end-user behaviour. Therefore, it is accepted that the owner's manual may be either in paper or digital format.*

*However, it is advised that manufacturers take into account the Commission's proposal 2025/0133 (COD) for Directive on digitalisation and common specifications: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A52025PC0503>*

*The Commission's proposal for Directive on digitalisation and common specifications foresees if the owner's manual is provided in digital format, it should be:*

- marked directly on the product how to access the instructions*
- alternatively marked on packaging or accompanying documents, if it is not possible on the product*
- downloadable, printable and saveable on an electronic device*
- make them accessible online during the expected lifetime of the product and for at least 10 years after placing the product on the market or putting it in service*
- paper instruction should be provided only on request at the time of the purchase. They should be provided free of charge within one month*
- safety information (such as instructions on safe use, risk warnings, maintenance guidelines, and other relevant details necessary to ensure consumer safety) should be provided either on paper or through labelling on the watercraft.*

## **6. Article 15 - EU declaration of conformity and declaration in accordance with Annex III**

Inclusion of text marked in red into Article 15

*....."If a translation of the EU declaration of conformity is not signed by the manufacturer, a copy of the original EU declaration of conformity signed by the manufacturer must be provided together with the translated version.*

*The Recreational Craft Directive does not specify the form of EU declaration of conformity. In case the EU Declaration of Conformity is provided in digital format, the manufacturer should provide internet address or machine-readable code where that EU declaration of conformity can be accessed. Digital EU declarations of conformity should be made accessible online for the expected lifetime of the product and at least 10 years after the placing on the market or the putting into service. See also Commission's proposal 2025/0133 (COD) for Directive on digitalisation and common specifications:*

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A52025PC0503>

*Products in the scope of the Directive may be covered by other Union legislation too. To ensure effective access to information for market surveillance purposes, the information required to identify all Union acts applicable to the product concerned should be available in a single EU declaration of conformity. In order to reduce the administrative burden on economic operators, that single EU declaration of conformity may be a dossier made up of relevant individual declarations of conformity"...*

## **7. Article 50 – Committee procedure**

The explanation of role of Expert Group. Addition of the text in red.

*“The RCD Committee has a specific role in examining different questions related to the implementation, application and management of the Directive. The Committee sets up its own rules of procedure and it is chaired by the Commission and composed of the representatives of EU Member States and those states which signed either the EU-EEA agreement or the Customs Union Agreement with the EU. **The Commission also creates the RCD Expert Group which discusses legislative interpretations and appropriate implementation of rules. It is enlarged to representatives of other EU-wide interested parties, such as standards makers, notified bodies, industry, consumers etc”.** See also:*

<https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/expert-groups-register/screen/expert-groups-explained?lang=en>.

#### **8. Annex I.A.5.7 – Navigation lights, shapes and sound signals**

Inclusion of text marked in red into Annex I.A.5.7. Removal of outdated text.

*Navigation lights have to comply with the 1972 COLREG or CEVNI Rules. **Annex I of COLREG 1972 Regulation and Chapter 3 of CEVNI Regulation set the rules on positioning and technical details of lights and shapes. Rule 1b of 1972 COLREG, however, allows different national requirements for local use.** Moreover, COLREG 1972, Annex I, point 134 specifies that the construction of light and shapes and the installation on board the vessel shall be to the satisfaction of the appropriate authority of the State whose flag the vessel is entitled to fly.*

#### **9. Annex V.2 – Private importers – technical documentation**

Inclusion of text marked in red into Annex V.2

*However, technical documentation is required in case of private imports (as stated in Article 12 of the Directive). The technical documentation shall be obtained either from the original manufacturer or drawn up by private importer using appropriate expertise. Private importers may have it drawn up by **an independent** technical expert. **Technical documentation must not be drawn up by a notified body, which also assesses the conformity of the product.***

*Copy of the technical documentation or available technical file that has been submitted to the notified body for the PCA assessment, has to be kept by the person who is placing such a product on the market or putting it into service at the disposal of the national authorities.*

*Where the content of the technical documentation is described in Annex IX of the Directive, the technical file required to be demonstrated by persons described in Article 19(3) and 19(4) of the Directive should incorporate all the available documents referring to the product’s first placing on the market or putting into service. These documents may include ownership papers, the manufacturer’s certificate, surveyors’ reports, the boat’s original owner’s manual, engine and other component manuals, specifications, drawings, stability booklet etc.*

***The examples given in a guidance above do not create an exhaustive list since in each case there will be different documents that will enable the notified body to assess the equivalent conformity.***

#### **10. Annex V.3 – Post construction assessment for major craft conversion**

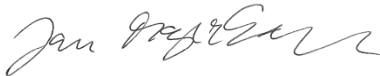
Inclusion of text marked in red into Annex V.3

*“The notified bodies **must carry out an** ~~are supposed to satisfy themselves with such~~ examination of the individual product **to ensure that it** ~~which enables to~~ demonstrates the equivalent conformity of the product with the relevant requirements of the Directive. **For scenarios stated in Articles 19.2 (private imports) and 19.4 (self-built watercraft placed on the market within 5 years), the notified body shall assess conformity with all essential requirements as stated in Annexes I.A, I.B and I.C. The same applies also for changing the original intended purpose of watercraft not covered by this directive in a way that it falls under the scope of this directive.***

*For the watercraft undergoing major craft conversion or major engine modification, the notified body is responsible for a complete conformity assessment, however, it may limit its testing and inspection only to those essential requirements which are affected by the modification or conversion. Notified body should follow the principle of proportionality of its assessment to the modifications made on the product in order to avoid unnecessary burden to the users.*

*They shall issue the PCA certificate and report of conformity and keep it at the disposal of the national authorities for next 10 years“.*

11. **Update of references** to the Commission’s documents, Blue Guide chapters, harmonised standards, footnotes, etc.



Jan Mayerhöfer  
Desk Officer for Recreational Craft Directive 2013/53/EU