
Wind and Watersport Vlaanderen – National Authority for IRC in Belgium

1. Certificates issued:

In **2024 IRC Belgium** registered 11 new certificates, made 32 revalidations, 4 secondary certificates for a total of 47 certificates. For promotion we also issued 21 Single Event Ratings. These numbers are not high but stable in post-covid-time. Most Belgian boats are active in Belgium, England, Holland and France but some also compete in the Med. Almost half of the Endorsed Certificates (23) was issued for the Half Ton Classics Cup in Nieuwpoort (10).

The dynamic of IRC Go is good in two major clubs along the Belgian Coast : the Royal North Sea Yacht Club in Ostend (RNSYC) and Royal Yacht Club of Nieuwpoort (KYCN). Perfect system for both club- and recreational regatta's – up to 50 boats at the start competing with combination of regular IRC and IRC Go. People appreciate the simplicity but for as far as optimisation most don't care too much.

People make active use of the support given by the Belgian IRC Authority (WWSV). Boats are weighed for free (even a French and Dutch boat came to Belgium for this service), measurements session for sails are offered and with the use of free Single Event Ratings we try to introduce more people into IRC racing.

Other measurement systems in Belgium are Cruiser Rating with 125 certificates in September 2024 which is 30% lower than last year. ORC is not in use in Belgium. Some boats sailing in Holland may have an ORC certificate. A consistent trend towards monotype sailing – J80 and SB20 and J24 – is confirmed nationally. Belgium is hosting Worlds J80 and Europeans SB20 in 2025. There is also a smart tradition in Dragoon sailing in Ostend.

2. Comments:

In 2024 a classic full racing calendar, locally as well as international, was offered. But the levels of participation are lower than before. Local club racing is popular but boats don't move to other clubs. They race with simplified rating systems, such as IRC Go or Cruiser Rating. Half of the Belgian fleet sails internationally. Races like Cowes Week, North Sea Regatta, Van Uden Reco are popular and some teams score still well. In the Med a small number of Belgian boats participate in IRC. Most visible with Xpresso (BEL1030/JPK1030 Guy Claeys) winning races in the Med. Few crews look at the calendar of RORC races and shorthanded racing is limited to Mini 650, mainly based in Lorient (FRA). The classic Oostende-Ramsgate in the month of May scores best on the calendar.

Local races have more success than championships or series. The number of boats in the local championship Open North Sea Championships is decreasing year after year and is now very low. The formula will be evaluated for 2025. People tend to stay in their club for informal racing and events with higher numbers in participation. The end of the season race “the Antwerp Race” hopes to have 100 participants with between 30 and 40 racing in IRC (also from Holland) – the biggest part of the fleet going for the local Cruiser Rating.

3. General situation in Belgium

A lot of boats qualify to ask for an IRC certificate but prefer the use of other local systems (Cruiser Rating, IRC Go, unmeasured, SER). Regatta’s in clubs use the alternative rating formula’s and gather bigger fleets – up to 50 and more. Regatta’s in IRC attract specialised fleets. These boats also compete in international competitions in the UK, France, Netherlands. Only few Belgian boats are known to have an ORC certificate or do compete in this system (for example Scheveningen, Breskens, Stellendam – Holland).

WWSV keeps a yearly information session. This year we saw very little activity in boats looking for optimisation of their rating. The informative sessions are good but only attire confirmed IRC sailors, even though they were held online. The formula of the Open North Sea Championships has been reviewed but didn’t generate the desired effect yet. The Open Belgian Championship and the Antwerp Race are still scheduled. A new trend is the popularity of winter sailing in the secluded waters of Zeeland (Holland).

A confirmed trend is the fleet of J/80’s in Nieuwpoort with up to 25 boats appearing for local racing. Some of them are looking for participation in international regatta’s. Dutch Open, Spi Ouest, Crouesty, Europeans and Worlds. The Worlds J80 are held in Belgium next year. A new fleet of SB20 are forming in Ostend with a European Championship 2025 to be held there. A lot of sailors look at this formula, rather than handicap sailing in IRC. These sailors are crew “lost” for IRC teams. The advantage is that one-design boats attract more youngsters and talented sailors. A trend which we welcome too in IRC Boats.

The contact with UNCL/YCF is of excellent quality and we’ll continue to promote IRC with our sailors.

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