



**WIND & WATERSPORT
VLAANDEREN**
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Wind and Watersport Vlaanderen — National Authority for IRC in Belgium

1. Certificates issued:

In 2026 IRC Belgium registered 3 new certificates, made 36 revalidations, 5 secondary certificates for a total of 43 certificates. For promotion we also issued a few Single Event Ratings (5). These numbers are not high. Most Belgian boats are active in Belgium, England, Holland and France but some also compete in the Med. Almost half of the Endorsed Certificates (8) was issued for the Half Ton Classics Cup in Hangko Norway (4). 8 boats with a Belgian sailnumber got their certificate abroad (YCF/RORC)

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. We are considering to offer this formula to other clubs with good club racing.

People make active use of the support given by the Belgian IRC Authority (WWSV). Boats are weighed for free (7 in 2026), measurements session for sails are offered.

Other measurement systems in Belgium is Cruiser Rating with 136 certificates in September 2026 which is a stable number. 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. There is also a smart tradition in Dragon Sailing in Ostend.

2. Comments:

In 2026 the classic racing calendar was decimated in Belgium due to very low levels of participation in recent years. 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, IRC Nationals, Round the Island Race, 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. 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. The “Open Belgian Sailing Week” in Nieuwpoort/Oostende had a second edition with a 4 days event along the coast with mix of inshores and round the cans. Inspired by sailing weeks such as we know them in Cowes, Ramsgate and La Trinité. People seem to like the formula which will grow in next years

Local races have more success than championships or series. The Belgian series ONZK was abandoned in 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 10 and 20 racing in IRC which is very low (also from Holland) — the biggest part of the fleet going for the local Cruiser Rating. This race used to attract up to 200 boats.

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 specialized 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. The formula of the Open North Sea Championships has been stopped. 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. A new fleet of SB20 are forming in Ostend. 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. There is no active fleet of shorthanded racers. Offshore Belgium has some talent in Mini 650, Class 40 and a silver medal in the Globe 40 with Team Curium.

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

Report / Luc Geirnaert — WWSV