

Asteria Advisory

BUILDING BRIDGES



+ 356 99858000
gs@asteria.mt
<http://www.asteria.mt>

Classification vs CE Marking for Yachts

What Owners and Brokers Must Know

Two regimes. Two purposes. One frequent misunderstanding.



1. Executive Summary

A **classification certificate** and a **CE marking** serve fundamentally different roles. This distinction applies **across all classification societies**, without exception.

- **Classification** is a voluntary technical regime.
- **CE marking** is a legal requirement under EU law.

A yacht may be fully classed yet still **non-compliant for EU market purposes**. Class alone never substitutes CE marking.

2. What Classification Actually Means

Classification Certificate

Issued by: a recognised classification society

Nature: voluntary, private-law regime

Confirms that:

- the yacht meets recognised technical and safety standards;

- hull, machinery and systems comply with class rules; and
- surveys and maintenance are conducted in line with those rules.

Commonly required by:

- insurers
- financiers
- flag administrations
- technical managers

What classification does *not* do:

- It does **not** establish compliance with EU product legislation
- It does **not** authorise placement on the EU market

3. What CE Marking Means

CE Marking under the EU Recreational Craft Directive (RCD)

Legal framework: Directive 2013/53/EU

Nature: mandatory public-law regime

Confirms that the yacht:

- complies with EU safety, stability, noise and emissions requirements; and
- may be **placed on the EU market**, imported, sold, or put into service.

CE compliance is evidenced through:

- an **RCD Module Certificate** (where required),
- a **Declaration of Conformity**, and
- a **CE Builder's Plate**.

Without CE compliance, a yacht's movement or sale within the EU may be restricted.

4. The Important Clarification: Some Class Societies Are Also Notified Bodies

Some classification societies are also designated as **EU Notified Bodies** under the RCD.

When acting **in that separate capacity**, they may:

- perform RCD conformity assessments; and
- issue **CE-related certificates** supporting CE marking.

Crucially:

- this is a **different role**,
- governed by **EU law**, and

- results in **separate documentation**.

A classification certificate alone — regardless of the society issuing it — **does not create CE compliance**.

Classification confirms how a yacht is built and maintained.

CE marking confirms whether it may legally circulate within the EU.



5. When Yachts Commonly Need Both

Many yachts, particularly larger or commercially operated vessels, carry:

- **classification** for technical assurance and operational credibility; and
- **CE marking** for EU legal compliance and market access.

The two regimes complement each other — but they are never interchangeable.

6. Asteria Advisory Compliance Check

Before sale, import, registration or refit, confirm:

- ✓ Valid CE documentation
- ✓ Alignment between class status and intended use
- ✓ Impact of refits or modifications on CE compliance
- ✓ Whether Post-Construction Assessment is required

Contact **Asteria Advisory** for expert legal and corporate guidance on ship or yacht registration and management or maritime operations setup in Malta.

✉ gs@asteria.mt | 🌐 www.asteria.mt