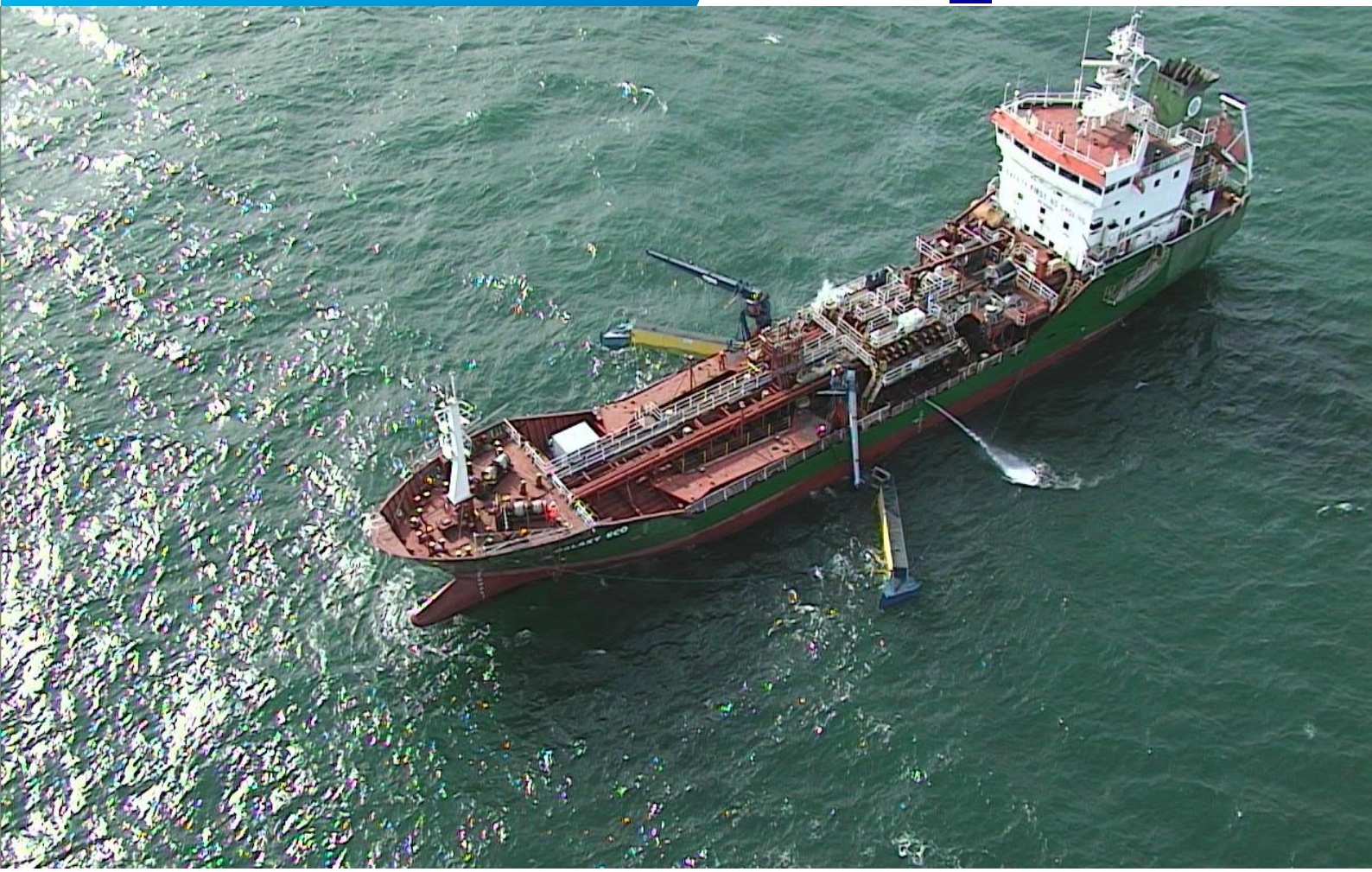
European Maritime Safety Agency
Ref. Ares(2024)2192860 - 22/03/2024



Drills & Exercises Annual Report 2023

Sustainability and Technical Assistance

Date: 15/03/2024

EMSA

Summary

The European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA), in accordance with the mandate outlined in Regulation (EC) No 1406/2002 of the European Parliament and of the Council (as amended), provides a range of services to assist EU coastal states in responding promptly and effectively to pollution from ships, as well as oil and gas installations.

These services can be likened to a 'toolbox' from which requesting states can select and utilize the response means most suitable for their immediate needs. By developing these services at the EU level, EMSA aims to complement and augment the response resources available at the national and regional levels through targeted, cost-effective, and efficient support.

EMSA ensures the continual operational readiness of these services and organizes their mobilization at short notice upon request. Once activated, the specific services fall under the control and responsibility of the requesting party. This service is accessible to EU member states, EFTA/EEA countries and, subject to certain conditions, also to non-EU countries sharing a regional sea basin with the EU.

At the end of 2023, there were 15 fully equipped oil spill response vessels, including 13 with light remotely piloted aircraft systems (LRPAS) capability, eight dispersant stockpiles, and five EAS arrangements available for mobilization.

To meet the high standards of performance for pollution response required by the Agency, the contracted response arrangements must undergo regular training, drills, Equipment Condition Tests (ECTs) and exercises. The evaluation of contractors' performance during vessel drills, ECTs and exercises, by the Agency's staff, aligns with the "Guidelines on Conducting Drills/ECTs and Exercises for the EMSA Contracted Vessels/EAS arrangements", serving as an effective tool to ensure the pollution response services' adequate level of preparedness is constantly maintained.

In the realm of responding to incidents involving Hazardous and Noxious Substances (HNS), EMSA provides rapid access to expert advice through its MAR-ICE Network. This service facilitates swift information transfer regarding chemical substances involved in marine pollution emergencies 24/7 to EU/EFTA coastal Member States and EU Candidate Countries. MAR-ICE exercises are conducted annually to familiarize EU Member States with the service's activation procedures and ensure a high quality of service.

Overall, the outcomes of drills, ECTs, exercises, and MAR-ICE activations carried out during 2023 demonstrated that the services were efficiently provided and aligned with the expectations of EMSA service users.

Table 1. Summary of drills, ETCs and exercises carried out in 2023.

Vessel Acceptance Drills: Newly Contracted / Improvement projects	New EAS stockpile acceptance	Quarterly Drills / ECTs / Equipment training & familiarisation	Operational Exercises: Vessels / EAS	Notification Exercises: Vessels / EAS	MAR-ICE Exercises / Real cases of chemical pollution
3 / 7	1	57/ 57 / 5	6 exercises / 4 vessels (2 with RPAS) / 4 EAS	9 exercises / 7 vessels (6 with RPAS) / 3 EAS	5 / 1
Total number of events	151				

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Maps

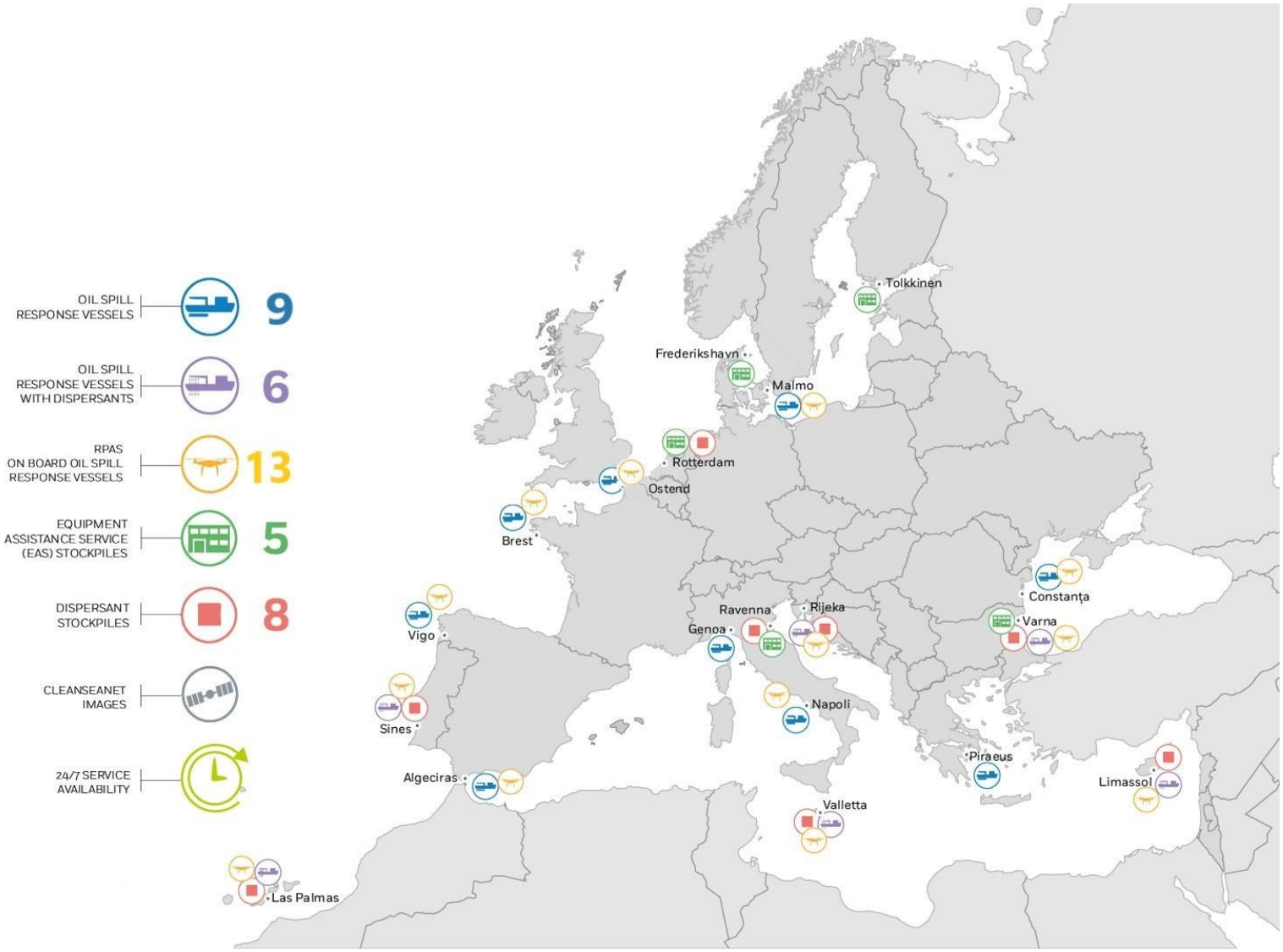
List of Charts

1. Introduction

1.1 EMSA's oil pollution response services (PRS) - Overview

Through its "toolbox" of PRS, EMSA offers a European tier of response resources to top-up the capacities of coastal States for protecting their marine environment from oil pollution caused by ships and oil and gas installations. The map below provides an overview of EMSA's oil PRS and their geographical distribution.

Map 1: Distribution of EMSA's contracted vessels and EAS arrangements at the end of 2023



1.2 Integration of EMSA services with MS pollution response mechanisms

To make sure EMSA's pollution response tools seamlessly fit into a country's response plans, it's crucial for each country to understand EMSA's assets, procedures, contracts, and costs. This way, these response tools become a valuable and cost-effective part of national plans.

When it comes to EAS (Equipment Assistance and Support), countries should also be familiar with using the equipment. This service needs to work alongside Vessels of Opportunity (VOOs) and requires trained personnel to deploy the equipment.

To truly benefit from EMSA's pollution response tools, there needs to be close and regular cooperation between EMSA services and operational staff in each country. To boost this collaboration, the Agency has set up a schedule of Pollution Response Services activities for the year 2023.

For better communication between EMSA and countries regarding operations and sharing information about EMSA's services, a dedicated Helpdesk-Contact Point (PRS.OPSTeam@emsa.europa.eu) is in place since 2022.

The summary of the joint operational EMSA-MS activities conducted in 2023 are listed in the table below.

Table 2. Joint operational activities EMSA-MS 2023

Service	Activity	Where
Vessel Network & EAS & MAR-ICE Service	**Notification/Table-top Exercises: 9** - 7 activations of Vessel Contractors, 4 of EAS Contractors - 5 activations of MAR-ICE service for HNS exercises	MS
Vessel Network & EAS	**Operational Exercises: 6** - 4 deployments of Vessels - 4 deployments of EAS	MS
EAS	**Hands-on sessions at EAS stockpile:** Hands-on session EAS Northern Baltic Sea with 8 operators from 8 MS, 23-25 May 2023 Hands-on session EAS Southern Europe with 7 operators from 4 MS, 14-16 June 2023	5 EAS locations
	Dedicated in-country familiarisation on the EAS equipment - 3 sessions took place	MS to support with logistics
	1 activation of EAS service for oil pollution real incident*	Sweden
MAR-ICE Service	**National MAR-ICE familiarisation sessions** - 2 sessions executed in 2023. - 1activation of MAR-ICE service for HNS real incident	Online

***** Passenger ro/ro vessel Marco Polo (IMO: 9019080) en route from southern Trelleborg to Karlshamn, Sweden, ran aground some five nautical miles southwest of Karlshamn, in Pukavik Bay, Baltic, on 22 October. Marco Polo sustained a hull breach and experienced an oil leak. On 26 October Sweden requested EMSA assistance with Ro-boom 2000. EMSA delivered the boom and the technical support personnel from EAS Baltic on 27 October.

1.3 Activities of the EMSA Network of pollution response vessels and EAS in 2023

At the close of 2023, there were 15 fully equipped oil spill response vessels and 5 EAS stockpiles available for mobilization in case of marine pollution.

The key milestones for the Vessel Network development in 2023 were as follows:

- Entering into service of the vessel arrangement, re-contracted at the end of 2022, to replace the expiring contract for the Atlantic Middle. The vessel *Ria de Vigo* based in Vigo, Spain, successfully completed the Preparatory Phase and commenced operational service on 15 September 2023.
- Entering into service of the vessel arrangement, re-contracted at the end of 2022, to replace the expiring contract for the Black Sea North. The vessel *Amalthia*, stationed in Constanta, Romania, entered operational service on 29 September 2023.

- Entering into service of the vessel arrangement, re-contracted at the end of 2022, to replace the expiring contract for the Channel and North Sea. The vessel *Interballast III*, stationed in Ostend, Belgium, entered operational service on 28 November 2023.
- The completion of the improvement of spill detection and monitoring capacity by equipping vessels *Ria de Vigo*, *Amalthia,* and *Interballast III* with remotely piloted aircraft systems (RPAS).
- The replacement of RPAS with a new system on board *Monte Anaga* (Algeciras, Spain), *Kijac* (Rijeka, Croatia), *VN Partisan* (Brest, France), and *Alexandria* (Limassol, Cyprus).
- The awarding of an Oil Pollution Response Vessel Availability Contract for the Baltic Sea (vessel *Norden*, based in Malmo, Sweden) to replace the expiring contract in 2024. The vessel is scheduled to enter EMSA service in July 2024.
- The awarding of an Intermediate Storage Availability Contract for the Baltic and North Sea (vessel *Vingaren* with a 6341 m^3 storage capacity). The vessel is set to enter EMSA service at the beginning of March 2024.

In 2023, the main activities related to EAS included:

- Awarding a Framework Contract for EAS Baltic located in Frederikshavn, Denmark and EAS North Sea located in Rotterdam, Netherlands in November 2023.
- Re-contracting and commissioning the EAS arrangement for the Northern Baltic Sea to replace the contract expiring in January 2023. EAS Northern Baltic Sea is in Tolkkinen, Finland, and comprises of 25 stand-alone equipment sets. The new contract entered into force on 15 January 2023.
- Enhancing EMSA's response toolbox through the awarding of a Framework Contract for the delivery of HNS response equipment in 2023.

Details regarding the service of the Vessel Network and EAS arrangements in 2023 are outlined in the table below.

Table 3. Summary of the Oil Pollution Response services in 2023

Area	Contractor / Contract	Vessel(s) / Assets	Vessel type / storage capacity(m^3) / dispersant stock	Service 2022
1. Contracted vessels				
Southern Baltic	Stena Oil EMSA/NEG/1/2015 Lot 2	*Norden*	Oil Tanker / 2880	Whole year service
Channel and Southern North Sea	DC Industrial S.A. 2014/EMSA/NEG/1/2014 Lot 3.1	*Interballast 3*	Hopper Dredger / 1886	The Contract expired on 23/06/2023
	DC Industrial S.A. 2023/EMSA/CPNEG/3/2022 Lot 1	*Interballast 3*	Hopper Dredger / 1886	The vessel was re-contracted and put into service as of 28 /11/ 2023
	DC Industrial S.A. EMSA/NEG/1/2014 Lot 3.2	*DC Vlaanderen 3000*	Hopper Dredger / 2744	The contract expired on 30/06/2023
Atlantic Coast	Remolcadores Nossa Terra S.A. EMSA/NEG/1/2014 Lot 1	*Ria de Vigo*	Offshore Supply / 1522	The contract expired on 11/03/2023
Atlantic Middle	Remolcadores Nossa Terra S.A.	*Ria de Vigo*	Offshore Supply / 1522	The vessel was re-contracted and put into

	2022/EMSA/CPNEG/3/2022 Lot 2			service as of 15/09/2023
Bay of Biscay	Seaowl EMSA/CPNEG/01/2017	*VN Partisan*	Offshore Supply / 1022	Whole year service
Southern Atlantic Coast	Mureloil EMSA/CPNEG/1/2020 Lot 2	*Bahia Tres*	Oil Tanker / 7413 / Dispersant 200 t.	Whole year service
Canary Islands and Madeira	Petrogas EMSA/NEG/1/2015 Lot 1	*Mencey*	Oil Tanker / 3500 / Dispersant 200 t.	Whole year service
Western Mediterranean Sea	Naviera Altube EMSA CPNEG/1/2019 Lot 2	*Monte Anaga*	Oil Tanker / 4096	Whole year service
	Ciane EMSA/CPNEG/1/2020 Lot 3	*Brezzamare*	Oil Tanker / 3288	Whole year service
Central Mediterranean Sea	Sarda Bunkers EMSA/CPNEG/1/2020 Lot 1	*SB Borea*	Oil tanker / 3558	Whole year service
	Petronav EMSA/CPNEG/1/2019 Lot 3	*Adelia*	Oil Tanker / 7458 Dispersant 180 t.	Whole year service
	Environmental Protection Engineering S.A. EMSA/CPNEG/2/2021 Lot 2	*Aktea II*	Oil Tanker / 4486	Whole year service
Adriatic Sea	Dinamarin Ltd EMSA/CPNEG/1/2019 Lot 1	*Kijac*	Oil/Chemical Tanker / 1730 Dispersant 200 t.	Whole year service
Eastern Mediterranean Sea	Petronav EMSA/CPNEG/1/2018	*Alexandria*	Oil Tanker / 7458 / Dispersant 200 t.	Whole year service
Northern Black Sea	Petronav EMSA/NEG/1/2014 Lot 2	*Amalthia*	Oil Tanker / 5154	The contract expired on 20/05/2023
	Petronav 2022/EMSA/CPNEG/3/2022 Lot 3	*Amalthia*	Oil Tanker / 5154	The vessel was re-contracted and put into service as of 29/09/2023
Southern Black Sea	COSMOS EMSA/CPNEG/6/2016 Lot 1	*Galaxy Eco*	Oil Tanker / 2969 Dispersant 200 t.	Whole year service
2. EAS				
Northern Baltic	Lamor Corporation AB EMSA/CPNEG/2/2018	25 stand-alone equipment sets	Contracted storage area: 812m^2 (Tolkkinen, Finland)	The Contract expired 14/01/2023
	Lamor Corporation AB 2022/EMSA/CPNEG/4/2021	25 stand-alone equipment sets	Contracted storage area: 900m^2 (Tolkkinen, Finland)	New Contract effective as of 15/01/2023
Baltic Sea	Stena EMSA/CPNEG/2/2019 Lot 1	24 stand-alone equipment sets	Contracted storage area: 1,000m^2 (Frederikshavn, Denmark)	Whole year service

North Sea	Ambipar EMSA/CPNEG/2/2019 Lot 2	29 stand-alone equipment sets Dispersant 205 t.	Contracted storage area: 900m^2 (Rotterdam, The Netherlands)	Whole year service
Southern Europe	Ottavio Novella EMSA/CPNEG/2/2020	34 stand-alone equipment sets Dispersant 200 t.	Contracted storage area: 1,000m^2 (Ravenna, Italy)	Whole year service
Black Sea	Bon Marine EMSA/CPNEG/3/2021	17 stand-alone equipment sets	Contracted storage area: 600m^2 (Varna, Bulgaria)	Whole year service

1.4 Purpose and types of drills and exercises

The vessels contracted by the Agency are equipped with state-of-the-art oil containment, recovery, and spill detection equipment. Additionally, some of the vessel arrangements have dispersant spraying capabilities, with dispersant stock available. The pollution response equipment provided by the Agency through the EAS aims to achieve high effectiveness in pollution response actions.

Once the technical requirements of each contract are satisfied, the key factors determining the success of the pollution response system include the skills of the vessel's crews in operating the equipment, the capability of oil spill response coordinators to lead response actions, and the integration of EMSA's response assets within the pollution response mechanisms of the Member States. For the EAS, the critical factor lies in the operational condition of the equipment. Therefore, regular training, drills, equipment condition tests (ECTs), and exercises are essential to achieve and maintain the appropriate level of performance.

Each Vessel and EAS contract defines the types and number of drills, ECTs, and exercises to be carried out by each associated service:

- The vessels conduct two types of drills: (1) acceptance drills (also referred to as acceptance tests), which involve the acceptance of a new vessel into service or a vessel/equipment improvement project, and (2) regular quarterly oil pollution response drills. They also engage in two types of exercises: (1) notification exercises and (2) at-sea operational exercises.

- Regarding the EAS arrangements, the contract fixes a maximum number of ECTs per year for the initial services based on the number of equipment sets. Additional ECTs may be contracted by EMSA in case of additional equipment being stored in the EAS arrangements. ECTs aim to guarantee the full functionality of the equipment and ensure that technical support personnel can deploy and instruct Member State's operators on how to use the equipment. It is important to note that technical support personnel do not operate the equipment during response operations. Concerning exercises, the same two types are conducted as for the vessels.

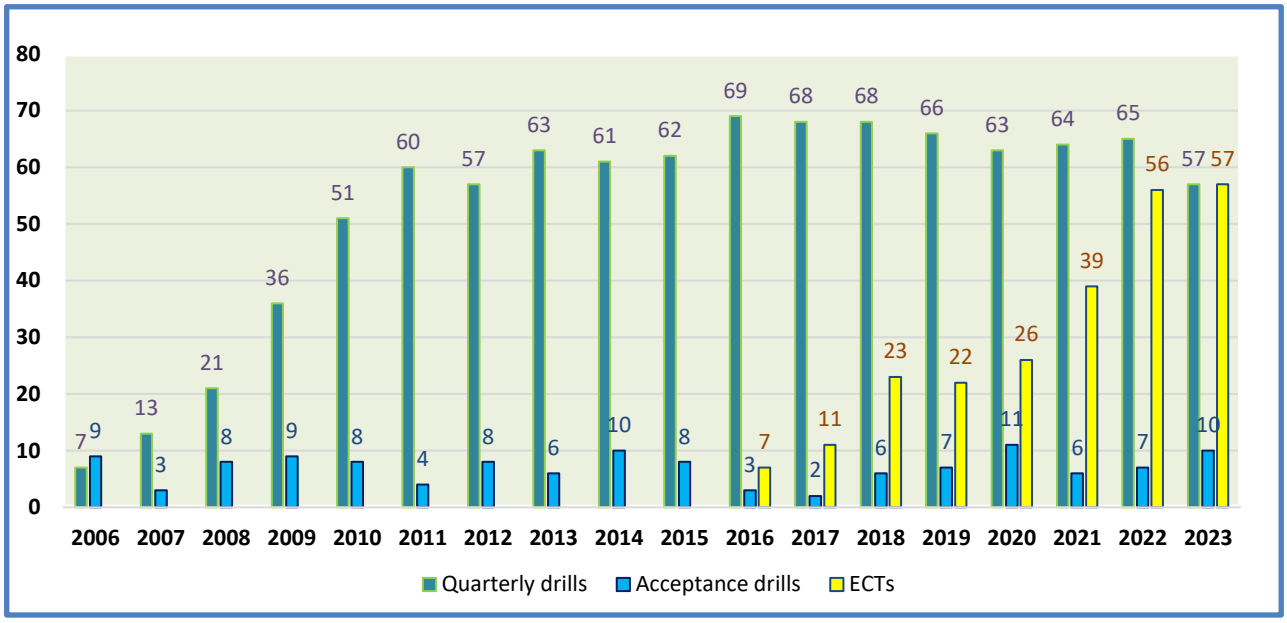
Detailed instructions on conducting drills, ECTs, and exercises, including their methods of evaluation, are provided in the "Guidelines on Conducting Drills/ECTs and Exercises for the EMSA Contracted Vessels/EAS arrangements." These guidelines constitute a component of all contracts, periodically reviewed and updated to incorporate new service developments, new types of equipment/services acquired, and lessons learned during drills and exercises.

2. Drills & ECTs performed in 2023

In 2023 a total of 57 quarterly drills and 10 acceptance drills/tests related to vessels, and 57 EAS ECTs were performed respectively by the Vessels and the EAS arrangements under contract to the Agency.

A summary of Vessel drills and EAS ECTs performed by EMSA’s OPR services during the period 2006-2023 is shown in the chart below.

Chart 1. Number of Vessel drills and EAS ECTs 2006 – 2023



2.1 Vessel drills

2.1.1 Acceptance drills

The acceptance drills are of particular importance as they are the major milestone for new vessels, new equipment as well as the overhauled equipment to enter into the standby phase of the pollution response service.

The table below summarise the vessel acceptance drills in 2023.

Table 4. Vessel / Equipment Improvements and Acceptance drills carried out in 2023.

No.	Contract	Contractor	Vessel/EAS	Home port	Subject	Acceptance Test Date	Results
1	2022/EMSA/CPNEG/3/2022 Lot 2 - Atlantic Middle	Remolcadores Nossa Terra S.A.	*Ria de Vigo*	Vigo, Spain	Acceptance of the newly contracted vessel	22-23/08/2023	Acceptance effective from 15/09/2023
2	2022/EMSA/CPNEG/3/2022 Lot 3 - Black Sea North	Petronav	*Amalthia*	Constanta, Romania	Acceptance of the newly contracted vessel	26-28/09/2023	Acceptance effective from 29/09/2023
3	2023/EMSA/CPNEG/3/2022 Lot 1 - Channel and North Sea	DC Industrial S.A.	*Interballast III*	Ostend, Belgium	Acceptance of the newly contracted vessel	21-27/11/2023	Acceptance effective from 28/11/2023
4	Amendment no.1 to Contract 2022/EMSA/CPNEG/3/2022 Lot 2 - Atlantic Middle	Remolcadores Nossa Terra S.A.	*Ria de Vigo*	Vigo, Spain	Acceptance of the improvement project: Accommodation for the lightweight RPAS services on board the vessel	29/09/2023	Acceptance effective from 30/09/2023

5	Amendment no. 2 to Contract 2022/EMSA/CPNEG/3/2022 Lot 3 - Black Sea North	Petronav	*Amalthia*	Constanta, Romania	Acceptance of the improvement project: Accommodation for the lightweight RPAS services on board the vessel	31/10/2023	Acceptance effective from 01/11/2023
6	Amendment no. 2 to Contract 2022/EMSA/CPNEG/3/2022 Lot 1 Channel and North Sea	DC Industrial S.A.	*Interballast III*	Ostend, Belgium	Acceptance of the improvement project: Accommodation for the lightweight RPAS services on board the vessel	23/11/2023	Acceptance effective from 28/11/2023
7	Amendment No. 3 to Contract No. 2019/EMSA/CPNEG/1/2019 Lot 2 - West Mediterranean Sea	Naviera Altube	*Monte Anaga*	Algeciras, Spain	Acceptance of the improvement project: Replacement of the RPAS on board the vessel	14/02/2023	Acceptance effective from 15/02/2023
8	Amendment number 5 to Contract No. 2019/EMSA/CPNEG/1/2019 – Lot 1 Adriatic Sea	Dinamarin	Kijac	Rijeka, Croatia	Acceptance of the improvement project: Replacement of the RPAS on board the vessel	08/03/2023	Acceptance effective from
9	Amendment No.5 to Contract No. 2017/EMSA/CPNEG/2/2017 - Bay of Biscay	SeaOwl	VN Partisan	Brest, France	Acceptance of the improvement project: Replacement of the RPAS on board the vessel	31 /03/2023	Acceptance effective from
10	Amendment number 3 to Contract No. EMSA/CPNEG/1/2018 – East Mediterranean Sea	Petronav	Alexandria	Limassol, Cyprus	Acceptance of the improvement project: Replacement of the RPAS on board the vessel	20/04/2023	Acceptance effective from 15/11/2022

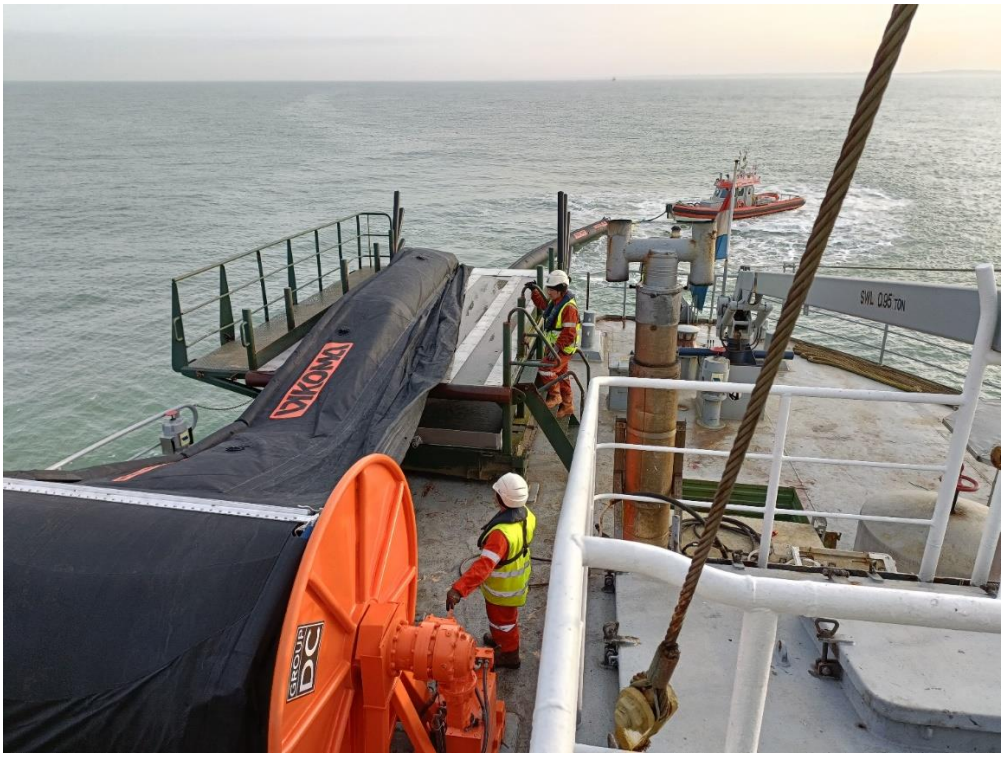


Figure 1: *Interballast III* Acceptance Test. Boom deployment.

2.1.2 Quarterly drills

The EMSA vessel Contractor is obliged, on a quarterly basis, to proceed to a drill to train the vessel's crew and test the oil pollution response equipment, to be ready to carry out oil pollution response services efficiently.

The guidelines describing performance standards for the vessel, crew and equipment are part of the Vessel Availability Contract. The quarterly drill can be accepted only if all required standards have been achieved. The acceptance of the Contractor's Quarterly Drill Report is a condition for the payment of the Vessel Availability Fee.

The outcome of the quarterly drills carried out during 2023, with no drill rejected, demonstrates that the various vessels arrangements are operated up-to EMSA standards and that the vessel arrangements are fully operational.

The summary of the quarterly drills carried out in 2023 is presented in the table below.

Table 5. Summary of quarterly drills 2023.

Area	EMSA Contractor / Contract	*Vessel*	No.	Date in year 2023	Comment
Baltic	Stena Oil AB / EMSA/NEG/1/2015 - Lot 2 Southern Baltic Sea	*Norden*	1Q	29/03	4 drills required in 2023. All drills were conducted and accepted by EMSA.
			2Q	31/05	
			3Q	17/08	
			4Q	09/11	
Southern North Sea and the Channel	DC Industrial / 2014/EMSA/NEG/1/2014 - Lot 3.1 Channel & Southern North Sea	*Interballast III*	1Q	07/03	2 drills required in 2023. Contract expired on 23/06/2023. All drills were conducted and accepted by EMSA.
			2Q	24/04	
			3Q	-	
			4Q	-	
	DC Industrial / 2014/EMSA/NEG/1/2014 - Lot 3.2 Channel & Southern North Sea	*DC Vlaanderen 3000*	1Q	06/03	2 drills required in 2023. Contract expired on 30/06/2023. All drills were conducted and accepted by EMSA.
			2Q	16/05	
			3Q	-	
			4Q	-	

	DC Industrial / 2023/EMSA/CPNEG/3/2022 Lot 1 - Channel and North Sea	*Interballast III*	1Q	-	No drills required in 2023. Vessel entered the service on 28 November
			2Q	-	
			3Q	-	
			4Q	-	
Atlantic Coast	Remolcadores Nossa Terra / EMSA/NEG/1/2014 - Lot 1 Atlantic Coast	*Ria de Vigo*	1Q	01/02	1 drill required in 2023. Contract expired on 11/03/2023. The drill was conducted and accepted by EMSA.
			2Q	-	
			3Q	-	
			4Q	-	
Atlantic Middle	Remolcadores Nossa Terra / 2022/EMSA/CPNEG/3/2022 Lot 2 - Atlantic Middle	*Ria de Vigo*	1Q	-	1 drill required in 2023. The drill was conducted and accepted by EMSA.
			2Q	-	
			3Q	-	
			4Q	22/11	
Bay of Biscay	SeaOwl / 2017/EMSA/CPNEG/22/2017 Bay of Biscay	*VN Partisan*	1Q	31/03	4 drills required in 2023. All drills were conducted and accepted by EMSA.
			2Q	13/06	
			3Q	08/09	
			4Q	11-13/12	
Southern Atlantic coast	Mureloil / EMSA NEG/1/2012 - Lot 1 Southern Atlantic Coast	*Bahia Tres*	1Q	08/03	4 drills required in 2023. All drills were conducted and accepted by EMSA.
			2Q	17/04	
			3Q	20/09	
			4Q	04/10	
Canary Islands and Madeira	Petrogas / EMSA/NEG/1/2015 - Lot 1 Canary Islands and Madeira	*Mencey*	1Q	14/03	4 drills required in 2023. All drills were conducted and accepted by EMSA.
			2Q	14/06	
			3Q	19/09	
			4Q	09/10	
Western Mediterranean Sea	Naviera Altube / EMSA CPNEG/1/2019 Lot 2 Western Mediterranean Sea	*Monte Anaga*	1Q	14/02	4 drills required in 2023. All drills were conducted and accepted by EMSA.
			2Q	10/05	
			3Q	02/08	
			4Q	10/11	
	Ciane / EMSA/NEG/1/2020 Lot 3 Western Mediterranean Sea	*Brezzamare*	1Q	16/03	4 drills required in 2023. All drills were conducted and accepted by EMSA.
			2Q	25/06	
			3Q	13/09	
			4Q	13-14/11	
Adriatic Sea	Petronav / 2019/EMSA/CPNEG/1/2019 Lot 3 Adriatic Sea	*Adelia*	1Q	03/03	4 drills required in 2023. All drills were conducted and accepted by EMSA.
			2Q	06/06	
			3Q	29/08	
			4Q	10-11/10	
Central Mediterranean Sea	Sarda Bunkers / 2020/EMSA/CPNEG/1/2020 - Lot 1 Central Mediterranean	*SB Borea*	1Q	06/02	4 drills required in 2023. All drills were conducted and accepted by EMSA.
			2Q	10/05	
			3Q	25/06	
			4Q	5-7/12	
Aegean Sea	EPE / EMSA/CPNEG/2/2021 Lot 2 Aegean Sea	*Aktea II*	1Q	20/03	2 drills required in 2023. All drills were conducted and accepted by EMSA. The vessel entered the service on 01/07/2022
			2Q	22/06	
			3Q	30/08	
			4Q	23-24/10	
Adriatic Sea	Dinamarin Ltd / 2019/EMSA/CPNEG/1/2019 – Lot 1 Adriatic Sea	*Kijac*	1Q	7-8/03	4 drills required in 2023. All drills were conducted and accepted by EMSA.
			2Q	21/04	
			3Q	14/09	
			4Q	7-8/12	

Eastern Mediterranean	Petronav / EMSA NEG/1/2010 - Lot 1 Eastern Mediterranean	*Alexandria*	1Q	21/03	4 drills required in 2023. All drills were conducted and accepted by EMSA.
			2Q	20/04	
			3Q	31/08	
			4Q	16-17/10	
Black Sea North	Petronav / 2014 EMSA/NEG/1/2014 - Lot 2 Northern Black Sea	*Amalthia*	1Q	14/03	2drills required in 2023. Contract expired on20/05/2023. All drills were conducted and accepted by EMSA.
			2Q	29/04	
			3Q	-	
			4Q	-	
	Petronav / 2022/EMSA/CPNEG/3/2022 Lot 3 - Black Sea North	*Amalthia*	1Q	-	1 drill required in 2023. The vessel entered the service on 29/09/2023 The drill was conducted and accepted by EMSA.
			2Q	-	
			3Q	-	
			4Q	17/11	
Black Sea South	Cosmos 2016 EMSA/CPNEG/6/2016 - Lot 1 Southern Black Sea	*Galaxy Eco*	1Q	23/03	4 drills required in 2023. All drills were conducted and accepted by EMSA.
			2Q	16/06	
			3Q	12/09	
			4Q	17/10	
Total number of quarterly drills 2023: 57					

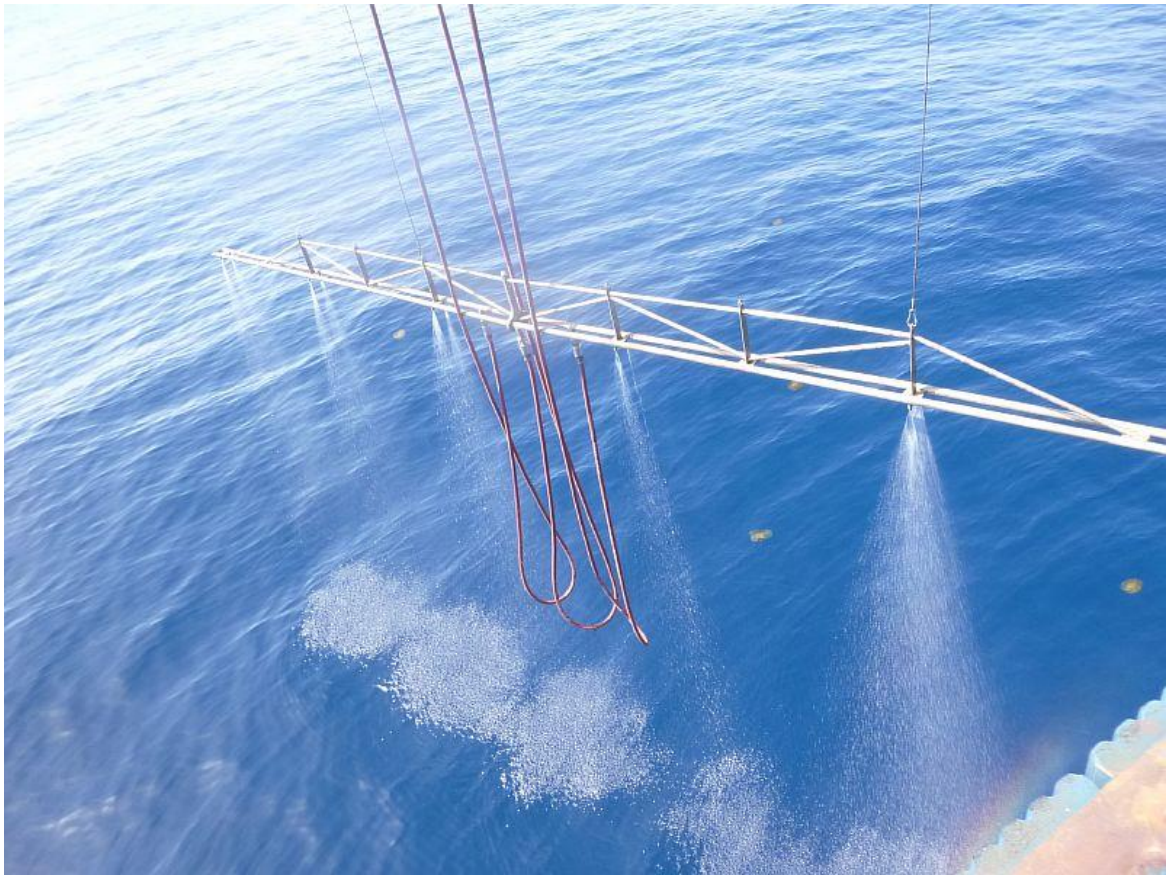


Figure 2: Quarterly drill on board *Adelia.* Dispersant spraying system test

2.2 EAS - Equipment Condition Tests (ECTs) and training sessions

According to the contract, the EAS Contractors shall train their staff and maintain the equipment in a full state of readiness for carrying out oil pollution response services efficiently.

To demonstrate the fulfilment of these obligations, the Contractors carry out ECTs. An ECT is a periodical test of the condition, functionality and operational readiness of the equipment set in normal operational conditions (in water).

Due to weather limitations, most of the activities were carried out during the 2nd and 3rd quarters of the year, where weather conditions are more favourable. The results of the ECTs were assessed partly on site by EMSA and partly remotely based on the visual evidence provided by the contractors.

Within the framework of the joint co-operation programme EMSA-MS, two training sessions for the Member States' equipment operators were organised in the EAS Northern Baltic Sea (Tolkkinen, Finland) and EAS Southern Europe (Ravena, Italy). The trainees were able to get familiarised and operate different equipment systems such as the Current Buster 6, the Speed Sweep, the Ro-Trawl and V-Sweep systems.

In addition, dedicated in-country familiarisation on the EAS equipment was provided on the following occasions:

- Constanta, Romania (September 2023): in-country training with the Current Buster 4, Desmi Ro-Trawl and Lamor Oil Storage Barge;
- Koper, Slovenia (September 2023): in-country training with the Current Buster 4, Desmi Ro-Trawl and New Naval Oil Storage Barge; and,
- Grenaa, Denmark (October/November 2023): in-country training with the Current Buster 6 and Desmi Speed Sweep,

The summary of the ECTs, equipment training and familiarisation activities with MS carried out in 2023 is presented in the table below.

Table 6. ECTs, Training and Familiarisation sessions 2023

Contractor	1st Quarter	2nd Quarter	3rd Quarter	4th Quarter	Result
Ambipar EAS North Sea (Rotterdam)		Current Buster 6 (05/23)	Current Buster 4 - 09/23	Workboat 10/23	Equipment was found in a good condition. All ECTs accepted by EMSA
		Speed Sweep (05/23)	New Naval Fence boom 09/23	New Naval Fence Boom 10/23	
		Ro-Trawl No 2 (05/23)	New Naval Barge/ offloading pump 09/23		
		Lamor Side sweep system (05/23)			
		Lamor Skimming system (05/23)			
		Desmi Scan Trawl (05/23)			
Stena Oil EAS Baltic Sea (Frederikshavn)		Ro-Trawl (05/23)	Medium Skimmer (07/23)	EAS Familiarisation in Grenaa, Denmark (10/23)	Equipment was found in a good condition. All ECTs accepted by EMSA
		Lamor Barge (05/23)	V-Sweep (07/23)		
		Speed Sweep (06/23)	Current Buster 4 (07/23)		
		Medium Skimmer (06/23)			

		V-Sweep (06/23)			
Ottavio Novella EAS Southern Europe (Ravenna)	Work Boat 1 (02/23)	EXERCISE RAMOGEPOL 2023 (05/23)	Ro-Trawl (07/23)	Lamor Barge (10/23)	Equipment was found in a good condition. All ECTs accepted by EMSA
	Work Boat 2 (02/23)		Current Buster 6 (07/23)	Fence Boom (10/23)	
			Work Boat (07/23)	V-Sweep (10/23)	
			New Naval Barge (07/23)	Current Buster 6 (10/23)	
			Lamor Barge (07/23)	Ro-Trawl (10/23)	
			Medium Skimmer (07/23)	POLLEX 23 EXERCISE (11/23)	
			EAS Familiarisation in Koper, Slovenia (09/23)		
LAMOR AB EAS Northern Baltic Sea (Tolkkinen)	Arctic skimmer with FI BG (not an ECT)	Lamor LSLCC7400 (06/23)	High Capacity Skimmer (09/23)		Equipment was found in a good condition. All ECTs accepted by EMSA
		Current Buster 6 (Set 1) (06/23)	M-Size Skimmer (09/23)		
		Scorbarge (Set 5) (06/23)			
		Desmi Oil Trawl (Set 1) (06/23)			
		Desmi Speed Sweep (Set 2) (06/23)			
		Desmi Oil Trawl (Set 2) (06/23)			
		Current Buster 4 (Set 1) (06/23)			
		Lamor Medium Sweep System (Set 3) (06/23)			
		Lamor Medium Sweep System (Set 4) (06/23)			
		Lamor Medium Sweep System (Set 5) (06/23)			
		Storage Barge LSB 100(06/23)			
Bon Marine EAS Black Sea (Varna)		Work Boat (05/23)	Medium Skimmer (07/23)	Work Boat (10/22)	Equipment was found in a good condition. All ECTs accepted by EMSA
		Fence Boom (05/23)	Current Buster 4 (07/23)	BREEZE EXERCISE (10/23)	
		Work Boat (06/23)	V-Sweep (08/23)		
		New Naval Barge (06/23)	Lamor Barge (09/23)		
			Work Boat (09/23)		
			EAS Familiarisation in Constanta, RO (09/23)		
TOTAL ECTs 2023:	**57**				
Hands-on training sessions for equipment operators:	1. Hands-on session EAS Northern Baltic Sea with 8 operators from 8 MS, 23-25 May 2023 2. Hands-on session EAS Southern Europe with 7 operators from 4 MS, 14-16 June 2023				

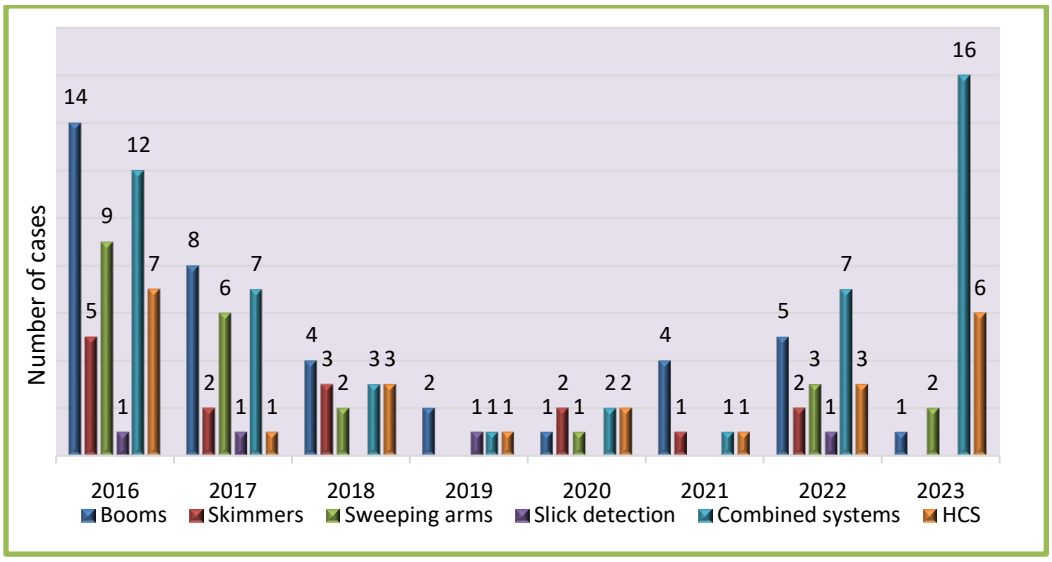
	2
In-country familiarisation activities:	1. In-country familiarisation EAS equipment in Romania, 13 – 14 September 2023 2. In-country familiarisation EAS equipment in Slovenia, 19 – 20 September 2023 3. In-country familiarisation EAS equipment in Denmark, 31 October – 2 November 2023 **3**

Figure 3: EAS training in Koper, Slovenia

2.3 Technical Issues Record

Checking the technical status and completeness of the oil pollution response equipment on board the vessels and at the EAS stockpiles is an important element of each drill / ECT attended by EMSA observers.

Chart 2. Number of Technical issues 2016 – 2023.



EMSA conducts annual verification of all equipment. Besides this, both vessels and EAS contracts provide for a mandatory reporting of incidents/malfunctions. For this purpose, the Agency has developed a specific form known as the "event report." Twenty-seven such event reports were submitted to EMSA. Considering the number of EMSA vessels, EAS stockpiles, and the total number of equipment sets, the reported number of equipment failures is not significant. The distribution of failures among different types of equipment is slightly different from that of the previous year, with a slight increase in the number of recorded technical failures.

There was only 1 report of the boom system failure. Old booms systems have been subject to replacement or overhauling during preparatory phases of new contracts in recent years. Also, skimmer cases were not recorded. Most of the old skimmers were replaced in recent years with High-capacity skimmers. Most cases are related to equipment stored in EAS stockpiles (15 cases). However, it is worth emphasizing that the number of equipment systems in EAS warehouses increased in recent years by almost one-third due to new deliveries of medium-sized and near-shore equipment.

The most common equipment failures were as follows:

- Small damages to equipment during deployment, retrieval, or towing, such as punctures or tears in the Current Buster or Ro-trawl section, or air leaks in towing slings of the floating barges.
- Malfunctions of the High-Capacity Skimmer systems, related to hydraulic systems or skimmer heads (6 cases).
- Problems with starting or running power packs, such as broken spring starters (6 cases).
- Single cases of the failure of combined systems.
- Cases reporting rust on hydraulic connections or the surface of sweeping arms.
- There are also some cases related to vessel engine failures and dispersant IBCs.

The technical issues were efficiently and effectively addressed, and the equipment was brought back to an operational state as quickly as possible. In general, in 2023, the OPR equipment under the Vessel and EAS contracts was maintained in a constant operational condition, ready to perform services for the Member States up to the standards required by EMSA.

Nevertheless, the EMSA network has existed for 19 years, and equipment purchased in the early years shows signs of aging, wear and tear. The Agency conducts a thorough equipment inventory verification and closely monitors the equipment's condition to be prepared to make informed decisions based on technical grounds regarding the declassification of old equipment and, subject to the availability of financial resources, its replacement with new equipment.

3. Exercises performed in 2023

At-sea operational exercises play a crucial role in facilitating the integration of EMSA's OPR services within the response mechanisms of Member States. This enhances the necessary coordination and cooperation between EMSA resources and coastal State response units. Additionally, these exercises offer rare opportunities for Member States' personnel to become familiar with the equipment available in the stockpiles.

It is important to note that, except for exercises within regional cooperation projects organized by the Agency, EMSA does not initiate exercises but actively participates upon request. The Agency applies a procedure for internal and external exercise coordination. This ensures the seamless provision of the full set of services (Vessels, EAS, Mar-ICE, CleanSeaNet, and others) in a harmonized manner. It also facilitates the exchange of feedback between EMSA and the Member States following the completion of exercises.

3.1 Operational exercises

In the course of 2023, four EMSA contracted vessels (two of which equipped with RPAS) and four EAS arrangements were deployed in six at-sea oil pollution response operational exercises, organised in cooperation with EU Member States and/or Regional Agreements.

These events took place in the Northern Baltic, Atlantic Coast, Madeira, West Mediterranean Sea, Adriatic Sea, and Southern Black Sea.

Feedback from the exercises organisers as well as reports from EMSA service providers indicate that all vessels/EAS systems deployed in the operational exercises successfully completed the tasks assigned.

It's noteworthy that the number of operational exercises involving EMSA vessels in 2023 was notably lower compared to recent years. The Agency's participation in these exercises is contingent upon requests from Member States, and in 2023, only four such requests were submitted.

The summary of operational exercises performed by EMSA contracted vessels and EAS arrangements in 2023 is shown in the table below.

Table 7. Operational exercises 2023.

No.	Name of Exercise	Date	Location	Participating Parties	EMSA Vessel (RPAS) / EAS
1	**Joint Finnish-Swedish ice recovery exercise**	6-7 February	Bay of Bothnia / Finland-Sweden	Finland / Sweden / EMSA	*EAS Northern Baltic: LAS 125 Arctic Skimmer*
2	**RAMOGEPOL 2023**	10 May	Toulon / France	France / EMSA	*Brezzamare / EAS South Europe: Current Buster 6*
3	**ATLANTIC POLEX 2023**	12 May	Madeira	Portugal / EMSA	*Mencey*
4	**ARCACHON 2023**	12 October	Arcachon / France	France / EMSA	*Ria de Vigo with RPAS*
5	**BREEZE 2023**	18 October	Varna / Bulgaria	Bulgaria / EMSA	*Galaxy ECO with RPAS / EAS Black Sea: Current buster*
6	**POLEX Italy**	20 November	Trieste / Italy	Italy / Slovenia / EMSA	*EAS Southern Europe: Current buster / Lamor medium size skimmer*

3.2 Notification exercises

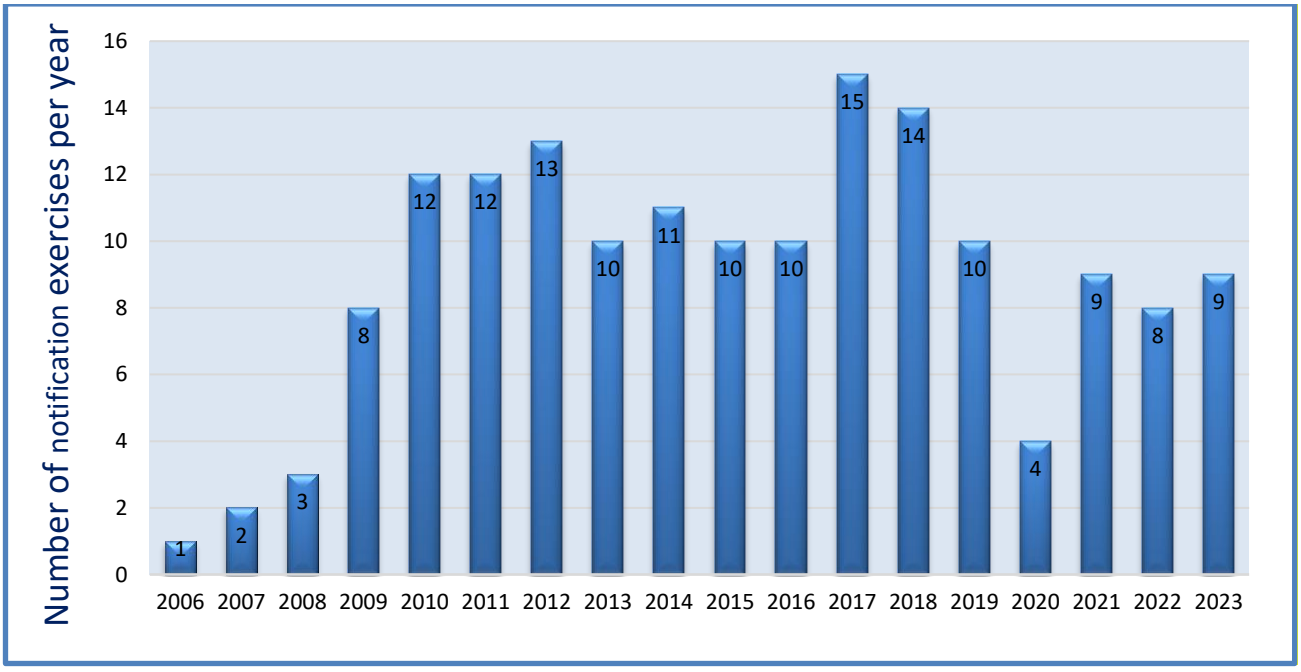
Notification exercises typically coincide with operational exercises, although there are instances of standalone notification exercises. The primary objective of these exercises is to assess and implement agreed-upon procedures and communication channels for reporting incidents and requesting/providing assistance. Member States typically initiate these exercises.

Notification exercises involve the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA), one or more Requesting Parties, EMSA's contractor(s), and the Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC) operated by DG ECHO. The key evaluation criterion for notification exercises is the time required for both the EMSA contractor and the Requesting Party to sign the Incident Response Contract (Vessel - IRC-V or EAS - IRC-E).

In the year 2023, the Agency engaged in nine notification exercises, encompassing seven activations of EMSA vessels (with RPAS on board in six cases) and four activations of the EAS services.

The chart below illustrates the annual count of notification exercises conducted from 2006 to 2023.

Chart 3. Notification exercises 2006-2023



In 2023, out of nine exercises, five saw the completion of EMSA assistance procedures, with the signature of five IRC vessel contracts and four IRC equipment contracts.

During each exercise, EMSA Contractors acted promptly and followed EMSA standards. However, some Member States ended the procedure before signing the IRC Form. It's crucial to emphasize that mobilizing EMSA assets depends on signing the Incident Response Contract and its annex, the IRC Form. This contract outlines obligations for both the Requesting Party and the Contractor.

Exercises provide a chance to ensure response authorities understand all clauses of this contract. The IRC Form specifies the vessel's configuration, or the type of EAS equipment requested. It's important to note that signing the IRC during exercises doesn't trigger any payment by the Requesting Party.

In the 2023 notification exercises, there was an improvement in MS using CECIS. However, there's still a need for more CECIS training for pollution response personnel responsible for seeking assistance from other Member States and EMSA.

Summary of results of the notification exercises carried out in 2023 can be found in the table below.

Table 8. Outcome of the Notification exercises 2023.

No.	Name / date	Participating parties: MS	Assistance Requesting party / time	EMSA assistance offer type / time	Acceptance of EMSA assistance offer / time	EMSA action	Signature of IRC-V / time IRC-E / time	Comment
1	Copenhagen Agreement 16/01/2023	DK, NO, IR, EMSA	Denmark / 13:53	OPR vessel NORDEN with RPAS / 15:08	None	None	None	Exercise discontinued after submission of an offer by EMSA.
2	RAMOGEPOL 10/05/2023	AL, BA, CY, DZ, EG, ES, FR, GR, HR, IL, IT, LB, LY, MA, MC, ME, MT, SI, SY, TN, TR, EMSA	France / 07:41	OPR vessel BREEZE, EAS equipment / 10:51	OPR Vessel BREEZE, Offshore boom, Current buster 6 / 11:04	Mobilisation of the vessel and EAS	IRC-V / 13:36 IRC-E / 13:36	Successful exercise with both IRC -V and IRC-E signed within reasonable time (< 6 h).
3	Atlantic POLEX.pt 12/05/2023	ES, FR, MA, PT, EMSA	Portugal / 09 :54	OPR vessel MENCEY with RPAS / 11:23	OPR vessel Mencey with RPAS / 11:30	Mobilisation of the vessel and RPAS	IRC-V / 12:15	Successful exercise. The vessel was mobilised in a very short time. IRC signed 2 h15 min. after request for assistance.
4	CYPRUS 1 05/07/2023	AL, BA, CY, DZ, EG, EMSA, ES, FR, GR, HR, IL, IT, LB, LY, MA, MC, ME, MT, SI, SY, TN, TR	Cyprus / 07:03	OPR vessel ALEXANDRIA with RPAS, EAS equipment / 09:05	OPR vessel ALEXANDRIA with RPAS 1 x Oil Storage Barge (100m3) 2 x Skimmer LWS 500 2 x V-Sweep / 9:41	Mobilisation of the vessel, RPAS and EAS	IRC-V / 13:03 IRC-E / 15:22	In general, this was a successful exercise. IRC-Vessel was signed within reasonable time (6 h). Signature of the IRC-E was delayed 2 hours due to unavailability of the EAS contact person.
5	BALEX BRAVO 1 10/07/2023	DE, DK, EE, NO, FI, LT, LV, PL, RU, SE	Latvia / 10:57	OPR vessel NORDEN with RPAS / 12:22, EAS equipment / 12:57	None	None	None	Despite of offer of many vessels from MS no offer has been recorded and accepted in CECIS Requests Overview. Missed opportunity to exercise Assistance mobilisation procedures.
6	BALEX BRAVO 2 30/08/2023	AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, EMSA, ES, FI, FR, GR, HR, HU, IE, IS, IT, LI, LT, LU, LV, MK, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, RU, SE, SI, SK, UK	Latvia / 06:58	OPR vessel NORDEN with RPAS / 09:24	OPR vessel NORDEN with RPAS / 13:41	Mobilisation of the vessel and RPAS	None	The exercise was terminated before signature of the IRC-V. Missed opportunity to exercise Assistance mobilisation procedures.
7	Varna 2023 16/10/2023	BG, EMSA	Bulgaria / 06:37	OPR vessel GALAXY ECO with RPAS / 08:55 Current buster 4 / 09:36	None	Mobilisation of the vessel, RPAS and EAS	IRC-V / 13:05 IRC-E / 13:05	Offer was not accepted in CECIS. Based on local contacts both IRC-V and IRC-E were signed before completion of the procedure in CECIS

8	SAMPO 23 06/11/2023	EE, EMSA, FI, LT, LV, SE	Finland / 13:41 (first request in CECIS logbook) 07/11/2023 06:47 Placed in Requests Overview	OPR vessel NORDEN with RPAS / 07/11/2023 06:59	OPR vessel NORDEN with RPAS / 08/11/2023 13:34	Mobilisation of the vessel and RPAS	None	IRC-V was not signed. Exercise was terminated before contract signature. Exercise took 3 days without completing the EMSA assistance mobilisation procedure
9	CYPRUS 2 28/11/2023	AL, BA, CY, DZ, EG, EMSA, ES, FR, GR, HR, IL, IT, LB, LY, MA, MC, ME, MT, SI, SY, TN, TR	Cyprus 07:09	OPR vessel ALEXANDRIA with RPAS, EAS equipment / 08:54	OPR vessel ALEXANDRIA with RPAS / Speed Sweep, Current Buster, V Sweep 11:40	Mobilisation of the vessel, RPAS and EAS	IRC-V / 13:05 IRC-E / 13:05	Successful exercise with both IRC -V and IRC-E signed within reasonable time (6h). MS and EMSA contractors exercised full procedure of EMSA assistance mobilisation including Notice of Readiness sent to MS .

4. MAR-ICE activations for drills and exercises

The MAR-ICE Network of chemical experts was established in October 2008, through a 3-party Cooperation Agreement between EMSA, CEFIC (European Chemical Industry Council) and CEDRE (Centre for Documentation, Research and Experimentation on accidental water pollution). The MAR-ICE service became fully operational in January 2009, has been activated 70 times to date and currently runs through to December 2027.

Requesting countries can activate the MAR-ICE Network for real incidents, as well as for drills and exercises by contacting the MAR-ICE Contact Point and sending the MAR-ICE Activation Form, as per the activation procedures and contact numbers known to the relevant national authorities dealing with pollution response at-sea.

The MAR-ICE Network offers a 24/7 service to EU Member States, Coastal EFTA States and coastal EU Candidate Countries providing, upon request, rapid access to specialised information and expert advice on chemicals involved in marine spills. This expert support is available both remotely via phone and email (MAR-ICE service level-1) and on-site at the command centre of the requesting country (MAR-ICE service level-2). The information and support provided by the MAR-ICE Contact Point is based on product specific characteristics and on advice from chemical industry experts.

Other dedicated tools developed by EMSA for chemical spill support, complement the MAR-ICE service, such as the 257 MAR-CIS datasheets and the BE-CHEM tool outputs. When these are available for the substances involved in the specific incident or exercise scenario, they are also provided to the requesting country through the MAR-ICE service.

In 2023, the MAR-ICE network was activated:

- Once for a real incident.
- Five times for exercises, three of which were by Spain. One activation, during the Balex 2023 exercise requested Level-2 assistance. Details are presented in the Table below.

During these exercises, some minor communication / e-mail issues were noted, as well as some deviations from the service's activation procedures by the requesting party. The requested information was provided in almost all cases within the established timelines of the service.

With the objective to raise awareness of the service among national administrations, EMSA, together with the MAR-ICE Contact Point, delivered in 2023 two more online national familiarisation sessions to relevant national experts in Cyprus and in France. These short MAR-ICE familiarisation sessions aim to present and discuss the service's scope, activation procedures and expected outputs, and are available upon request and free of charge to all EU Member States.

Table 9: MAR-ICE drills/exercises in 2023

MAR-ICE SERVICE DRILLS / EXERCISES 2023				
Nr	**Date**	**Country**	**Scenario / Products involved**	**Assistance provided**
1	**25/01/2023**	**Spain**	**Exercise scenario** involved the leak of 2 products from a tanker in a port location. **Products involved**: Ammonia (UN 1005) and Phenol (UN 2312). **Request covered** product specific information (Section F1 of Form)	**Activation of MAR-ICE Level-1** The MAR-ICE service provided the following product-specific documentation regarding the substances involved: - MAR-CIS datasheets for both products - Cedre chemical response guide for Ammonia
2	**22/02/2023**	**Portugal (EU-MODEX Exercise)**	**Exercise scenario** involved a container vessel that had a collision and grounding, a fire on board and the loss of containers. **Products involved:** Several products were involved in the scenario (UN2880, UN1307, UN3265, UN3264, UN 1760, UN3082, UN1263). **Request covered** product specific information, modelling and risk assessment. (Sections F1 and F2 of Form)	**Activation of MAR-ICE Level-1** The MAR-ICE service provided the following product-specific documentation and explanatory information regarding the substances involved: - MAR-CIS datasheets - ERICards - Safety Data Sheets - Cedre chemical response guide for Xylene - Risk assessment table for involved products - CHEMMAP modelling outputs
3	**16/06/2023**	**Spain**	**Exercise scenario** involved a collision and the breakage of an oil tank of the vessel, as well as the spill of two products at sea. **Product involved:** Vinyl acetate (UN1301) and Fertilizers ammonium nitrate (UN 2067) **Request covered** product specific information, modelling and risk assessment. (Sections F1 and F2 of Form) Advice on possible interactions between polymerised vinyl acetate and an oil spill of low sulphur gas oil was also requested.	**Activation of MAR-ICE Level-1** The MAR-ICE service provided the following product-specific documentation and explanatory information regarding the substances involved: - MAR-CIS datasheets - Safety Data Sheets - Guidance document on the safe storage, handling & management of Ammonium Nitrate - Guidance for sea transport of ammonium nitrate-based fertilizers - CHEMMAP modelling outputs for Vinyl Acetate
4	**30/08/2023**	**Latvia (Balex 2023)**	**Exercise scenario** involved fire on board a container carrier, with potential release of acetone cyanohydrin (UN1541) **Products involved:** Several products were involved in the scenario (UN1541, UN3269, UN1950, UN1263, UN2801). **Request covered** product specific information, modelling and risk assessment. (parts of sections F1 and F2 of Form), as well as on-site expert advice (level-2) for UN1541.	**Activation of MAR-ICE Level-1 & Level-2** The MAR-ICE service provided the following product-specific documentation and explanatory information regarding the substance involved: - ERICards - Safety Data Sheets - Information from IMDG Code - CHEMMAP modelling outputs for UN 1541 - Risk assessment - Advice on proposed action plan - Contact was made with the chemical industry regarding an expert for UN 1541 (Level-2), however no manufacturer was identified.

5	19/10/2023	Spain	**Exercise scenario** involved the spill of Acrylonitrile from a chemical tanker in berth. **Product involved:** Acrylonitrile (UN 1093) **Request covered** product specific information, modelling and risk assessment. (Sections F1 and F2 of Form)	**Activation of MAR-ICE Level-1** The MAR-ICE service provided the following product-specific documentation and explanatory information regarding the substance involved: - MAR-CIS datasheet - Basic risk assessment - *[CHEMMAP modelling was not deemed possible as vessel was inside the harbour]*

4. Conclusions / Highlights

- The outcome of the drills, ECTs and exercises carried out during 2023 demonstrated that the service is operationally ready, efficient and in accordance with EMSA requirements.

- Since 2018, the Agency has been implementing improvement projects on the Vessel Network to enhance the detection capabilities for oil pollution on the sea surface, by equipping the contracted vessels with Lightweight Remotely Piloted Aircraft System (LRPAS). In 2023, another three EMSA vessels have been equipped. Currently, 13 of the 15 Agency's contracted vessels are equipped with LRPAS. The aim is to continue equipping, gradually and subject to technical feasibility, all EMSA vessels with LRPAS capabilities on board.

- In 2023, the Agency extended its capabilities to assist the Member States in marine HNS pollution incidents. The Agency signed a Framework contract for delivery of stand-alone equipment specially designed for HNS response operations: i.e., HNS pumping sets. This equipment will be available in the five existing EAS warehouses, and therefore MS should consider using this equipment for training and exercises.

- The Vessel Network exists already since 2006 and equipment purchased in the early years shows signs of ageing, wear, and tear and for some specific IT related equipment, obsolescence. The Agency regularly conducts a thorough equipment inventory and condition verification to decide on the old equipment de-classification and, subject to financial resources, replacement with new purchases. This process will be intensified in coming years.

- The results of the notification exercises have improved compared to previous years. More Member States have followed the full procedure to mobilize EMSA's resources. However, it is noted that there is still a need to provide CECIS training for the pollution response personnel responsible for requesting assistance from other MS and EMSA.

  In addition, the range of marine pollution response services offered by the Agency and available to Member States increases every year. Knowledge of their mobilisation procedures and the ability to use them by MS is essential for an effective response in the event of serious marine pollution incidents. Hence, the need to intensify the notification exercises and to apply the full procedure of mobilising EMSA resources during these exercises.

- To benefit from EMSA's pollution response "toolbox", a close and regular operational cooperation between EMSA services and MS operational staff is of paramount importance. The Agency is sharing a calendar of activities of the Pollution Response Services for each coming year. This is intended as a catalogue of activities, part of a new approach to enhance operational cooperation EMSA-MS.

  To facilitate communication through this process and dissemination of information on EMSA's services, a dedicated Helpdesk-Contact Point for Q&A has been established.

- EMSA's Vessels and EAS systems are deployed in operational exercises per year. These exercises, organised by MS, take place in all European waters and the Agency covers the costs of the participation of EMSA services. In 2023 the Agency received only 4 requests to participate in with an OPR vessel in the operational exercises.

It should be noted that MS usually use only a fraction of the ship's capacity during these exercises. For example, often the vessel's only task during an exercise is to deploy sweeping arms and follow the formation. To ensure the maximum effectiveness of the trainings, MS should be encouraged to expand the exercise scenarios and use the full capabilities of EMSA vessels (booms, skimmers, slick detection system, RPAS, dispersant spraying systems) as well as of EAS equipment systems.

- The costs of participation in these exercises are determined by the distance to the exercise site, fuel cost and the vessel's daily rate. In case of EAS stand-alone equipment, the main cost elements are the transport costs and the provision of Technical Support Personnel, both costs also covered by EMSA.

  The issue of aiming at cost efficiency in exercises should be considered. High inflation and the increase in the cost of fuel, equipment and labour also significantly affect the cost of the exercises, in particular with deployment of vessels. Therefore, emphasis should be placed on the effective use of EMSA vessels during operational exercises at sea.

- The steadily increasing number of MAR-ICE service activations for exercises also involving HNS scenarios, demonstrates MS' willingness to learn more about the service, how it can be activated and what it can offer in terms of specialised information, advice, and support for chemical incidents at-sea.

- EMSA is continuing its efforts to raise awareness on the service during the meetings of the CTG MPPR and PRS User Group, as well as during relevant workshops. The Agency also offers the possibility for MS to request "National familiarisation sessions on the MAR-ICE service". During these short, dedicated information sessions provided jointly by EMSA and the MAR-ICE Contact Point and held online, several national/local HNS experts from a MS can participate to find out more about the MAR-ICE Network, its activation procedures and the service provided.

- On the basis of consultations with MS and in line with their expectations, the Agency contracted in 2023 a vessel for intermediate storage of oil recovered during major oil pollution at sea. The vessel has the base in Frederikshavn (Denmark) and will enter into service at the beginning of March 2024.

European Maritime Safety Agency
Praça Europa 4
1249-206 Lisbon, Portugal
Tel +351 21 1209 200
Fax +351 21 1209 210
emsa.europa.eu