



EMSA OUTLOOK 2026

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword from the Chair of the Management Board	4
Foreword from the Executive Director	5
Executive Summary	7
SUSTAINABILITY	11
Decarbonising Maritime Transport	11
Marine Environmental Protection	12
Pollution Detection, Monitoring and Enforcement	12
Preparedness and Response	13
Maritime Safety Standards	14
SAFETY	14
EMSAFE: Evidence-Based Maritime Safety	15
Passenger Ship Safety	16
Autonomous Surface Ships	16
Fishing Vessel Safety	16
Safety Compliance and Harmonisation	16
Accident Investigation and Knowledge Sharing	17
Human Factors in Maritime Safety	17
Maritime Security Oversight and Implementation	18
SECURITY	18
Cybersecurity in the Maritime Sector	19
Risk Monitoring and Critical Maritime Infrastructure	19
Security Tools and Digital Systems	19
SURVEILLANCE	20
Regional RPAS Operations	20
Satellite-based Services and Innovation	21
Copernicus Maritime Surveillance Service	21
SIMPLIFICATION	22
European Maritime Single Window Environment	22
Maritime Digital Certification	23
Interoperable Information Sharing through CISE	24

TABLE OF CONTENTS (cont.)

DIGITALISATION	25
Integrated Maritime Services and Situational Awareness	25
SafeSeaNet and Core Maritime Databases	26
Digital Tools for Monitoring and Enforcement	26
Cybersecurity and Cloud Migration	27
European Maritime Awareness Centre	27
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND CAPACITY BUILDING	28
Recognition and Oversight of Classification Societies	28
Seafarer Training and Certification Systems	29
Implementation of EU Maritime Legislation	29
Learning Services and the EMSA Academy	29
Capacity Building and Regional Cooperation	30
PARTNERSHIPS AND INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION	31
European Cooperation on Coast Guard Functions	31
Cooperation with EU Agencies and International Organisations	32
International Cooperation and Global Partnerships	33
Cooperation with Pre-Accession and Neighbourhood Countries	33
External Capacity Building	33
PEOPLE AND CORPORATE SERVICES	34



Foreword from the Chair of the Management Board

Europe's maritime sector stands at a turning point. The global context in which maritime transport operates has become much more complex, shaped not only by the urgent need to decarbonise shipping and accelerate technological innovation, but also by evolving geopolitical tensions and security risks that directly affect maritime trade and maritime infrastructure. In this environment, EMSA's role remains central to ensure that the European Union and its member countries can rely on a robust system supporting maritime safety, environmental protection and the resilience of maritime transport.

The year 2026 marks a milestone for the Agency with the entry into force, in January of the revised EMSA Regulation. This new mandate reflects the evolving needs of the European maritime sector and strengthens the Agency's capacity to support the EU's maritime policy objectives. It broadens EMSA's role in several key areas, including environmental protection, maritime surveillance, digital services and operational assistance to Member States and EU institutions. The updated legal framework ensures that the Agency can continue to act as a centre of expertise and operational support at European level, while remaining responsive to new and emerging challenges.

At the same time, the geopolitical landscape has become increasingly uncertain. Ongoing tensions in several regions of strategic importance for maritime trade, including Russia's continued war of aggression against

Ukraine and the evolving situation concerning Iran, underline the vulnerability of global shipping routes and maritime supply chains. These developments have also highlighted the growing risks associated with irregular shipping activities, including the operation of so-called "shadow fleets" used to circumvent international sanctions regimes and regulatory oversight. Such developments pose significant risks to maritime safety, environmental protection and the transparency of global shipping. In this context, EMSA's analytical capabilities, maritime surveillance services and data systems will continue to play an important role in supporting Member States and EU institutions in monitoring maritime activities and consolidating situational awareness in European waters and beyond.

The EU has also taken important steps to further modernise its maritime regulatory framework. The adoption of the Maritime Safety Package in 2025 represents a significant update of key legislative instruments governing maritime safety, accident investigation, flag state responsibilities and port state control. EMSA will continue to provide technical assistance and expertise to support the effective and consistent implementation of these measures across the Union. This includes the further development of digital tools, support to inspections and capacity-building activities for national administrations.

In parallel, the maritime sector is at the forefront of the EU's transition towards climate neutrality. The extension of the EU Emissions

Foreword from the Chair of the Management Board (cont.)

Trading System to maritime transport and the implementation of the FuelEU Maritime Regulation are important steps towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions from shipping. EMSA will continue to support the European Commission and Member States through the operation and development of monitoring and reporting systems, technical expertise and analytical tools necessary to ensure the effective implementation of these policies.

Beyond regulatory developments, the European Commission has recently presented new strategic initiatives aimed at building up the resilience and competitiveness of Europe's maritime ecosystem. The EU Port Strategy and the EU Maritime Industrial Strategy underline the strategic importance of ports, shipbuilding, maritime services and maritime technologies for Europe's economy and security. EMSA will help advance these broader policy objectives through its technical expertise, its role in supporting maritime digitalisation and its operational services that target safe, efficient and environmentally responsible maritime transport.

In carrying out its tasks, EMSA continues to operate within a strong network of cooperation, bringing together Member States, European institutions, EU agencies and international partners. This collaborative approach remains one of the Agency's greatest strengths and is essential for addressing the increasingly interconnected challenges the maritime sector faces.

On behalf of the Management Board, I would like to thank the staff of EMSA for their professionalism, dedication and commitment, as well as the Member States and European institutions for their continued support and engagement in the Agency's work. Together, we ensure that the European maritime safety system remains effective, forward-looking and capable of responding to the challenges of a rapidly changing world.

Wojciech Zdanowicz

Chair of the Administrative Board



Foreword from the Executive Director

2026 marks an important year for the European maritime sector. Measures developed and agreed in recent years are now moving into wider operational use, becoming part of day-to-day practice in ports, at sea and within national administrations across the Union. EMSA's role is to support this transition by helping ensure that implementation is consistent and underpinned by reliable services and robust digital systems.

The year also marks an important step for the Agency itself. In 2025, the co-legislators adopted a revised EMSA mandate, which entered into force at the beginning of 2026. The updated legal framework strengthens the Agency's role and clarifies its responsibilities, reflecting both the growing expectations placed on EMSA and the increasing complexity of EU maritime policy.

Environmental regulation will see some of the most immediate operational effects in 2026. FuelEU Maritime enters its first full compliance phase, while maritime transport continues its phased integration into the EU Emissions Trading System. EMSA will operate and further develop the digital systems supporting these frameworks and continue technical work on alternative fuels, waste streams, underwater radiated noise and environmental monitoring. Surveillance services will remain available, from satellite-based detection to remotely piloted aircraft deployments to underwater operated drones, and pollution-response capacity will remain in place should incidents occur.

Safety rules are also evolving. The European Maritime Safety Package reflects a sector increasingly shaped by cleaner propulsion, new materials, automation and digitalisation. Implementation work begins in 2026. EMSA will support updates to guidance, certification processes, oversight tools and coordination mechanisms to facilitate consistent application. Analytical work, including the outcome of the European Maritime Safety Report, will continue to support risk-based approaches.

Security pressures continue to shift. Interference with navigation systems, cyberattacks and patterns linked to sanctions evasion have become more frequent. As implementation of the European Maritime Security Strategy progresses, EMSA will support inspections, strengthen information exchange and contribute with technical expertise on emerging risks, including those linked to unmanned systems.

At the same time, the broader geopolitical context continues to seriously affect maritime transport. Conflict-related disruptions to trade routes, increased risks in certain sea basins and growing pressure on critical maritime infrastructure underline the need for reliable situational awareness, resilient systems and effective coordination at EU level.

Reporting and administrative systems will continue to evolve as digitalisation becomes more embedded. The European Maritime Single Window environment will expand. SafeSeaNet will further support the re-use of submitted

Foreword from the Executive Director (cont.)

data, and the first operational components for EU level eCertification will move forward. CISE will take a significant step with the introduction of a secure channel for classified exchanges.

Under the revised mandate, the Agency will also advance the transformation of its maritime support services, including preparatory work towards the European Maritime Awareness Centre, operating 24/7 with the aim of strengthening EU level analytical capacity and operational support available to the European Commission and Member States.

Capacity building and cooperation continue to underpin effective implementation. Inspections, training, technical assistance and regional projects will support consistent application of rules, both within the EU and in neighbouring regions preparing to align with EU standards.

This year's programme is necessarily detailed, reflecting the scope of the work ahead. Change in the sector is steady rather than dramatic,

but it is tangible. EMSA's focus remains on delivering reliable services and practical technical support, ensuring that European maritime legislation is implemented effectively and produces tangible results across the Union.

At a time of heightened geopolitical uncertainty and with a strengthened mandate now in force, this focus – and the professionalism that underpins it – is more important than ever.

Maja Markovčić Kostelac

Executive Director

Executive Summary

This work programme is the first to be delivered under the latest revision of the EMSA mandate, adopted as part of the Maritime Safety Package and in force as of 18 January 2026. The strengthened legal framework expands and clarifies the Agency's role in operational support, digital services, maritime monitoring and assistance to Member States.

At the same time, it reflects a geopolitical context marked by conflict-related disruptions, increased security risks and pressure on maritime routes and infrastructure. In this environment, effective EU level coordination and reliable maritime services are essential to support resilience, situational awareness and consistent implementation of maritime rules.

The work programme brings together operational services, technical expertise, digital systems and capacity building to support Member States, enlargement countries and partner regions in applying EU and international maritime legislation.



SUSTAINABILITY

2026 will be an important year for improving the environmental footprint of maritime transport. Several major EU laws are now shifting from preparation to practical application. These include the extension of the EU Emissions Trading System to shipping and the first full compliance cycle under FuelEU Maritime, both designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from ships. Preparations will also continue for the revised Ship-Source Pollution Directive, which will strengthen enforcement and create more consistent penalties for illegal discharges. Together, these measures will begin influencing how ships are fuelled, operated and monitored, helping the sector move towards cleaner and more environmentally sustainable maritime activity.

As this new framework takes shape, EMSA will assist Member States, ports and the maritime industry in applying the rules in a practical and harmonised way. This assistance will take many forms, including guidance, technical tools, monitoring services and access to specialised pollution-response capacity when needed. The wider goal is to turn Europe's environmental ambitions into measurable progress at sea and in port areas, while keeping maritime transport safe and resilient.

DECARBONISING MARITIME TRANSPORT

Reducing emissions from ships remains a central priority. Maritime transport continues to grow, and the sector is adapting to new environmental requirements. In 2026, the Agency will help implement measures designed to cut greenhouse gases and the uptake of cleaner propulsion systems, energy-efficient technologies and sustainable alternative fuels.

Key activities will include continued roll-out of the FuelEU Maritime Regulation, which limits the greenhouse gas intensity of energy used on board ships, and providing the digital platforms and technical expertise needed for the implementation of such legislation and of the extension of the EU Emissions Trading System to maritime transport. EMSA will continue developing the necessary databases and reporting tools, as well as continue to focus on the monitoring and development of predictive models, analysis of patterns and risk-based tools to facilitate monitoring and enforcement.

The Agency will also continue to assist with initiatives linked to the implementation of the 2023 IMO Strategy on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from ships, energy efficiency and carbon intensity. EMSA will contribute to discussions at EU and IMO level on the decarbonisation of shipping and the safe use of new fuels and emerging propulsion systems.

Several technical studies will help prepare future policy and operational decisions. These include work on waste-heat recovery systems, and an updated study on electrical energy storage technologies including supercapacitors.

MARINE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Shipping activities can affect the marine environment in many ways, including ballast water discharges, chemical releases, waste streams and underwater noise. In 2026, EMSA will continue supporting EU and international efforts to reduce these impacts and promote consistent implementation across Member States.

A new study on waste from ships to assess current practices, volumes and management pathways, with a focus on identifying gaps, environmental impacts, and opportunities for improved monitoring measures will be launched.

The Agency will act as technical secretariat to the European Sustainable Shipping Forum, the European Ports Forum and the Expert Group on Waste from Ships, and will provide input to EU and IMO working groups. Work on underwater radiated noise will also progress, including the next phase of the NAVISON Project to refine modelling methods and update EU maritime noise maps.

POLLUTION DETECTION, MONITORING AND ENFORCEMENT

Effective monitoring and enforcement remain essential for reducing pollution and ensuring compliance. Advances in satellite services, artificial intelligence and remotely piloted aircraft are already shifting monitoring from reactive detection to proactive surveillance.

In 2026, EMSA will continue expanding these capabilities. CleanSeaNet will remain the core satellite monitoring service and will be further enhanced, including a gradual expansion towards monitoring additional pollutants such as sewage, garbage and pollutants in packaged form, alongside improvements to the existing monitoring of oil and chemical spills. New services will also be procured to enable systematic use of Sentinel-2 optical imagery, improving the accuracy of pollution verification activities of Member States.

Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS) will continue supporting sulphur emissions monitoring and will play a growing role in pollution verification. These activities will be complemented by the Integrated Maritime Services, SafeSeaNet and Copernicus Maritime Surveillance, which together provide fused vessel traffic and satellite intelligence. Reporting and feedback procedures between CleanSeaNet and national authorities will also be improved to reflect the updated legal requirements and strengthen enforcement.

PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE

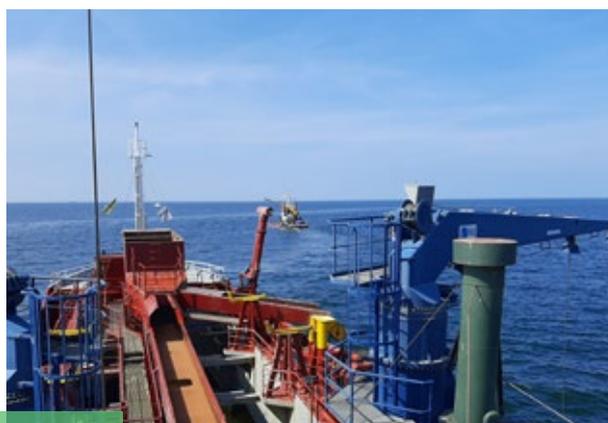
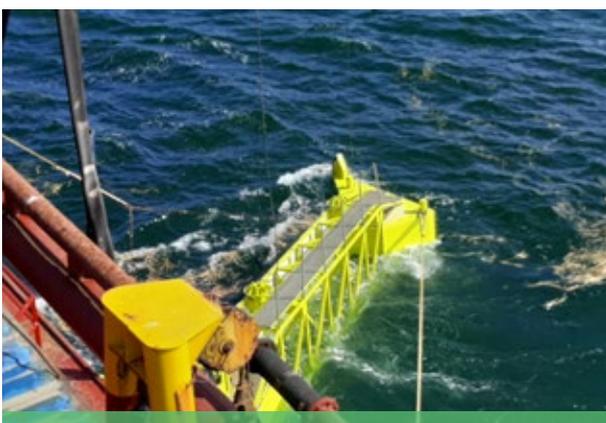
Even with stronger prevention and monitoring, pollution incidents still occur. Preparedness and response capacity therefore remain essential, particularly as new fuels and technologies become more common across the fleet. In 2026, EMSA will continue managing the European top-up pollution response capability, ensuring its toolbox of assets and services is available to coastal Member States when needed.

This includes maintaining the network of stand-by pollution response vessels. New availability contracts are expected to become operational in the Bay of Biscay, the Canary Islands and Madeira, and the Northern Baltic Sea. Existing capacity in the Atlantic, North Sea, Mediterranean and Black Sea regions will also remain in place. Equipment Assistance Service stockpiles and dispersant reserves across Europe's sea basins will continue to be maintained and adapted to evolving operational needs.

Following the outcome of the discussions on the possible options to make the EMSA pollution response toolbox future-proof in shifting risk patterns and geopolitical challenges, the Agency will proceed to implement the agreed actions, including launching the exercise of a risk assessment for all EU sea basins to serve as a basis for the location of the Agency's assets.

Support will continue through exercises, training and deployments on request, including work with the Consultative Technical Group for Marine Pollution Preparedness and Response to share experience and good practice. Services such as the MAR-ICE network and MAR-CIS chemical database will remain available to assist with hazardous and noxious substance spills. These come alongside spill trajectory modelling and a prototype tool to simulate oil pollution response operations at sea, now being developed with Member States.

The Agency will also continue to fill knowledge gaps in relation to the behaviour of alternative fuels in marine spill scenarios and the appropriate response methods.



EMSA's pollution response toolbox of assets and services is evolving to address emerging risks and challenges across all EU sea basins, strengthening preparedness and response for the future.

A large container ship is docked at a port. The ship's hull is dark blue and features the words "SAFETY FIRST" in white capital letters. The deck is filled with stacks of colorful shipping containers in shades of blue, orange, and brown. A white crane is visible on the ship's deck. In the background, a port facility with wind turbines and other structures is visible under a clear sky. A semi-transparent red box with the word "SAFETY" in white capital letters is overlaid on the top left of the image.

SAFETY

Maritime safety in Europe is entering a new phase in 2026. The recently adopted European Maritime Safety Package begins to move into implementation, updating long-standing rules and modernising the framework that governs how vessels are built, operated and overseen. The package reflects the changing reality at sea: ships are integrating new fuels, digital systems are reshaping navigation and operation, and automation is gradually becoming part of the maritime landscape.

As these changes unfold, EMSA will help Member States and the European Commission put the new requirements into practice. This includes providing technical expertise, supporting the revision of guidance and standards, developing and enhancing digital systems used for oversight, and facilitating cooperation among national authorities. EMSA will contribute to ensuring that regulation is applied consistently across the EU and that safety measures evolve in step with technological and operational developments. This will also include work linked to the digital elements of the package, such as the development and modernisation of oversight tools and processes used by flag and port State authorities.

MARITIME SAFETY STANDARDS

Ensuring the safe operation of ships begins with sound regulation and effective implementation. In 2026, the Agency will continue supporting the European Commission and Member States on the development and revision of maritime safety legislation at EU and international level. This includes work linked to International Maritime Organisation safety conventions, where the Agency contributes with technical expertise to the EU coordination process.

As alternative fuels and new propulsion technologies become more common, safety frameworks must continue to evolve. The Agency will expand its technical assistance safety work in the IMO for systems such as batteries, onboard carbon capture, wind-assisted propulsion, nuclear concepts and air lubrication systems. Findings from EMSA studies on ammonia and hydrogen will help to develop guidance documents and support development at both EU and international level.

Alongside this, the Agency will support in areas such as the Safe Return to Port requirements for passenger ships, safety considerations related to electric and alternative fuel vehicles transported on roll-on/roll-off passenger vessels, updates to steering and propulsion standards, fire safety measures and the revision of existing communication and equipment standards. The revision of Chapter III of SOLAS (the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea), updates to the Life-Saving Appliances (LSA) Code and developments on the VHF Data Exchange System (VDES) will also be monitored and supported.

EMSAFE: EVIDENCE-BASED MARITIME SAFETY

The European Maritime Safety Report (EMSAFE) provides an analytical overview of safety performance trends and emerging risks in the EU maritime sector. In 2026, the Agency will follow up on the second edition of the report, published at the end of 2025, and collect structured feedback from the European Commission, Member States and relevant expert groups. These inputs will help determine where safety initiatives may require adjustment or further study and will come alongside ongoing work related to accident trends, alternative fuel safety considerations and risk-based approaches to regulation.



Policy leadership continues to emphasise maritime safety as a foundation for a competitive and sustainable blue economy.

PASSENGER SHIP SAFETY

Passenger ship safety remains a priority area. EMSA will continue supporting the development and implementation of amendments to EU passenger ship safety legislation and contribute to guidance relevant to Directive 2009/45/EC and Directive 2003/25/EC. The Agency will also assist the European Commission in preparing the report to the European Parliament on the implementation of passenger ship safety legislation.

In addition, new studies will examine safety considerations for ships using lightweight construction materials and zero- or near-zero-emission technologies. The ongoing study on evacuating large passenger ships, including work on oversized lifeboat design, is expected to be completed in 2026. Work will also continue to promote the use of the DONA (Dynamic Overview of National Administration) tool, which provides an overview of exemptions, equivalences and alternative design arrangements under the passenger ship safety framework.

AUTONOMOUS SURFACE SHIPS

Automation is gradually emerging as part of the maritime landscape. With the IMO now developing a non-mandatory code for Maritime Autonomous Surface Ships (MASS), the Agency will continue supporting EU coordination and contribute technical input to this work.

EMSA will maintain its risk-based assessment tool (RBAT) designed to assist Member States in reviewing and approving MASS projects and will continue offering workshops and training to build capacity. A new study in 2026 will examine navigation, communications and connectivity requirements to support autonomous operations.

FISHING VESSEL SAFETY

Safety performance in the fishing sector remains a concern. In 2026, EMSA will assist with any follow-up to the evaluation of Directive 97/70/EC as well as to the development of a voluntary Port State Control regime for fishing vessels where relevant.

SAFETY COMPLIANCE AND HARMONISATION

Consistent application and enforcement of safety standards remain a core objective of EU maritime safety policy. In 2026, EMSA will continue to assist Member States in both their flag State and port State obligations. As flag States, Member States are responsible for ensuring that ships registered under their flag comply with applicable international and EU safety rules throughout their operation. As port States, they verify that foreign ships calling at their ports also meet these standards through inspections and follow-up procedures. This work includes continued participation in Paris MoU activities and coordination of EU input to the IMO Correspondence Group on Port State Control, helping ensure a harmonised and effective approach across Europe.

In parallel, the Agency will continue to provide technical assistance in the area of marine equipment, including support on applicable standards, the review of safeguard cases and coordinating the annual update of the list of approved equipment. EMSA will also maintain its work related to the

EU-US Mutual Recognition Agreement on marine equipment. The Agency will continue managing technical tools such as the Maritime Equipment Directive (MarED) Portal and acting as secretariat to the MarED group of notified bodies. Should the revision of the Marine Equipment Directive progress in 2026, EMSA will contribute to the process by providing technical input and facilitating discussions between the Commission, industry and national authorities.

EMSA will also continue to run the management unit of Equasis, the global public shipping-information platform used to promote transparency and quality in the sector. In 2026, work will begin on implementing the new five-year Equasis strategy, including system enhancements, updated data sources and improvements to user access. The platform supports safety oversight by enabling authorities, insurers, ports, industry and the wider public to review vessel histories, compliance records and safety-related performance indicators, making it an important complement to port State control and flag State monitoring activities.

ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING

Learning from incidents remains essential for improving maritime safety. In 2026, EMSA will continue to assist Member States in applying accident investigation legislation, managing the European Marine Casualty Information Platform (EMCIP), and providing operational assistance where needed. This includes services, such as the enhanced underwater service, that support inspections to locate wrecks and collect evidence following serious incidents, as well as coast guard tasks. The Agency will continue acting as secretariat to the Permanent Cooperation Framework and promote knowledge exchange through analytical reports, annual casualty overviews, workshops and training. New tasks under the revised safety package will help strengthen operational services and preparations for a potential peer review system for marine accident investigation.

HUMAN FACTORS IN MARITIME SAFETY

Technology and regulation are only effective when matched with appropriate human skills and competence. The revision of the Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping Convention and Code is underway at the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) and is expected to continue until at least 2030. In 2026, the Agency will continue supporting this work by contributing to EU positions and providing technical input.

Earlier studies on training requirements for seafarers working with alternative fuels and for MASS operators will be used to inform discussions. The Agency will also begin preparations for a wider study on maritime employment in 2027, reflecting ongoing discussions about future workforce needs in the maritime sector.

A close-up photograph of two metallic padlocks resting on a glowing blue and red circuit board. The padlocks are illuminated with a red glow, and the background shows intricate circuit patterns and glowing points of light.

SECURITY

Maritime security risks continue to evolve in a complex geopolitical context. Ongoing armed conflicts, notably the war in Ukraine, and heightened geopolitical tensions are expected to sustain pressure on the maritime security environment in 2026. European seas, including the Black Sea and the Baltic Sea, as well as strategic corridors such as the Red Sea, face persistent security challenges. At the same time, evolving threats – including shadow fleets circumventing sanctions, cyber-enabled attacks, GNSS interference, and hostile drone and hybrid activities targeting ports, vessels and critical infrastructure – are adding complexity and uncertainty.

EMSA will support through inspections, technical guidance, enhanced situational awareness, cybersecurity capacity-building and strengthened operational information exchange, with the aim of reinforcing resilience and promoting consistent application of maritime security requirements across the sector.

MARITIME SECURITY OVERSIGHT AND IMPLEMENTATION

In 2026, the Agency will continue assisting the European Commission and the EFTA Surveillance Authority in carrying out maritime security inspections under EU legislation, including Regulation (EC) No 725/2004 and Regulation (EC) No 324/2008. These inspections assess how well ports, ships and authorities apply the required security measures. EMSA will take part in planned inspections, including for Norway and Iceland, and will help refine inspection methods and support follow-up actions when requested.

The Agency will also contribute to expert working groups coordinated by the European Commission, such as the Maritime Security Committee (MARSEC) and the Ship and Port Facility Security Working Group (SAGMAS). These forums allow Member States, experts and industry to address implementation challenges and respond to new risks. As technologies evolve, EMSA will help develop practical guidance to assist national authorities.

CYBERSECURITY IN THE MARITIME SECTOR

As ships, ports and maritime infrastructure become more digitalised, cybersecurity is increasingly essential to maintaining safe and secure operations. In 2026, the Agency will continue assisting the European Commission and Member States in strengthening their ability to prevent and respond to cyber incidents. This includes participation in specialist working groups, joint training activities and the delivery of dedicated courses through the EMSA Academy.

Work will also continue to improve the exchange of information about cyber threats and incidents affecting the maritime sector, in cooperation with the EU Agency for Cybersecurity (ENISA). The development of an information sharing system is underway. Under its updated mandate, the Agency will help Member States share experience, raise awareness and develop approaches that encourage more effective responses to emerging cyber risks.

RISK MONITORING AND CRITICAL MARITIME INFRASTRUCTURE

In 2026, EMSA will continue developing a methodology to help national authorities better assess risks from unmanned aerial systems, such as drones, that could be used to target ships or port facilities. The approach will be tested with volunteer ports and shared with Member States for further improvement. As the work progresses, it may expand to include unmanned vessels or underwater devices.

In parallel, the Agency will examine how its existing surveillance and information systems could support the monitoring of threats to underwater infrastructure, including hybrid activities or intentional disruption. This may include assessing how satellite imagery, surveillance technologies and integrated situational awareness platforms can address national and regional monitoring needs.

SECURITY TOOLS AND DIGITAL SYSTEMS

Throughout 2026, EMSA will continue managing the maritime security module of THETIS-EU, a digital platform that Member States may use to record security inspections carried out by authorised officers. The Agency will also assist in selecting and training national maritime security inspectors when requested.

Capacity building will continue to play an important role. Through expert exchanges, workshops and dedicated training, EMSA will foster a more harmonised approach to implementation. A cybersecurity training programme will focus specifically on new threat patterns affecting port operations and shipping.

SURVEILLANCE



In 2026, EMSA will continue to provide maritime surveillance services for Member States' activities at sea. These services assist national authorities across a broad range of operational tasks and contribute to maritime situational awareness at EU level. Work during the year will include the continued deployment of multipurpose RPAS services under a regional model, the introduction of a renewed RPAS portfolio and enhanced support for pollution monitoring and verification. Satellite-based services, including global SAT-AIS and Earth Observation, will remain available, alongside the Copernicus Maritime Surveillance service. Together, these services offer Member States and EU bodies a consistent and flexible surveillance capability to support operations at sea.

REGIONAL RPAS OPERATIONS

Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS) form a core element of the Agency's surveillance services. In 2026, the Agency will continue providing multipurpose RPAS operations to support coast guard functions through a regional model designed to ensure operational continuity over multiple years in key maritime areas. These services deliver real-time, high resolution data, contributing to tasks such as vessel identification, maritime activity monitoring, detection of suspicious behaviour, pollution verification, and search and rescue.

The Agency will continue expanding this regional approach so that a single deployment can serve several neighbouring coastal States and support different maritime administrations operating in areas such as safety, security and environmental protection. A renewed RPAS portfolio will progressively enter service. Within the existing cooperation framework with the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA), RPAS will also continue to contribute to fisheries monitoring and control tasks.

Under the revised Ship-Source Pollution Directive, RPAS services are expected to play an expanded role in supporting pollution verification, including follow-up activities triggered by satellite detections. This will reinforce the connection between air-based surveillance and Earth Observation imagery, enabling faster and more targeted responses to suspected maritime pollution.

SATELLITE-BASED SERVICES AND INNOVATION

Satellite-based services remain central to the Agency's surveillance support. Throughout 2026, satellite Automatic Identification System (AIS) data will continue to be provided, enabling global tracking of reporting vessels and contributing to maritime domain awareness when combined with other data sources. Earth Observation services will remain available and can be activated under contingency arrangements to support responses to maritime emergencies, including major accidental spills.

The Agency will continue upgrading satellite capabilities through new procurement contracts, including radar and high resolution optical imagery and access to data from additional satellite constellations. Work will also continue to assess emerging satellite sensors, new space-based communication solutions and additional RPAS configurations and payloads that could be integrated into future operational services.

Cooperation with the European Space Agency will continue to play an important role, particularly in defining technical requirements and identifying opportunities for space-based solutions to support maritime surveillance tasks. In parallel, the Agency will continue exploring the use of artificial intelligence in image analysis and will build on initial findings to assess how such tools could be operationally deployed.

COPERNICUS MARITIME SURVEILLANCE SERVICE

The Copernicus Maritime Surveillance service will continue being delivered to Member States, EU institutions and selected international organisations. In 2026, it will assist a broad range of operational functions including maritime safety, maritime security, fisheries control, customs enforcement, law enforcement and marine pollution monitoring. The service provides access to Earth Observation imagery and value-added products such as vessel detection layers and pollution indicators.



SIMPLIFICATION

Facilitating the simplification of maritime reporting and information exchange remains a key objective in the context of the EU's ongoing efforts to modernise its regulatory and administrative framework. In 2026, EMSA will support these efforts by contributing to the reduction of unnecessary administrative burdens for authorities and industry, promoting greater consistency in reporting requirements, and enabling more efficient submission, sharing and reuse of information across Europe's ports and maritime information systems.

In parallel, EMSA will begin supporting the implementation of new responsibilities arising from the maritime safety package. This includes preparatory work to modernise digital ship certificates and to further the development of an optional EU level solution for the issuance and verification of electronic certificates, in particular for Member States that do not have national systems in place. Alongside continued progress on the EU Seafarers' Certification Platform, these activities contribute to a more streamlined, coherent and interoperable approach to maritime documentation across the sector.

EUROPEAN MARITIME SINGLE WINDOW ENVIRONMENT

A significant part of the work related to simplification is linked to the continued roll-out of the European Maritime Single Window environment (EMSWe), the progressive shift towards digital certification for ships and seafarers, and enhanced interoperability between existing EU maritime information systems. Together, these developments aim to improve harmonisation, usability and data quality, while ensuring that reporting requirements remain proportionate and aligned with operational realities ashore and at sea.

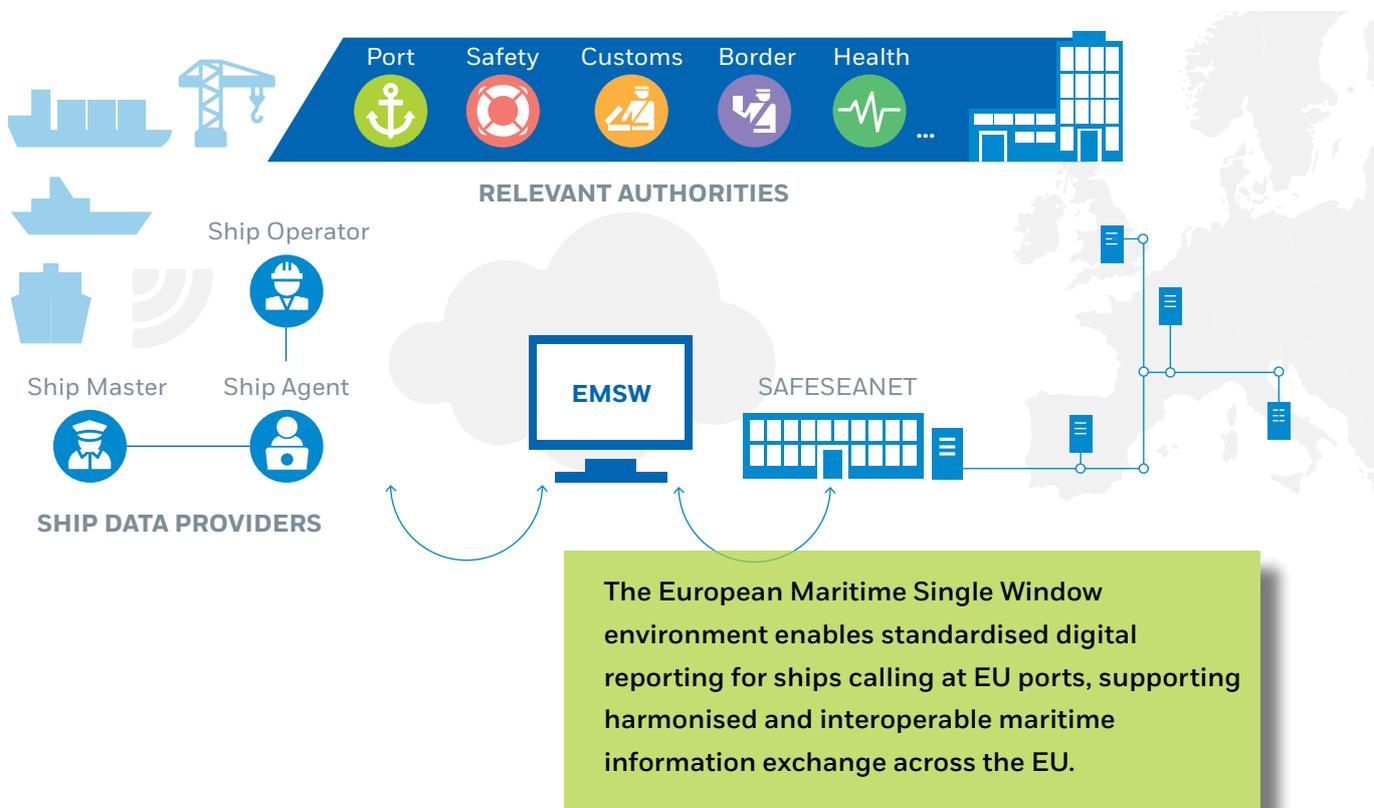
The EMSWe is the EU framework that enables ship operators to submit mandatory reporting formalities in a standardised digital format when entering or leaving European ports. In 2026, the Agency will continue assisting the European Commission and Member States in developing and maintaining the datasets, specifications and common databases needed to ensure the system functions in a consistent and harmonised way across the EU.

Work during the year will include maintaining the common data set and related documentation, ensuring it reflects ongoing regulatory developments and international standards. The Agency

will also continue supporting the harmonisation of reporting formats to enable ship operators to submit required information in the same structure at any EU port, reducing duplication and manual processing.

The Agency will continue developing the EMSWe shared database services. These include systems containing ship identification and particulars, information on dangerous goods carried on board, port facility data and ship sanitation records. These shared systems will assist Maritime National Single Windows operated by Member States and help streamline reporting requirements.

During the year, the Agency will support the European Commission at the IMO's Expert Group on Data Harmonisation, contributing to work on the IMO Compendium on Facilitation and Electronic Business. This helps ensure that European digital maritime reporting requirements continue to align with global standards and requirements.



MARITIME DIGITAL CERTIFICATION

The development of the exchange of certificates in a digital form, known as eCertification, will continue as a major area of work in 2026. This includes certificates issued to seafarers and certificates carried on board ships for compliance with safety and environmental regulations.

For seafarers, the Agency will continue developing the EU Seafarers' Certification Platform, a central system that will allow digital management of certificates, endorsements and supporting administrative steps. Modules developed in 2026 will enable seafarers to apply for and renew certificates in a digital format and allow national administrations to manage these processes electronically. The platform is scheduled for full completion in 2027.

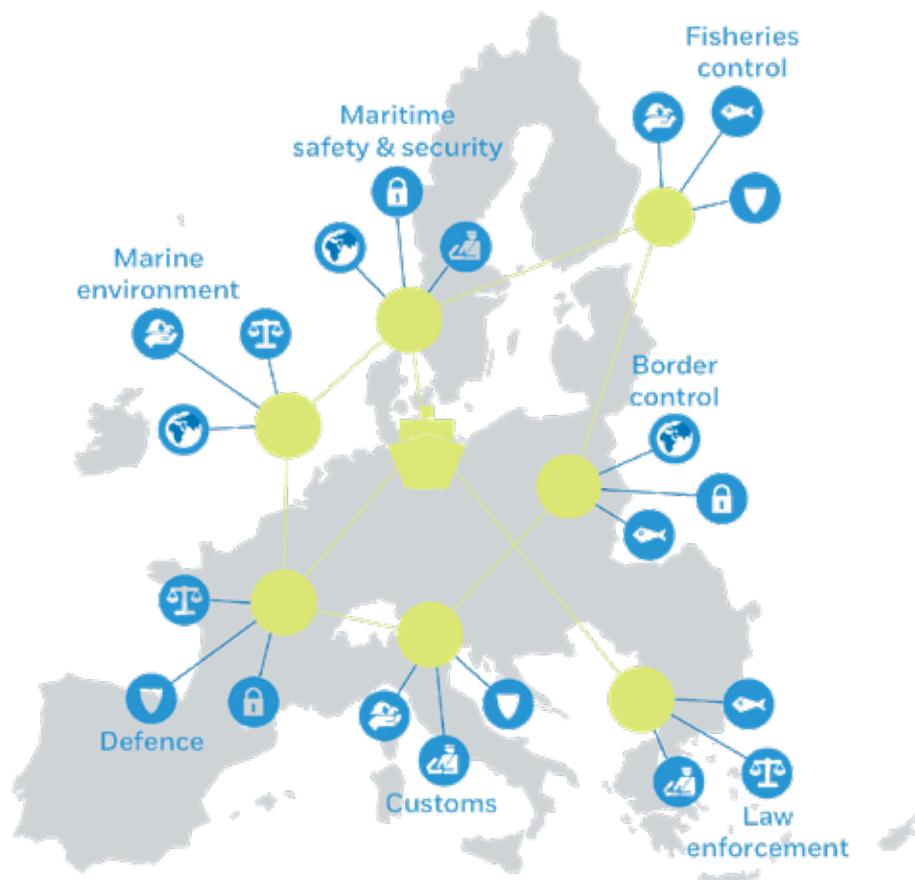
For ships, the Agency will continue to maintain the THETIS eCertificates module, enabling Member States to exchange information on ship certificates in support of port State control inspections and flag State responsibilities. New work arising from recent legislative developments will focus on defining technical requirements and completing the design phase for an optional EU level solution to facilitate the issuance and verification of digital ship certificates, particularly for Member States without existing national systems.

INTEROPERABLE INFORMATION SHARING THROUGH CISE

The Common Information Sharing Environment, known as CISE, is a cooperation network enabling maritime authorities from different sectors to securely exchange surveillance information on a voluntary basis. It supports sectors including safety, security, customs, fisheries control, border management, environmental protection and maritime transport.

In 2026, the Agency will continue coordinating the operational phase of CISE. This will include maintaining and evolving the technical systems used for connectivity and interoperability, fostering operational exchanges between users and delivering training, exercises and best practice workshops.

A key milestone during the year will be the establishment of the first classified network enabling the secure exchange of information up to EU RESTRICTED level. This development enables improved cooperation between civilian, law enforcement and military authorities and enables CISE to support sensitive operational use cases such as the protection of critical maritime infrastructure.



CISE enables secure, interoperable cross-border information sharing between maritime authorities, across civilian and military domains, connecting directly with existing national legacy systems.



DIGITALISATION

Digital systems are integral to how maritime authorities track vessel movements, enforce legislation and share information. As maritime operations become more connected and data-driven, the demand for reliable, interoperable platforms continues to grow.

In 2026, the Agency will build on this foundation by strengthening the digital services that support safety, security, environmental protection and regulatory compliance. The focus will be on continuing the move of its maritime applications to the cloud for improving interoperability across systems, making services easier to use and ensuring the digital architecture can support new regulatory and operational requirements as they emerge. Migration of maritime applications to cloud environments will continue, subject to resource availability, with the goal of improving system resilience, scalability and interoperability.

Much of this work will involve established platforms such as SafeSeaNet, Integrated Maritime Services (IMS) and the THETIS family of inspection and reporting tools. At the same time, new functionalities will be implemented stemming from the Maritime Safety Package, and preparations will continue for the future European Maritime Awareness Centre (EMAC).

INTEGRATED MARITIME SERVICES AND SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

The Agency will continue operating and developing Integrated Maritime Services, which provide authorities with a single operational picture by combining vessel tracking, behavioural analysis, Earth Observation data and contextual layers such as weather or operational alerts.

IMS is widely used across the EU because it reduces duplication of monitoring systems and enables faster, coordinated responses at national and cross-border level. In practice, this means authorities can detect abnormal behaviour earlier, respond more quickly to emergencies and work with a shared, verified information base.

In 2026, improvements will focus on user experience, expanded mobile access and strengthened connections with national platforms. Automated Behaviour Monitoring models will continue to evolve and cooperation will progress on shared tools assisting search and rescue, including drift-modelling capabilities. Alerts received through the COSPAS-SARSAT distress beacon system will remain integrated into the service.

SAFESEANET AND CORE MARITIME DATABASES

SafeSeaNet will remain the EU's central maritime information exchange system, ensuring secure and continuous data flows between national authorities.

Enhancements will also continue to reference databases holding ship particulars, dangerous goods data, port information and geographic reference points. These datasets are essential for harmonised information across different information systems.

DIGITAL TOOLS FOR MONITORING AND ENFORCEMENT

The Agency will continue maintaining the digital platforms used to support inspections and verification activities under EU law. This includes:

- THETIS modules supporting port State control, environmental inspections, ship recycling and animal welfare checks
- THETIS-MRV and emissions trading, supporting emissions reporting and compliance under the EU Emissions Trading System
- FuelEU Maritime digital workflows supporting compliance and documentation
- New tools linked to the revised Ship-Source Pollution Directive, including early elements of an electronic reporting system, a whistle-blower channel and a platform giving public access to non-confidential information.
- Helpdesk support, structured training and iterative system improvements will continue based on feedback from national administrations and EU users.

EUROPEAN MARITIME AWARENESS CENTRE

Work will also continue towards establishing the European Maritime Awareness Centre (EMAC) under the Agency's revised mandate. The centre will gradually introduce more advanced analytical services, automated processing and strengthened operational support. Once fully operational, it will provide round-the-clock support to Member States and the European Commission.



Building on the former Maritime Support Services centre, the European Maritime Awareness Centre will further strengthen integrated maritime surveillance and situational awareness at EU level.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND CAPACITY BUILDING



In 2026, the Agency will continue supporting Member States, enlargement countries and partner regions in strengthening the implementation of EU maritime legislation and international standards. This work combines technical assistance, structured learning services, visits and inspections, and targeted capacity building projects. The overall objective is to promote consistent implementation of the maritime regulatory framework, strengthen institutional capability and contribute to safer, cleaner and more efficient maritime transport within and beyond the European Union. This support will also reflect new requirements linked to the revised Agency mandate and the evolving regulatory landscape, particularly in areas affected by digitalisation, decarbonisation and the adoption of new EU legislation such as the Maritime Safety Package.

RECOGNITION AND OVERSIGHT OF CLASSIFICATION SOCIETIES

Classification societies, acting as recognised organisations, carry out statutory inspections and certification on behalf of flag States. In 2026, the Agency will continue to assist the European Commission and Member States in the recognition and oversight of these organisations under EU law.

This support will focus on the implementation of the agreed annual inspection programme, including inspections of recognised organisation offices, as well as inspections related to new applications for EU recognition, where requested. The Agency will also provide technical assistance in the periodic assessment of the quality assessment and certification entity provided for by Article 11 of Regulation (EC) No. 391/2009.

In this context, the Agency will prepare draft assessment reports, support follow-up actions, promote consistent implementation of the regulatory framework, and organise a workshop with Member States dedicated to monitoring and oversight activities. Under the revised mandate, the Agency may be requested to provide technical assistance to the Commission on possible remedial measures or the imposition of fines. This work promotes a consistent application of EU rules, fair competition, and higher levels of maritime safety and pollution prevention.

SEAFARER TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION SYSTEMS

Ensuring that seafarers working on EU Member State flagged vessels are qualified and certified in line with EU and international requirements remains a key activity. In 2026, the Agency will conduct inspections in third countries and continue visiting Member States to monitor implementation of the Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping (STCW) framework.

These activities help support harmonised interpretation of requirements, improve consistency and strengthen the level playing field across the EU.

IMPLEMENTATION OF EU MARITIME LEGISLATION

The Agency's visits to Member States remain an important mechanism for assessing how maritime legislation is applied in practice. In 2026, planned visits will continue to cover areas including passenger ship safety and port reception facilities for ship-generated waste. The Agency may carry out additional visits at the request of the European Commission.

These visits provide Member States with targeted feedback and technical support, while enabling the Commission to gather structured evidence on implementation practices, emerging trends, and common challenges. The findings contribute to identifying areas where regulatory adjustments, additional guidance, or further harmonisation may be required.

LEARNING SERVICES AND THE EMSA ACADEMY

The EMSA Academy will continue expanding its portfolio of certified learning services designed to assist staff working in flag State, port State and coastal State roles. Training programmes will follow the Harmonised Training Programme established through a needs analysis carried out with Member States and are delivered within a quality-managed framework aligned with ISO learning service principles.

In 2026, the portfolio will include Common Core Curricula, part-time courses, short courses and microlearning modules. Microlearning will play an increasing role as a flexible format supporting emerging or rapid training needs. New learning services will be developed in areas where regulatory updates require new competencies, including environmental compliance under the revised Ship-Source Pollution Directive and possible new pathways for flag State surveyors, depending on the outcome of the 2025 mapping exercise. Subject to availability of volunteering host States, a pilot exchange programme will also take place, offering hands-on, practical experience to complement formal learning.

Digital tools such as the MaKCs e-learning system and the Virtual Reality Environment for Ship Inspections will continue to be supported and expanded, including through the integration of artificial intelligence-based features. RuleCheck will also remain a core training and reference tool and will be further enhanced, including the introduction of automated notifications on legislative updates.

EMSA will continue providing structured training to Port State Control Memoranda of Understanding, including the Paris MoU and regional MoUs in the Mediterranean and Black Sea. Its capacity building tools (MaKCs and RuleCheck) will continue to support the daily work of Port State Control Officers around the world.

A new study – MARCOMPASS – will also be the focus of the work in 2026, aiming at mapping evolving competencies and emerging maritime administration job profiles in light of decarbonisation, alternative fuels, automation and digital oversight tools. Findings will help guide future training priorities.

CAPACITY BUILDING AND REGIONAL COOPERATION

Working with neighbouring regions remains an important part of the Agency's role. In 2026, the Agency will continue delivering the SAFEMED V and BCSEA II projects, which help partner countries in the Mediterranean, Black Sea and Caspian Sea regions strengthen their maritime administrations and apply international standards more effectively. Activities will include practical workshops, joint exercises, help with bringing international maritime rules into national law and access to Agency tools and learning services. SAFEMED V will continue supporting the use of THETIS-MED and the Dynamic Overview of National Administration (DONA) platform, as well as the work related to the adoption of the Paris MoU Ship Risk Profile by the MED MoU. BCSEA II will focus on targeted assistance to Ukraine. Preparations will also advance for the possible new BCSEA III project expected to start in 2027.

The Agency will also continue assisting enlargement and potential candidate countries through the IPA III programme. Support may include help with aligning national legislation with EU maritime rules, training, mock audit exercises and access to tools and services developed by the Agency. The DONA platform will assist participating countries by helping authorities clearly map responsibilities, identify gaps and track progress, contributing to more effective and coordinated maritime governance over time.

PARTNERSHIPS AND INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION



In 2026, the Agency will continue to foster cooperation at EU and international level in line with its mandate, contributing to the effective and consistent implementation of EU maritime legislation and to the promotion of EU maritime standards. This work reflects the inherently global nature of maritime transport and the increasing role of maritime activities in supporting wider EU public policy objectives, including safety, security, environmental protection and integrated maritime governance.

The Agency's activities will promote the coherent application of EU maritime rules in an international operating environment, in particular by reinforcing cooperation with other EU agencies and bodies, engaging with relevant international organisations within the scope of its technical expertise, and contributing to EU external action where requested.

This will include the provision of technical assistance, operational know-how, shared tools and data services, and capacity-building support, notably for partner countries in neighbouring regions and enlargement countries. These activities will be carried out in support of the European Commission and in coordination with Member States, contributing to safer, cleaner and more resilient maritime transport while respecting the Agency's regulatory and operational remit.

EUROPEAN COOPERATION ON COAST GUARD FUNCTIONS

The Agency will continue contributing to European cooperation on coast guard functions together with the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA) and the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex). This cooperation assists national authorities across a wide range of functions, including maritime safety, law enforcement, border management, environmental protection, fisheries control and search and rescue.

Cooperation is implemented through the Tripartite Working Arrangement (TWA), which provides the overarching framework for joint action. The TWA is guided by a jointly agreed Annual Strategic Plan, setting shared priorities and ensuring coordinated delivery across the three agencies.

In 2026, the Agency will implement the tasks agreed under the TWA Annual Strategic Plan. Planned activities include support to information sharing, surveillance and communication services, capacity-building initiatives, risk analysis and the coordination of operational assets. In this context, the Agency will continue leading or contributing to Multipurpose Maritime Operations, which allow maritime authorities in the same region to rely on shared surveillance, response and data services when appropriate, thereby improving interoperability between authorities and systems.

These activities will focus on strengthening operational cooperation, enhancing information sharing and supporting maritime authorities during Multipurpose Maritime Operations. The Agency will also continue contributing to broader strategic actions related to surveillance, resilience and preparedness, in line with its legal mandate. This includes supporting the use of CISE as a secure channel for operational-level maritime information exchange across sectors and between Member States.

As the current holder of the rotating chairmanship of the TWA from mid-2025 to mid-2026, EMSA is coordinating the activities under the Annual Strategic Plan. As part of this role, the Agency will coordinate the joint European Coast Guard Event and support participation in relevant European and international maritime initiatives. Activities will continue to improve cooperation between national authorities, enhance interoperability between systems and services, and support implementation of the EU Maritime Security Strategy and its Action Plan. Where relevant, this work will also contribute to wider EU policy frameworks related to maritime resilience and collective situational awareness.

COOPERATION WITH EU AGENCIES AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

In 2026, the Agency will continue providing tools, services and operational support to other EU agencies and international organisations. This includes surveillance, vessel tracking and Earth Observation products made available under the Copernicus Maritime Surveillance service, alongside tailored information services developed under existing cooperation frameworks.

Under the service agreement with EFCA, the Agency will further develop IMS to support fisheries monitoring and control. Additional services may include RPAS operations and pollution response equipment subject to agreement and available resources.

Under the cooperation arrangement with Frontex, tailored maritime services will continue to be provided in support of border surveillance, situational awareness and risk analysis needs. The Agency will also continue sharing satellite imagery related to suspected pollution cases and supporting participation in operational exercises when requested.

These cooperation frameworks help make better use of resources and avoid duplication across the EU maritime surveillance landscape. Where appropriate, the Agency will also support cooperation with other EU operational partners, including Europol, the Maritime Analysis and Operations Centre (Narcotics) and the Emergency Response Coordination Centre, contributing to a more coherent EU operational picture across maritime surveillance and information services.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS

The Agency will continue supporting the European Commission and Member States in international forums including the IMO and the International Labour Organisation. Contributions will focus on technical matters such as maritime safety, labour conditions for seafarers and the prevention of pollution from ships as well as on supporting the effective implementation of agreed international rules.

Engagement with regional organisations, forums and memoranda of understanding on port State control will continue, helping promote consistent implementation of international standards and supporting information exchange. The Agency will also maintain cooperation with the European Space Agency in areas related to satellite surveillance, environmental monitoring and the assessment and operational use of emerging technologies.

Digital maritime information platforms developed at EU level, such as Equasis, will continue to be supported in cooperation with international signatories, helping promote transparency and improved knowledge-sharing in the global maritime sector.

EXTERNAL CAPACITY BUILDING

In line with EU policy priorities and established procedures, the Agency may contribute to capacity building initiatives in non-EU countries when requested by the European Commission. Such activities may focus on supporting maritime safety and environmental protection, implementation of international conventions or strengthening institutional capabilities. Any new request will be assessed in terms of relevance, resource implications and alignment with EU policy frameworks and the Agency's mandate.

PEOPLE AND CORPORATE SERVICES



Corporate services underpin the Agency's technical and operational activities by ensuring efficient administration, sound governance and effective people management. In 2026, these services will continue to support EMSA's expanding portfolio of tasks, in line with the revised mandate and the Maritime Safety Package.

As the Agency's responsibilities increase, ensuring the availability of appropriate skills and expertise will be essential. Additional staff and financial resources available in 2026 will support the first year of implementation of the revised Founding Regulation.

Recruitment, staff mobility, and learning and development activities will be managed in a forward-looking manner, supporting both the integration of new expertise and the continuous development of existing staff.

Corporate services will also continue to support staff by fostering an inclusive working environment and well-being. Attention to gender balance, geographical diversity and equal opportunities will remain integral to human resources policies, in line with the Agency's diversity and inclusion framework and EU principles.

In parallel, corporate services will ensure sound administrative and financial management, supporting the efficient use of resources and compliance with the applicable EU legal framework, including support for the strengthened role of the Management Board in strategic oversight, staffing, and resource planning.

In line with EMSA's sustainability objectives, the Agency will aim to reduce its environmental footprint. These efforts are embedded in the Agency's environmental management system and the continued application of recognised ISO standards.



ABOUT THE EUROPEAN MARITIME SAFETY AGENCY

The European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) is one of the European Union's decentralised agencies, based in Lisbon. Its mission is to promote a high and consistent level of maritime safety and security across the EU, support the prevention of and response to marine pollution, and contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emissions from shipping. EMSA also supports the digital transformation of the maritime sector by facilitating electronic data exchange, reducing administrative burden, and providing integrated maritime surveillance and situational awareness services to the European Commission and EU Member States, contributing to a safe, clean and sustainable maritime sector in the EU.

© European Maritime Safety Agency, 2026

Photo credits: Images: European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA), Adobe Stock, Shutterstock and Getty Images.



Get in touch for more information

European Maritime Safety Agency

Praça Europa 4
Cais do Sodré
1249-206 Lisboa
Portugal

Tel +351 21 1209 200 / Fax +351 21 1209 210

emsa.europa.eu

