

**SafeSeaNet Group meeting no. 21**  
**Agenda item V**  
**8 May 2014**

**SSN 21/5/3 (v.1.00)**  
**Lisbon, 8 April 2014**

## **STATUS AT NATIONAL LEVEL**

### **Audit on Maritime Support Services in EMSA**

#### **Submitted by EMSA**

<i>Summary</i>	Presents the outcome of the audit carried out by the Internal Audit Service of the Commission and the subsequent action plan to address the recommendations.
<i>Action to be taken</i>	As per paragraph 3
<i>Related documents</i>	a. IAS Audit Report b. Associated Action Plan

## **1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

This paper presents the results of the audit of the EMSA Maritime Support Services (MSS) that was carried out by the Internal Audit Service (IAS) of the European Commission from 16-20 September 2013. In line with IAS recommendations, this paper identifies a number of follow up actions linked to Member States.

The scope of the audit, a brief description of the audited activities and the major observations and recommendations are summarised in Annex I. The Action Plan for EMSA as agreed with the IAS to address the recommendations is in Annex II.

## **2. ACTIONS REQUIRING MS INVOLVEMENT**

Two main topics were raised by the IAS. The first related to the annual SSN Member State Status Reports, after it was found that around one third of Member States either do not provide the requested feedback within the suggested time period or do not provide it at all. In its findings, the IAS stated that *"any failure of a Member State to react to issues highlighted in the status report concerning data quality in SSN may call into question the reliability and accuracy of the system as the main tool for vessel monitoring in European waters."*

Directive 2002/59/EC (as amended) also includes the following similar statement (paragraph 18 of the introduction): *"The effectiveness of this Directive depends greatly on the Member States enforcing its implementation strictly."*

As SafeSeaNet is the EU platform for exchanging ships' information as defined in different Directives, it is clear that the auditors see the main weakness as being the lack of an accurate, timely and complete information supply from data providers. They see

that this slows down the continuous quality improvement that should be evident as a result of the other MS and EMSA efforts.

As a result, **Member States are invited** to take appropriate actions to address the reported data quality issues and provide feedback on all reports.

Regarding the second topic, the IAS suggested that *"the Agency should consider drafting common operational procedures to define the control mechanisms on data quality in SSN and have them adopted by the HLSG"*.

The existing "Common Operational Procedures" (COPs) agreed by the SSN Group are not fully enforced at MS level despite the fact that there has been a significant positive evolution over the years.

In order to reinforce the importance of the COPs, and of the commitment of the Member States, it is intended that they should be adopted by the HLSG, in line with the IAS recommendation.

### **3. ACTION REQUIRED**

Member States are invited to note the information provided.

Attachments:

Annex I: Summary of the MSS audit report

Annex II: Action Plan

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## **ANNEX I. SUMMARY OF THE MSS AUDIT REPORT**

### **(Extracts from the final report)**

#### **1. SCOPE OF THE AUDIT**

The objective of the audit was to assess the performance of MSS from the perspective of organisation, management and efficiency of the service delivery. The IAS audit covered primarily the following aspects related to the functioning of MSS:

- Set-up, organisation and procedural framework of the entity.
- Principal processes/tasks in line with the definitions detailed in the EMSA Work Programme 2013 as follows:
  - Ensuring the availability of EMSA maritime applications through a 24/7 help desk, application monitoring and first level incident management, as well as contact point for activation of emergence assistance in case of an accident or incident at sea.
  - Safeguarding data quality and compliance with vessel and incident reporting requirements in the key applications, notably SafeSeaNet, LRIT and CleanSeaNet.
  - Support operation of vessel traffic monitoring and maritime surveillance pilot projects.

#### **2. AUDIT CONCLUSION**

Overall, the audit showed that the EMSA Maritime Support Services (MSS) and its help desk function effectively as an entity and delivers the services expected from it in an efficient manner. This is demonstrated by a clear organisational structure and division of tasks and responsibilities, well documented procedures including key controls and measures to ensure business continuity, regular management reporting on activities and performance, and staff with adequate professional background, both IT and maritime.

Nevertheless, the audit also identified areas with room for improvement. This is the case as regards performance measurement and the need to develop more comprehensive key performance indicators. Similarly, the number and age profile of pending tickets at the help desk need to be monitored more actively and tackled in a timely fashion to avoid long-standing open issues. Finally, the Agency needs to raise the awareness of Member States regarding the importance of good data quality in the maritime applications.

#### **3. USER SATISFACTION SURVEY ON MSS**

The audit field work was preceded by a user satisfaction survey on MSS. The objective was to learn how the users of the EMSA maritime applications perceive the service provided by the MSS help desk, as well as possible suggestions to improve the service level in the future. The survey was planned in cooperation between the IAS and EMSA but launched and carried out in the name of the IAS.

The results of the survey showed a high level of user satisfaction with the MSS and its roles as the help desk and a contact point for maritime emergencies. This is in line with the results of the audit and confirms the perception of MSS and its help desk as a mature service, which functions effectively and largely meets the expectations of its stakeholders. Some of the comments provided by the survey respondents could also be useful as suggestions for improving of the service in the future.

#### **4. MAJOR OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Five recommendations were issued by the IAS as shown below (only the last one referred to the SSN system, EMSA and the MS which text is included at the end of this section). The summary of the other recommendations follows:

**Recommendation N.1: Expand the KPIs for MSS.**

**EMSA should** include the number of SSN Status Reports that MSS issues every year for each MS. In addition, EMSA shall undertake a survey assessing/measuring the users' perception of MSS as a help desk for EMSA maritime applications. It will be included in the draft 2015 Work Programme. The survey will be repeated on a regular basis (every 2 years).

**Recommendation N° 2 - Calculation of average time for processing tickets<sup>1</sup>.**

MSS KPIs reflects the average reaction time for requests reaching the MSS. This calculation should be reflected in a procedure and be accompanied by measures to ensure the completeness of the underlying data.

**Recommendation N° 3 - Monitoring of open issues/tickets.**

The IAS detected a high number of tickets that were waiting for a response. MSS is tasked to reduce this figure to the minimum necessary by updating its own procedures, warning EMSA teams whenever there is an abnormal delay in responding, etc.

**Recommendation N° 4 - Evaluating the workload of the MSS help desk.**

MSS shall evaluate by mid-2014 its workload, as planned, with the objective to ensure optimal balance between the number of staff on duty and the corresponding workload as well as the distribution of the workload between shifts.

Under the heading “**REPORTING ON DATA QUALITY**” the IAS indicated the following:

##### **Background information**

*As stated in the Directive 2002/59/EC, the main objective of SafeSeaNet (SSN) is to provide a European platform for maritime data exchange between maritime administrations in the Member States (MS), which is necessary to ensure the Union legislation in the area of vessel traffic monitoring. It comprises a network of national SSN-systems in the MS and a central SSN-system hosted by EMSA, which constitutes a nodal point to interact with the national systems. Regarding data quality in SSN, article 14 states that MS shall cooperate to ensure the interconnection and interoperability of the national systems used to manage the information.*

*The data in SSN consists primarily of coordinates for ship positions, data on the ships' routes such as pre-arrival, arrival and departure details important to the port of call, information on any dangerous and polluting goods on board, and incidents and accidents reports.*

*According to SSN IFCD, the responsibility for monitoring the data quality of the information exchanged through SSN lies with the MSS. For practical implementation, the MSS duty officers review the data provided by each national SSN-system every 24 days and subsequently report by e-mail on the results of their analysis to the MS in question. This*

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<sup>1</sup> MSS employs a ticketing tool to track and aggregate all the exchanged information/communication with MSS stakeholders. Each ticket has a unique number reflected in the “subject” of the email.

*report ("Data Quality Monthly Report") regularly includes suggestions for follow-up actions and requests for clarifications if necessary. For ensuring data quality in SSN at the MS level, the IFCD (section 4.6) explicitly states that MS should set in place appropriate control mechanisms to investigate data quality issues that affect more than 0.1 % of the reports per month.*

*In addition to the monthly reporting, an annual status report per MS summarises the main issues/findings associated with SSN implementation at the national level. The report is signed by the Head of Unit of C.2. ("Vessel Traffic and Reporting Services ") and sent to the competent authority of each MS. The report is based on the review of the quality of the data provided by the MS during one month. The MS are asked to reply to the status report within one month from the issuance of the report. MSS acknowledges the receipt of the reply by e-mail and, where necessary, asks for further clarifications regarding the issues addressed in the report, or provides instructions for how to improve data quality in the future.*

### **Finding**

*A review of the latest status reports (all 24 MS participating in SSN) showed that eight MSs had not provided a formal reply to the report - this despite the fact that the cover note accompanying the report suggests that such a reply should be sent within one month. No measures had been taken by MSS to remind the countries in question.*

### **Current risk**

*Any failure of a member state to react to issues highlighted in the status report concerning data quality in SSN may call into question the reliability and accuracy of the system as the main tool for vessel monitoring in European waters. It may also slow down the efforts for continuous quality improvement undertaken by MSS since the start of SSN in 2007 and which for most MS have produced significant results, as evidenced by the status reports over the years.*

### **Recommendation N°5 - Following up the status reports on SSN sent to MS**

*The Agency should review the procedure for the annual status reports on data quality in SSN and complete it with steps for sending reminders, signed by the Head of Operations (Department C) or the Executive Director, to a MS that neglects to provide a formal reply to the report. As a proactive measure, the cover notes accompanying the status reports should be reviewed with the objective of emphasising the importance of active cooperation and responsibility of all MS participating in SSN, especially with regard to continuous improvement of data quality.*

*For raising the profile of data quality in the system, the Agency should consider drawing up comparative reports on the data quality in SSN and presenting them at the meetings of the High Level Steering Group (HLSG) of SSN. The Agency should give more visibility to the annual summary report on data quality in SSN by formalising it and making it available to a wider audience.*

*Finally, the Agency should consider drafting common operational procedures to define the control mechanisms on data quality in SSN and have them adopted by the HLSG.*

## ANNEX II. ACTION PLAN

REC. N°	TITLE/PRIORITY	ACTION PLAN	TARGET DATE	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	REC. N°
1	Expanding the KPIs of the MSS / Important	<p>The Annual Work Programmes detail the Key Performance Indicators (KPI) of the Agency.</p> <p>In order to measure the level of "data quality" monitoring, a new KPI will be added to the draft 2015 Work Programme regarding the minimum number of reports to be issued by the MSS on the quality of Member States' SSN data.</p> <p>The 2015 Work Programme is expected to be adopted by the EMSA Administrative Board in November 2014.</p>	2015	Head of Unit C2	1
		<p>The proposal to undertake a survey assessing/measuring the users' perception of MSS as a help desk for EMSA maritime applications will be included in the draft 2015 Work Programme. It will be proposed to repeat the survey on a regular basis (every 2 years).</p> <p>The 2015 Work Programme is expected to be adopted by the EMSA Administrative Board in November 2014.</p>	2015	Head of Unit C2	1
2	Calculation of average time for processing tickets / Important	<p>The Agency has refined the formula regarding the calculation of the average time for feedback or resolution of issues related to emergencies, incidents in maritime applications or urgent help desk requests.</p> <p>The calculation of the average values should be accompanied by measures to ensure the completeness of the underlying data. An appropriate procedure will be developed.</p>	<p>Implemented in 2013 (4<sup>th</sup> quarter).</p> <p>New procedure adopted by end of 1<sup>st</sup> quarter 2014.</p>	MSS Coordinator	2

REC. N°	TITLE/PRIORITY	ACTION PLAN	TARGET DATE	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	REC. N°
3	Monitoring of open issues/tickets / Important	In order to regularly analyse the status and origin of pending tickets, especially the aging ones, it is proposed to issue an initial review of all "active" tickets, their status and age profile.	March 2014	MSS Coordinator	3
		<p>Following the above mentioned review, the MSS will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify/define the appropriate metrics to be measured;</li> <li>Revise, where appropriate the current procedure for monitoring and timely resolution of pending tickets; and</li> </ul> <p>Having established the relevant metrics, the MSS will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inform those EMSA application teams to which the tickets have been escalated, the status of pending tickets on a monthly basis. This action will be reflected in the procedure for monitoring pending tickets.</li> </ul>	<p>April 2014 (for indicators)</p> <p>June 2014 onwards (procedure revision and reporting)</p>	MSS Coordinator	3
4	Evaluating the workload of the MSS help desk / Important	<p>Evaluating the workload of the MSS help desk with the objective to ensure optimal balance between the number of staff on duty and the corresponding workload as well as the distribution of the workload between shifts:</p> <p>The note proposing the new MSS set-up (dated 22/01/2013) recommended that there be an evaluation of its implementation after being in operation for one year. The new set-up was applied in April 2013.</p> <p>Accordingly, the associated evaluation report will be issued mid-2014.</p> <p>A similar assessment shall be carried out whenever a significant change on the responsibilities and tasks of the MSS has been implemented.</p>	Mid- 2014	Head of Unit C2	4

REC. N°	TITLE/PRIORITY	ACTION PLAN	TARGET DATE	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	REC. N°
5	Following up the Status Reports on SSN sent to MS / Important	<p>The Agency will review the current procedure regarding the annual status reports on MS data quality in SSN.</p> <p>Modifications to the procedure will include, as a minimum steps for sending reminders and the revision of the cover note accompanying the reports. Associated template shall be updated appropriately.</p>	<p>April 2014 for the updated procedure</p> <p>SSN representatives to be informed (SSN Group and HLSG)</p> <p>July 2014 for its implementation</p>	Head of Unit C2 Chairman of the SSN Group	5
		<p>To raise the profile of the importance of MS data quality in the SSN system, the Agency will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Revise the structure of the report on individual MS data quality in SSN</li> </ul> <p>The Agency will enhance the visibility to the annual summary report on data quality in SSN. Accordingly, the following actions will be proposed to the stakeholders concerned:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The summary report, as currently presented at SSN Group Workshops, on SSN implementation and data quality will be revised to highlight the open issues, including a comparative tables.</li> <li>A similar report shall be presented at the subsequent HLSG (usually 1 or 2 months later).</li> <li>Appropriate extracts will be included in the EMSA Annual Activity Report as, adopted by the Administrative Board.</li> </ul>	<p>May 2014: SSN Group Workshop to be informed of approach</p> <p>July 2014: HLSG to be informed of approach</p> <p>2014 Annual Activity Report published in mid-2015.</p>	<p>MSS Coordinator Chairman of the SSN Group</p> <p>Head of Unit C2</p> <p>Head of Unit C2</p>	5
		To fulfil the recommendation on drafting common operational procedures to define the control mechanisms on data quality in SSN and have them adopted by the HLSG, it is proposed to present these procedures at the next HLSG meeting for agreement.	Next HLSG meeting (July 2014)	Head of Unit C2 MSS Coordinator	5