

## EMSA Consolidated Annual Activity Report 2023

### Assessment by the EMSA Administrative Board

The Administrative Board's assessment covers three main areas: strategic achievements, operational achievements and the management of the Agency. The assessment takes into account the relevant legal, strategic, and resource framework, as well the applicable annual work programme.

The Administrative Board appreciates the structure of the Consolidated Annual Activity Report 2023 which reflects that of the EMSA Single Programming Document 2023-2025.

Each activity is clearly linked to its legal basis and placed in strategic context through references to the relevant articles of the EMSA Founding Regulation and to the relevant objectives of the EMSA 5-year Strategy. This demonstrates the consistency of the annual activities with the tasks assigned by the legislator and the strategic outlook adopted by the Administrative Board. Furthermore, the allocation of budget and staff to each activity clarifies relative impact on resources.

### A) EMSA's strategic achievements in 2023

The EMSA 5-year Strategy 2020-2024 on which the Single Programming Document 2023-2025 was based, established EMSA's strategic priorities in the areas of Sustainability, Surveillance, Safety, Security and Simplification - the "5 S" – as well as Digitalisation and Technical & Operational Assistance. This 5-year Strategy reflects the important role played by EMSA to support the Commission priorities in EU policy areas related to the seas in order to strengthen Europe's competitiveness, sustainable growth and Blue economy, as well as contribute to the EU's security agenda and international profile.

The EMSA Single Programming Document 2023-2025 and the concrete actions planned under each of the "5 S" for 2023 were aligned with the strategic priorities of the 5-year Strategy. The Administrative Board welcomes the fact that the CAAR provides clear examples of EMSA's achievements that contribute to the realisation of the multi-annual strategic priorities or "5 S" and the underlying 36 multi-annual strategic objectives.

The Administrative Board noted that overall, EMSA implemented the actions planned, and by that made progress towards achieving the strategic priorities of the Agency.

In our view, the present report addresses the key deliverables of the Agency in 2023 and demonstrates that the objectives set, in particular for the five strategic priorities were met.

The highlights of the strategic achievements in each work area in 2023 are outlined below.

# Sustainability

Strategic priority:

Contribute to the European Green agenda for maritime transport by strengthening the EU capacity to protect the marine environment, manage climate change and respond to new environmental challenges

## ***Strategic achievements in 2023:***

As knowledge hub and as the developer and provider of tools and services to support Member States' environmental enforcement efforts and the expert support to the Commission at the IMO, EMSA continues to be a reference point for the Commission and the Member States with its tools and technical expertise.

EMSA has been involved in initiatives related to the European Green Deal and provided support and data to the Commission and Member States. In particular, this support has been crucial in the process towards the final adoption of the proposals part of the "Fit for 55 package" such as the extension of the Emission Trading System (ETS) to maritime transport and the FuelEU Maritime Regulation. Under the dedicated Service Level Agreement with the Commission EMSA was able to deliver the first building blocks of the necessary enhancement in THETIS-MRV for new functionalities in support of the implementation of the legislation. At the same time, online seminars to raise awareness among users and other dissemination measures were ensured in close cooperation with the Commission. Similar assistance was also provided to the Commission in relation to the implementation of the FuelEU Maritime Regulation. Also, a Contribution Agreement was signed to ensure financial resources in support of the first specific IT developments for the FuelEU Compliance Database that needed to kick off before the formal adoption of the Regulation. Support was ensured in the drafting of several implementing and delegated acts both for the extension of the ETS and the FuelEU Maritime Regulations. In addition, EMSA continued to provide assistance for the implementation of Regulation (EU) 2015/757 and supported the Commission in the analysis of emissions data from the fourth reporting period. This resulted in the publication of the relevant report in March 2023 to inform the public and allow for an assessment of the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and the energy efficiency of maritime transport. These ongoing developments are effectively casting the Agency as the main provider of tools in support of the ongoing effort towards greener maritime shipping.

At international level, EMSA continued to assist the Commission and the Member States in relation to work on energy efficiency, carbon intensity and fuel lifecycle GHG intensity.

Technical work in support of the Commission and different stakeholders continued also on alternative fuels and sources of renewable energy, marine litter, underwater noise, the implementation of the revised Port Reception Facilities Directive, the Sulphur Directive and its enforcement, the Zero Pollution initiative, and Greenhouse Gases at international and European level thus confirming the commitment of the Agency towards sustainability goals and greener shipping. Throughout 2023 the Agency continued supporting the Commission in the evaluation of Directive 2005/35 on ship-source pollution and in the preparation of the Commission's proposal for amending such Directive, as part of the maritime safety package.

In the field of pollution response, the Agency follows a bottom-up approach to identify the services it offers to top up national capabilities. As a result, in 2023 a new contract for the delivery of hazardous and noxious substances (HNS) response equipment was concluded with the first orders for the 5 Equipment Assistance Service (EAS) arrangements. This equipment consists of an offloading system which will complement EMSA's toolbox providing Member States with a new capacity to respond to chemical incidents on board ships.

In addition, a new service for intermediate storage of oil was successfully contracted. With this new concept, EMSA will offer Member States additional storage capacity for use by national response vessels, by performing ship-to-ship (STS) transfer at the area of the pollution, thus maximising efficiency of the spill response operations.

Following public procurement procedures, the Agency maintained the existing service level of stand-by oil spill response vessels and EAS arrangements, covering all the European sea basins. One vessel contract in the Baltic Sea area and 2 EAS contracts in the Baltic Sea and in the North Sea were successfully signed. However, the Agency was not successful in contracting a vessel for the Canary Islands and Madeira, due to lack of available vessels in the area.

EMSA continued strengthening operational cooperation in the field of pollution preparedness and response at European level. This included the support to DG ECHO in the planning and execution of DBX EU MODEX discussion-based exercise. In addition, under the framework of the EFCA-EMSA Service Level Agreement (SLA), 2 EFCA chartered vessels, Ocean Sentinel and Ocean Guardian, were equipped and crew was trained for pollution response duties, under the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM).

Regarding support to Member States in case of a chemical incident, the MAR-ICE service providing expert information and advice is gaining momentum with Member States thanks to the recently introduced “information webinars” which help spread information to a wider number of response coordinators at national or local level on how to use the service and what support could be provided.

The Agency, together with the Commission, also maintained its close cooperation with the Secretariats of the European Regional Agreements through the annually held Inter-Secretariat meetings which provide a unique forum for sharing information and identifying common areas of work in the fields of marine pollution prevention and response.

## Surveillance

Strategic priority:

[Strengthen EMSA's role as the core information management hub for maritime surveillance](#)

### ***Strategic achievements in 2023***

EMSA Earth Observation services continued to develop and deliver surveillance capabilities in support of a wide range of use cases and services, with emphasis on CleanSeaNet, Copernicus Maritime Surveillance, support to Frontex under the existing SLA and the support to maritime emergencies at sea in the context of EMSA's contingency plan.

In 2023 new framework contracts for the acquisition of Synthetic Aperture Radar satellite licenses from Radarsat-2, TerraSAR-X and PAZ1 were concluded, establishing EMSA's capability to acquire services from these satellites for the coming years. Additionally, a new contract concerning oil spill thickness and volume estimation using satellite images from the Sentinel-2 constellation was awarded, which will further expand EMSA's support to Member States during emergencies involving large oil spills. Finally, the Artificial Intelligence (AI) for Earth Observation services project produced the first deliverables, linked with vessel detection from optical and Synthetic Aperture Radar, that will be deployed to a pre-operational phase in 2024 for further enhancements.

EMSA offered RPAS services to support maritime surveillance, Search and Rescue (SAR) and emissions monitoring, and is already a reference at EU and global level for the use of RPAS for maritime surveillance in the civil domain. In 2023, EMSA enhanced its regional strategy for

multipurpose maritime surveillance by serving multiple entities of more than one country and therefore promoting the efficient use of resources in support of coast guard functions. EMSA RPAS services were actively used in the EMSA Baltic 2023 MMO operations, further strengthening regional cooperation between participating authorities from Finland, Estonia and Latvia.

3 preliminary market consultations were concluded concerning: i) the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) applied to RPAS based sensors, ii) satellite based Radio Frequency data and services provision for Maritime Security and Surveillance and iii) oil spill volume estimation based on satellite images from Sentinel-2.

With respect to SAT-AIS data services, EMSA continued to provide global satellite AIS data services to end-users. To ensure continuity and optimise EMSA's SAT-AIS data service delivery EMSA successfully completed the procurement process for global real-time SAT-AIS data services which consist of 2 services one for primary low latency SAT-AIS services and the other for backup/supplementary and high-density SAT-AIS services.

EMSA continued to strengthen its cooperation with the European Space Agency (ESA) in support of EMSA's operational maritime activities in the field of integrated space-based solutions. Both Agencies have continued to identify ways on how to best leverage the use of space-based assets and technologies for enhancing maritime safety and surveillance services.

EMSA continued to promote the CISE initiative and the number of stakeholders who have joined the network has increased. The first set of operational services started to be implemented and the Sea Basin Strategy was launched.

## Safety & Security

Strategic priorities

Contribute to higher maritime safety standards, anticipate new maritime safety challenges and expectations, and provide knowledge-based solutions with the aim of contributing to the reduction of marine casualties and human loss

Strengthen maritime security in Europe and globally where there is a European interest

### ***Strategic achievements in 2023:***

The Agency confirmed and deepened its relevance as a key partner to the Commission and the Member States at EU and IMO level in the development of the necessary safety and standardisation framework. This was done both for traditional ship safety aspects like life-saving appliances or fire safety, and for innovative disrupting technologies such as new alternative energy systems for ships and autonomous systems, multi-dimensional safety aspects of electrical systems related to batteries or the carriage of electric vehicles on board ships. EMSA has actively supported the Commission and the Member States in the development of an adequate analysis framework to address existing safety and standardization gaps, including the drafting of best practices and guidance.

EMSA continued to run the notified bodies group technical secretariat and enhanced the EU MED Portal with new features. This is also reflected by the fact that several technical consultations were addressed to EMSA in relation to MED Market Surveillance. Finally, EQUASIS, to which EMSA is a contributing member and runs the Management Unit, continued to be a reference platform for ship related information, fostering quality shipping worldwide. In this respect, the Agency started the implementation of actions to modernise, improve and enhance the Equasis website, the statistics and the presentation of the budget.

EMSA continued to play an active role in the field of Accident Investigation acting as the Secretariat to the Permanent Cooperation Framework (PCF) of Accident Investigative Bodies (AIBs) and assisting its work related to better consideration of the Human Element in marine casualties by organising a workshop dedicated to this topic. The Agency also managed the EMCIP database and to facilitate the reporting obligations of Member States at international level, EMSA started the development of an interface between EMCIP and the new IMO portal on Marine Casualties. In addition, the Agency has been publishing an annual overview of marine casualties and incidents based on EMCIP data since 2014. It presents detailed statistics on marine casualties and incidents involving ships flying a flag of an EU Member State, accidents in the territorial sea and internal waters of Member States or wherever the interests of Member States are involved. Finally, EMSA started in 2023 the first operational support to Accident Investigation Bodies by providing underwater surveys based on Remotely Operated Vehicles (ROVs). EMSA carried out several operations at the request of Member States to observe and obtain footage of wrecks to support accident investigation.

In 2023 the Commission requested EMSA to provide technical support on several topics, including the revision of 3 safety Directives (AI, PSC and FS), analysis of IMO submissions proposing EU positions and the development of a study on the main safety aspects relevant for search and rescue operations at sea which is expected to be finalised in 2024. Given the steady increase in cyber-threats and cyber-attacks aimed at disrupting the maritime domain, the main stakeholders, i.e. industry, academies and governments, have acknowledged that more attention should be paid to this topic. EMSA established a Task Force to progress in the relevant work. Based on the Action Plan of the Task Force, several actions were concluded including the publication of the Guidance on how to address cybersecurity onboard ships during audits, controls, verifications and inspections. Moreover, a conference was organised with the main stakeholders in the EU on maritime cybersecurity including the Commission, ENISA, Member States, port authorities, industry and academia. This positioned the Agency as the main forum to discuss the associated challenges.

As concerns the Human Element, EMSA has worked at the side of the Commission and the Member States during the preliminary stages of the comprehensive review of the STCW Convention and Code at the IMO and has promoted the implementation of the MLC, 2006 Convention, providing training to ensure compliance and enforcement to both EU Member States and third countries.

With the objective of filling knowledge gaps emerging from the green and digital transformation of shipping in relation to the Human Element, the Agency published a study on the identification of competences for Maritime Autonomous Surface Ships (MASS) operators in remote operation centres (ROC) and launched a procurement aiming at a study on the identification of competences for new fuels.

## Digitalisation & Simplification

Strategic priority

[Facilitate the simplification of EU shipping by supporting EU-wide digital maritime solutions](#)

### ***Strategic achievements in 2023:***

As the main provider of the maritime picture in Europe, the Agency continued the development of its Integrated Maritime Services (IMS) producing comprehensive near real time maritime traffic visualization with the integration of new data, information and functionalities. In 2023 the number of users of IMS increased by 13% and counted 7.118 individuals while the number of operational bodies using IMS increased by 22 amounting to a total of 684 different organizations. IMS service was

delivered to 26 Member States, but also to Montenegro and 5 EU Agencies/Bodies covering an ever wider range of maritime functions including coastguard cooperation.

Based on the EMSA Cloud Strategy and Roadmap in 2023 the Agency finalized and adopted the new EMSA cloud native technological landscape and defined new standards and practices for IT development and operations required in order to provide benefits of cloud technologies to the user community in a cost-effective manner. The Maritime Picture in the cloud as envisaged by the 5-year strategy enables EMSA to offer to Member States a new generation of Integrated Maritime Services with more advanced analytical solutions and tactical applications for management and coordination of maritime operations while making it easier to expand and accommodate growing user communities.

Development of cloud based Long Term Storage and new advanced analytics capabilities continued together with interested Member States and EU Agencies/Bodies. During 2023, new Automated Behaviour Monitoring capabilities were deployed for fourteen additional algorithms enabling users to:

- gain global information on changes to ships' particulars and voyage related events;
- have access to a historical overview of detected ship-to-ship (STS) or at sea encounter events, drifting events and ship related events, analyse 'gaps' in vessels reporting positions.

This capability to generate information on a global level has proven key in the Agency's efforts to assist the Commission and the Member States in the monitoring of sanctions against the Russian Federation, with this information being fused together with other sources of information hosted by the Agency to provide early warnings to the Member States when vessels potentially subject to sanctions call the EU.

Based on the study on the development of machine learning (ML) and artificial intelligence (AI) for Integrated Maritime Services (IMS), in 2023 EMSA completed the pilot phase of 2 new IMS service components. The AI Maritime Awareness service component is designed to discover and record data from various sources to identify events affecting ships under EU flags or cargo transport bound to EU ports. It can also be used to support maritime incident reporting and risk assessment.

EMSA continued to further expand the IMS toolbox, including the search and rescue component. Based on the drift modelling guidelines for IMS, a proof of concept has been finalised of a SAR Drift Model which is made available for testing to Member States on a voluntary basis. This solution provides for modelling of predicted drifting of objects such as vessels or containers on the sea surface and is expected to support national search and rescue efforts, as well as to improve safety of navigation in general.

Coastal radar data interface specifications of the Integrated Maritime Services have been finalized and made available to the Member States. The Radar Data Exchange Interface Control Document was developed enabling Member States to integrate coastal radar tracks in the enhanced maritime picture. This will help them to benefit from AIS and radar data processing by the ABM services offered by EMSA.

Following preliminary analyses of the impact of AIS spoofing on the reliability of the maritime awareness picture performed by EMSA during 2023, the setup of a dedicated working group to address the AIS spoofing issue was agreed in December 2023.

Efforts to support the digitalisation/simplification of maritime transport within the context of the new SafeSeaNet (SSN v.5) continued. EMSA provided support to Member States in executing the commissioning tests and transition to operation of their national systems. The upgrade of national systems to version 5 progressed, with only 2 Member States pending the commissioning tests and expected to enter into operation in 2024.

Progress was made regarding the development of the Central Ships, Locations, HAZMAT and Organisations databases. The Central Ship Database is operational and integrated with the following

data sources via system-to-system communication: LRIT CDC (ship data from the LRIT ship database), THETIS (ship data from PSC inspections), SafeSeaNet (ship data from MRS notifications and Incident Reports) and the commercial data provider (information on commercial ships of 100 GT and above). SafeSeaNet is integrated with the Central Ship Database and uses it as reference for all ship identifiers and particulars data. The central geographical database was further improved. EMSA implemented a functionality that enables the display of areas associated with the different responsibilities of organisations (e.g. SAR area, VTS area and MRS area).

EMSA has elaborated in cooperation with experts of the Commission, the Member States and shipping industry's associations the European Maritime Single Window environment's (EMSWe) data set and Message Implementation Guide, which form a harmonised specification of the information exchanges between ship operators and the Maritime National Single Windows of the Member States. Such harmonisation should facilitate reporting and further reduce administrative burden, which is the objective of the EMSWe Regulation (EU) 2019/1239. EMSA also started the development of the common EMSWe ship, location and hazmat databases required by the EMSWe Regulation. These databases should enable the reuse of the information provided through the maritime National Single Windows and facilitate the submission of information by declarants.

On behalf of the Commission, EMSA also contributed to the elaboration on the IMO Compendium on Facilitation and Electronic Business which defines a harmonised worldwide reference data model for the electronic fulfilment of reporting obligations in Maritime Single Windows.

The traffic density mapping service continued to deliver several outcomes such as the development of the additional categories of maps.

The development and testing of solutions to facilitate the reporting procedures from ship to shore and improve the coastal stations' situational awareness continued in 2023. The "Integrated Reports Distribution" (IRD) tool proved that there is an untapped potential to simplify the work of both ships and coastal stations through the re-use of data and the "reporting once" principle allowing the reduction of voice communication.

In 2023, EMSA supported the EUREKA Consortium (consisting of representatives of the maritime administrations of Albania, Italy, Croatia, Greece, Montenegro, Slovenia and Bosnia and Herzegovina) in the implementation of technical solutions defined during the previous preparatory phase for modernising the IMO adopted Ship Reporting System (SRS) in the Adriatic Sea (ADRIREP).

EMSA continued hosting, operating, and maintaining the European Union LRIT Cooperative Data Centre (EU LRIT CDC) and the European Union LRIT Ship DB (EU LRIT Ship DB) on behalf the Commission and Participating Countries, i.e. EU Member States, Norway, Iceland, Montenegro, Georgia, and Tunisia. The Agency also continued hosting, operating, and maintaining the International LRIT Data Exchange (LRIT IDE), both Production and Developmental Testing environments, on behalf the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and SOLAS Contracting Governments.

EMSA's cooperation with EUROSTAT on Maritime statistics also progressed. The study on the use of SSN and other EMSA data for maritime statistics needs demonstrated that it is possible to use an estimation method based on EMSA data.

Under the framework of the new EFCA-EMSA Service Level Agreement signed in December 2022, a major overhaul of the EMSA IMS EFCA service continued, implementing and integrating horizontal solutions that benefit all EMSA IMS users, while allowing a degree of customisation needed for the fisheries control community. With more than 1.440 users, the IMS service for EFCA has become indispensable for the day-to-day fisheries control actions and can serve as a powerful back-up for national applications.

Since the signature in 2018 of the first Working Arrangement between Europol and EMSA, EMSA has been providing Integrated Maritime Services (IMS) to support Europol in the areas of law enforcement and organised crime activities at sea. Since October 2023 SSN details (HAZMAT, Bunkers, MRS, Security and Waste) are shared with Europol for a period of 1.

Under the EMSA MAOC (N) Cooperation Agreement, EMSA provides surveillance tools and services to MAOC (N) to support Europe's fight against drug trafficking in the Atlantic and Mediterranean maritime domain.

In late 2022, the EUNAVFOR Atalanta operation was extended to December 2024. The Cooperation Agreement was amended in May reflecting that Somalia was now a partner in the EUNAVFOR Atalanta operation. Since the end of December 2023, in relation to the increased hostile activities in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, EUNAVFOR is provided with relevant information.

Under the current EMSA-EUNAVFOR Med Cooperation Agreement, signed in November 2021, EMSA provides access to the IMS via the IVTMIS operation in the SafeSeaNet Ecosystem (SEG). Within the scope of the Cooperation Agreement, EUNAVFOR Med has access to T-AIS and SAT-AIS coverage from their area of interest to a global level since November 2023 for their monitoring of vessels coming from the Gulf of Aqaba and/or Russian ports.

EMSA continued to provide services to Frontex contributing to the protection of the EU's external border. The integrated maritime picture provided through IMS, Automated Behaviour Monitoring and Earth Observation services based on satellite imagery were shared with Frontex and EFCA with the required customisation in the framework of coast guard cooperation and specific bilateral Service Level Agreements.

With the objective of continuing to offer maritime digital services in support of the daily work of the competent authorities of the Member States in the domain of port state control and ship inspection, EMSA continued development and operation of THETIS and its modules in accordance with requirements of the legal acts and the user communities. Both inspection databases THETIS-PSC and THETIS-EU were fully operational. EMSA deployed 3 major releases of THETIS with 16 new features as well as 3 major releases of THETIS-EU with 9 new features, aiming to simplify the work of the inspectors and help shorten the duration and improve the quality of inspections.

The THETIS-EU Air Emission Service has fulfilled its objective by collecting emission measurements reported by EMSA's RPAS and EU Member States own-operated RPAS to the benefit of the Sulphur Inspection Community.

THETIS-MRV remained operational during the year 2023, allowing companies to declare 2022 emissions by the end of April 2023 and the data to become public beginning of July 2023.

Development of the enhancements to THETIS-MRV necessary to cater for the extension of the EU ETS to maritime transport and the revision of the EU maritime transport MRV Regulation were launched in 2023. The system has been enhanced with ETS-related functionalities to support new types of users (Administering Authorities), such as the new workflow for the approval of the Monitoring Plan, the partial reporting of emissions (in case a ship changes company), according to the Implementing Act published by the Commission in November 2023.

Preparatory work continued in relation to ship related eCertificates, using THETIS as the platform to store relevant information and to make them available to Member States in their capacity both as Flag and Port States. Availability of digital information on ships certificates readily available to Port State Control Officers within THETIS once horizontally implemented will significantly reduce the administrative burden on shipping and improve the efficiency of port state control activities.

THETIS-Animal Welfare continues to support the reporting of the control of livestock vessels and benefit competent authorities responsible for the enforcement of Regulation (EC) 1/2005, aimed at protecting the welfare of animals during transportation. In cooperation with DG SANTE, THETIS-

Animal Welfare was enhanced with the possibility to record full details of the “Certificate of Approval” as a basis for a mandatory enforcement check to be carried out by veterinary inspection authorities of the Member States. A statistical analysis module was developed for the benefit of DG SANTE and Member State Authorities.

The development of a new RPAS Data Centre was not completed as the contract was terminated by the contractor for economic reasons. The existing RPAS Data Centre service continued throughout 2023 with the same standard of quality as in previous years. EMSA completed a market study, identified alternatives and procured software licences with a view to setting up in 2024 a new type of solution for offering an information platform supporting RPAS operations.

## Technical & Operational Assistance

Strategic objectives

[Consolidate EMSA support to the Commission for the development of EU and international legal acts and for assessing their implementation](#)

[Extend and formalise EMSA training schemes](#)

[Support EU neighbourhood and sea basin policies to level-up and harmonise standards](#)

### ***Strategic achievements in 2023:***

The contribution of the Agency to the development and implementation of EU standards and regulations in the maritime sector is delivered through a programme of Visits and Inspections, corresponding reports and cumulative horizontal analyses. The continued focus on implementing the Methodology for Visits to Member States, as adopted by the EMSA Administrative Board, ensured that the Agency succeeded in reducing the administrative burden for Member States, developing and sharing best practices and lessons learnt, and strengthening the flow and exchange of information. The horizontal analyses, which incorporate a cost-efficiency assessment, confirmed their added value both for Member States and the Commission.

In addition, the Quality Management System for Visits and Inspections, covering the full scope of the Agency’s visits and inspections activities continued to be implemented and provides a solid framework for continuous improvement. 2023 saw the conclusion of one cycle of Member State visits concerning marine equipment.

EMSA offers to Member States, candidate and potential candidate countries and neighbouring countries sharing EU sea basins, an increasingly innovative, collaborative and flexible capacity building toolbox. The toolbox can be specialised and tailor-made and relies increasingly on successful existing services, tools and applications as well as new technologies and learning services outside formal education.

In 2023 the Agency continued its flagship project, under the label of EMSA Academy, and several ISO certified learning services were designed, developed and delivered. These learning services constituted the backbone of the different activities planned in support of the competent authorities of the Member States and beneficiaries of the ENP/IPA projects. Identified following a bottom-up approach, they aim at enhancing competencies and skills, thus fostering capacity at national level towards homogeneous implementation and enforcement of safety, security and sustainability rules and regulations in the EU and beyond. Focussing on functions, and combining state-of-the-art tools, such as the eLearning platform MaKCs and the Virtual Reality Environment for Ship Inspections (VRESI), the Agency has put together various products in support of professional development such as Common Core Curricula, part-time courses and short courses. These innovative learning services

were delivered in a blended-learning mode (i.e. a combination of online synchronous and asynchronous modules and in-person classroom meetings), leading to certification upon demonstration of acquisition of knowledge and specific skills, and are related to identified job profiles, to EU/International maritime legislation or to EMSA's operational maritime applications and tools.

The project "Preparatory measures for the future participation of relevant IPA II beneficiary countries in the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA)" funded by the EU continued to be implemented and will proceed through the new project which started in September 2023 until August 2027.

As maritime safety, maritime security and protection of the marine environment are common concerns of the Member States and third countries sharing the same sea basins, EMSA continued to implement the 2 projects for technical assistance for the Mediterranean Sea (SAFEMED V) and the Black and Caspian Sea (BCSEA II). Both projects have a very ambitious action plan, combining the priorities set at EU level by the Commission and reflected in the 5-Year Strategy pursued by the Agency, and aim to contribute to the approximation of standards related to maritime safety, security, pollution prevention and response.

Following the interest expressed by third countries, access to tools in support of PSC activities in different regions of the world was authorised by the EMSA Administrative Board, therefore confirming the potential for exporting the Agency's knowledge and by extension EU standards and solutions beyond the European geographical dimension. Currently, 9 out of 9 Port State Control regimes in the world, as well as the Australian Maritime Safety Authority, are using EMSA tools, namely RuleCheck and/or MaKCs.

Finally in 2023 EMSA concluded its term as Chair of the Tripartite Working Arrangement for the European cooperation on Coast Guard functions which teams up the efforts of EMSA EFCA and Frontex. The annual Coast Guard event organised by EMSA gathered in June 2023 more than 100 stakeholders representing all relevant communities.

## **B) EMSA's operational achievements in 2023**

The Administrative Board took note of the different operational achievements that contributed to the Strategic Objectives, as highlighted at the beginning of the CAAR 2023, and of the information on the operational outputs against previously set objectives as per the Single Programming Document 2023-2025, as detailed in Part I "Achievements of the year". We consider that the overall performance and quality of the outputs were high and contributed to reaching the strategic objectives.

## **C) Management**

An overall effective and efficient monitoring of programme implementation was in place to track the delivery of planned outputs and performance per activity and signal potential risks throughout the year and across the Agency.

The Administrative Board commends the work carried out by the Agency regarding the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation. This entailed a constant support to the Member States and the Commission with the provision of information and surveillance services, assisting in the implementation of the different sanctions applied by the Union against the Russian Federation.

The Key Performance Indicators used by the Agency to measure the continuity and quality of the EMSA external services have met their respective targets overall. As per previous years, cases in which targets have not been met have been duly justified.

The high level of implementation of the work programme resulted in an excellent budget implementation and the Agency executed 89,667,100 EUR in Commitment Appropriations (CA)<sup>1</sup>, representing 99.94% of the total budget of the year, and 88,320,118 EUR in Payment Appropriations (PA)<sup>2</sup>, amounting to 98.44% of the total budget when only counting C1 Funds<sup>3</sup> (appropriations voted in the current budget).

Based on information outlined in Parts II, III and IV of the CAAR2023 and on the work of the Administrative and Finance Committee throughout the year, the Administrative Board notes the Agency's exhaustive and meticulous approach to the follow-up of the outcome of audits by the various auditing bodies. In particular, the Administrative Board appreciates the fact that the Internal Audit Service of the Commission (IAS) and the European Court of Auditors (ECA) did not issue any critical audit recommendations or observations that could lead to a reservation in the annual declaration of assurance and that at the end of 2023, all audit recommendations issued and due by 31/12/2023 and earlier had been implemented.

Furthermore, the Administrative Board notes that measures are in place to maintain an appropriate risk and control environment and provide an appropriate level of assurance. Building blocks of assurance leading to the Declaration of the Authorising Officer are in place, as are measures to address any serious management and control weaknesses identified.

## Conclusion

The Administrative Board of the European Maritime Safety Agency concludes that the Agency has met its objectives in accordance with the annual work programme for 2023 and the overall multi-annual strategic framework.

The Administrative Board notes with satisfaction how the Agency is committed to its core tasks and also with dedication contributes to improved European cooperation and efforts to contribute to the EU green deal while continuing to take on a pioneering role in the digital transformation of maritime transport by incorporating new technologies into the maritime situational picture as well as into services that increase the efficiency and effectiveness of maritime administration and enforcement.

Finally, the Administrative Board greatly values the excellent performance of the EMSA staff in carrying out the tasks of the Agency, even throughout another particularly challenging year, enhancing maritime safety, security and prevention of pollution and paving the way for the use of new technology to the benefit of the European maritime community.

Done at Lisbon, 6 March 2024



Signed

Wojciech Zdanowicz

Chairman of the Administrative Board

---

<sup>1</sup> Commitment appropriations cover the total cost of the legal commitments entered into during the current financial year - even if such a legal obligation extends over more than one year.

<sup>2</sup> Payment appropriations cover expenditure arising from commitments of the current year and/or earlier years, which are due for payment in the current year.

<sup>3</sup> These figures contain revenues from fees and charges amounting to 242,289 EUR.