European Maritime Safety Agency: response to pollution caused by ships and to marine pollution caused by oil and gas installations, multiannual funding 2014-2020

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The Commission presents the mid-term evaluation of Regulation (EU) No 911/2014 on multiannual funding for the action of the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) in the field of response to marine pollution caused by ships and oil and gas installations. The report and its annex present the results of the use of the Union contribution as well as an evaluation of the Agency's ability to fulfil its responsibilities in an effective and cost-efficient manner.

To recall, the Regulation sets up the creation of a **multi-annual financial framework** for the pollution response activities of the Agency so that the latter may enter into long term financial commitments in order to offer adequate and sustainable operational support to the Commission and the Member States, using services provided by industry. The financial envelope for the current period 2014-2020 is EUR 160.5 million, slightly more than that allocated for the period 2007-2013 (EUR 154 million (in order to cater for the extension of the mandate covering oil and gas installations).

Oil pollution response services: at the end of 2016, EMSA's oil pollution response capability comprised the following arrangements:

- 17 fully equipped stand-by oil spill response vessels for mechanical recovery of oil, 4 of which equipped in addition with dispersant spraying capability;
- 4 dispersant stockpiles;
- 2 Equipment Assistance Service stockpiles established in the North Sea and the Baltic Sea.

According to its mandate, EMSA has focused on assets designed for spills of a significant amount, an investment that Member States could not have achieved at national level. The report notes that the Agency' s 17 vessels nearly **equal the storage capacity** of all Member States vessels of comparable capacity.

The financing envelope allocated to the Network of Standby Oil Spill Response Vessels represents the larger part of EMSA pollution response budget. An analysis of the **cost-effectiveness** of the existing model of chartered vessels suggest that EMSA's oil pollution response activities would be cost effective when compared to the economic consequences that would result from the absence of capacity on its part to adequately deal with an oil spill and prevent it from reaching the shoreline.

The evaluation support study has also shown that the existence of EMSA's oil pollution response services topping up national and private resources does not seem to be having an adverse impact on the **level of preparedness** of the EU Member States and EFTA countries.

CleanSeaNet: as a reminder, this is the satellite based oil spill detection service, which was established in 2007. The report states that the service ensures a **uniform assessment** and overview of discharge trends and the **deterrent effect** of the spill-monitoring programme. The use of European Space Agency managed satellites has brought **considerable cost reductions** to the service as licenses are available free of charge. Over the period 2014-2016, the costs of the service per 1,000 km 2 monitored decreased approximately by 22% and EMSA has been ordering proportionally more Sentinel-1 Earth Observation products as a

result. The previously declining trend of oil spills detected reversed in 2016, and the report suggests that a possible reason is the introduction of the Sentinel-1 satellites, which resulted in improved detection capabilities.

Risk assessment: EMSA will launch a further risk assessment exercise in 2018-2019, working with regional and national authorities to carry out a sort of stress test of existing capacities. For the future, Regulation (EU) 2016/1625 revising EMSA's mandate fosters cooperation with the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) and the European Fisheries Control Agency, which entails exploring the possible sharing of assets.

Overall, the Commission considers that the mid-term evaluation shows that EMSA has established and maintains a comprehensive pollution detection, preparedness and response program in line with its mandate to top-up EU/EFTA coastal Member States capacities to respond to large-scale incidents. It adds that there is a possibility of facilitating the financing pollution response equipment transportation costs through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism. The budget to continue financing these activities, taking into account the current and future budgetary constraints, will remain an integral part of the annual Union subsidy.