

Accidental or deliberate marine pollution: hydrocarbons or harmful substances, community framework for cooperation

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This Communication sets out the current state of Community action in terms of marine pollution preparedness and response. It also indicates how the framework will be followed up and developed as from 2007 when the Community framework for co-operation will expire.

Since the establishment of a Community framework in the field of accidental or deliberate marine pollution in 2000 there has been a marked improvement in the preparedness of officials in the fight against accidental or deliberate marine pollution in the Member States. Today, 20 Member States, together with Norway and Iceland, play an active role in the Community framework for co-operation. Further, since 2001 there have been new developments at a Community level in terms of marine pollution prevention, preparedness and response – most notably the establishment of the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA). In 2003, the European Parliament, recognising the importance of the Community framework, adjusted the reference amounts in order to take account of EU enlargement and raised the budget to EUR 12.6 million for the period.

In its findings the Communication notes that, for almost thirty years, Community action in the field of accidental or deliberate marine pollution has expanded to include enhanced co-operation between the Member States. Experience gained from recent disasters demonstrates that Europe's response was both rapid and effective.

The marine pollution accidents that have taken place in the past have had a significant impact on the environment. The Communication, therefore, urges the EU to do everything in its power to ensure that such disasters are not repeated. For this reason, actions to deal with such accidents are more necessary than ever before. Despite the expiry of the Community framework for co-operation, the Commission intends to continue and promote targeted actions against ship-source pollution from 2007 onwards. The European Maritime Safety Agency will play an increasing role in this field.