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PRESS RELEASE

## **Interagency agreement to enhance situational awareness at Europe's maritime border**

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**EMSA's integrated maritime services will be used by Frontex to reinforce control at the Schengen external border. A three-year service level agreement was signed between the two agencies on 3 May 2013.**

Frontex assists Member States in cooperation at the operational level at all types of borders (sea, land and air). Managing one external border requires coordination of activities between national and European agencies. "The agreement signed with EMSA is an excellent example of how EU agencies can serve the Member States. The service provided by EMSA to Frontex will help in developing effective situational awareness in the maritime domain, both for the agency and the Member States" said Frontex Executive Director Ilkka Laitinen.

Upon signing the agreement, Markku Mylly, EMSA's Executive Director stated, "We are delighted to be part of this venture. It is gratifying to see our maritime service capabilities being used to support Frontex and the Member States. We look forward to fulfilling the new role entrusted to us, and to working with Frontex in the years to come."

Realising that EMSA's expertise can be used to improve maritime awareness, Frontex has requested operational support for the detection of various illegal activities at sea. Under the new agreement, EMSA will develop tailored monitoring services, information products, and tools. Data from EMSA's Integrated Maritime Data Environment (IMDatE), including ship position reports and satellite images, will be provided to Frontex to enable them to construct a more comprehensive overview of activities at Europe's maritime borders. This will build on previous pilot project services developed by EMSA for Frontex, and on integrated services which EMSA already offers to Member States and other EU bodies.

EMSA's services will be provided to Frontex in the framework of joint operations at sea, and of EUROSUR, the European Border Surveillance System. By strengthening information exchange and cooperation between Member States' authorities, EUROSUR aims to reduce the number of irregular migrants entering the EU undetected, prevent cross-border crime, as well as to assist search and rescue activities at the external maritime borders of the Union.

Information provided to the Member States by Frontex based on the EMSA services will be used for various purposes, such as:

1. Surveillance of targeted ports and coasts;
2. Tracking of suspect vessels over high seas;

3. Monitoring sea areas for environmental purposes.

In addition to maritime data, EMSA's support will also consist of a 24/7 helpdesk service, via the Maritime Support Services operations centre, and training to analyse the data delivered.

By combining skills, experience and resources, EMSA and Frontex can build on synergies to improve the quality of services developed. Cooperation also brings cost savings by avoiding duplication of effort and overlapping infrastructures, and in terms of economies of scale. The signing of the service level agreement brings existing cooperation between EMSA and Frontex to a new level, for the benefit of Member States.

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