

EMSA CHARTERS OIL RECOVERY VESSELS

Willem De Ruiter presents an EMSA flag to a contractor during a Brussels media information event on 29th November.

On 29th November, EMSA presented its contracts for the chartering of oil recovery vessels at a media information event in Brussels.

Three companies have been selected to provide the services after a nine month tender process. A pool of five vessels will cover the Baltic Sea under the coordination of the Finnish company Lamor Corporation. The French company Louis Dreyfus Armateurs will provide one large vessel for the Atlantic Coast and Western approaches to the Channel, and the Maltese company Tankship Management will operate in the Mediterranean Sea.

"This unique operational task is one of EMSA's major and most visible contributions to maritime safety in European seas," said EMSA Executive Director Willem de Ruiter. "By chartering these ships, EMSA fully participates in the protection of our seashores. The Prestige accident demonstrated the lack of high capacity response equipment in Europe and this weakness has now been partially remedied. The network of vessels will be further strengthened in 2006 and EU Member States will be able to rely on a 'reserve for disasters' which will normally be available within a maximum of 24 hours."

Given both the limited budget and the requirement to fulfil such a "top-up" role in a cost-efficient manner, EMSA was neither in a position to build, nor to buy, dedicated spill response vessels. Instead, it created a public-private initiative to implement its task in practice. The vessels will, under normal circumstances, carry out their day-to-day commercial activities. In the event of a large oil spill, and following a request for assistance from a Member State, a vessel will cease its

usual activity and, at short notice, will be transformed into and operate as an oil recovery vessel. More information on the chartering of oil recovery vessels can be found at: <http://www.emsa.eu.int/>

ADMINISTRATIVE BOARD CHAIRMAN AND VICE-CHAIRMAN RE-ELECTED

At the latest meeting of the Administrative Board, held on 28/29th November, the Chairman of the Board, Mr. Brian Wadsworth, and the Vice-Chairman, Mr. Francis Vallat, were re-elected for a period of 3 years. They were re-elected after separate rounds of voting for each office, in a process which involved the participation of 23 Member States and the European Commission.

CONTRACT SIGNED FOR TEMPORARY HEADQUARTERS

EMSA Executive Director, Willem De Ruiter, was in Lisbon on 14th November to finalise the arrangements for the re-location of the Agency to its permanent seat. The contract for the temporary headquarters building was signed, and this means that Agency staff will be able to begin work in Portugal from April 2006.

This was a very important milestone for the Agency, which has been awaited for some time, and it enables the detailed planning for the move to be undertaken in the full knowledge that the accommodation will be available. A lot of effort has already been put into ensuring that the transfer takes place with the minimum disruption.



The newly designed EMSA flag will fly at the Lisbon headquarters and on the agency's oil pollution response vessels.

However, this will be a significant challenge, as it means moving a large number of people, together with their families. The Agency will operate from this newly constructed, temporary building in the Expo area (north-east of the city centre) from April 2006 until

the permanent city centre building at Ribeira das Naus is finalised around the end of 2007. The temporary building is currently being fitted out to EMSA specifications so that the Agency can operate effectively, and fully, from this location during the interim period.

2nd EMCIP WORKSHOP

Preparations for the launch early next year of the European Marine Casualty Information Platform (EMCIP) were discussed at EMSA's 2nd Workshop on Marine Casualty Investigation in Brussels on 15/16th November. In addition to presentations by EMSA and the contractor (SSPA), a number of work stations were made available for delegates to familiarise themselves with a prototype of the envisaged EMCIP operational interface.

The workshop programme also included discussions on: current proposals for a revision of the IMO Code for the investigation of marine casualties and incidents; practical considerations for states cooperating in marine casualty investigations; technical developments relating to voyage data recorders (VDRs) and; investigator training. Presentations by representatives of the Commission, the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) and the investigation authorities of a number of Member States were well received and provided for constructive debate. A working group is to be established next year, which will be initially focussed on the operation and future development of EMCIP.

SAFESEANET PROGRESSING WELL

As the SafeSeaNet ship reporting project comes to the end of 2005, 7 Member States have successfully completed the test phase, with 4 other countries (Belgium, Denmark, Ireland and Portugal) ready to join them in the coming weeks. These countries can now participate in the implementation of the system. Three training sessions were organised in 2005 (for senior managers in national maritime administrations, for new Member States, for national operators and for EMSA staff). It is expected that, within the next 6 months, 75% of Member States will have passed the test phase and be involved in full implementation, prior to the system becoming fully operational within 12 to 18 months.

INVENTORY OF NATIONAL POLICIES ON USE OF OIL SPILL DISPERSANTS

The use of chemical dispersants as an oil pollution response method at sea is an issue which has been widely discussed over the past thirty years. In order to have an up to date overview of the current national policies regarding the use of those dispersants in the Member States, EMSA has produced a 54 page inventory on the issue.

In April 2005, EMSA sent a questionnaire to all the EU coastal Member States (plus Norway and Iceland). Based on the answers received from the competent National Authorities, EMSA has now published this information on: the usage of oil spill dispersants; the testing and approval procedures for chemical dispersants and; the means and equipment for dispersant application in each of the Member States.

EMSA HOSTS ANTI-POLLUTION REGIONAL AGREEMENTS MEETING

On 16th November, EMSA hosted a meeting in Brussels to discuss the basis for future interaction between the Agency, Regional Agreement secretariats (Helcom, Barcelona Convention and Bonn Agreement) and the chairmen of their technical groups. The European Commission was represented. The meeting gave the opportunity to discuss issues relating to strategy, operations, cooperation, communications and information exchange. Following a very constructive debate, it was decided that such meetings should take place on a regular basis.

WORLD MARITIME DAY EVENT

The Portuguese government, and the IMO Secretary General, invited EMSA Executive Director, Willem De Ruiter, to attend the first parallel event related to World Maritime Day, which took place in Lisbon on 15th November. The day involved a panel discussion on industry views in the morning and on administrations in the afternoon. Mr De Ruiter was one of the 5 panellists in the latter session, together with IMO and Portuguese representatives, who expressed views and answered questions on the strategies and roles of maritime public sector organisations.

EU MARITIME REGIONS CONFERENCE

At the 33rd general assembly of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe (CPMRE), which was held in Madeira on 3/4th November, Emilio Martin Bauza, head of EMSA's Technical Co-operation and Development Unit presented the tasks of the Agency. This was an excellent opportunity to make representatives of 120 maritime regions aware of the developing role of the Agency and its importance to maritime safety.

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