



EMSA NETWORK OF OIL SPILL RESPONSE VESSELS

PROTECTING EUROPEAN SEAS
AGAINST OIL POLLUTION



EMSA'S OIL SPILL RECOVERY SERVICE

EMSA was assigned the following tasks in the field of response to marine pollution:

- To work with the Member States to support with additional means in a cost efficient way pollution response actions in case of pollution caused by ships as well as marine pollution caused by oil and gas installations
- To provide assistance in case of pollution caused by ships as well as marine pollution caused by oil and gas installations affecting those third countries sharing a regional sea basin with the Union.

In order to perform these tasks, EMSA has established contracts with commercial vessel operators for at-sea oil recovery services around the European coastline.

REQUESTING THE SERVICE

EMSA contracted vessels and equipment are available to Member States and neighbouring countries in need of additional means of at-sea oil recovery.

Under normal circumstances, EMSA contracted vessels carry out their usual commercial activities. However, in the event of an oil spill, following a request for assistance, the appointed vessel will cease its normal activities, be transformed into a certified oil recovery vessel and become operational at short notice.


The vessels and equipment are channelled to the requesting party through the Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC), which is managed by the European Commission's humanitarian aid and civil protection department (DG ECHO).

The requesting party will then have at its disposal the pollution response resources provided by EMSA and these come under its command and control. The choice of where and which resources to use lies with the requesting party.

The costs involved in the setting up of the network of Stand-by Oil Spill Response Vessels and associated equipment stockpiles are covered by EMSA, which ultimately is funded by the EU and coastal European Free Trade Association states' taxpayer contributions.

Member State authorities are the main beneficiaries of the network of vessels. However, support can be extended to other third parties upon authorisation by EMSA/Member States, under the supervision of the national competent authority, and if conditions are clearly determined in advance.

It is important to note that, independent of their area of commercial operations, all vessels are available to respond to a spill anywhere in European waters.



VESSELS AND EQUIPMENT

EMSA currently maintains 18 fully equipped Stand-by Oil Spill Response Vessels (January 2015). Each of the EMSA contracted vessels has the following characteristics:

- Large recovered oil storage capacity
- Speed of 12 knots for prompt arrival on scene
- Good manoeuvrability to carry out oil recovery operations
- On-board capability to decant excess water thereby maximising the use of on-board storage capacity
- Ability to heat recovered cargo and use high capacity pumps to facilitate the discharging of heavy viscous oil mixtures to shore side facilities
- Oil slick detection system to facilitate the positioning of the vessel in the thicker oil slicks, and to enable operations at night.

The requesting party can choose a combination among the response options in the 'toolbox':

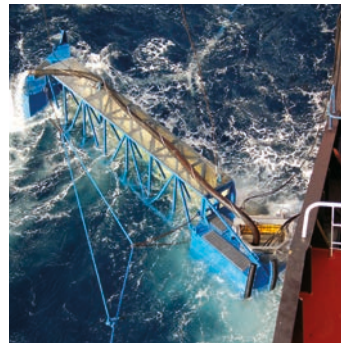
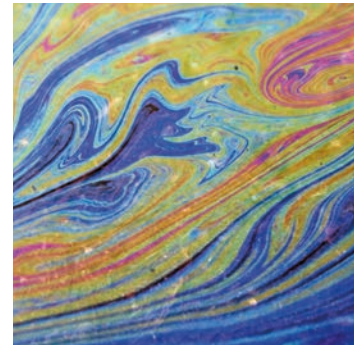
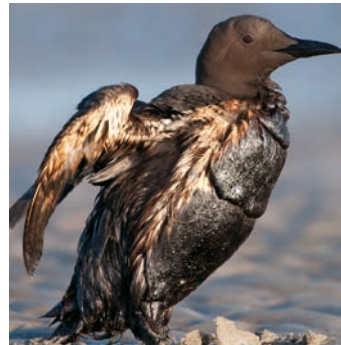
- Two different options exist for mechanical recovery in the vessel arrangements:
 - ✓ sweeping arms
 - ✓ ocean-going booms and offshore skimmer (on certain vessels there are also high-capacity skimmers and weir booms available).
- Alternatively, seaborne dispersant application systems are available in some vessel arrangements:
 - ✓ spraying equipment
 - ✓ dispersants.

The average individual oil storage capacity of the EMSA contracted vessels is in the region of 3500m³ and they provide a total storage capacity of more than 60000m³.

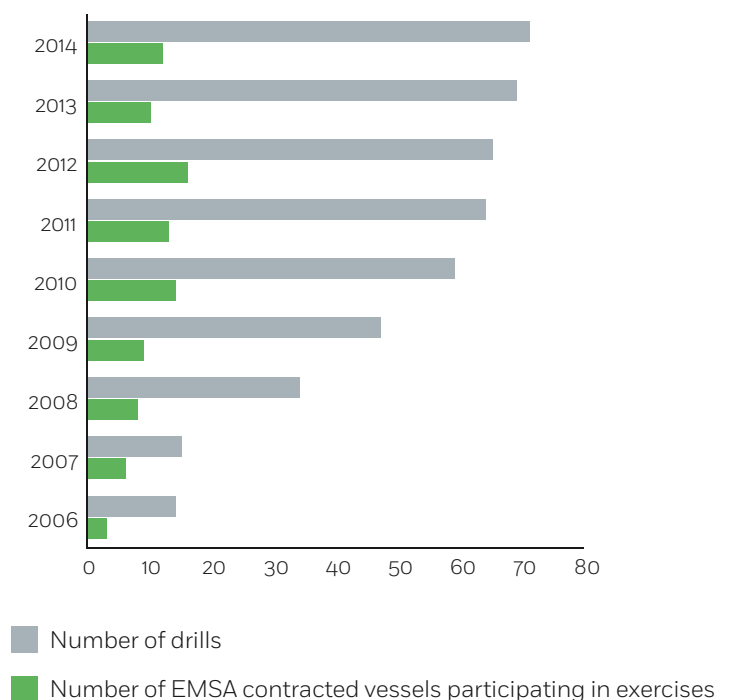
MAINTAINING THE SERVICE

To maintain the level of at-sea oil recovery service, EMSA has established a system of drills and exercises, as follows:

- **Drills:** all vessels undergo drills every three months under the supervision of EMSA in order to test the proper functioning of the equipment and to train crews.
- **Exercises:** in order to work under an international command and control structure, which is the most likely scenario during a major spill, each vessel is participating in regular at-sea spill response exercises with other response units.

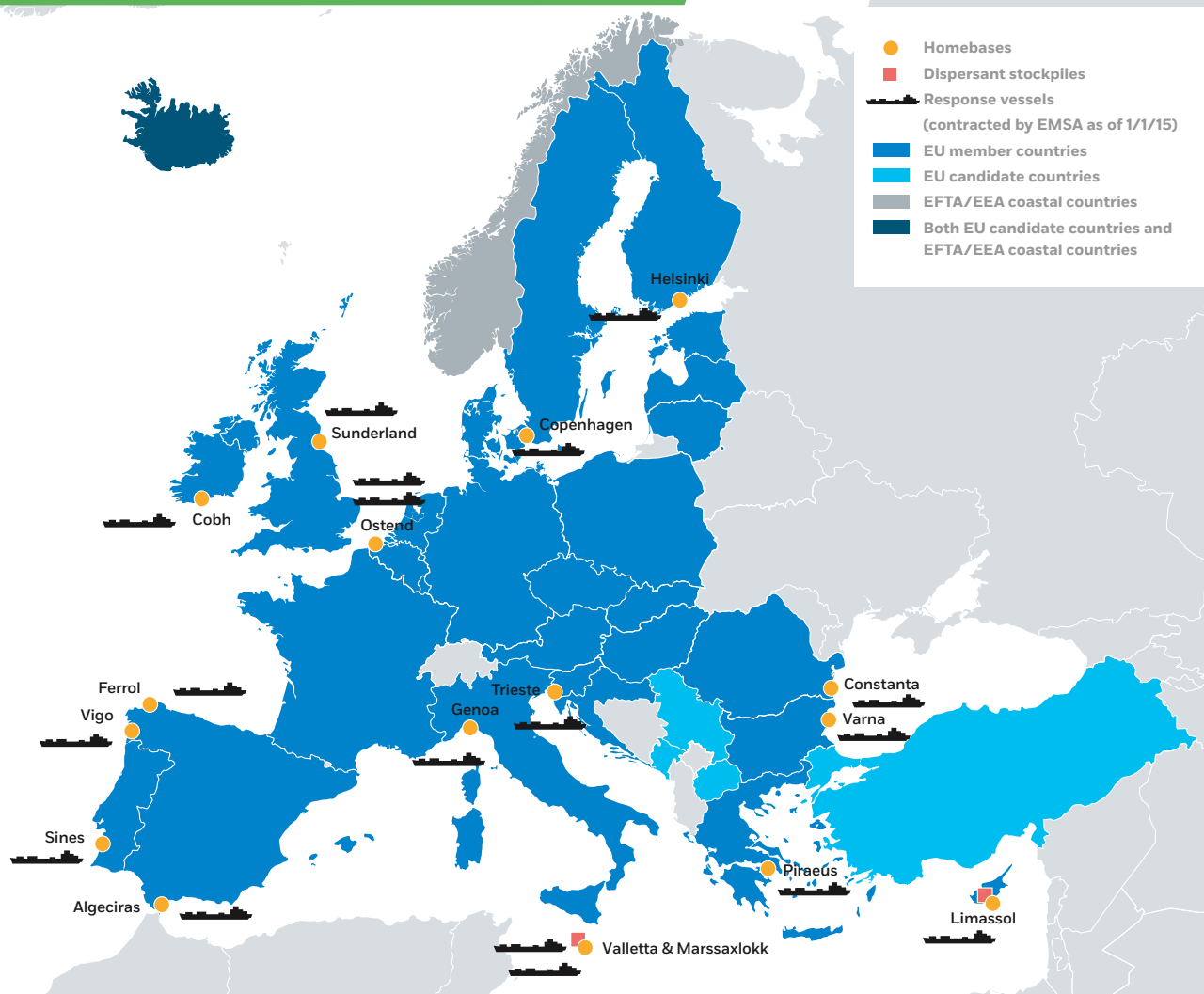


Number of drills and exercises from 2006-2014



NETWORK OF EMSA CONTRACTED VESSELS

SUPPORTING THE EFFORTS OF COASTAL STATES



ABOUT THE EUROPEAN MARITIME SAFETY AGENCY

The European Maritime Safety Agency is one of the European Union's decentralised agencies. Based in Lisbon, the Agency's mission is to ensure a high level of maritime safety, maritime security, prevention of and response to pollution from ships, as well as response to marine pollution from oil and gas installations. The overall purpose is to promote a safe, clean and economically viable maritime sector in the EU.

Get in touch for more information

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