

Brussels, 14 September 2006

Safety at sea: The European Maritime Safety Agency settles in Lisbon

The installation of the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) in Lisbon was celebrated today with the inauguration of its headquarters in the presence of the Prime Minister of Portugal, José Sócrates Carvalho Pinto de Sousa, the European Commission President José Manuel Barroso and its Vice-President in charge of Transport, Jacques Barrot. EMSA's mission is to provide technical and scientific advice to the Commission and the Member States in order to ensure a high and uniform level of maritime safety and security, thereby preventing accidents and pollution at sea.

Commission President José Manuel Barroso hailed this new step in the development of the Agency stressing that "in addition to its technical role and its challenging tasks, EMSA demonstrates to European citizens that the European Union attaches particular importance to ensuring safety at sea and preserving the marine environment".

Vice-President Jacques Barrot added, "EMSA is an indispensable tool to implement the EU maritime safety policy efficiently, to develop it further and to enhance international cooperation. Its purpose is to reduce the risk of maritime accidents, marine pollution from ships and the loss of human lives at sea".

The Agency has the following main tasks:

- Provide technical assistance to the Commission in the development and follow-up of EU legislation in the field, including monitoring visits in Member States;
- Work with Member States and accession countries in the organisation of training activities and provide them with technical advice in implementing the relevant Community *acquis*;
- Assist Member States affected by pollution from ships;
- Boost co-operation on the setting-up of a European vessel traffic monitoring and information system;
- Elaborate common methods of maritime accident investigations;
- Provide objective and reliable information in the field of maritime safety and maritime traffic.

Created in 2002¹ in the aftermath of the *Erika* disaster, EMSA has been operating from its provisional headquarters in Brussels until recently. The move to Lisbon follows a 2003 decision of the European Council, which fixed the permanent location of the Agency.

¹ Regulation (CE) N° 1406/2002 of the European Parliament and of the European Council setting up the European Maritime Safety Agency.