



EARSC Statement Revising EU rules on illegal discharges of ships

The European Association of Remote Sensing Companies ([EARSC](#)) is a trade association based in Brussels, representing the European downstream services sector. EARSC counts more than 135 members across 25 countries of Europe.

EARSC welcomes the revision of the Directive on ship-source pollution and fully supports the initiative of the European Commission to protect the marine environment from ship-source pollution.

Despite increased surveillance and enforcement efforts, illegal discharges of oil and other polluting substances still regularly occur in European waters, and the detection, and therefore the number of prosecutions, remains low.

In that regard, we would like to highlight the importance of EO-based services to track and monitor ship pollution. Satellite remote sensing data, such as data coming from Sentinel satellites ([Copernicus programme](#)¹) has proven to be a reliable and valuable technology, providing services to support the surveillance work and rapid response for decision-makers. The oil spill monitoring and vessel detection service [CleanSeaNet](#)² has improved the effectiveness of monitoring and reduced administrative costs, while allowing better detection of polluters. With CleanSeaNet, the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA)³ has extended the capacity of the European monitoring services for safety and environmental protection and EO service providers support this effort by offering the advantage of a global ground network,

¹ Copernicus programme: Copernicus is the European Union's Earth observation programme coordinated and managed by the European Commission in partnership with the European Space Agency, the EU Member States and EU agencies. It aims at achieving a global, continuous, autonomous, high quality, wide range Earth observation capacity (www.earsc.eu)

² CleanSeaNet is a satellite-based monitoring system for marine oil spill detection and surveillance in European waters. In total, CSN has seven SAR and Optical service providers (CLS, KSAT,MDA, EDISOFT, e-GEOS, Airbus-DS and EUSI). These companies operate a network of ground stations distributed worldwide (see images below), to ensure Near Real Time delivery.

³ The European Union agency charged with reducing the risk of maritime accidents, marine pollution from ships and the loss of human lives at sea by helping to enforce the pertinent EU legislation

capacities and expertises for tracking and tracing activities⁴ playing a key role in the fight against marine oil pollution.

Thanks to routine coverage of most maritime areas worldwide, satellite data can enable cost effective pollution surveillance. Satellite data is used to detect and monitor size, extent and location of oil spills and provides information on wind, current and waves to predict oil movement.

In parallel to the development of possible regulatory and non-regulatory measures outlined in the consultation, there is also a need for a streamlining Member States management of maritime affairs, in particular skills and knowledge assistance in the development of national and subregional systems for preparedness and response.

Consequently, EARSC believes that the revision of EU rules on illegal discharges of ships should specify that Earth Observation data and added-value services are operational solutions, which shall be used for the monitoring of oil pollution and oil illegal discharges. EARSC remains at your disposal to work together on this objective.

⁴ It is acknowledged in the community that monitoring has a deterrent effect, so if polluters know that there's surveillance, they are likely to pollute less because there's a risk of being caught, and the fines are very high