Data made available to relevant National Competent Authorities (NCA) in the Member States to support them in exercising their obligations as flag, port and/or coastal States come from systems, hosted in the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA). The main information in the system, the Union Maritime Information and Exchange System, stems from the EU Member States. The service also integrates Automatic Identification System (AIS) information and satellite imagery products, available through the Copernicus Maritime Surveillance service. The service can be used to detect and, when combined with vessel position information, identify vessels in areas of interest.

The EMSA’s IMS\(^1\)- EUROPOL service is in line with the EMSA-Europol Working Arrangement from 18 December 2018. This provides Europol with access to maritime surveillance services to support their activities in the areas of law enforcement and organised crime activities at sea. The IMS historical track capabilities can be used to follow vessels of interest and support relevant investigations. It is for the Members of EUROPOL to decide how to use that information. It is also for the law enforcement authorities to apply for access to IMS via their counterpart NCA.

There is a pilot project starting to explore how the information could be used. Following the launch of a roll-out programme by EUROPOL, the EMSA IMS-EUROPOL service was used by a MS for the first time in April 2021. The German Federal Criminal Police Law Enforcement unit was provided access to the system on a “pilot project” basis.

\(^1\) Integrated Maritime Services (IMS).