

Towards a Regional Service in the Baltic Sea: EMSA's RPAS to support Finnish, Estonian and Swedish Coast Guard functions



The Remotely Piloted Aircraft System (RPAS) services for maritime surveillance will as of the 4th of July, under the command of Finland, support Coast Guard functions of Finland, Estonia and Sweden.

Building upon existing cooperation agreements, information collected from on-board RPAS system will be shared in parallel with multiple member states, allowing for a common maritime picture and a more comprehensive coordination. This operation is an example of the gradual phasing-in of the new “regional approach” to RPAS operations for which preparations have started in 2020. In addition, participation in the HELCOM Balex Delta exercise, organised by Estonia, is also planned for August with the deployment of the RPAS on board the Finnish Offshore Patrol Vessel Turva. This exercise includes the participation of the member states in the region.

The Baltic sea represents a nerve centre for commerce but is at the same time also a great challenge when it comes to maritime safety and security. Enhanced surveillance using RPAS based on intensified cooperation between member states and EU agencies will facilitate the carrying out of coast guard functions.

Since the start of this type of service in 2017, EMSA numerous missions to EU member states have proven that RPAS services are efficient and are complementary means for maritime awareness. As agreed recently, the European Maritime Safety Agency will work towards services with a regional reach, assisting more than one EU member state at the same time. This approach will be gradually phased-in with preparations taken during 2020.

The selected RPAS for this operation is a CAMCOPTER® S-100 from Schiebel under contract of EMSA. This RPAS is capable to take off and land vertically from an area of 8x8m, has a flight endurance of more than six hours, and a range of more than 200km. The aircraft carries a payload of optical and infrared cameras as well as an AIS receiver and an automated maritime surface search sensor which detects targets at sea during daytime. These capabilities are deemed suitable to meet the user requests for a multipurpose service.