

# EMPA Newsletter

2026 EDITION 7



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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### “PROGRESS, ENGAGEMENT AND VIGILANCE”



**As we approach the summer season, I would like to take a moment to thank all of you for your continued professionalism and dedication, and to wish you and your families a safe, relaxing, and well-deserved summer.**

**Since my last message, we have experienced a very active and productive period across EMPA.**

**Our key highlight was our highly successful 60th EMPA General Meeting in Ghent, where we benefited from strong participation, excellent discussions, the strengthening of ties with stakeholders and decision-makers, and valuable exchanges on the challenges and opportunities facing our profession.**

In recent months, I have also had the privilege of attending several national pilotage congresses and meetings, including those of our colleagues from Italy, France, Turkey, and Spain, as well as the EMPA Football Tournament. Many thanks to you all for your hospitality, and especially to Johannes Sivertsen, President of Norsk Losforbund, and our Norwegian colleagues for their warm welcome and support to our Board of Directors in Ålesund.

These occasions are far more than formal engagements, as they represent invaluable opportunities to meet our members, strengthen relationships, and enhance communication across our membership. I see this direct engagement as essential to ensuring that EMPA continues to evolve and respond effectively to the needs of our members. I am also pleased to highlight that we have recently launched the new EMPA website

— [www.empa-pilots.eu](http://www.empa-pilots.eu) — designed to provide easier access to guidance, best practices, policy updates, and key information.

At the same time, we are working to strengthen pilots' participation in EMPAsafe, which plays a critical role in improving safety across our profession. The system's effectiveness depends on the quality and consistency of the data we all contribute. Increased engagement will enable us to enhance pilot transfer safety, not only for ourselves but also for colleagues in the next port.

We remain fully engaged with important regulatory and policy developments. We are seriously concerned about and are closely following the situation in Romania, particularly regarding the Opinion of the Advocate General in CJEU Case C-117/25, insofar as they may be interpreted as encouraging a competitive model or market-type pressures in the provision of pilotage services.

We remain firm in our stance that pilotage services do not belong in a competitive market framework, in order to ensure that safety is never compromised by economic pressure.

We are also carefully monitoring developments in Turkey following the amendments to Ports Law No. 618 and the subsequent concession Regulation on Pilotage and Towage Services, which raise serious concerns.

EMPA will continue to support our members and to advocate for solutions that preserve the independence, integrity, and safety mission of pilotage services.

Across all these discussions, our message remains clear and consistent: pilotage is a safety-critical public service, essential to safe navigation, the protection of lives, the environment, and critical maritime infrastructure.

Looking ahead, we will continue to prioritise engagement with our members, strengthen cooperation, and ensure that EMPA delivers real value to both members and stakeholders, contributing to safety, security, efficiency, environmental protection, and sustainability across the logistics chain, particularly in maritime transport.

Thank you once again for your commitment and for the vital work you perform every day in keeping our ports, ships, and communities safe.

I wish you all a very pleasant summer!

Fair winds and following seas, be happy, be safe.

*Miguel Vieira de Castro*



# Keeping Complex Professions Understandable: Why Harbour Pilots Need a Communication Guide

## by Javier Sagarrabay, Pilot from Gijón, Spain

**Try this experiment. Type the following sentence into any AI system: "Pilotage is a valuable profession and harbour pilots play an essential role." Then add a simple instruction: "tear this statement apart." Within seconds, you will get a list of objections, criticisms, and counterarguments — written smoothly, sounding convincing, and easy enough to share.**

The example is simple, even a little blunt, but it helps us see the problem clearly. The point is not that every criticism produced this way is necessarily wrong, or that AI tools should be demonised. The point is different: the cost of producing well-structured, hostile arguments against a complex profession has dropped dramatically. Where there used to be some friction between having a negative opinion and being able to express it as a coherent argument, that friction has almost disappeared.

This change is especially significant for professions whose real function is more complex than it looks from the outside. Harbour pilotage is a clear example. For a long time, it was not a profession that faced serious structural questioning within the maritime and port system. On the contrary, it was generally respected, associated with expert knowledge, operational necessity, and technical authority. That is precisely why the shift we are seeing today deserves attention: we are not witnessing the return of some old hostility, but the rise of new forms of oversimplification and questioning, driven by economic pressures, promises of technological replacement, and the growing ease of producing plausible-sounding critical arguments.

In this new environment, it is no longer enough for a profession to do its job well, or for its usefulness to have been recognised historically. It is not enough to respond to each criticism one by one with improvised replies. What is needed is a framework for what we can call discursive resilience: a minimum set of principles, distinctions, and ways of responding that can keep complex functions understandable to the public.

### From Effortful Argument to Instant Criticism

What matters about the experiment above is not the specific result, but the structural change it reveals. Criticism of complex professions is nothing new in history. What is new is how easily such criticism can now be generated, organised, and circulated with the appearance of analytical depth.

Where before, constructing a reasonably developed objection required at least some reading, comparison, ordering of ideas, and writing effort, now anyone can get a ready-made set of plausible, verbally smooth, and easily shareable objections in seconds.

The user does not just get a witty phrase or a superficial complaint. They get a full toolkit of attack lines, often organised by level, dressed in analytical language, and ready to be used by someone who has not personally done the work of understanding or building the argument. In this sense, the production of critical speech no longer depends solely on individual effort — it benefits from a form of outsourced thinking without precedent.

The consequences of this change need to be stated clearly. It does not necessarily mean there is more falsehood, or that all criticism produced this way is illegitimate. It means, rather, that it has become extraordinarily cheap to turn hostile intuitions, strategic interests, or partial truths into frameworks that look like mature reasoning. Form lends authority to content, and that authority can spread regardless of whether the person sharing it has actually checked its solidity, balance, or omissions.

This creates a particularly relevant asymmetry. Producing an articulate criticism can now cost almost nothing; checking it, contextualising it, or responding to it fairly still costs a great deal. As a result, the public conversation tends to favour the availability of lightweight criticisms that are easy to produce and socially effective to spread, while fair explanations of complex functions still require comparatively more effort.

But the problem does not stop there. There is an additional and especially delicate dimension: any professional text about pilotage — even one that is not written in response to a controversy — can now almost immediately be subjected to conceptual demolition, caricature, or hostile reframing. A newsletter article, an institutional note, a public statement, or a training document can all be taken apart within seconds using plausible and verbally effective objections. Discursive vulnerability no longer appears only when the profession is under attack; it appears also, preventively, every time the profession speaks at all.



### **Why This Hits Complex Professions Especially Hard**

Not all professions are equally vulnerable to this new ease of producing critical frameworks. Complex professions have a specific fragility: their value tends to be contextual, distributed, and systemic. In other words, it cannot be easily captured by immediate observation or by simply describing its most visible parts.

Harbour pilotage is a particularly useful case for thinking about this. Its function cannot fairly be reduced to a single visible task or a simple intervention in a manoeuvre. It operates at an interface where local knowledge, situated judgment, coordination between actors, reading of available means, environmental variability, the uniqueness of each situation, and the need to absorb uncertainty at critical points in the port system all come together. All of this is real, but it is not always easy to see from the outside.

That is precisely why simplified criticism has a structural advantage. It can select the visible part of the work, strip it of context, and present it as the whole picture. It can replace the question about function with a question about the character of the group. It can mix institutional design, economic cost, technological tensions, individual failures, and professional traditions as if they all belonged on the same level. And it can do all this with an expressive economy that serious defence does not naturally possess.

A complex profession, therefore, is not vulnerable because it lacks reasons. It is vulnerable because its reasons are denser than the caricature made of them.

### **The Mistake of Thinking That Doing Good Work Is Enough**

One of the most common instincts in established professional groups is to believe that the real usefulness of the function will eventually prove itself. According to this logic, if the profession keeps solving real problems, keeps being necessary, and maintains a reasonable level of performance, there is no need to worry too much about how it is described from the outside. This attitude may have been understandable when public discourse moved more slowly. Today it is not enough.

The reason is simple. The real value of a profession and its public perception no longer necessarily evolve at the same pace or on the same level. A profession can continue to be objectively valuable and still end up surrounded by suspicion or undervaluation if it fails to make its function intelligible in terms that the surrounding environment can process.

This does not mean bending technical truth to marketing. It means recognising that public intelligibility is now part of what preserves the institutional standing of a function. Where caricature spreads easily and fair explanation demands greater density, narrative passivity becomes a form of unprotection.

### **Why Improvised Responses Are Not Enough**

One might object that, faced with each specific criticism, it would be enough to respond in a specific way: correct, clarify, qualify, and move on. But this case-by-case strategy has serious limitations.

First, it is usually reactive and late. It arrives after the hostile framing has already begun to take effect.

Second, many spontaneous professional responses fall into recurring mistakes: a defensive tone, corporate pride, excessive technical language, visible irritation, or conceptual confusion.

Third, the most effective criticisms do not work only through what they claim, but through the frame they propose. That is, they organise the perception of the problem before the facts are even discussed. Responding only with data, without correcting that frame, is often insufficient.

Fourth, the speed at which attacks are generated and the slowness with which they are verified creates an asymmetry that cannot be resolved by individual improvisation alone.

To all of this, one must add a less visible but decisive reason. Discursive vulnerability no longer appears only when the profession responds to an external criticism. It also appears when the profession produces its own ordinary discourse. An institutional text, an explanatory article, a public statement, or a training document can now be dismantled, reordered, and caricatured with remarkable ease by tools capable of generating persuasive objections in seconds. This means that the problem is not only how to respond better when others attack, but also how to write from the start in a way that is less exposed to later demolition.

The need for a shared guide or protocol arises precisely from this double requirement. On one hand, it should help recognise foreseeable attacks, avoid defensive mistakes, and bring the discussion back to the right level. On the other, it should work as a preventive tool for writing more robust professional texts: a way to avoid handing over capturable phrases, unintentional simplifications, exploitable ambiguities, or self-satisfied formulations that can later be used against the profession itself.



## The Idea of Discursive Resilience

The concept of discursive resilience gives us a useful name for the goal we are after. It is not about reputation management, ideological protection, or propaganda. It is about a profession's capacity to withstand interpretive attacks without losing its intelligible shape.

A discursively resilient profession is not one that manages to eliminate criticism, but one that prevents poorly framed criticisms, aggressive simplifications, or conceptually poor readings from too easily replacing a reasonable understanding of its function. In short, it is a profession that knows how to protect the cognitive space within which it wants to be judged.

This resilience requires three things. It requires anticipation, because it cannot depend on reaction alone. It requires disciplined condensation, because truth that cannot circulate is at a disadvantage compared to caricature that can. And it requires institutional substance, because no rhetorical device will hold if there is not a real reserve of legitimacy behind it.

## The Difficult Balance: Avoiding Both Opacity and Propaganda

The need for a guide of this kind raises an obvious risk. In the name of self-defence, a profession could slide towards a closed, self-congratulatory, or propagandistic rhetoric. That risk exists and it is worth naming explicitly. But the existence of the risk does not invalidate the need for the tool; it obliges us to design it better.

The guide being justified here should not aim to make the profession look artificially better, but to preserve the minimum complexity necessary to think about it fairly. It must accept limits, acknowledge tensions, admit vulnerabilities, and rigorously separate the systemic function from the flaws of its possible institutional framework or the failures of specific individuals. Only in this way will it avoid becoming a piece of self-celebration.

Real discursive self-defence does not deny problems. It prevents problems from being used as an excuse to destroy the framework that allows a valuable function to be understood.

## Applying This to Harbour Pilotage

In the case of harbour pilotage, the usefulness of a discursive resilience guide is particularly clear. Pilotage sits at the intersection of several contemporary tensions: technological pressure, promises of automation, trivialisation by analogy — that is, the tendency to reinterpret complex professions through reductive comparisons with apparently simpler functions — economic scrutiny, safety requirements, efficiency narratives, regulatory changes, and public oversimplifications about the role of specialised professions. All of this makes it an especially susceptible object to be explained poorly. Trivialisation by analogy deserves particular attention.

In other sectors, we already see impoverished rereadings of highly qualified professions, discursively reduced to trivial versions of themselves: the pilot as mere 'aeroplane driver', the crew as simple service staff, the expert as a residual operator of systems that supposedly already do the essential work. These analogies do not need to be accurate to be harmful. It is enough that they are cognitively comfortable and socially repeatable. In the case of pilotage, the risk is analogous: that a dense, situated, and systemic function ends up being recoded as a mere visible service, easily comparable to others and eventually dispensable.

If the professional group itself does not have a shared way of explaining what problem it actually solves, why that problem persists even as technology changes, and how its limits should be understood without confusing them with functional irrelevance, then it is left in an unnecessarily weak position. Not because the adversary is right, but because the profession has given up educating the frame through which it will be read.

The guide does not replace other essential tasks, such as training improvement, institutional reflection, or critical examination of technological interfaces. But it accompanies them. It functions as a piece of narrative stabilisation and strategic writing hygiene, without which even well-intentioned texts or real advances can be left exposed to being cut, trivialised, or reordered by simpler and more aggressive narratives.

## Conclusion

The emergence of tools and environments that make it cheap to produce articulate criticism obliges complex professions to reconsider some of their defensive assumptions. It is no longer enough to trust that technical truth, accumulated practice, or silent usefulness will be sufficient to preserve legitimacy. Nor is it enough to respond case by case, driven by improvisation or the wounded sensitivity of the group.

A new task is required: building mechanisms of discursive resilience. This means developing guides or protocols that help recognise foreseeable attacks, avoid response errors, condense truth without trivialising it, and maintain, behind every summary, a real base of legitimacy. But it also means something more: giving the professional group criteria for writing and communication that reduce its unnecessary exposure to the demolition, cutting, and later caricaturisation of its own texts.

In professions like harbour pilotage, where the function is dense, contextual, and systemic, this task is not a luxury or a communication whim. It is an additional condition of institutional self-preservation. The guide is justified not only as a reactive tool against external attacks, but also as a preventive device for writing, explaining, and engaging publicly with greater discursive robustness.

To put it as clearly as possible: when the cost of manufacturing hostile frameworks drops, the defence of a profession no longer depends only on doing things well. It also depends on ensuring that the profession's own words cannot be destroyed, caricatured, or misread too easily.



## EMPA 60TH GENERAL MEETING

### “Navigating the Past, Steering the Future”

The recent EMPA General Meeting, held in the historic city of Ghent, brought together members from across Europe for a productive exchange. Against the backdrop of one of Belgium's most vibrant academic and cultural hubs, participants engaged in rich discussions on current developments and EMPA's role in shaping EU policy. The meeting saw strong participation from member associations, policy makers and stakeholders, reflecting the continued relevance and drive of EMPA's work. The gathering provided a valuable opportunity for both long-standing members and newer participants to connect, and learn from best practices. Conversations throughout the meeting highlighted the collective commitment to advancing EMPA's mission, with particular emphasis on knowledge-sharing, and strengthening cooperation with members to address challenges more effectively. A central focus of the General Meeting was the review of ongoing activities and the identification of priorities for the coming period. Members exchanged updates on national advancements, providing insight into evolutions and difficulties affecting the sector.

The formal programme opened with contributions from key stakeholders, including Miguel Vieira de Castro, EMPA President, Sofie Bracke, the Deputy Mayor responsible for the port of the City of Ghent, and Wim Van Bogaert, Harbour Master, North Sea Port.

A keynote address from Torsten Klimke (DG MOVE, European Commission) provided an insight into upcoming developments in maritime and port policy, security, and inland navigation at EU level. The high-level roundtable explored the EU port and industrial maritime strategies, bringing together representatives of the European associations of ports, private terminal operators, shipowners, tugowners, and the executive agency of the Dutch Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management.



This debate highlighted current pressures on the sector, including competitiveness, sustainability, and the need for EU support.

Later in the day, a dedicated session focused on workforce challenges and resilience, with contributions from Nathalie Balcaen on Project Olivia, Patrick Galvin on Greenport Alliances, as well as industry stakeholders representing transport workers and shipowners.

The panel debate emphasised skills shortages, workforce adaptability, and the attractiveness of maritime careers.



The second half of the day shifted to the geopolitical situation and their impact on ports. Anne Legrégeois, Deputy Director for Fleets and Seafarers in France, provided the keynote speech. A final session examined how maritime pilots adapt to geopolitical and operational changes, with input from pilots from Poland, the Netherlands, and Norway.

The General Meeting reaffirmed EMPA's role as a platform for collaboration, knowledge exchange, and strategic reflection. The discussions provided important insights into the evolving maritime landscape.

Participants left Ghent with renewed momentum and a shared commitment to addressing future issues collectively, reinforcing EMPA's contribution to Europe's port and maritime community.

Last but not least, we would like to express our deepest appreciation to our sponsors. Their support and dedication have greatly contributed to the success of this General Meeting. It is thanks to these partnerships that we can continue to deliver valuable and engaging events.

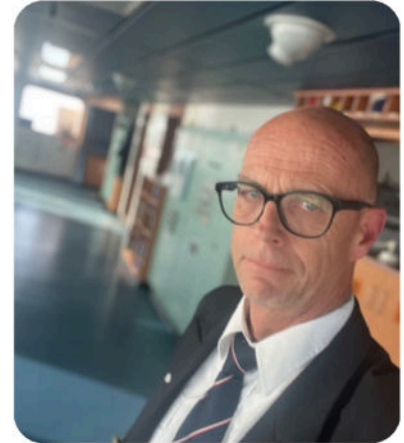


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## PILOT LADDERS

### From Conference to Practice: Turning Knowledge into Action

by Arie Palmers



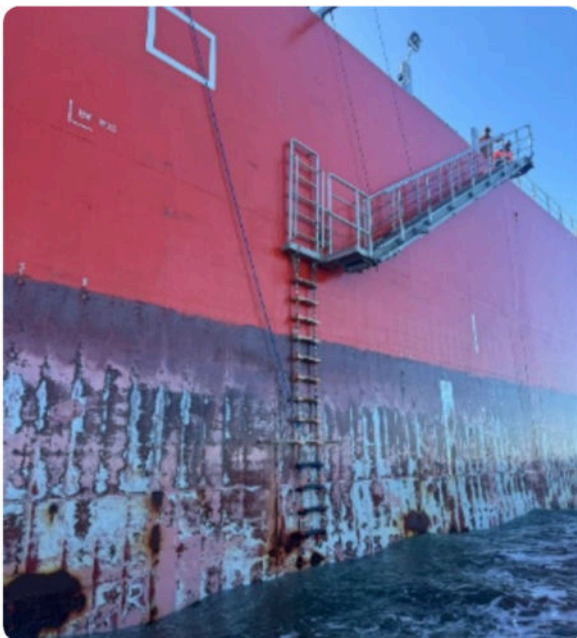
Dear all,

As you may know, I recently returned from New Zealand, where I spoke about pilot ladders at the New Zealand Maritime Pilots' Association conference. The conference days were packed with very interesting topics covering all kinds of subjects directly related to our profession. I believe I earned enough Continuous Professional Development (CPD) points during that week to get me through the next three years.

There are a few points I would like to highlight. One of them is the fact that the tugs there are equipped with a Portable Pilot Unit (PPU), just like the pilot on the vessel during berthing. This means that both the pilot and the tug masters have exactly the same image on their screens. This leads to a better understanding of each other's movements and provides more detailed information for all parties involved.

Another valuable session was an S-100 workshop, where we had in-depth discussions with representatives of the International Hydrographic Organisation on how S-100 presentation can be optimised in the electronic charts we all use. A very worthwhile exchange.

I am still using EMPAsafe on a daily basis and can only hope that more and more pilots will start using it so that we can build a solid database for all pilots in Europe. Recently, I received a 'heads-up' via EMPAsafe regarding a vessel that had been reported through the app:



The vessel was built in 2018 and, as you can see, the pilot transfer arrangement did not comply with regulations, although it had of course been class-approved. In short, the pilot refused to use the arrangement, and the vessel had to ballast until the freeboard was low enough to use a single pilot ladder. EMPAsafe helped us identify the vessel in advance so that proper ballasting instructions could be issued.

Subsequently, the vessel had to proceed to dry dock, which we considered a good opportunity to have the system corrected. I will not disclose the name of the vessel; as a CHIRP Ambassador and member of the CHIRP Maritime Advisory Board, that is not how I operate. What does concern me, however, is that this vessel has been sailing since 2018, and I could not find a single report submitted to Port State Control apart from the one via EMPAsafe. This implies that many pilots consider this arrangement acceptable.

At the time of writing, I am also working on an article on liability in the event that a pilot is injured while using a non-compliant pilot transfer arrangement — a topic that is both interesting and somewhat concerning. You will see this published in due course.

As long as pilots do not report issues or take action, those of us in the IMPA workgroup can draft all the regulations we want, but it will ultimately be in vain. Moreover, it sends the wrong message to vessel crews, suggesting that unsafe arrangements are acceptable. Some cases do appear on the Dangerous Ladders Facebook page (sometimes even with the vessel's name), but if that is the only action taken, what is the real impact? Simply naming and shaming is not enough.

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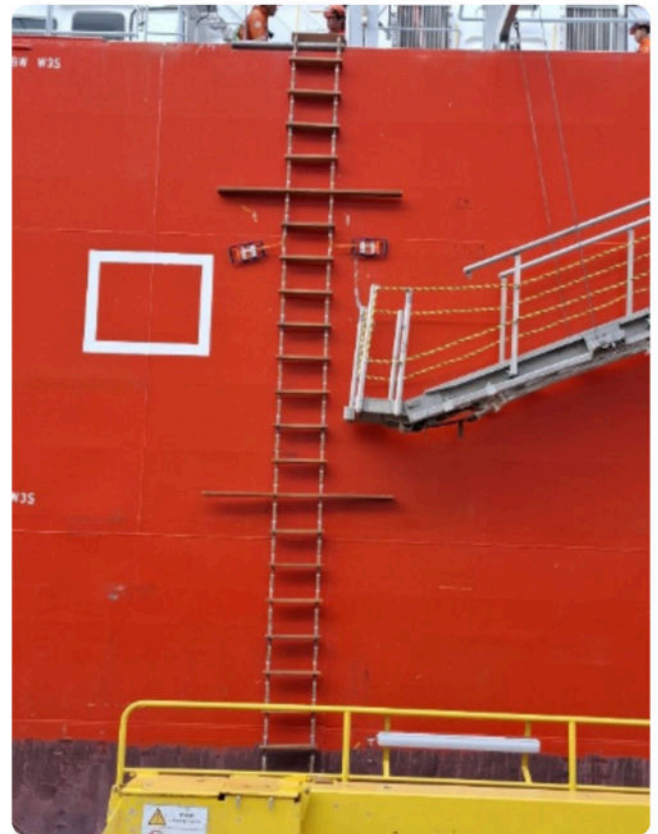
When you want things to be fixed, you need to engage with all parties involved to work out a solution that complies with regulations and is therefore safe.

And that is exactly what happened in this specific case: we contacted the shipyard, class, and representatives of the shipping company to achieve a safe solution. The result of this very fruitful cooperation can be seen in the picture alongside.

You may have read in a previous article that we did the same with vessels from another company, and once again all parties involved were very cooperative in working out a good solution. The bottom line: if you engage, the problem will be solved. If you simply post an angry picture online, problems will not be resolved.

A colleague also encountered another vessel, a VLCC, that still had an illegal trapdoor system.

Unfortunately, we were too late to engage and have it fixed: if no one informs you in time, you are too late. This specific vessel has been reported via the EMPAsafe app as well as to Port State Control.



At present, we have this vessel 'blacklisted', and she will not be serviced by one of our pilot launches.

At most, service may be provided by helicopter, should that option be available, but this will likely come at a cost higher than refitting. For reference, I include a picture of the vessel, which is currently drifting in the English Channel (or Pas-de-Calais, if you prefer), awaiting further instructions

EMPAsafe will provide information about this vessel should it plan to enter another port in an EMPA-associated country, so pilots will be alerted in advance.

I have conducted some research on this vessel, and the arrangement was installed after 1 July 2012, which means it cannot rely on the grandfather clause still present in SOLAS V/23. The vessel has been operating for 15 years and still has this arrangement. Over all those years, it appears that nobody reported it or attempted to have it rectified. This will be a matter to address should this vessel reappear in our region.

Please stay safe, everyone.

Arie Palmers, Registered Pilot Scheldemonden, The Netherlands



## DEEP-SEA PILOTAGE

### A MILESTONE FOR INCLUSION: EMPA WELCOMES DEEP-SEA PILOTS INTO ITS FAMILY

**Brussels, April 2026 – This marks an important milestone for EMPA and for the European pilotage community. Following the decision taken at the General Meeting in Ghent on 14 April 2026, EMPA has opened its doors to Deep-Sea Pilots, approving 61 professionals as affiliate members and concluding a two-year process of revising its internal framework.**

**This step reflects a clear commitment to inclusiveness. For the first time, Deep-Sea Pilots who are not represented through national pilotage associations can join EMPA directly, provided they hold a valid certificate issued by a European coastal state authority.**

**We are pleased to warmly welcome the 61 pilots from Redwise, Trinity House London, Trinity House Newcastle upon Tyne, and Trinity House Hull. Their inclusion strengthens our collective voice and reinforces our shared mission to safeguard and support licensed deep-sea pilotage across Europe.**

### BALTIC PILOTAGE AUTHORITIES COMMISSION (BPAC)

The BPAC (Baltic Pilotage Authorities Commission) meeting was held on 27–29 May 2026 onboard *Silja Serenade*, a passenger liner sailing between Helsinki and Stockholm.

The meeting brought together pilotage authorities from Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Germany, Poland, and Estonia. EMPA was also represented, together with members of the Swedish and Finnish pilot associations.

A full two-day agenda was required, as this was the first BPAC meeting since 2019. The planned 2020 meeting in Latvia had been cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. During the meeting, participating countries delivered presentations covering both national and deep-sea pilotage statistics, ongoing development projects, and other key topics of mutual interest. Significant changes have taken place since the authorities last met, and many new individuals are now involved in pilotage-related matters. Feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive, highlighting the value of renewed cooperation and information exchange.

EMPA addressed the meeting, introduced our work and presented its updated recommendation and position paper on deep-sea pilotage. EMPA also informed BPAC members about the resumption of NEDSPA (North European Deep-Sea Pilots Association) meetings, which have been held regularly since 2024. The importance of continued collaboration within European and international working groups was recognized and welcomed also by the BPAC authorities, and we hope to see even closer cooperation between these forums in the future.

Collaboration between pilot organisations, coastal state authorities, and stakeholders on both EU and national legislation is essential for maintaining and enhancing maritime safety."



Authorities play a key role in establishing and administering procedures such as the issuance of deep-sea pilot and Pilot Exemption Certificate (PEC) licences. Effective information exchange and strengthened cooperation contribute directly to safer and more efficient maritime transport across Europe. The active participation of pilots and EMPA representatives is of particular importance. Pilots are the eyes and ears of the maritime industry onboard vessels and possess first-hand operational knowledge of the actual safety conditions, practices, and safety culture on board.

EMPA was represented at the BPAC meeting by Vice President and Chairman of the Deep-Sea Pilots Committee, Capt. Kaj Hahtonen.



# GREENPORT ALLIANCES: PEOPLE POWER DRIVING DECARBONISATION IN THE PORT SECTOR



Over the past 2.5 years, the European Maritime Pilots Association (EMPA) has been working on a Co-EU Funded Erasmus+ project called GREENPORT Alliances. Working on the project for EMPA have been President Miguel Vieira de Castro, EMPA Secretary General Aileen Van Raemdonck, and former EMPA Vice President Patrick Galvin.

GREENPORT Alliances is a project focused on making sustainability and green skills a reality for the maritime port services sector. The project aims to change how people plan, coordinate and execute port calls, cutting emissions

through real behavioural change. By connecting academia, industry, and representative organisations, GREENPORT is developing training and education for both higher education and vocational education settings. The aim is to make low-carbon best practices not just teachable, but also workable and scalable. EMPA contributes its operational expertise to ensure that what's taught aligns with industry best practices in maritime pilotage.

Backed by the European Union's Erasmus+ programme, GREENPORT fits right in with EU goals for green skills, innovation, and smart, sustainable mobility. Harnessing education as a powerful tool to transform the port sector and drive emissions reduction, inspiring a cleaner, sustainable future.

## Port Services as a Proactive Driver of Cleaner Port Calls

GREENPORT Alliances encourages ports to take immediate action by refining every stage of a port call. Practical steps include better planning of voyage and berth movements for ships, selecting efficient speeds for workboats and pilot boats, and improving coordination among VTS, terminals, and agents to eliminate unnecessary waiting. These measures are packaged into implementable guidance and training, making emissions reduction a standard part of safe and efficient port operations.

Greener technologies and future fuels like hydrogen and methanol, as well as electric engines, are in the pipeline, but they're not ready for large scale adoption just yet. Plus, let's be honest, the boats in use today can last 30 years or more, so traditional engines are going to be with us for a long while yet.

## Hands On Simulator Training

Part of the Vocational Education Training programme, designed for aspiring pilots and those already in the job, involves hands-on experience using simulators. The primary aim is to prioritise safety in navigation and ship handling while providing pilots with the opportunity to develop new skills. This training emphasises understanding how to effectively utilise elements such as wind, tide, momentum, and hydrodynamics to reduce engine and tug power needed for manoeuvring.

## Decarbonisation Through Operational Behaviour Change

To bridge the "technology gap," GREENPORT Alliances focuses on real operational behaviour in port services. The team collected best practices from port service providers as part of the work packages, transforming them into clear guidance and modular training. The premise is simple: small improvements in daily decisions, supported by digital tools and shared procedures, help cut fuel use and emissions without sacrificing safety or efficiency.

Small operational changes in port services may lead to immediate emissions savings. For example, allocating tug assistance based on ship size, running workboats at efficient speeds, and coordinating scheduling across all parties help reduce fuel use and unnecessary idling. These changes account for real-life constraints such as weather and traffic, while ensuring services remain safe and reliable.

What really sets GREENPORT apart lies in its ability to turn real operational lessons into content that's teachable, testable, and easy to roll out elsewhere.

## A Three-Pronged Educational Strategy

To embed these ideas in the industry, GREENPORT is developing education materials that make green skills and sustainability core to port services. The 10 project partners across 8 countries are creating practical, accessible training for both new entrants and experienced professionals.



EMPA's operational experience helps keep the content relevant to daily port realities, especially where pilotage and other services like towage intersect.

The educational strategy includes three main areas: integrating green skills and eco-navigation into higher education for future maritime professionals; offering short, accredited courses in energy-efficient operations for current professionals, such as tug masters and pilots; and providing an eLearning course to train maritime educators in delivering the GREENPORT methodology across Europe.

### Bridging Industry and Academia

This whole mission runs on teamwork between universities and industry partners across the consortium. Piri Reis University is a project leader, with everyone collaborating via dedicated work packages from management and quality inspections to research, curriculum building, and dissemination. Industry groups like the European Tugowners Association (ETA) and the European Maritime Pilots' Association (EMPA) help ensure what's proposed works in practice. That way, the project continues rooted in real life while still being easy for ports across Europe to pick up and use.



## GREENPORT Alliances

As the industry prepares for the green transition, GREENPORT Alliances is building a Permanent Cross-Sectoral Working Group to ensure that maritime professionals are pre-emptive and forward-looking, rather than purely reactive to future regulations.

The message is clear: ports do not have to wait for tomorrow's fuels to start reducing emissions today. By turning operational best practice into accredited learning and by convening partners across education and industry, GREENPORT Alliances helps the port services sector make safer, smarter, lower-carbon choices routine. The project is now in its final year, and we are on the last work package, which is piloting the learning materials. We look forward to seeing the outcome of this work package and to how the learning materials developed over the past few years will be accepted by students.

## Project Partners

### LABOUR MARKET ACTORS



European Tugowners Association  
(Belgium)



EMPA  
European Maritime Pilots' Association  
(Belgium)



Porto de Aveiro  
Administracao Do Porto De Aveiro Sa  
(Portugal)



Aggregazione Pubblico Privata Sullalogistica Mare Terra Società Consortile A Responsabilita Limit  
(Italy)

### HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTES



T.C. Piri Reis Universitesi  
(Turkey)  
COORDINATOR



Nikola Vaptsarov Naval Academy  
(Bulgaria)



Sveučilište u Rijeci, Pomorski fakultet  
University of Rijeka, Faculty of Maritime Studies

Sveuciliste U Rijeci  
(Croatia)

### VOCATIONAL EDUCATION & TRAINING PROVIDERS



acrosslimits | AcrossLimits Ltd  
(Malta)



Constanta Maritime University  
(Romania)



Hogere Zeevaartschool  
(Belgium)



# GREENPORT

## *Alliances* Partners



### **Piri Reis University**

Piri Reis University is the coordinating partner for the GREENPORT project, responsible for overall project management and quality assurance. The university will lead Work Package 1, Management and Coordination, and will oversee the implementation of the project, ensure deadlines are met, and coordinate activities among partners.



### **EMPA**

The European Maritime Pilots Association represents maritime pilots in Europe and promotes safety and efficiency in maritime operations. Within the project, EMPA contributes with their expertise in maritime operations, feedback on training materials, and engaging industry partners.



### **ETA**

The European Tugowners Association represents tugboat operators in Europe and is actively involved in promoting sustainable practices in the maritime industry. Within the project, they will be the leaders of Work Package 2, and they are responsible for contributing to needs analysis, providing industry expertise, and giving feedback on curriculum development.



### **NVNA**

Nikola Vaptsarov Naval Academy is a prominent maritime education institution focusing on naval and maritime training. Leading Work Package 4, the academy is responsible for curriculum development, training material creation, providing vocational education expertise, and industry collaboration.



### **MarTe**

MARTE. is a leading maritime research consortium based in Italy, with the goal to promote and manage R&D projects in the sea-land logistics sector and port management. Within the project, they are the leaders of Work Package 3, and will be responsible for conducting scientific analysis, identifying best practices, and supporting curriculum development.



## GREENPORT *Alliances* Partners

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### **AMA**

Antwerp Maritime Academy is a renowned maritime education institution offering programmes in maritime studies. Being the leaders of Work Package 5, AMA is responsible for curriculum development, delivering training, designing assessments, and knowledge exchange activities.



### **AcrossLimits**

AcrossLimits is a consultancy firm specialising in project management, innovation, and capacity building. As the leaders of Work Package 6, AcrossLimits will take on the role of dissemination and communication leadership, coordinating promotional activities, ensuring stakeholder engagement, and planning sustainability.



### **APA**

The Administration of the Port of Aveiro is a port authority responsible for managing operations at the Port of Aveiro in Portugal. Their role within the project is to provide industry insights, give feedback on the training content and share practical experience.

### **University of Rijeka**



The University of Rijeka is a higher education institution with expertise in maritime studies and research. Their role in the project is to contribute to curriculum development, and conducting research activities.



### **Constanta Maritime University**

Constanta Maritime University is a vocational education and training provider focusing on maritime education. Within the project, they are responsible for contributing to curriculum development, reviewing training material, and industry collaboration.



# THE 60TH EMPA FOOTBALL TOURNAMENT IN BEAUTIFUL ÅLESUND



The picturesque Norwegian city of Ålesund was the proud host of the 60th EMPA Football Championship, held on 14 and 15 May 2026.

The tournament, which brought together national maritime pilots' teams from across Europe, proved to be a resounding success — both on and off the pitch — combining world-class sportsmanship, breathtaking natural scenery, and an extraordinary spirit of fellowship within the European pilotage community.

The event kicked off in spectacular fashion with the group stage draw held at Fjellstua, one of the most breathtaking viewpoints in the Ålesund region. Against the backdrop of dramatic Norwegian fjords and lush green landscapes, team representatives gathered to discover their group opponents in an atmosphere of anticipation and camaraderie. This idyllic setting set the perfect tone for the days ahead, blending the competitive spirit of the tournament with the natural splendour that Norway has to offer.

The matches were played at the Langevåg Stadion football grounds, where teams from across Europe competed with remarkable skill and passion. From the very first whistle, the quality of play was outstanding, with each side displaying the commitment and technical ability that characterise the highest levels of amateur sport.



The tournament format provided memorable encounters throughout both the group stage and the knockout rounds, building excitement with every match.

Throughout the championship, the conduct of all participating teams was exemplary. Fierce competition was matched at every turn by mutual respect, solidarity, and the true spirit of fair play.

The tournament once again demonstrated that the EMPA Football Championship is not merely a sporting event, but a celebration of the values that unite the European maritime pilots' community: trust, safety, and brotherhood. Players, coaches, and supporters alike contributed to an atmosphere of friendship that will be remembered long after the final whistle.



The tournament culminated in a thrilling final between the host nation, Norway, and Belgium. In front of an enthusiastic crowd, the Norwegian team rose to the occasion on home soil, delivering a composed and dominant performance to claim the championship title with a convincing 2-0 victory. The triumph was met with tremendous joy and warm applause from all participants, with the Belgian side receiving well-deserved recognition for their excellent run to the final.

Following the sporting action, participants and guests gathered for the official gala dinner at the Hotel Scandic Parken in Ålesund. The evening was a true celebration, with an exceptional atmosphere created by the warmth and energy of all those present. Superb cuisine and outstanding live music set the stage for an unforgettable night of connection, laughter, and shared memories. Speeches, toasts, and dancing brought together pilots from all corners of Europe in a spirit of genuine joy and unity — perfectly capturing what makes the EMPA community so special.



The entire championship was a testament to the exceptional organisational work carried out by the Norwegian pilotage community. Every detail — from logistics and venues to hospitality and programme — was handled with professionalism and warm generosity, leaving all participants deeply impressed. EMPA and all participating delegations extend their heartfelt congratulations and gratitude to the Norwegian hosts for a truly world-class event.



Captain Miguel Vieira de Castro attended the event together with the EMPA Board.

EMPA would like to sincerely thank Captain Johannes Sivertsen and the Norwegian Sports committee for the excellent organisation and for the incredible dedication and commitment.

Next year's tournament will take place on 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> June '27 in Sines (Portugal) — here we go!



# FROM A CONVERSATION TO A TOOL FOR PILOT SAFETY

**“The best ideas often emerge from the challenges we encounter in our daily work.”  
EMPAsafe was no exception**

The story began in 2023 during a maritime conference held in Mexico. It was there that Miguel Vieira de Castro, President of the European Maritime Pilots' Association (EMPA), met Airam Rodríguez, CEO of Hiades Business Patterns. During their discussions, a recurring question emerged, one that many maritime pilots across Europe had been asking for years: how can we improve the exchange of safety-related information between pilot organisations operating in different ports and countries?

The need was evident. Despite the existence of international regulations, pilot transfer procedures and extensive safety guidance, pilots continue to encounter improperly rigged pilot ladders, incorrectly fitted retrieval lines, technical deficiencies and other conditions that may compromise a safe transfer.

The objective was never to replace existing procedures or create another administrative burden. The idea was both simpler and more ambitious: to ensure that critical information reached the next pilot before the vessel itself.

Following those initial discussions, EMPA and HIADES began working together on a solution that would connect the European pilot community through a platform designed specifically for the needs of maritime pilots. What initially appeared to be a difficult concept to turn into reality gradually took shape through continuous collaboration between pilots and developers, combining operational experience with technological expertise.

Since then, EMPAsafe has continued to evolve. The platform now records activity across 26 countries and has active users throughout Europe and Canada.

Countries such as Ireland, Portugal, Spain, Italy and Finland have played an important role in the growth of the platform, while new user communities have recently emerged in Sweden, Croatia and France.

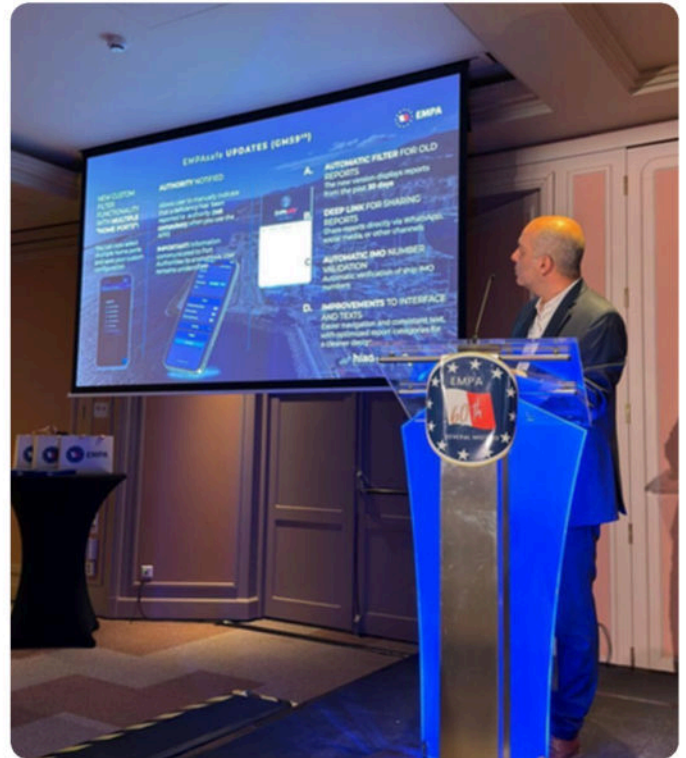
However, the true value of EMPAsafe should not be measured solely by the number of users or reports submitted. Its importance lies in something much simpler: providing pilots with relevant information before a manoeuvre takes place, allowing them to prepare more effectively and make decisions with greater situational awareness.





The data presented during the 60th General Meeting showed that pilot transfer-related deficiencies remain a persistent concern. Incorrectly rigged retrieval lines, improperly secured pilot ladders and various technical deficiencies continue to feature prominently among reported incidents. These figures do not necessarily indicate that more problems exist today than in the past; rather, they demonstrate that pilots now have a practical means of documenting and sharing situations that previously remained confined to local conversations.

Perhaps one of the most significant findings is that the rate of formal reporting to the competent authorities remains relatively low. This highlights that there is still room to strengthen reporting culture across the maritime sector. The more information that flows between pilots, authorities and shipping companies, the greater the industry's ability to identify trends, address recurring deficiencies and improve the safety of those involved in pilot transfer operations.



For this reason, a significant part of the presentation delivered in Ghent focused on the latest developments introduced to EMPASafe. The purpose of these 3 enhancements is not to add complexity, but to make the platform more useful and more accessible to pilots in their day-to-day operations.

The ability to select multiple home ports now enables users to view incidents from different operational areas simultaneously. Automatic IMO number validation improves data quality and consistency. A new option allows users to indicate whether a deficiency has been reported to the relevant authority, providing greater visibility and follow-up of reported incidents. In addition, direct sharing links make it easier to distribute information through messaging applications, social media and professional communication channels.

Particular attention was given to the platform's new notification logic. EMPASafe can now distinguish whether an incident was identified upon arrival or upon departure of a vessel. This allows notifications to be directed automatically to the most relevant pilot organisation, ensuring that information reaches the right people at the right time and improving cooperation between pilot organisations operating in different ports.

The vision that inspired EMPASafe remains unchanged from the conversation that first sparked the idea in 2023:

**THAT NO PILOT SHOULD HAVE TO FACE  
A KNOWN RISK WITHOUT FIRST HAVING  
THE OPPORTUNITY TO KNOW ABOUT IT.**





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## EMPA Board Scouts Costa del Sol for Future General Meeting Venue

*In preparation for the upcoming European Maritime Pilots' Association (EMPA) General Meeting, Association officials conducted a site inspection along the Costa del Sol to identify the most suitable venues for the European pilotage community.*



**Malaga, 8 June 2026** — The European Maritime Pilots' Association (EMPA) has begun preparatory work for its next General Meeting (11–14 May 2027) with a site visit to the Costa del Sol, one of southern Europe's most distinguished maritime and hospitality destinations.

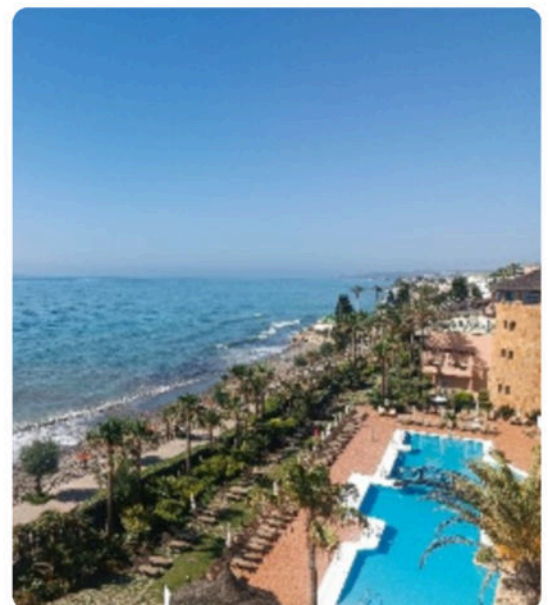
The visit was led by Captain Miguel Vieira de Castro, President of EMPA, accompanied by Captain José Antonio Pérez Lorente, Vice-President of EMPA and Delegate for International Affairs of the Spanish Pilots' Association (Colegio Oficial Nacional de Prácticos de España).

***"Our community deserves a General Meeting that matches its professional excellence and European scope. The Costa del Sol offers outstanding conditions to welcome pilots from across the continent, and we are committed to making the next GM a landmark event for maritime pilotage in Europe. We also want this to be a genuine meeting point for the companies and industries that work alongside us every day — our sponsors are key partners in the profession, and we are determined to offer them the visibility and direct access to the European pilotage community that their commitment deserves."***

***Captain Miguel Vieira de Castro, President of EMPA***

The visit, organised in collaboration with Patterson Travel, focused on evaluating potential conference facilities and accommodation options along the coast, with the aim of selecting a venue that truly reflects the standing of the European pilotage community. The delegation assessed a range of locations for their accessibility, infrastructure, and capacity to host a gathering befitting the importance of the EMPA General Meeting.

The EMPA General Meeting is one of the foremost events in the maritime-port calendar, bringing together marine pilots from across Europe to share expertise, address common challenges, and strengthen the cohesion of the profession. Attracting the widest possible participation from European pilots remains a core objective, ensuring that the GM continues to serve as a benchmark event for the maritime and port community at large. Further details regarding the venue and programme of the next EMPA General Meeting will be announced in due course through the Association's official channels.



**SAVE THE DATE 2027**

Estepona, Spain 11-14 May 2027



## European Maritime Pilots' Association vzw

### About EMPA

The European Maritime Pilots' Association (EMPA) represents marine pilots across Europe, promoting the highest standards of safety, professionalism, and excellence in maritime pilotage. EMPA serves as the authoritative voice of the European pilotage community before European and international institutions.

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EUROPEAN MARITIME PILOTS' ASSOCIATION

# GENERAL MEETING

NAVIGATING THE PAST, STEERING THE FUTURE

WITH OUR SPONSORS' SUPPORT, THIS 2026 GENERAL MEETING WAS A SUCCESS—THANK YOU!

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