



## Europe Maritime Safety Report (EMSRT)

by the London office, Japan Association of Marine Safety

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## INTRODUCTION

The articles in this report deal with the topics of decarbonisation, maritime security and capacity building.

The first article of the report summarises recent news regarding alternative fuels and propulsion technologies that can help the shipping industry on its pathway towards decarbonisation.

The problem of ports as gateways for illegal drug trafficking is the topic of the second article. The article describes both short-term repressive action as well as long-term preventative policy plans.

The third article describes recent maritime security developments and initiatives in the Black Sea Basin.

The fourth article is dedicated to the topic of maritime security and capacity building and sheds light on recent cooperation initiatives between the EU and Vietnam.

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## Encouraging developments on green fuels and propulsion technologies

Recent developments and reports show that good progress is made regarding technologies and fuels that help the maritime industry on its trajectory towards net-zero GHG emissions. One example relates to advancements on the use of ammonia and methanol as sustainable maritime fuels, the other example relates to wind propulsion technology. Both are further described below.

The “[Getting to Net-Zero Coalition](#)”, which defines itself as an “alliance of more than 200 organisations (including over 180 private companies) within the maritime, energy, infrastructure, and finance sectors (...) committed to getting commercially viable zero-emission vessels powered by zero-emission fuels into operation by 2030”<sup>1</sup>, has published a [report](#)<sup>2</sup> on the state of play of ammonia and methanol as sustainable maritime fuels. The report finds that in principle, both fuels are ready for use in the shipping sector. According to the report, there are around 60 methanol- capable vessels already in circulation and more than 300 additional ones on order. Ammonia has not yet reached the same degree of maturity, but the report explains that first ammonia-powered vessels have been successfully piloted and bunkering trials are underway at major ports, including Rotterdam.

However, both fuels still face remaining challenges for their commercial scale-up. The report finds that for methanol, the challenge consists of enhancing the availability of “green molecules” (e.g. renewably sourced hydrogen and carbon atoms derived from biogas)) that form the basis of the production of the green fuel. Consequently, green methanol at the moment only represents a small share of the total amount of methanol used in shipping. As regards ammonia, the report identifies the challenge of rolling out bunkering infrastructure in key ports. There are debates as to whether dedicated ammonia bunkering vessels are needed from an early adoption phase; also, some ports appear to be adverse to the risk of hosting ammonia bunkering infrastructure.

Moreover, an [article](#)<sup>3</sup> by leading German weekly news magazine “Focus” describes the potential of wind-assisted propulsion. Gavin Allwright, secretary general of the [International WindShip Association](#)<sup>4</sup> is quoted as saying that in the next five years about 15% of the global fleet could be equipped with wind assistance systems. By 2050 this proportion could reach 50%. The growth in wind propulsion technology is generated by technological progress on the one hand and legislative as well as political developments on the other hand. The article explains that the EU’s Emission Trading System (ETS)<sup>5</sup>, which now also applies to international maritime transport and the FuelEU Maritime

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<sup>1</sup> Global Maritime Forum: <https://globalmaritimeforum.org/getting-to-zero-coalition/>

<sup>2</sup> [https://downloads.ctfassets.net/gk3lrimlph5v/42oVCMYa8EuGXsvd46hIH6/e7a183fa7adb94749676607ad72a2a8c/Getting\\_to\\_Zero\\_Coalition-From\\_pilots\\_to\\_practice\\_Methanol\\_and\\_ammonia\\_as\\_shipping\\_fuels.pdf](https://downloads.ctfassets.net/gk3lrimlph5v/42oVCMYa8EuGXsvd46hIH6/e7a183fa7adb94749676607ad72a2a8c/Getting_to_Zero_Coalition-From_pilots_to_practice_Methanol_and_ammonia_as_shipping_fuels.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Focus, 14 August 2025: [https://www.focus.de/earth/weniger-emissionen-im-schiffsverkehr-mit-segelschiffen\\_2a6dc3c1-733c-4145-84d4-9ef545e4447e.html](https://www.focus.de/earth/weniger-emissionen-im-schiffsverkehr-mit-segelschiffen_2a6dc3c1-733c-4145-84d4-9ef545e4447e.html)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.wind-ship.org/>

<sup>5</sup> Governed by EU ETS Directive: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A02023L0959-20230516>

[Regulation](#)<sup>6</sup>, which sets increasingly strict carbon emission limits for marine fuels, will contribute to ship operators opting for wind technology as it helps achieve compliance with the emission and fuel standards. The process is likely to be even accelerated once the IMO adopts its Net-Zero Framework in October. [The article](#) concludes that wind propulsion assistance systems can be used on nearly all types of vessels. So far, only very large container vessels have refrained from it, mainly due to technical challenges like the need for large space on deck as well as challenges for cranes to load and unload container vessels that would have sails.<sup>7</sup> But shipping company Hapag-Lloyd reportedly has plans to also use the technology for its container vessels.

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## Preventative and repressive measures against drug smuggling in ports

Drug trafficking keeps being an issue in major European ports. According to a [recent report](#) by the European Union Drugs Agency (EUDA), nearly 2,000 tonnes of illegal drugs were seized in or on their way to EU sea ports between 2019 and 2024.<sup>8</sup> The authorities are attempting to address it with a combination of repressive and preventative measures.

As regards the repressive approach, the Brussels Times reports<sup>9</sup> that Belgian authorities recently intercepted a shipment of 1.2 tonnes of cocaine in the Port of Antwerp and carried out ten arrests in relation to the case. Customs officials discovered the drugs aboard the ship Grande Africa when it was anchored at a quay in the Port of Antwerp. The operation involved the Federal Judicial Police of Antwerp, the Maritime Police, and the Special Units Directorate (DSU). Police then arrested ten suspects in the nearby region of Zelzate in connection to the case. A judge in Antwerp is in charge of the investigation and will determine whether the suspects remain in custody.

Meanwhile the European Commission has announced it is preparing a new EU drugs strategy that may also address the topic of drugs smuggling. According to the European Commission, the drugs strategy will aim “to update policy frameworks and propose concrete actions to combat drug trafficking both within the EU and internationally, highlighting a coordinated approach to adapt to emerging threats”<sup>10</sup>. At the moment, the exact content of the strategy and its impact on the maritime sector is not yet clear, since the European Commission is only at its initial planning phase. A public consultation is ongoing,

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<sup>6</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2023/1805/oj/eng>

<sup>7</sup> Dassault Systems Blog: The return of wind assisted propulsion at sea: <https://blog.3ds.com/industries/marine-offshore/the-return-of-wind-assisted-propulsion-at-sea/>

<sup>8</sup> EUDA, Seaports: monitoring the EU's floodgates for illicit drugs: [https://www.euda.europa.eu/publications/joint-publications-including-eu-drug-markets/seaports-monitoring-eu-floodgates-illicit-drugs\\_en](https://www.euda.europa.eu/publications/joint-publications-including-eu-drug-markets/seaports-monitoring-eu-floodgates-illicit-drugs_en)

<sup>9</sup> Brussels Times, 1 September 2025: <https://www.brusselstimes.com/1726663/ten-arrests-after-1-2-tonnes-of-cocaine-intercepted-at-port-of-antwerp>

<sup>10</sup> See European Commission: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/14682-Tackling-drug-trafficking-EU-drugs-strategy-and-EU-action-plan\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/14682-Tackling-drug-trafficking-EU-drugs-strategy-and-EU-action-plan_en)

which gives stakeholders and other interested parties the opportunity to provide input to the strategy. The European Commission plans to adopt its new drug strategy by the end of the year. It would replace the current strategy<sup>11</sup> which dates back to 2021.

At the same time the European Commission is equally working on a ports strategy which may also aim to address the issue of drug trafficking in ports. This initiative is also foreseen by the end of the year.<sup>12</sup> The content of the strategy is not yet clear either, but the European Commission's initial idea is to make it a holistic action plan that touches on various topics related to ports, which may include the issues of organised crime related to drugs.

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## Romania identified as potential host for the future EU Black Sea Security Hub

On 1 September, the President of Romania proposed Romania as the host country for the EU's planned Black Sea Security Hub, aimed at strengthening infrastructure protection, surveillance, and maritime security in the Black Sea region.<sup>13</sup> The hub was suggested by the [EU's Black Sea Strategy](#)<sup>14</sup> in May 2025. The hub would among others have the role of "enhancing maritime situational awareness and information sharing on the Black Sea, real-time monitoring from space to seabed, and early warning of potential threats and malicious activities." In particular, it would help monitor "critical maritime infrastructure, including submarine cables, offshore installations, gas and wind energy operations off the Romanian and Bulgarian shores, and related maritime capabilities, using existing and new technologies such as underwater sensors, unmanned/remotely piloted vessels and surveillance drones programmes (air, surface, underwater)". As regards Coast Guards, the hub also foresees "a mechanism for broadening coast-guard cooperation in the Black Sea basin, modelled on existing mechanisms", in particular the [Mediterranean Coast Guard Functions Forum](#)<sup>15</sup>. Within this forum, the coast guards of participating countries cooperate on a wide range of issues including maritime safety, security and environmental protection.

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/49194/eu-drugs-strategy-booklet.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/14659-EU-Ports-Strategy\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/14659-EU-Ports-Strategy_en)

<sup>13</sup> [https://www.reuters.com/world/romania-wants-host-planned-eu-black-sea-security-hub-president-says-2025-09-01/?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://www.reuters.com/world/romania-wants-host-planned-eu-black-sea-security-hub-president-says-2025-09-01/?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

<sup>14</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52025JC0135&qid=1749565956960>

<sup>15</sup> <https://coastguard.europa.eu/index.php/cooperation-agreements/mechanisms/mediterranean-coast-guard-functions-forum-mcgff>

According to Romanian news<sup>16</sup>, on 15 September, Romanian Member of the European Parliament (MEP), Virgil Popescu, and other Romanian MEPs sent a letter to the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen expressing support for the city of Constanta to host the Black Sea Security Hub. While the direct next steps are not clear, similar centres or hubs need a formal Council decision before they can be set up.

. The Black Sea Strategy updated the previous [Black Sea Synergy](#)<sup>17</sup> dating back to 2007. The Black Sea Strategy moreover positions the region as a key link between Europe, the Southern Caucasus, Central Asia, and the Eastern Mediterranean, highlighting its strategic importance for security, trade, energy, and food (notably grain) supplies. It promotes targeted investments in transport, energy, and digital infrastructure to boost connectivity and trade across the EU. The strategy is built on three pillars and focuses on: (1) Security, Stability, and Resilience, including protection of infrastructure and military mobility; (2) Growth and Prosperity, with energy links, green corridors, and blue economy investments; and (3) Environmental Protection, Climate Resilience, and Civil Protection, including pollution reduction, ecosystem restoration, and EU participation in the [Bucharest Convention](#)<sup>18</sup>, dealing with the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution. While the Strategy is not legally binding, it serves to outline the EU's approach and priorities towards this sea basin.

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## EU and Vietnam strengthen cooperation in enhancing maritime security

On 10 September 2025, experts from Vietnam and the European Union met in Hanoi for a roundtable discussion with the aim to address pressing challenges in regional and global maritime security. The event was attended by approximately 50 participants, including military personnel and officials from government agencies such as the Navy and Coast Guard.

The roundtable provided a platform for exchanges on maritime threats and strategies for enhanced cooperation, and was organised jointly by the Institute for Defence International Relations (IDIR) of Vietnam's Ministry of National Defence and the Delegation of the European Union to Vietnam. The event was supported by the [ESIWA+ project](#)<sup>19</sup> (Enhancing the EU's Security Cooperation in and with Asia and the Indo-Pacific), co-funded by the EU, Germany, and France.

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<sup>16</sup> <https://www.news.ro/politic-extern/virgil-popescu-sustin-demersul-centrul-securitate-maritima-ue-fie-gazduit-constantia-sustine-continuare-demersurile-intarim-extindem-rolul-tarii-cadrul-uniunii-europene-1922400515182025091122164949>

<sup>17</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2007:0160:FIN:EN:PDF>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.unep.org/bucharest-convention>

<sup>19</sup> [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/esiwa-enhancing-security-cooperation-and-asia\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/esiwa-enhancing-security-cooperation-and-asia_en)

Discussions centred on critical issues such as the protection of sea cables, ensuring safer sea lanes of communication, and reinforcing support for the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea ([UNCLOS](#)<sup>20</sup>).

EU Ambassador to Vietnam, H.E. Julien Guerrier, emphasised the EU's commitment to being a reliable maritime security partner in the region. He highlighted the [EU Action Plan on the Security of Submarine Cables](#)<sup>21</sup> (adopted in February 2025) as a robust framework for developing joint strategies to enhance the resilience of critical infrastructure and establish collaborative mechanisms for incident response and information sharing.

French Ambassador to Vietnam, H.E. Olivier Brochet, and German Chargé d’Affaires to Vietnam, H.E. Simon Kreye, underlined the importance of Vietnam as a key partner in ensuring maritime order in the Indo-Pacific. Both countries have actively contributed to maritime security in the region, with Germany deploying a Task Group in 2024<sup>22</sup> and France deploying the aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle in 2025<sup>23</sup>.

This event is significant as it highlights the deepening of EU-Vietnam security cooperation, paving the way for further collaboration in the framework of ESIWA+ and contributing to regional peace, stability, and prosperity. Events like these are part of the implementation of the EU’s [plan of action](#) to implement the ASEAN-EU strategic partnership (2023-2027). The strategic partnership among others foresees cooperation in the fields of maritime security, maritime law-enforcement, maritime safety and connectivity.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> [https://www.un.org/depts/los/convention\\_agreements/texts/unclos/unclos\\_e.pdf](https://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/unclos_e.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52025JC0009>

<sup>22</sup> <https://singapur.diplo.de/sq-en/2675430-2675430>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.navalnews.com/naval-news/2025/04/french-csg-ends-its-clemenceau-25-deployment-in-the-indo-pacific/>

<sup>24</sup> European External Action Service: Plan of Action to Implement the ASEAN-EU Strategic Partnership (2023-2027): [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/plan-action-implement-asean-eu-strategic-partnership-2023-2027-0\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/plan-action-implement-asean-eu-strategic-partnership-2023-2027-0_en)