European Sealing Association Year in Review 2025

By Mark Neal, ESA Secretary General



Over the past year, the European Sealing Association has remained a central platform for technical collaboration, regulatory engagement and industry exchange across Europe. A key event was the Annual General Meeting in April, which brought the ESA community together in Ljubljana for the first time. The meeting marked an important leadership transition with the appointment of Ozan Devlen as ESA Chair. We also welcomed Sandy Van den Broeck into the role of Environmental and Social Governance (ESG) Director, a position created to help drive our commitment to sustainability and responsible practices. The AGM once again underlined the importance of in-person exchange for shaping shared priorities and strengthening cooperation across the industry.

Throughout the year, PFAS regulation remained one of the most significant topics across multiple industrial sectors. We closely followed the evolving restriction process, from early updates on regulatory developments to the important moment when sealing applications formally entered the scope of ECHA's assessment. As the process moves towards the socio-economic analysis phase, we are preparing to coordinate a structured industry response for the upcoming SEAC public consultation in 2026. To support members with reliable and centralised information, we launched the PFAS Information Hub, bringing together regulatory updates, technical context and industry guidance in one dedicated reference point.

Environmental, Social, and Governance

Environmental, Social, and Governance topics took on a more defined shape in 2025. ESA's ESG Survey provided valuable insight into what matters most to member companies, with a strong emphasis on carbon footprint reduction, regulatory compliance and sustainable supply chains. Practical sustainability initiatives also continued to develop, including work on biodegradable alternatives for gasket spacers and stretch films as part of the ESA Plastics Reduction Initiative. These efforts reflect a broader shift from strategic discussion towards concrete solutions within the industry.

Regulatory Development

Regulatory developments also remained in focus, including ongoing work around the revised European Drinking Water Directive, particularly the rollout of the European Positive Lists and the practical steps now required from manufacturers. Through ongoing dialogue within the European Drinking Water (EDW) platform and participation in stakeholder meetings, we continue to track implications for sealing applications and share updates with our members.

Across ESA's technical divisions, 2025 was marked by ongoing testing programmes, standardisation work and continued development of training resources. Hydrogen-related research advanced significantly, with emission and ageing tests ongoing for packings, FKM and elastomers at DHBW Mannheim and CETIM, including preparations for hydrogen testing in new dedicated facilities. At the same time, work continued on major industry standards such as API 682 and machinery-related position papers. Training development remained a shared priority across divisions, with several new online courses on packings, mechanical seals, gaskets and elastomeric applications nearing completion for the ESA Knowledgebase. Sustainability-driven projects also progressed, including biodegradable gasket spacers and wrapping foil alternatives. The ESA divisions remained active contributors to international trade publications, with six articles published in Valve World during the year, alongside further contributions to World Pumps and Flow magazine.

The Marketing Committee continued to support ESA's communication and outreach throughout the year. Regular bimonthly newsletters and an active LinkedIn presence helped keep members and the wider industry informed, with our follower base continuing to grow. Groundwork also began on a redesign of the ESA website, which will be a key focus of activity in early 2026.

Looking to the year ahead, we are already looking forward to bringing members together again at the ESA Annual General Meeting, which will take place in Seville from 14 to 16 April 2026. We wish all members and partners a pleasant end of the year and a successful start to 2026!