**EFCA Administrative Board adopts its annual report for 2018**

11/04/2019

EFCA celebrated its 32nd Administrative Board meeting and adopted its Annual Report for 2018. 2018 was a year of intense activity, marking the tenth anniversary of the EFCA in Spain (Vigo). Throughout last year, EFCA combined its core tasks of operational coordination and fisheries control with its contribution to the EU Coast Guard cooperation. These were the main highlights:

The level of inspection activity coordinated by EFCA increased last year. In 2018, the cooperative efforts have led to 26,922 coordinated inspections, an increase in comparison to 2017 (20,956), and 714 suspected infringements detected, a decrease compared to 2017 (833). Non-compliance with recording obligations and technical measures remain the most frequent type of infringements detected in the context of the Joint Deployment Plans.

EFCA has concluded in cooperation with Member States guidelines for risk assessment and compliance indicators, providing a better basis for a more effective planning and assessment of control and monitoring operations. The priority risks for non-compliance were identified in accordance with these methodologies. In particular, a joint exercise with the Member States on risk assessment of non-compliance with the Landing Obligation; mis-recording of catches and illegal gears was conducted for all areas.

In relation to efforts to promote an effective and efficient implementation of the Landing Obligation, EFCA, at the request of the Control Expert Groups and the European Commission, created a Technical Working Group (TWG) focusing on the definition of Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM) systems requirements and technical guidelines to monitor the implementation of the LO across EU waters.

Concerning the support to national authorities in coast guard functions, EFCA hosted the first Annual European Coast Guard event in La Toja, Spain. The event brought together the three agencies’ Administrative Board members and related experts to identify potential areas of synergy and future cooperative activities among the agencies in support of Member States performing coast guard functions. The cooperation with the other European agencies EMSA and Frontex to support Member States national authorities carrying out coast guard functions, is reflected in the fact that the EFCA chartered means, when operating in the Mediterranean and the Baltic Sea, were also available for multipurpose operations in cooperation with EMSA and Frontex,

Regarding the international dimension of the Common Fisheries Policy, EFCA has assisted the European Union in cooperating with developing countries and with international fisheries organisations to help to combat illegal fishing. In 2018, the five-year EU funded development project PESCAO kicked off, including a component aiming at improving the fight against Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported (IUU) fishing activities in Western Africa, contributing to sustainable fisheries management and the reduction of food insecurity in the region. As part of this project, EFCA provides technical assistance to the Regional Bodies and thirteen countries in the area.

Moreover, EFCA assisted the Commission to cooperate with third countries and international organisations dealing with fisheries such as the Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (NAFO, NEAFC, ICCAT and GFCM), to strengthen the operational coordination and compliance.  In line with point 40 of the MEDFISH4EVER Declaration, EFCA has continued to cooperate with third countries in the Mediterranean to promote an effective level playing field in the area. The cooperation in the Strait of Sicily involving the Mediterranean Member States was implemented in cooperation with Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and Algeria.  The agency coordinated an enhanced cooperation involving Romania and Bulgaria with Ukraine, Turkey and Georgia in the Black Sea.

Another important area in EFCA’s work is training, as a capacity building tool. A total of 1,496 inspectors and experts from EU and third countries were trained by EFCA. EFCA through participation in training events and through e-learning.

In relation to EFCA’s information systems, these enabled the collection of data from each Member State providing details of their fishing vessels, catches and other such information. Overall, EFCA exchanged Electronic Reporting System-logbook data from 3,557 vessels. The volume of Vessel Monitoring Vessels (VMS) messages exchanged by the EFCA VMS increased by 13.7% from 2017 reaching 34.7 million messages.

"The EFCA granted an effective and robust support to the Member States and the Commission for the implementation of the control regime applying to the Common Fisheries Policy encompassing the fight against IUU fishing, ranging from the coordination of the Joint Deployment Plans to Earth Observation technologies including development of standardised methodologies, training and capacity building.  Moreover, the assistance to the Union in the international dimension of the Common Fisheries Policy increased as the cooperation with the EMSA and Frontex in the framework of the EU cooperation on Coast Guard intensified, “said Pascal Savouret, EFCA Executive Director.