**Third workshop and exercise COASTEX 19 of the European Coast Guard Functions Forum**

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The third workshop of the European Coast Guard Functions Forum (ECGFF) on "Multipurpose Maritime Operations" (MMO) held in Catania, Sicily, Italy from 3 to 5 June, highlighted the coordination between the Italian Coast Guard, the Guardia di Finanza, and  the cooperation with  Italian Navy.

The workshop was organised with the support of the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA) and welcome around 90 delegates from 16 Member States and from the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) and the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex), which are supporting national authorities carrying out Coast Guard functions with EFCA.

Since 2009, the European Forum of Coast Guard Functions voluntarily brings together several national organisations implementing Coast Guard functions in the European Union (EU), European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and Schengen area, with the aim of strengthening the so-called Coast Guard cooperation.

The event addressed the issue of complex multipurpose maritime operations, in which several Coast Guard functions are implemented simultaneously, in order to prepare effective and efficient responses to multiple challenges that may arise in a given area of ​​operations. In these contexts, the coordinated participation of units belonging to the different Coast Guard organisations and to the three EU agencies is crucial.

The agenda of the first day's work included a plenary session and three working groups on the different aspects of this activity, with a particular focus on risk management, training, operational and logistical implications.

The concept of MMO was concretely tested on 4 June in the context of an exercise at sea called COASTEX19. Under the operational coordination of the Italian Coast Guard eleven naval assets, three aircrafts and three boarding teams created a complex scenario that simulated activities to combat illegal fishing, fight pollution, search and rescue operations and illegal trafficking.

The human resources and means of the Italian Coast Guard, Guardia di Finanza and Italian Navy, the three EU agencies as well as the Portuguese Navy, the German Federal Police and the Spanish Customs intervened in various moments of the exercise, cooperating with high standards of interoperability and synergy. The delegates participating in the workshop were able to attend as privileged observers all the operations directly from four of the ships engaged in Coastex19.

The workshop concluded today with the presentation of the exercise outcomes during the last preparatory meeting of the Plenary Conference of Heads of Coast Guard organisations to be held in Venice, Italy from 12 to 15 November 2019