



ECGFF TERMS OF REFERENCE

The European Coast Guard Functions Forum¹ is a self-governing, non-binding, voluntary, independent and non-political forum whose membership includes the Heads of the Coast Guard Functions or equivalents of each European Union maritime nation and associated Schengen countries². The European Commission and its Institutions and Agencies with related competencies in Coast Guard Functions are acting as observers³.

The overall aim of the Forum is to study, contribute to and promote understanding and development of maritime issues of importance and of common interest related to Coast Guard Functions across borders and sectors, both civil and military, and to contribute to progress in the various CGF activities.

Coast Guard Functional activities

Coast Guard Functional activities are mainly defined for the purpose of the Forum and in no order of priority as:

- i. maritime safety, including vessel traffic management
- ii. maritime, ship and port security
- iii. maritime customs activities
- iv. the prevention and suppression of trafficking and smuggling and connected maritime law enforcement
- v. maritime border control
- vi. maritime monitoring and surveillance

¹ Full title 'Forum of the Heads of the Coast Guards Functions of the European Union and Schengen Associated Countries'.

² The Forum recognizes that each Member State has different national structures for the delivery of CGFs and that the Head of Delegation or Secretariat members may be accompanied by other national institutions competent in CGFs. The selection of which national CGF Service provides the Head of Delegation or Secretariat member is strictly a matter for the Member State who will advise the Chairmanship of the respective National PoC, HoD and Secretariat members.

Annex 1- List of ECGFF Member States with National Authorities

³ Annex 2- List of ECGFF Observers



- vii. maritime environmental protection and response
- viii. maritime search and rescue
- ix. ship casualty and maritime assistance service
- x. maritime accident and disaster response
- xi. fisheries inspection and control; and
- xii. activities related to the above Coast Guard Functions

Objectives

With the general aim of improving the development of CGFs across borders and sectors, the Forum has the following objectives:

- i. To build and maintain a network of Heads of National authorities for Coast Guard Functions and designated Officers from EU Institutions, Agencies and Directorates with related competencies in CGFs
- ii. To agree Rules and Procedures for the Plenary Conference, Secretariat and any working groups including matters related to funding
- iii. To assist in the development of common operational procedures and standards in line with prescribed international norms, reinforce synergies and improved operational preparedness, cooperation and response across borders and sectors
- iv. To consider the possibilities of promoting trust, burden sharing, asset sharing and enhanced regional cooperation
- v. To establish a standing forum promoting the exchange of information, expertise, technical assistance, best practice, training, exercises and education
- vi. To provide relevant recommendations, advice and joint submissions as appropriate
- vii. To act as a shared advice source on operational 'coast guarding' to others including the EU Institutions⁴

⁴ With respect to that EU Institutions and agencies with related competencies in CGFs



- viii. To consider, discuss and where possible develop a common understanding of operational challenges and emerging risks in the maritime domain of EU States
- ix. To develop over time and as appropriate a coordinated and collective response through cooperation and agreement to emerging and existing risks in the EU maritime domain and
- x. To monitor on-going development in the maritime domain that may have an impact on Coast Guard Functions
- xi. To establish and maintain contacts, within the frame of common objectives, with relevant institutions and organizations at the international and/or European level

Annual HoD Plenary Conference

The Forum's annual plenary conference of the Heads of Coast Guard Functions of the EU and associated Schengen countries may result in decisions to conduct further work, projects, research or produce documents within the scope of the Forum's objectives. This work may be done either by the Secretariat, or through special tailored working groups directed by a national lead partner supported by Secretariat. Decisions on further work of Secretariat will be made by the Chairmanship and decisions on creating working group(s) will be made by the annual plenary conference following the proposal of a country willing to be a national lead partner through Secretariat. Results of the works of the Secretariat as well as working groups will be presented during the following Plenary Conference, or as appropriate.

The Member States will participate on an equal footing in the discussions on the Plenary Conference. All decisions will be made on the basis of consensus. Consensus is understood as the absence of objection.

The Chairmanship, with consensus of the Member States, and upon agreement of the Commission, who provides financial support, and the EU agencies, may decide to invite Guests to the Plenary Conference. As such, the representatives from third countries, non-EU Institutions or other bodies having a link with Coast Guard issues of a subject studied or



relevant to ECGFF objectives can be invited to attend the Plenary Conference on ad-hoc basis.

The Heads of Coast Guard Functions Plenary Conference will, as far as possible, be arranged annually by the Member State responsible for the Chairmanship. The Member State responsible for the Chairmanship for the next year Plenary Conference will be agreed and appointed at the closing of each Plenary Conference. The Chairmanship is rotating and lasts for the period of one Plenary Conference which is normally twelve months.

The Chairmanship, in accordance with the conclusions of the Plenary Conference shall write an “action plan” that defines the priorities and the activities for the next year. The Action plan is sent to all the ECGFF Points of Contact (PoCs) and shall be adopted by the first Secretariat meeting.

The Chairmanship shall prepare conclusions from the Plenary Conference.

According to their annual Work Plan, EU institutions may provide the necessary administrative and financial support for the planning and execution of the Plenary Conference, working groups and Secretariat.

Chairmanship Rotation

The rotation of the chairmanship is based on a time-schedule adopted by the Plenary, in accordance with Annex 4. In particular, the future ECGFF chairmanship starts initially with those ECGFF Members which until [2025] have not chaired the Forum, in an alphabetical order, followed by those ECGFF Members that have already held the Chair in the past, in the order of their chairmanships.

The Chairmanship time-schedule is presented every year at the Plenary for assessment and adoption.

Member States which, according to the schedule, should assume a future chairmanship but due to constraints are not in position to do so, should inform the sitting Chairmanship at least two years before. As an example, such constraints may inter alia be the EU Council Presidency, Chairmanship of other Coast Guard forums and/or other specificities or limitations that prevent a



country to assume Chairmanship.

In this case, a safeguard mechanism for maintaining the Presidency schedule will be triggered. In particular, the ECGFF Member State scheduled to assume the presidency, with the facilitation of the sitting Chairmanship, should make every effort to either propose another ECGFF Member State to mutually exchange the chairmanship or investigate the possibility to co-chair the forum with another ECGFF Member State.

In case the chairmanship of the forum is assumed by two member states (co-chairmanship) the works of the Forum are carried out by dividing the organizational obligations i.e. workshops, secretariat, working groups and plenary session among the two Member States, in a way that will ease the channeling of the necessary funds. In addition, the order of the involved Member States will be re-arranged at the Chairmanship rotation schedule.

In order to provide adequate time for the ECGFF Member States to adapt with the Chairmanship schedule, the scheme will come into force in [2026].

Financing of the annual Plenary Conference

Based on its Policy priorities and annual Work Plan DG MARE is interested in supporting ECGFF. The Chairman may apply for a grant from DG MARE or the respective EU Executive Agency.



Secretariat

- Secretariat will be appointed to assist the Chairmanship in the delivery of their duties to plan and prepare the next Plenary Conference and to further objectives of the Forum.
- Secretariat meets regularly or as needed.
- Secretariat has a coordinating role with the implementation of the Chairmanships action plan.
- The Chair will circulate any minutes or relevant documentation to the Member State PoCs and the participating Commission services for comment.
- Secretariat Meetings should be implemented as a back to back meeting in advance or after the Workshops co-organized by the ongoing chair and EU Agencies (EFCA, EMSA and Frontex).

Rotation and composition of Secretariat

- The Secretariat is led by the Member State responsible for the Chairmanship and for the forthcoming Plenary Conference.
- The participation to the Secretariat generally requires commitment to an upcoming Chairmanship of the Forum. The Secretariat's ECGFF funded section consists of seven (7) representatives from the Member States.
- The Secretariat will contain representatives from the previous, present and upcoming chairs for continuity purposes. The term in Secretariat will begin two years prior to the respective Chairmanship and end four years after. After four years since a Chairmanship, that Member State will leave one position in the funded Secretariat rotation or seek a future Chairmanship.
- Other Member States willing to contribute without committing to the Chairmanship may participate in Secretariat at their cost or through ECGFF funding, if available.
- Generally, the funding of the Secretariat Meetings will be provided by the Agency, which is supporting the workshop.



- The Secretariat rotation has started since 2015 Chairmanship.
- Funding by the agencies EFCA, EMSA and Frontex has started from the 2018 Chairmanship

Cooperation ECGFF with the three Agencies EFCA, EMSA and Frontex / TWA⁵

The cooperation of the ECGFF with the EU Agencies EFCA, EMSA and Frontex is regulated by Annex 3 “Principles of Cooperation and Communication between ECGFF and the Agencies EFCA, EMSA, Frontex”.

Terms of Reference amendments

This Terms of Reference document is owned by the Plenary Conference Chairman. Suggestions on amendments to this document should be addressed to the Chair for staffing and coordination. Decisions on amendments will be taken at the following Plenary Conference.

⁵ TWA – Tripartite Working Arrangement

Annex 1 – ECGFF Member States with Authorities

Belgium

- Coast Guard

Bulgaria

- Chief Directorate „Border Police“

Croatia

- Coast Guard
- Ministry of the sea, transport and infrastructure

Cyprus

- Cyprus port & Marine Police

Denmark

- Admiral Danish Fleet

Estonia

- Police and Border Guard

Finland

- The Finnish Border Guard

France

- Secrétariat général de la mer

Germany

- German Federal Police
- German Federal Customs Administration

Greece

- Hellenic Coast Guard

Iceland

- Icelandic Coast Guard

Ireland

- Irish Coast Guard
- Irish Navy
- Sea Fisheries Protection Authority
- Revenue

Italy

- Italian Navy
- Italian Coast Guard
- Guardia di Finanza

Latvia

- Latvian State Border Guard
- Naval Forces Coast Guard Service

Lithuania

- State Border Guard Service under the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania

Malta

- The Armed Forces of Malta

Holland

- Netherlands Coastguard

Norway

- Norwegian Coast Guard

Poland

- Polish Border Guard
- Polish Maritime Administration
- Polish Main Sea Fisheries Inspectorate
- National Revenue Administration

Portugal

- Portuguese Navy
- Guarda Nacional Republicana
- Portuguese National Maritime Authority
- Foreigners and Borders Service (SEF)

Romania

- Romanian Border Police

Slovenia

- Slovenian Police
- Slovenian Maritime Administration

Spain

- Guardia Civil
- Armada (Spanish Navy)
- Customs Spain
- SASEMAR/DGMM(Directorate General for Merchant Marine) – MITMA
- General Secretariat of Fisheries

Sweden

- Swedish Coast Guard

Annex 2 – ECGFF Observers

- 1) EU Commission
- 2) European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA)
- 3) European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA)
- 4) European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex)
- 5) European Union Satellite Centre (SatCen)
- 6) European Defence Agency (EDA)
- 7) Maritime Analysis and Operation Centre-Narcotics (MAOC-N)

ECGFF Terms of Reference

Annex 3

Principles of Cooperation and Communication between ECGFF and the Agencies EFCA, EMSA, Frontex

This document specifies possible communication and cooperation principles between EMSA, EFCA and Frontex (the Agencies framework) and the ECGFF to ensure coherence between projects and topics / measures and avoid duplication and redundancy of projects / topics / measures in the short and medium term.

1.) Potential fields of future cooperation / creating synergies / possible mutual content support

- Raising awareness of new topics
- Interconnection with CG communities at national level
- Information sharing
- Capacity building and training
- Capacity sharing including Multipurpose Maritime Operations (MMO)
- Common maritime situation picture
- Cyber Attack Prevention
- Risk analysis
- Surveillance services
- Further promote EU cooperation in various sea basins.
- Expertise and input in maintaining the Practical handbook on European cooperation on coast guard functions.
- Expertise and relevant input on analyzing needs and identification of gaps

2.) Principles of Cooperation and Communication with the Agencies

- The three Points of Contact (PoCs) of the interagency cooperation and the ECGFF current and future ECGFF Chairmen will meet primarily through video conference at least once a year in May/ June.
- Objective of these meetings is to exchange about the performed activities and the future Annual Strategic Plan of the agencies, as well as the draft work plan of the up-coming ECGFF Chairmanship.
- The meetings will be facilitated by the Agency which is chairing the TWA.
- Actual Agencies' points of contact are:
 - **Frontex**
eu.coastguard@frontex.europa.eu
 - **EMSA**
eu.coastguard@emsa.europa.eu
 - **EFCA**
eu.coastguard@efca.europa.eu
- Agencies will provide the Chairmanship the contact information of their respective heads, and update their contact information with the Chairmanship, if needed.
- Ad-hoc meetings may be organized in order to discuss specific subjects if there are particular needs using video conferences as a priority. The European Commission may be invited to these meetings.
- The ECGFF Chairman will be invited to the Annual European Coast Guard Event organized by the Agencies.
- ECGFF could contribute with experts / expertise on specific activities / defined areas of the Agencies work upon ad hoc requests of the Agencies for determined projects.

3.) Coordination of work plans / avoidance of duplication and ensuring sustainability

Close coordination of the future ECGFF working plans with those of the Agencies and a related prioritization of the planned measures and topics are essential in order to increase cost efficiency and avoid duplication of work.

- both sides should be aware of the dates for the presentation of planned topics / measures and work plans of the Agencies (Single Programming Document).
- planning of topics/measures by the future Chairmanship in coordination of the planned topics of the "Agencies' Annual Strategic Plans" through the Agencies' Point of Contacts.
- Each year, one workshop will be funded per agency if the topic fits into the Agencies' work plans.
- The three Workshops should be well defined and budgeted.
- Coherence of the topics / measures with the "Agencies' Annual Strategic Plans" shall favor a well-structured financing budget for the activities to be carried out by the ECGFF during the Chairmanship period. It would be conceivable to prioritize maximum three workshops with a focus on the scope of the interagency Annual Strategic Plan.
- The ECGFF Chairmanship will provide the report with the outcomes of the workshops to the Agencies' PoCs.
- The Forum should continue to implement multiannual topics / measures, if this is necessary for the sustainability of the individual topics / measures.
- Workshop outcomes and results may also be taken into account by the Agencies cooperation framework for future development.
- Workshops may be opened to the communities and stakeholders of the Agencies.

4.) Involvement of the EU Commission

The EU Commission will be kept involved in the cooperation initiatives with the Agencies when relevant.

5.) Financial Aspects

A. Reimbursement procedure for workshops of the ECGFF Chairmanship

- Each of the Agencies will fund one of the three agreed workshops
- Reimbursement of travel and accommodation costs for three (3) participants per Member State by the Agencies

B. Funding of the ECGFF Secretariat meetings

- The Secretariat Meetings should be generally implemented as back to back meetings in advance or after the workshops.
- When organized as back to back with the workshops, reimbursement of travel and accommodation costs for (up to) seven representatives of ECGFF Secretariat (ECGFF ToR) will be covered by the Agency funding the workshop.

Annex 4

Draft Table of Future ECGFF chairmanships (in alphabetical order)

2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034
CY	DK	EE	IS	NDL	NO	LT	RO	SI	BG
2035	2036	2037	2038	2039	2040	2041	2042	2043	2044
LV	MT	PL	ES	SE	IE	GR	FI	DE	FR
2045	2046	2047	2048	2049	2050	2051			
HR	BE	IT	PT						

Table of ECGFF chairmanships

ECGFF Members which have not yet chaired the Forum	ECGFF Members that have already held the Chair in the past
Bulgaria (BG)	Belgium (BE) - 2023
Cyprus (CY)	Croatia (HR) - 2022
Denmark (DK)	Finland (FI) - 2015
Estonia (EE)	France (FR) – 2020-2021 (due Covid restrictions)
Iceland (IS)	Germany (DE) - 2018
Latvia (LV)	Greece (GR) - 2013
Lithuania (LT)	Ireland (IE) - 2012
Malta (MT)	Italy (IT) – 2014& 2019
Netherlands (NL)	Poland (PL) - 2009
Norway (NO)	Portugal (PT) – 2017 & 2024
Romania (RO)	Spain (ES) - 2010
Slovenia (SI)	Sweden (SE) – 2011

Expectations to be fulfilled by the European Coast Guard Functions Forum chairmanship.

Background

As requested during the first secretariat meeting, and as the current chair and project office, we will try to give you an insight in the expectations requested of the member state that is chairing the ECGFF.

It is expected that the chair organizes and/or facilitates two or three workshops, a Coastex exercise, a meeting of the working group Cybersecurity and a plenary conference.

During the chairmanship, each agency will provide funding for one workshop (or the Coastex exercise) on the condition that the topic fits into the work plan of the respective agency.

For the meeting of the working group Cybersecurity and the plenary conference funding is provided by means of a grant mechanism, coordinated by DG MARE.

Furthermore, organized back-to-back to each workshop/Coastex, a secretariat meeting has to be organized.

Starting point is a meeting with the three agencies under the Tripartite Working Arrangement (TWA) to kick-off discussions and manage expectations. Separately, it is advisable to also have an introductory meeting with DG MARE.

Initial steps to be undertaken by the chair:

- define a timeline to be discussed with and approved by the agencies
- install a project office for overall coordination for administration, logistics, communication, funding, ... (For the BE chairmanship, this project office was made up of the staff of the Belgian coast guard secretariat, assisted by staff of our Belgian coast guard partners)
- if needed, assemble a specific project team per workshop
- set up a line of communication with the previous chair for hand-over of useful information, documents, participants lists, ...
- draw up a communication plan
- define branding by creating a logo, templates for letters, powerpoints, biographies, ...

Since the organization and funding of the workshops and Coastex differ slightly from the organization of the WG Cybersecurity and the plenary conference and since the secretariat meetings have specific characteristics, these will be treated in separate parts of this document:

- Part 1: the organization of the workshops/Coastex co-organized with the agencies.
- Part 2: the organization of the secretariat meetings
- Part 3: the organization of the working group Cybersecurity and the plenary conference.

1. Organization of the workshops/Coastex co-organized with the agencies

Principles of cooperation and communication between ECGFF and the agencies EFCA, EMSA, Frontex are outlined in detail in Annex 3 of the Terms of Reference (TOR), see attachment 1.

Broadly speaking, there are two ways in which to organize the workshops/Coastex:

- taking care of all organization and logistics yourself and the agencies will refund costs
- Working together with the event agencies of FRONTEX and EFCA and for EMSA, you can use their accommodation in Lisbon

We recommend to opt for the second and make use of the experience and knowledge that the agencies have gathered over the years in organizing such events. We can testify to the fact that they have been very supportive in preparations for the workshops and also during the workshops.

In more detail and based on our own experience, this inventory indicates in the first column all aspects where the agencies offer support (funding and staff) and in the second column it is indicated what the chairmanship is expected to provide.

Agency	Chairman
Meeting venue	Project Office (POF)
Hotel accomodation	Dinner (no obligation)
Reimbursement of the travel (max 3/country)	
Invitations, registrations and Agenda	Agenda
Invitations to their management board	Invitations sending out to the MS
Invitations to the speakers	
Moderating 1 day	Moderating 1 day
Joint meeting report (notetaker and recordings)	Joint meeting report (notetakers)
Registrations	Registrations
Lanyards, badges, country plates, own banners	Promo materials chairmanship(pens, flags, banners...)
Communication	Communication and Photographer
Accomodation for the secretariat meeting (back-to back meeting after the workshop)	Secretariat meeting: Agenda/Chairman/meeting report

It is difficult to give an estimate on the amount of staff needed for the organization of the workshops/Coastex, since this depends on the amount of tasks that can be done in-house and the amount of tasks that are subcontracted. Furthermore, for the BE chairmanship, all staff involved took on these tasks on top of their usual duties.

Focal points:

- Drawing up the agenda for the workshop is very much a two-way effort; both the agencies and the chair have an equal say in which topics to put on the agenda and which speakers to invite. Furthermore, the agencies have a widespread network from which they can invite interesting speakers.
- During the workshops, the efforts are evenly distributed and the agencies support the chairmanship with moderation, registration, note-taking, ...
- When feasible, the chairmanship is asked to provide a number of promotional materials (notebooks, pens, ..) and usually the chairmanship is expected to provide a gift at their own cost to offer to the executive director of the agencies at the end of the workshop.
- Organization and funding of a dinner is on the responsibility of and paid for by the chair. This is not obligatory, but we recommend to have a dinner included if possible, since this offers a welcome opportunity to network and to exchange views amongst the participants.

2. Secretariat meetings

Funding:

TOR state the following:

- Generally, the funding of the Secretariat Meetings will be provided by the Agency, which is supporting the workshop.
- The Secretariats ECGFF funded section consists of seven (7) representatives from the Member States.

This means that the agencies will provide funding for a venue for the secretariat meeting, with the inclusion of funding for catering a coffee break. In total, seven representatives taking part in the secretariat meeting may seek reimbursement from the agencies.

Organization & Logistics:

TOR state the following:

- Secretariat Meetings should be implemented as a back to back meeting in advance or after the Workshops co-organized by the ongoing chair and EU Agencies (EFCA, EMSA and Frontex).
- the Secretariat is led by the Member State responsible for the Chairmanship and for the forthcoming Plenary Conference.
- The participation to the Secretariat generally requires commitment to an upcoming Chairmanship of the Forum.
- The Secretariat will contain representatives from the previous, present and upcoming chairs for continuity purposes. The term in Secretariat will begin two years prior to the respective

- Chairmanship and end four years after. After four years since a Chairmanship, that Member State will leave one position in the funded Secretariat rotation or seek a future Chairmanship.
- Other Member States willing to contribute without committing to the Chairmanship may participate in Secretariat at their cost or through ECGFF funding, if available

Although the TOR states the secretariat is made up of representatives of the previous, current and upcoming chairs, this does not mean that other member states cannot take part in the secretariat meeting. Generally, the invitation is sent out to all member states and representatives who are interested in taking part, are very welcome (keeping in mind the limited number of reimbursement possibilities). When the secretariat meeting is organized in a hybrid manner, this opens up opportunities for more representatives to take part. Representatives from the agencies also take part in an observer role.

It is up to the chairmanship to draw up the agenda, send out the invitation, chair the secretariat meeting, write and send out the minutes.

Usually, the secretariat meeting takes place on the second day, after conclusion of the workshop, in the afternoon. Topics to be addressed at the secretariat meeting are those to do with organizational aspects and internal functioning of the forum.

3. Organization of the WG Cybersecurity and the plenary conference

Funding:

The TOR state the following: “Based on its Policy priorities and annual Work Plan DG MARE is interested in supporting ECGFF. The Chairman may apply for a grant from DG MARE or the respective EU Executive Agency.”

During our BE chairmanship this grant amounted to 142000€. Costs are covered for 80% of the maximum amount by the European Commission/ DG MARE. 20% of the maximum amount of the grant and all costs above the 142000€ are to be covered by the chairmanship.

In our case, the European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency (CINEA) was responsible for the funding, and they have sent us an invitation to submit a grant application. The whole process of applying for the grant is done via an online portal. A manual is available on how to navigate this portal. For reference purposes, we had asked for and thankfully received the grant applications of previous chairs (Germany and Croatia), which proved very helpful.

The grant application is to be submitted before a certain deadline, after which it will take some time to have the application evaluated. There is a project advisor of the EU/DG MARE with whom you can

keep in contact, preferably via the online portal or via e-mail. When the evaluation has yielded a positive result, the grant agreement has to be prepared, again via the portal.

When the agreement is signed, 40% of the total amount is made available to you, and the remaining amount is made available after conclusion of the plenary conference, where the chairmanship is handed over to the next chair.

Organization & logistics:

In the table beneath, you can find a short overview of the tasks that have to be performed by the chairmanship.

Organisation of the WG Cybersecurity and the Summit	
Meeting venue	Project Office (POF)
Hotel accomodation	Dinner/ ice-breaker
Reimbursement of the travels (max 1or 3/country)	Invitations, registrations and Agenda
Moderating	Invitations to the speakers
Final report	Communication
Registrations	Cultural Activity
Lanyards, badges, country plates, gifts for speakers	Promo materials chairmanship (pens, flags, banners...)
Photographer	Present for the handover ceremony

Although this may seem a lot to take on, it is important to highlight that there is a high level of freedom on when, how and where to organize, both for the WG Cybersecurity and for the plenary conference. Moreover, the experience gained in organizing the workshops will be useful when organizing the plenary conference. The amount foreseen via the grant should be sufficient, especially when you can count on in-house knowledge and skills.

It is difficult to give an estimate on the amount of staff needed for the organization of the WG Cybersecurity and plenary conference, since this depends on the amount of tasks that can be done in-house and the amount of tasks that are subcontracted. Furthermore, for the BE chairmanship, all staff involved took on these tasks on top of their usual duties.

With regard to the WG Cybersecurity, it is important to underline that a separate TOR applies, see attachment 2. For this WG, most of the organizational efforts are done by the member state chairing this WG (currently France). Usually, the chairmanship is expected to facilitate a venue and provide funds (via the grant) for an ice-breaking event, followed by the working group, lasting one day and a half. Drawing up the agenda is the responsibility of the WG chair (and the member states taking part), but nevertheless, the current ECGFF chairmanship is invited to make a contribution and provide one or several speakers on relevant topics.

With regard to the plenary conference, as mentioned, there is a certain amount of freedom when drawing up the agenda. However, sufficient attention should be paid to the conclusions and lessons-learned of the workshops and Coastex. We should not only aim at an exchange of know-how and

experiences, but it would be good practice if chairmanships can elaborate further on the work done by their predecessors, in cooperation with the agencies and DG Mare.

4. Conclusion

Although taking up the chairmanship of the ECGFF inevitably leads to additional efforts with regard to staff and finances, this should not deter member states to put forward their candidacy for the chairmanship.

The organization internally may take some time, but it is a good learning experience for all staff involved in the project office. Moreover with regard to the workshops, the chairmanship can count on the support of the agencies, who take up an active role and offer advice. Also, hand-over from the previous chair usually includes a wide array of useful documents and templates, so that some of the work has already been done for you and can be 'recycled'.

Organizing this chairmanship leads to other member states getting to learn about and getting to know your coast guard structure. This not only results in a broadening of your network, but can lead to useful collaborations and partnerships, not only with the ECGFF member states and observers, but also with other coastguard fora or coastguard-related institutions. In addition, the cooperation with the agencies means that you get a better insight in the broad spectrum of services they offer to member states and offers you a direct opportunity to make use of these services.



ECGFF

European Coast Guard Functions Forum
Chairmanship BE

Plenary conference

26 – 28 September 2023

1. Introduction

Welcome speeches by:

- Mr Carl Decaluwé – Governor of West-Flanders province
- Ms Nathalie Balcaen and Mr Piet Pieters – Co-chairs of the BE coast guard
- Ms Iglia Yakova – Deputy head of Unit A3, DG MARE, European Commission
- Ms Susan Steele – as Chair of the Tripartite Working Arrangement (TWA)

2. Workshops

The ECGFF Plenary Conference of the Heads of Coast Guard Authorities of EU Member States and Schengen Associated Countries appreciates the results of the three workshops held under the Belgian Chairmanship and presented by the three Agencies, EMSA, FRONTEX and EFCA, in conjunction with the Belgian Chairmanship, and in particular:

2.1. On the workshop “Enhancing cross-sector and cross-border synergies” (Ostend, 28 Feb-2 March 2023)

- The workshop gathered around 160 representatives from 25 EU/SAC Member States, four EU Agencies (EFCA, EMSA, FRONTEX, and EDA) as well as the Maritime Analysis and Operations Centre – Narcotics (MAOC (N)), the European Commission, DG MARE, DG MOVE, and DG HOME which proves growing interest in enhancing operational border protection cooperation on national and international levels. Cooperation in the maritime domain is the key to success.



- Maritime Domain Awareness requires enhanced synergies with proper cooperation schemes in place, in order to facilitate sharing of information, to seize any opportunity of making information actionable. A sea basin approach is advocated by Member States.
- It is of a strategic nature to continue implementing Multipurpose Maritime Operations (MMO) in various sea basins around Europe, in order to develop the EU cooperation on coast guard functions and further develop interoperability between EU Member States, with EU agencies supporting them by providing services and facilitating information sharing.
- To identify suitable areas for MMO's, risk analysis is an important driver. Furthermore, main elements to the concept of the MMO are flexibility and adaptability.
- In light of digital and technological transformation, which led to more sophisticated organized crime including challenging hybrid threats, and in light of the increasing need to protect critical infrastructures, it is necessary to implement state-of-the-art technology and enhance our operational and surveillance capabilities.

2.2. On the workshop “Coast Guard functions in support of the Green Deal” (Lisbon, 17 – 19 April 2023)

- The workshop gathered around 70 participants, both in person and online, from around 40 authorities involved in the ECGFF with the objective of further enhancing the cooperation between authorities dealing with coast guard functions.
- The workshop looked at one of the most pressing challenges affecting us all: climate change and the just and sustainable green transition. Legislative developments connected with the European green deal and the maritime sector, more in particular the measures captured in the Fit for 55 package were discussed. Member States' experiences with alternative power solutions and the establishment of emission control areas were presented.
- A panel discussion with Member States was held, focusing on the implementation and enforcement at sea of coast guard activities in support of the green deal.
- Agencies services in support of Member States were presented, including EMSA RPAS, earth observation and pollution response toolbox.
- Finally, the workshop looked at the planned release of the second European Maritime Transport Environmental Report (EMTER 2.0). A first edition dates from 2021 and a second edition is planned for 2024. This data-driven and factual report prepared jointly by EMSA and the European Environment Agency aims to take the pulse of the sustainable transition underway in the maritime sector.

2.3. On the workshop “The use of evidence produced by innovative fisheries surveillance and inspection technologies” (Bruges, 2 – 4 May 2023)

- The workshop gathered around 118 participants, both in person and online, from 21 Member States and agencies.



- The workshop aimed at giving an overview of surveillance technologies and outlining the legal requirements and challenges associated with the utilization of evidence obtained from these technologies.
- Several key technologies, both of a cooperative and non-cooperative nature, were presented and discussed in the context of fisheries control.
- It was acknowledged that Member States have made gradual progress in incorporating evidence from innovative technologies into legal proceedings. There are varying levels of experience and acceptance across Member States. Innovative technologies can serve as both direct and auxiliary evidence in legal proceedings, indicating potential for further integration in the future.
- It was also noted that some technologies still produce a relatively high number of false positives, suggesting the need for further technical refinement.
- It was established that it is essential to acknowledge the full potential of innovative technologies and their accessibility in the fisheries control operational environment and adaptability to user needs.
- Furthermore, it is necessary to invest in the certification, mapping and assessment of the related processes and data sources to increase the useability of evidence obtained by innovative technologies in legal proceedings.
- It was concluded that sharing best practices across different coast guard functions on how innovative evidence-gathering technologies can be used is of vital importance.

3. Working Group Cyber Security

The ECGFF Plenary Conference of the Heads of Coast Guard Authorities of EU Member States and Schengen Associated Countries values the work done by the ECGFF WG Cyber Security, in particular:

- The WG Cybersecurity met twice in the past 12 months, with one meeting held at EMSA premises in Lisbon and another in Brussels under Belgian leadership. Participants included representatives from Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain, and the Netherlands, with involvement from DG Mare, EMSA, and EFCA.
- Member States shared valuable insights about the cybersecurity threats and incidents they have encountered. Participants exchanged information on ongoing cybersecurity projects. The meetings serve as a valuable platform for networking and sharing updates on projects related to cybersecurity.
- The WG Cybersecurity decided to include spoofing and GPS jamming within their framework. Given the frequent occurrence of such incidents, this decision underscores the importance of adapting to evolving threats.
- The meeting emphasized the critical role of trust and confidence among participants. In the realm of cybersecurity, where sensitive information is involved, trust is fundamental. Participants must trust each other to share information openly and work collaboratively.
- Looking ahead, a future is envisioned where participants define and implement actions together to enhance resilience against cyber incidents.



- The WG Cybersecurity extends an invitation to all Member States to join and actively participate. Expanding participation and sharing operational POCs will strengthen collective resilience against cyberattacks.

4. Coastex

The ECGFF Plenary Conference of the Heads of Coast Guard Authorities of EU Member States and Schengen Associated Countries underlines the importance of including a Coastex exercise amongst the ECGFF activities and appreciates the efforts made by the BE chairmanship to organize a Coastex exercise on May 2nd 2023.

- Coastex 2023 was a genuine MMO exercise in which a Search and Rescue (SAR) operation suddenly evolved into a security incident and in which there was a cooperation between governmental authorities and private companies (= windmill farm operator).
- The exercise showed that the presence of technical expertise in the crisis cell and the assistance of assets from the offshore industry is mandatory.
- The exercise highlighted the need for secure communication (audio/video) between all assets involved (vessels, helicopters, ...) and the crisis cell.
- The exercise demonstrated that meteo is a key factor and that there is an additional need for joint training by all actors involved in the exercise.
- Results of Coastex 2023 will be considered as input for a specific BE contingency plan.

5. Critical maritime infrastructure

The ECGFF Plenary Conference of the Heads of Coast Guard Authorities of EU Member States and Schengen Associated Countries notes the increase in critical maritime infrastructure in the various sea basins and emphasizes the need for protection of this critical infrastructure.

Two presentations were given on the topic by DG HOME and DG MARE. DG HOME presented the Critical Entities Resilience Directive and DG MARE focused on the link with the EU Maritime Security Strategy (EUMSS).

5.1. With regard to the Critical Entities Resilience Directive, it was noted that:

- There is a shift at EU level from protecting critical infrastructure to ensuring better resilience for critical entities (the entities operating that critical infrastructure).
- At national level, Member States will have to do risk assessments in 11 sectors, including in the water transport sector, and then identify their critical entities.



- A new Critical Infrastructure Blueprint will bring the critical infrastructure community to the crisis management table.

5.2. With regard to the EU Maritime Security Strategy, it was noted that:

- The EUMSS and its action plan are in place since 2014. The action plan was last updated in 2018. The 2023 update follows up on the Council conclusions on maritime security of June 2021, which called on the Commission and the High Representative to assess the need for an update.
- Aspects that needed to be taken in account were, inter alia, the changing global geopolitical arena, the increase in hybrid and cyberattacks and the increasing impacts of climate change and degradation of marine environment.
- Six strategic objectives are outlined in concrete proposals in the EUMSS action plan
- Several new elements have been included in the action plan such as: enhanced cooperation with different partners, the operational implementation of CISE, a framework for UXO's (unexploded ordnances), hybrid threats, ...
- Member States are fully involved in the process of updating the action plan, by means of the EUMSS Working Party and the endorsement by the council is expected by the end of 2023.

6. EU missions

The ECGFF Plenary Conference of the Heads of Coast Guard Authorities of EU Member States and Schengen Associated Countries feels it is important to broaden its horizon, and has therefore accepted two observers to give a presentation on EU missions, namely on the EU Capacity building mission in Somalia and on the EU advisory mission Ukraine.

6.1. With regard to the EU Capacity building mission in Somalia:

- Attention was brought to the political and the security situation of Somalia challenging international capacity building.
- Emphasis was put on the huge size of the Area of Operation (EEZ) compared to the modest means and capabilities of the Somali Maritime Law Enforcement Agencies.
- Question was introduced on how Member States, with the expertise and support of the ECGFF, could help building the nucleus of a Coast Guard in Somalia.

6.2. With regard to the EU advisory mission Ukraine:

- A short overview of the EU Advisory Mission to Ukraine was given, especially on the maritime/port priorities.
- The status on the situation in the Northwest of the Black Sea was highlighted with focus on Odesa ports, the grain deal and freedom of navigation.
- An outlook was shared on the situation for the Ukrainian Coast/Maritime Guard, whereby challenges and opportunities were discussed.



7. Coast Guard fora

The ECGFF Plenary Conference of the Heads of Coast Guard Authorities of EU Member States and Schengen Associated Countries is of the opinion that it is essential to create and maintain bonds with similar coast guard fora around the world and has therefore included presentations on the state of play for the Coast Guard Global Summit (CGGS) and for the Annual Coast Guard Event.

7.1. With regard to the Coast Guard Global Summit:

- It was explained that the Coast Guard Global Summit is a platform for global-level cooperation, in place since 2017. It consists of a summit (high-level meeting) and a working level meeting and is chaired by Coast Guard Japan.
- It was announced that from October 30th to November 2nd 2023, the 3rd CGGS summit takes place, with following agenda items: meeting guidelines, information sharing method, HR development and pioneer activities (use of autonomous shipping).
- Other activities by Coast Guard Japan on the capacity building for maritime security were briefly presented.

7.2. With regard to the Annual Coast Guard Event:

- It was stated that on 27 – 28 June 2023, EMSA hosted the 6th Annual European Coast Guard Event in Lisbon. Around 100 participants from 19 EU Member States, Norway, Iceland, Japan and EU bodies attended the event in person and on-line. They provided valuable feedback on the activities undertaken in the framework of interagency cooperation and contributions to the development of the Annual Strategic Plan which steers the work of the three agencies, identifying key priorities and specific projects to be implemented.
- It was explained that a high-level panel discussion joined together the three agencies and representatives from the EU Member States to reflect on the achievements of the interagency cooperation on coast guard functions so far and to brainstorm on its future.
- Results of the breakout sessions with representatives of the agencies and their stakeholders from the Member States covering the 5 areas of cooperation were illustrated.
- Further information was provided regarding the Greening Award initiative launched during the Annual Coast Guard Event.

8. Ensuring safety and security at sea

The ECGFF Plenary Conference of the Heads of Coast Guard Authorities of EU Member States and Schengen Associated Countries considers it an added value to share best practices and lessons-learned and has therefore allowed the Belgian chairmanship to include presentations on specific use cases, possible plans of approach, and possible solutions, all in the realm of ‘ensuring safety and security at sea’.



8.1 On the presentation of BE use cases:

- Focus was put on two specific BE use cases related to wind farm intrusion: an incident involving transmigrants and an incident where a ship went adrift during a storm in 2022.
- The incidents were outlined in detail and lessons-learnt identified.
- Following attention points can be deduced from these incidents:
 - What are the future-proof solutions to keep a permanent/constant cross-sector maritime surveillance over a large area? And more specifically: What is the best solution to detect immigrants unable to alert rescue services and maintain border control at the same time?
 - How do we protect offshore structures from shipping accidents? Can Emergency Towing Vessels mitigate the risk?
 - Maintaining maritime surveillance and risk mitigation can be expensive for coastal states. Especially when both are necessary at the same time for relatively small areas. Are the current solutions ready for cross-border cooperation?

8.2 On the presentation of offshore wind and shipping safety:

- A comprehensive overview of developments and initiatives in the Netherlands with regard to safety and security at sea was delivered.
- Following lessons-learnt were retained:
 - Focus on Prepare, Prevent, Detect and Respond. All are essential in the safety domain.
 - Cooperate with both national and international governing bodies and other stakeholders. Safety is everyone's concern.
 - Learn and evaluate. Incidents do happen, thus it is best to learn from them.

8.3 On the presentation of Stratos solution:

- The interest of stratospheric flights was emphasized. Stratospheric projects have been getting a lot of traction over the years. Although it is innovative and adventurous, its' true interest lies in the new opportunities stratospheric flights open to various applications.
- The importance of onboard technology solution was laid out. The aircraft itself is just a means. What matters most are the technologies those unmanned aircrafts will carry and what they will serve. If military use sounds obvious, there will be many civil applications where stratospheric earth observation will have major impacts.
- It was noted that the maritime segment offers a perfect use case to prove the value of earth observation from a stratospheric vehicle, as long as it is part of a larger solution to provide constant awareness.

8.4 On the presentation of the safety and security issues of Unmanned Maritime Systems in areas of critical infrastructure:



- The establishment and goal of the the Sarums (Safety and Regulations for European Unmanned Maritime Systems) Group was explained as well as initiatives undertaken so far.
- Attention was drawn to the lack of regulation concerning Unmanned Maritime Systems (UMS) and the need for comprehensive regulations and safety measures was emphasized.
- It was stated that the main focus for UMS lies undoubtedly on subsurface activities.
- It was announced that the Sarums Group created a best practice guide with operational guidelines, and regulations for unmanned systems. The aim is to provide clarity and standardization in an otherwise unregulated industry. The ultimate goal of the Sarums Group is to establish a certification process for UMS.
- It was clarified that the Sarums Group believes in sharing its research and findings with all stakeholders and is eager to collaborate with regulatory authorities.
- It was concluded that the maritime safety of UMS is the key to a future-proof maritime security .

9. Panel Discussion

The ECGFF Plenary Conference of the Heads of Coast Guard Authorities of EU Member States and Schengen Associated Countries encourages Member States to actively share their views on matters related to coastguard functions and therefore supported the introduction of a panel discussion during the ECGFF plenary conference.

Panellists taking part:

- Mrs Balcaen – Belgium - Co chair coast guard/ Administrator-general MDK
- Mr Juha Vuolle – Finland – Captain (CG), Deputy Head of Operations, Finnish Border Guard HQ
- Mr Jurgen Scraback – European Defense Agency (EDA) – EDA Head of Unit Maritime
- Mr Gianluca D’agostino – Italy – Captain Coast Guard

Questions on how to tackle new challenges and new risks on a cross-border scale were addressed. The usefulness of common toolboxes and risk analyses was discussed alongside considerations with regard to the assistance and services offered by the agencies to the Member States. Views were exchanged on how to best navigate the field of tension between governmental authorities and private companies, since it is increasingly common for them to share interests, particularly in the protection of critical infrastructure.

10. ECGFF Future framework

10.1 Amendment to TOR

Greece kindly agreed to further support the BE chairmanship in working out a proposal for a rotating chairmanship, for which the BE chairmanship wishes to express its gratitude. Under the Belgian chairmanship, a proposal for an amendment to the Terms of Reference (TOR) was drawn up.



Prior to the plenary conference the draft TOR were circulated among all ECGFF Member States for further input and remarks. They had also been previously discussed during the secretariat meetings under BE chairmanship.

The concept and the developments which led to the proposal were presented at the plenary conference and the draft TOR were submitted to the ECGFF plenary for adoption. As there were no objections from any of the MS, the amendment of the TOR is hereby approved. An updated version of the TOR is attached to these minutes, see attachment 1.

10.2 Rotation schedule

Under the Croatian chairmanship Greece introduced the proposal of the creation of a chair rotation system for chairing the ECGFF in order to ensure sustainability, prevent multiple ECGFF chairmanships by the same Member State, as well as to enhance the ownership of the forum by all Member States. Under the Belgian chairmanship, this proposal was further elaborated and a draft proposal for a schedule, starting in 2025 was drawn up. This proposal had also been discussed at the secretariat meetings under BE chairmanship.

In line with the wishes of several Member States, a short-term planning for the next five years was drawn up as well. The BE chairmanship wrote an official message to the 7 Member States first in row in the proposed schedule to identify candidacies for the next 5 years, being Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania and Bulgaria. Not all Member States that were addressed, have (yet) replied.

The schedule presented was as follows:

2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
CY	DK	EE	IS	NL

The BE chairmanship did receive confirmation from the Netherlands that they are willing and ready to chair the ECGFF in 2029. The candidacies of the other Member States in the schedule are unconfirmed or uncertain.

After this explanation, at the plenary conference the Italian Coast Guard made the official announcement that they are willing to take up the ECGFF chairmanship in 2025. This proposal was done in the light of the 160th anniversary of the Italian Coast Guard's existence in 2025.

The Belgian chairmanship thanked the Italian colleagues for this initiative and appealed to the Portuguese colleagues for further developing and finalizing a chairmanship model based on rotation, which could become a new annex to the TOR. The BE chairmanship offered their continuous support in this matter to the Portuguese colleagues. For the tentative rotation schedule, see attachment 2.

Under the Belgian chairmanship a document was drawn up with clarification on the tasks and obligations related to taking up the ECGFF chairmanship, see attachment 3.



11.Handover and Portuguese chairmanship

Next chairmanship is taken up by Portugal, as of 29 September 2023. The Portuguese chairmanship is a co-chairing concept. The first semester of the chairmanship will be supervised by the Autoridade Marítima Nacional (AMN) and the second semester by the Guarda Nacional Republicana (GNR).

Concluding speeches by:

- Mr João Does Aresta, general director of the maritime authority and commander of the maritime police
- Mr Jorge Bolas, commander of the GNR – UCC (Unidade de Controlo Costeiro)

A provisional timeline was given:

- 23 to 25 January 24 in Madeira – workshop EFCA
- 20 to 22 February 24 in Lisbon – WG Cyber Security
- 19 to 21 March in Lisbon 24 – workshop EMSA
- 7 to 9 May in Cascais 24 – workshop Frontex
- 3 to 5 June 24 – location TBD – WG Cyber Security
- 18 to 20 September 24 – location TBD – plenary conference and Coastex

The BE chairmanship wished the Portuguese colleagues success with continuing the ECGFF efforts and offered their full support.