



## Cyber threats in the maritime sector: cybersecurity working group

In January 2023, the maritime world was rocked by a large-scale ransomware attack on a leading classification society. More than 1,000 ships were affected. That attack is unfortunately not an isolated incident: in recent years, the entire maritime sector, from ports to passenger ships to classification societies, has been the target of cyber attacks on several occasions. That is why the Cybersecurity Working Group within the European Coast Guard Forum was set up a few years ago. Thanks in part to the knowledge exchanged by member states in the working group on cybersecurity, many attacks can also be avoided every year. This Cybersecurity working group, consisting of 32 experts from the various member states, met from 22 to 24 May in Brussels.

### New insights and developments

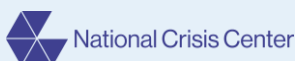
There were seven presentations on the agenda, covering various aspects of cybersecurity. Belgian speakers dealt with the topic of geopolitical impact on coast guard structure and activities and introduced the Centre for Cybersecurity Belgium and the brand new Cyber Command, which is part of the Ministry of Defence. Furthermore, the EMSA (European Maritime Safety Agency) spoke its new “cyber task force” and the training that it will set up about cyber security for maritime inspectors, the EFCA (European Fishery Control Agency) in turn made a presentation on the growing concerns about cyber threats in fisheries. Maritime cybersecurity exercises, the latest research on maritime cybersecurity and, finally, the French Maritime Computer Emergency Response Team were also presented.

During the last conference day, Eurocontrol presented how it deals with GNSS interferences for aeronautical domain, in order to learn from each other expertises. Then the working group discussed the possible orientations for the group in the near or mid-term future and elected a new chairman.

The Coast Guard is a unique Belgian organisation that pools and coordinates the expertise of 17 different partners in the maritime sector to ensure safety and security at sea.

In 2022 - 2023, the Belgian Coast Guard chairs the **European Coast Guard Functions Forum (ECGFF)**. The recurring theme throughout the Belgian presidency consists of the question: “How will we, as a country, guarantee our safety/security at sea?”.

Together with the European Agencies **Frontex, EMSA and EFCA**, the Coast Guard organises a number of workshops throughout the year. Furthermore, a **Cyber security working group** is being organized in cooperation with **DG Mare of the European Commission**, as well as a summit that will take place at the end of September 2023.



## Future cybersecurity challenges

The ongoing threat of cyber attacks necessitates a good exchange of knowledge between different countries. In recent years, the Cybersecurity Working Group has been a valuable platform for consultation. Given current developments, there is likely to be a greater need for closer European cooperation through EMSA in the near future. In this way, the maritime sector will continue to be safeguarded as much as possible from cyber threats in the future.

