ECGFF TERMS OF REFERENCE

The European Coast Guard Functions Forum\(^1\) 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 countries, the European Commission and its Institutions and Agencies with related competencies in Coast Guard Functions\(^2\).

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
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 CGF's across borders and sectors, the Forum has the following objectives

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\(^1\) Full title ‘Forum of the Heads of the Coast Guards Functions of the European Union and Schengen associated countries’.

\(^2\) The Forum recognises that each Member State has different national structures for the delivery of CGFs and that the Head of Delegation may be accompanied by other national institutions competent in CGF’s. The selection of which national CGF Service provides the Head of Delegation is strictly a matter for the Member State who will advise the Chair of the name of the HoD.
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 relating 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 Institutions

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 and Chairmanship

The Forums 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 Forums objectives. This work may be done either by the secretariat or through special tailored working groups directed by a national lead partner supported by the secretariat. Decisions on further work of the secretariat will be made by the chairman 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 the secretariat. Results of the works of the secretariat as well as working groups will be presented during the following Plenary Conference, or as appropriate.

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3 With respect to that EU Institutes and agencies with related competencies in CGF's
The chairman, after consultation with Member States, may decide to invite representatives from third countries, non-EU Institutions or bodies having a link with Coast Guard issues of a subject studied or relevant to that Plenary Conference.

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 chairmanship for the next year Plenary Conference will be agreed and appointed at the closing of each Plenary Conference. Member States willing to chair and host future Plenary Conferences should indicate this to the chairman at least two years before assuming the chairmanship. The Chairmanship is rotating and lasts for the period of one Plenary Conference which is normally twelve months. Consideration should be given to European sea basin rotation and harmonising the chair with other Coast Guard forums' rotations in the selection of successive chairs. A Member cannot take the position of Chairman of the Forum within the following seven year period unless there is no other candidate member and upon approval of the Plenary Conference.

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 PoC’s and shall be adopted by the first secretariat meeting in December.

The chair shall prepare conclusions from the Plenary Conference.

EU institutions may provide the necessary administrative and financial support for the planning and execution of the Plenary Conference, working groups and the secretariat.

**Secretariat**

A standing secretariat will be appointed to assist the chairman in the delivery of his duties, to plan and prepare the next Plenary Conference and to further the objectives of the Forum.

The secretariat will be chaired by the Member State responsible for the chairmanship for the forthcoming Plenary Conference. The Chair will circulate national Points of Contact (POC's) for the Member States with any minutes or relevant documentation.

The Secretariat meets at least three times per year. The Secretariat has a coordinator role with the implementation of the action plan.

The secretariat will contain officers from the previous, present and next chairs for continuity purposes.

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.