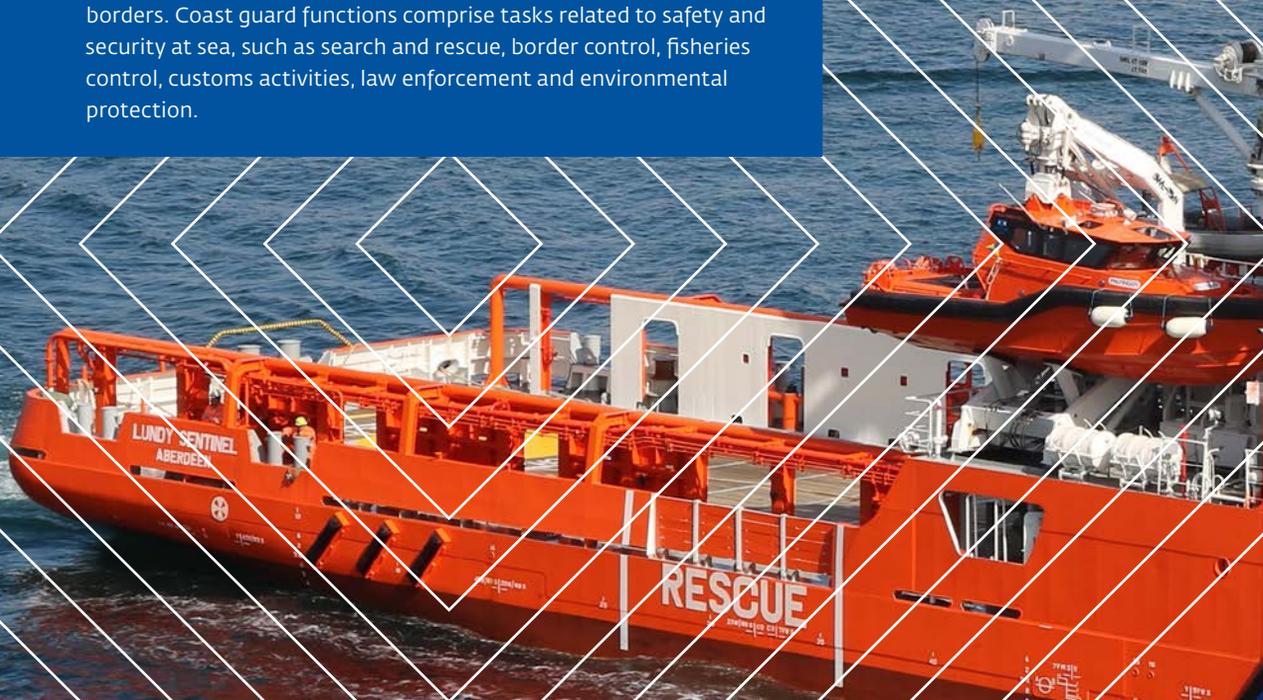


European cooperation on coast guard functions



Working together at sea: European cooperation on coast guard functions

European cooperation on coast guard functions describes the joint work of European agencies and national authorities at maritime borders. Coast guard functions comprise tasks related to safety and security at sea, such as search and rescue, border control, fisheries control, customs activities, law enforcement and environmental protection.





Who are the agencies involved in coast guard functions at the European level?

Three European agencies support the national authorities in performing their coast guard tasks:

- The European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA), based in Lisbon, Portugal
- The European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex), based in Warsaw, Poland, and
- The European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA), based in Vigo, Spain

Why we cooperate

The waters surrounding Europe are a busy place, accommodating a wide range of activities such as international and domestic freight and passenger transport, fishing, oil and gas production, as well as tourism and recreational activities. At the same time, the maritime domain is exposed to a number of risks – accidents, marine pollution, illegal fishing, terrorism, piracy, people smuggling and other cross-border crimes.

In the European Union, there are numerous authorities responsible for different coast guard functions. More than 400 civilian and military authorities in the Member States work together around the clock to ensure that the activities taking place at sea are lawful, safe, secure and environmentally sustainable.

Frontex, EMSA and EFCA support Member States with information sharing, surveillance and communication services, capacity

building activities as well as risk analysis and information exchange on threats in the maritime domain.

The three agencies work in multipurpose operations, where they together perform activities that support various coast guard functions in the same operation. Vessels and aircraft taking part in Frontex operations also collect and share information relevant to fisheries control, detection of pollution and compliance with maritime regulations by the respective national authorities and agencies. Similarly, the remotely piloted aircraft services deployed by EMSA can be used by Frontex for border surveillance, by EFCA for fisheries control and by individual authorities in their respective areas of competence.





European cooperation on coast guard functions explained

Each European agency supports European cooperation on coast guard functions with different objectives and responsibilities.

Frontex aims at improving the management of the external borders in order to ensure a high level of internal security in the EU and to tackle cross-border crime.

EFCA focuses on operational coordination of fisheries control and inspection activities, contributing to a level playing field for the fishing industry and ultimately to sustainable fisheries.

EMSA focuses on enhancing maritime safety, security and prevention of ship-source pollution. It also supports response operations to marine pollution caused by ships and by oil and gas installations.





Legal framework

Frontex, EFCA and EMSA have been working together for many years. In 2016, their cooperation was formalised with a legislative proposal by the European Commission leading to the amendment of the three agencies' founding regulations. In 2017, the agencies took a significant step in structuring their cooperation on coast guard functions by signing a Tripartite Working Arrangement.

The cooperation between the three EU agencies is managed by a Steering Committee composed of their Executive Directors. At the working level, three technical subcommittees meet regularly to discuss various areas of cooperation. EU Member States are consulted and involved in the discussions during the annual EU Coast Guard Event and other thematic meetings.

The technical subcommittees focus on surveillance and communication services, capacity building, risk assessment and capacity sharing.



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