

FRONTEX EVALUATION REPORT 2012

EPN Programme

JO Hermes 2012

Operations Division/Joint
Operations Unit /Sea Border Sector

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Public Version

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PUBLIC VERSION

1. Introduction

Brief risk assessment

Tunisia

At the beginning of February 2011 in Tunisia, conditions of poverty, the high unemployment rate and the demand by Tunisian people for radical social, political and economic reforms led to socio-political turmoil which resulted in the overthrow of the then Tunisian President Ben Ali. This turmoil triggered high seaborne illegal migratory flows from Tunisia with more than 20 000 migrants arriving in Italy in 2011. With the first free elections held in Tunisia on 23 October 2011 and its winner, the moderate Islamic Ennahda party, the situation in the country appeased political interests. However, the economic situation in the country and its high unemployment rate are the main push factors for young Tunisians to leave for Europe. To stop the continuing flow of migrants towards Italy, authorities of both countries signed a readmission agreement, allowing a maximum of 100 Tunisian migrants per week to be returned to Tunisia by the Italian authorities. As a result, the migratory flow showed a continuously decreasing trend until the end of 2012 with finally only sporadic incidents at the shores of Sicily and a total of around 2 000 migrants detected. The last remaining chance for Tunisian nationals to escape being readmitted by Italy to Tunisia is to reach the coast of Sicily undetected and continue their journey towards central Europe, usually by train.

Libya

After the rebels captured Tripoli and forced the Gaddafi loyalists to retreat from the ports and harbours, the organised crossing of migrants to Italy ended. The last forced migration incident by the Gaddafi regime to Lampedusa was reported on 17 August 2011. From that time on, pre-war facilitation networks started slowly to recover from the civil war. Until the beginning of 2012 there was only one network in place, led by Sudanese and Libyan facilitators, which was able to organise sea crossings for Somali migrants, causing a moderate influx of Somali migrants towards Lampedusa. Despite negotiations with the interim government in Libya (National Transitional Council) about increased border surveillance, no effective border controls took place along the Libyan coast during 2012. Moreover, the lack of border controls encouraged facilitation networks to increase capacity on the route from Libya to the EU. Since the second half of 2012, networks have expanded their area of influence towards West African and sub-Saharan countries and improved their organisational skills. As a result, arrivals from nationals of those particular countries to Italy increased and led to the detection and apprehension of over 6 000 migrants in 2012. Thus, a continuously high flow of migrants is entering Libya with the purpose of reaching Italy. For the time being, i.e. during wintertime, it is not feasible to undertake the last part of the journey due to rough weather conditions in the Central Mediterranean Sea.

Operational aim

The operational aim of the joint operation EPN Hermes 2012 is to focus on the common efforts to carry out border surveillance to ensure that persons attempting to cross the external maritime borders undergo the border control as required by the Schengen Borders Code (SBC) by tackling and controlling irregular migration flows from Tunisia, Algeria and Libya towards the islands of Lampedusa, Sardinia and Sicily.

Link to the other Frontex activities, projects, programs

The JO EPN Hermes has been implemented alongside with the JO EPN Aeneas 2012, both of them have shared the same ICC (International Coordination Centre) located in Rome and both JOs have been led and coordinated from the ICC Rome. ICC Rome has been developed as a core infrastructure to provide a platform for the management of JOs.

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The ICC Rome staff participated in the ICC exchange pilot project aimed to acquire knowledge and best practices about the ICCs in Piraeus and Madrid.

A new reporting tool, JORA, has been implemented during the JO.

The pilot project Positioning System has been tested during the JO EPN Hermes 2012 on in the aerial and maritime assets of Guardia di Finanza.

Guest Officers, aerial and naval assets deployed in the framework of the JO EPN Hermes, have obtained useful information about the place of deployment through the Yellow Pages under the umbrella of FOSS.

Period of the JO

JO EPN Hermes was launched as from 02 July 2012 09:00 LT until 30 October 2012 09:00 LT. Based on the risk assessment and agreement with the HMS Italy JO EPN Hermes was extended until 15 December (1st extension) and later on until 31 January 2013 (2nd extension).

Operational areas

The operational area was established from the South coasts of Sicily Island (Italy) up to 24 NM of the Tunisian coast.

Additional operational area south of Sardinia was on standby and would only be activated if the area was targeted with a massive number of arrivals.

The assets were instructed regarding the area to patrol and actions to be implemented by the ICC located in the Aeronaval Command of Guardia di Finanza in Pratica di Mare.

Activities in the area or the area itself would be constantly adapted/ adjusted to the local circumstances, latest intelligence and operational needs.

Hosting and participating MS

Host MS	Italy
Participating MS/SAC	Austria, Switzerland, Finland, France, Iceland, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain and United Kingdom.
3rd countries	Georgia
Other entities	EUROPOL, EFCA

Participating authorities

In total 16 different authorities (3 from the Host MS and 13 from other MS/SAC) participated in JO.

Host MS Participating authorities: Guardia di Finanza, Guardia Costiera and Polizia di Stato.

MS/SAC Participating authorities:

- Portugal (SEF, Air Force)
- France (DCPF-Border Police)
- Lithuania (State Border Guard service)
- UK (Border Agency Office, UKBA)
- Austria (Police)
- Switzerland (Border Guard Corps)
- Romania (Gen. Insp. Border Police)
- Poland (Border Guard)
- Spain (Guardia Civil, National Police)

- Finland (Finish Border Guard)
- Iceland (Icelandic Coast Guard)

Technical equipment deployed

During the JO EPN Hermes, 15 naval assets were deployed by the host Member State, Italy. Also 6 aerial assets: 4 planes and 2 helicopters were deployed altogether from Host and Home MS/SAC: Iceland, Italy, Portugal, Spain and Poland.

Experts deployed

Within JO EPN Hermes 2012, 12 MS/SAC deployed 25 Guest Officers:

- 18 of them were deployed as debriefing experts in the detention centres of Caltanissetta, Trapani and Mineo.
- 7 of them (on rotation basis) were deployed as Frontex Support Officer in Lampedusa as Frontex local representatives.

Host MS deployed 18 Experts as team leaders of the joint debriefing teams, 7 Intelligence Officers and 16 operators to ICC during the whole period of the JO (on rotation basis).

Other participating entities

Since the beginning of the JO EPN Hermes, Frontex established a direct cooperation with Europol, and was also cooperating with FRA - Fundamental Rights Agency, EMSA - European Maritime Security Agency, EFCA - European Fishery Community Agency, EASO - European Asylum Support Office.

The cooperation with other EU Agencies has been an added value to EPN Hermes, creating a lot of synergies and enhancing the interagency cooperation on EU level.

One Georgian Border Guard officer participated as observer.

Financial information

The budget initially committed for MS/SAC deployments was equal to 4,099,178.99€.

The level of payments, on 25 May 2013, was equal to 2,893,651.44€ (70% of the committed budget). The amount of 959,974.41€ (23.42%) is still to be paid, while the remaining 254,553.24€ (5.99%) was de-committed and reallocated to other activities.

2. Main objectives

Enhance border security - Effective border control at external borders maintaining deterrent effects; enhanced detection and prevention of cross border crime.

Enhance efficiency of border security - Detection of all targets enabling to intercept persons, to prevent unauthorized border crossings, to counter other cross-border criminality and to take measures against persons who have crossed the border illegally as well as to report the other illegal activities observed to respective authorities;

Enhance operational cooperation - High level of MS participation in JO; Enhanced inter-agency cooperation and cooperation between national authorities of host MS as well as on EU level; Seeking involvement of TC in operational activities; Multi-character operational concept applied.

Enhance exchange of information - Collection of operational information from all actors involved in order to obtain intelligence, thus improving the risk assessments that underpin the operational activities.

Enhance efficiency of the exchange of information - Implementation of fully automated online reporting system; Seeking standardized format and quality of the reports and interviews.

Identify possible risks and threats - Better knowledge about the irregular migration related criminal activities and networks operating in the area and higher identification of the risks and threats related.

Establish and exchange best practices - Fostering practical cooperation between the authorities involved in prevention and tackling illegal migration as well as other cross-border crime; Delivering workshops, briefings, operational meetings to participants.

Support establishment of permanent structures - Continue fostering cooperation/information exchange between MS NCC/ICC/RCC/LCC.

Support provision of trainings - Implementation of targeted specific training activities.

3. Operational results

During the JO EPN Hermes 2012, 117 incidents have been reported with a total of 5964 irregular migrants apprehended. Of the total number of incidents, 57% were inside the operational area and 43% outside the operational area.

Moreover, 52% of the total numbers of incidents were at sea and only 48% were incidents inland. This result also shows that the surveillance activities were well planned and carried out.

Along with JO EPN Hermes operational results, Frontex sea operations also play an important role by saving of lives at sea. In the framework of JO EPN Hermes, 46 SAR incidents were recorded with 3518 migrants rescued.

Since the beginning of the JO EPN Hermes, 68 facilitators were arrested.

Deployed debriefing experts from MS/SAC conducted 357 interviews with irregular migrants. The interviews performed by the experts and the reports of the Intelligence Officer, allowed Frontex to have a better situational overview and awareness.

The cultural mediators working along with the Guest Officers increased the quality of the information/intelligence gathered.

The briefings of the experts and crew members from MS/SAC, organized by Frontex at the beginning of their deployment, was successful in providing them with specific knowledge concerning the JO, Frontex Code of Conduct and fundamental rights.

The exchange of experience among the officers from different MS/SAC as well as the exchange of contact details will be positive for all participated MS/SAC.

