

PART I: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1 Background

According to the Frontex assessment and the evaluation of previous Frontex coordinated operations in the Central Mediterranean Sea specifically Sicily, Sardinia and Lampedusa, this area is affected by illegal migration from North African, Asian and sub-Saharan African countries. The major migration pressure via the sea originates from the coasts of the Maghreb countries, with various embarkation points. The human traffickers and the migrants themselves have developed strategies in order to make use of this favourable geographical situation.

According to the data provided by the Italian authorities the number of migrants arriving in the region had increased in 2008 when compared to the previous year. There was a remarkable increase in the arrivals of migrants in Lampedusa and Linosa in 2008.

Regarding arrivals in Sardinia, there was an increase in the number of illegal migrants but a decrease of incidents in 2008.

The Joint Operation EPN-Hermes 2009 took place from 16 April until 16 October, to increase the capacity of border control on persons attempting to enter the Schengen area illegally via Sea, using small/medium boats from Algeria, Tunisia and Libya.

The operation was carried out in operational areas of Lampedusa and Sardinia for the participating means for detection and interception as well as the deployment of Guest Officers (GOs) in the detention center of Caltanissetta for identification and interviews.

2 Achievement of the Objectives

For the Joint Operation EPN-Hermes 2009, the objectives were set and agreed upon between Frontex and the Member States as mentioned below:

- **Border surveillance** – to detect all targets enabling the identification of emergencies, to counter cross-border criminality and to take measures against persons who have crossed the border illegally;

Partly achieved – the participating means detected and intercepted targets at sea, those which were not detected at sea were finally intercepted on land. Most of the targets were detected out of the operational areas. To counter criminal networks was not possible due to they operate from the third countries.

- **Increase the capacity of the permanent structures** – to develop further the EPN working concept supporting the set up of NCCs/RCC/LCCs/FPs;

Partly achieved – there was no development of the NCC during the Joint Operation; even though the ICC in Cagliari has continued developing the LCC of EPN working concept and from 2009, Italy has set up a permanent operational room in Lampedusa working as a LCC during the operation. Therefore the permanent structure has been developed at local level but not at central level.

- **Increase the information gathering** – to establish best practices on debriefing of persons to obtain intelligence.

Achieved – Through the training session, prior to the operation, it was established a common working concept for the participating guest officers and the local staff improving the gathering of information and, as a consequence, improving the risk assessment for realizing steering processes on operational activities;

- Increase the number of identified persons – to establish best practices on identification procedures to improve the support of the national repatriation efforts;

Achieved – as all the migrants arriving to the Italian territory were identified by the Italian authorities supported by Frontex.

- Increase the number of repatriated third country nationals – to establish best practices on repatriation;

Partly achieved – all the migrants arriving to the Italian territory were identified; however the number of repatriated migrants has not been provided by the Italian authorities.

- Mapping processes – surveillance – information gathering – identification – protection mechanism-repatriation.

Partly achieved – aligned with the achievement of the objectives described above.

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Results - Outcome

- The Frontex coordinated activities envisaged the cooperation between the Member States, in particular among the deployed border guards exchanging the know-how and best practises and learning about the national procedures from each other;
- 59 incidents occurred within the operation, 13 of them within the operational area whereas 46 out of the operational area. 1193 migrants were disembarking on the Italian territory. .
- Most of the detections and interceptions at sea occurred out of the operational areas, therefore a better definition of the operational areas is required;
- The flexibility and cooperation of the participating Member States in the deployment of guest officers have been very helpful for the better implementation of the operation;
- The flexibility and effectiveness of the hosting Member State Italy in the logistic arrangement, facilitated the development of the operation;
- The language skills, apart from English (Arabic, Italian, French etc) of some of the guest officers increased the quality of the gathered information;
- The training sessions for the guest officers from hosting and participating MSs/SAC, organized by Frontex prior to the start of the operational phase was successful, providing them with specific knowledge concerning the operation;
- The exchange of experience among the officers from different Member States as well as the exchange of contact details will be positive for the hosting and participating MSs/SAC;

4 Budget

The direct financial contribution from Frontex to the Member States has been: 5.160.600 Euros. Until 1st December the participating MS/SAC has claimed and Frontex has reimbursed 1.532.738 Euros what means 29, 95% of the total budget committed.

5 Link to the usefulness of other Frontex activities

- In the framework of EPN Programme, the establishment of an organizational structure in the hosting Member States is vital, to steer the operational activities and to enhance the information gathering for the effective implementation of Frontex coordinated activities;
- It has been a permanent contact among Frontex Coordinators involved in EPN-Hermes and EPN-Nautilus, improving the level of coordination and exchange of information in Central Mediterranean area;
- It has been a permanent cooperation among the following Frontex Units during the operation: Joint Operations, Risk Analysis, Frontex Situation Centre and Research and Development. Even though there is a room for improvement in this regard.

6 Added value in the light of Frontex' goals

- Awareness – to achieve the situational awareness of the EU external borders;

During the operation the ICC received all the information regarding the incidents occurred in and out of the operational areas maximizing the effectiveness and accuracy of the analysis process.

- Response – to establish synchronization and efficient utilization of available resources;

In this regard the ICC carried out an effective coordination of the participating means increasing the level of surveillance of the defined areas.

The guest officers were deployed according to the needs increasing the information gathering. EU and Member States/Schengen Associated Countries would benefit from participation of more Member States/Schengen Associated Countries.

Joint Research Center (European Commission) and Frontex tested satellite technology in order to develop and integrate in the operational structure in the near future.

- Interoperability – to ensure development and integration of required tools and platforms;

Due to the experience gained in previous operations the level of coordination among different participating authorities considerably increased.

- Performance – to enhance the quality and quantity of border control;

In this regard Frontex should continue to encourage the developments on sharing knowledge and standardizing the work done by patrolling means, guest officers (hereinafter GOs) and national authorities during the border control.

