

## FRONTEX EVALUATION REPORT 2012

# EPN HORIZONTAL PROGRAMME EPN HERMES 2011

Operations Division  
Joint Operations Unit  
Sea Border Sector

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**PUBLIC VERSION****1. Introduction**

In early February 2011, and following the political turmoil in Tunisia, migratory flows from Tunisia to the Italian island of Lampedusa suddenly increased, reaching particularly high levels in the period from 1 January until 21 February 2011 with the detection of 5 160 illegal migrants who arrived on Lampedusa Island. This figure was staggeringly high in comparison to the 7 200 arrivals during the whole of 2008, at that time the peak year for migrant arrivals in this area. Until the fall of Tripoli in August 2011, the number of illegal migrants who reached Italy continued to increase due to the continuation of arrivals from Tunisia and, in addition, the income from large vessels with sub-Saharan migrants from Libya.

By the end of August, more than 47 000 illegal migrants had arrived in Italy, mainly on the island of Lampedusa. Nearly 20 000 illegal migrants departed from Tunisia while around 27 000 migrants left from Libya. While nearly all those migrants who arrived from Tunisia were Tunisian nationals, the migrants who came from Libya were mainly nationals from sub-Saharan countries.

The Joint Operation (JO) EPN-Hermes 2011 was launched in the framework of the Frontex response to the "Arab Spring" in North African countries and focused on irregular migratory flows arriving from Tunisia, Libya, Algeria and Egypt to the southern sea borders of Italy, namely to Lampedusa, Pantelleria, Linosa and Sardinia.

The aim of the JO was to focus on the common effort to carry out integrated border control ensuring that persons attempting to cross the external maritime borders would undergo control as required by the Schengen Borders Code.

The JO started on 20 February, in the South area of Lampedusa Island and was initially planned to last until 31 August 2011. Due to persistent migratory flows from Tunisia and Libya, the JO was extended in two occasions, firstly until 31 December 2011 and secondly until 31 March 2012. A predefined area south of Sardinia was activated in the framework of the JO Hermes from 15 March and due to the low number of migrant arrivals the area was deactivated on 31 August 2011.

The JO EPN Hermes has been implemented alongside with the JO EPN Aeneas 2011, 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.

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 extension of JO in 2012.

The pilot project Positioning System has been tested during the JO EPN Hermes 2011 on in the aerial and maritime assets of Guardia di Finanza.

Guest Officers, crews of 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.

All deployed naval assets were from the host Member State, Italy. In total 31 deployments of Coastal Patrol Vessel - CPV from Guardia di Finanza and Guardia Costiera. Aerial assets were deployed from the following MS/SAC: Italy, France, The Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Finland and Poland. In total 20 deployments of Fixed Wing Aircrafts - FWA (2 Italy, 4 Portugal, 1 France, 1 Spain, 1 Netherlands, 1 Poland and 1 Finland) and 1 deployment of Helicopter (Italy).

Within JO EPN Hermes 2011, participating MS/SAC deployed 187 Guest Officers (GO) as debriefing experts in the detention centres of Trapani and the CARAs of Cagliari, Caltanissetta, Bari, Mineo and Crotone, where the migrants were transferred to after being detected. 7 GOs were deployed as Frontex Support Officer in Lampedusa, representing Frontex at local level.

Host MS deployed the following experts: 39 Experts as team leader of the debriefing teams; 4 Intelligence officers in the ICC covering the whole period of the JO; 3 Operators in the ICC during the whole period of the JO.

Since the beginning of the JO EPN Hermes, Frontex established a direct cooperation with Europol to provide analytical support to Italian Authorities on migration flows coming from North Africa countries.

Frontex also cooperated with the following European Agencies: FRA - Fundamental Rights Agency, in particular, officers from FRA visited Lampedusa in order to gain knowledge about the JO procedures; EMSA - European Maritime Security Agency, crews members of the aerial and naval means were instructed to communicate any event related to maritime pollution (no case of pollution was detected during JO Hermes); EFCA - European Fishery Community Agency, crews members of the aerial and naval means were instructed to communicate any event related to illegal fisheries (one case related to the BlueFin Tuna campaign in which a huge concentration of Tunisian vessels occurred at the external border of the operational area and all the data collected was sent through the proper channels; EASO - European Asylum Support Office, Hermes team was constantly updating this Agency with the latest information.

All in all, the cooperation with other EU Agencies was an added value to EPN Hermes, creating a lot of synergies with them which enhanced interagency cooperation on EU level.

No third countries participated within JO EPN Hermes.

The initial budget was 2.000.000 Euro. Due to the continuous influx of migrants towards southern external borders of the EU, there was a need to extend the JO EPN Hermes. In order to be able to respond to these developments, the final budget was increased to 14,972,968.24 Euro.

## 2. Main objectives

For the JO EPN Hermes 2011, the objectives were set and agreed between Frontex and the Host Member State as :

- To focus on the border surveillance activities in the operational areas enabling detection of all contact of interest within the mentioned area, in order to intercept persons attempting to cross the external borders illegally;
- To facilitate the early detection and tracking of the contacts of interest in order to report their position to the authorities of the third countries where these have departed from, seeking for their prompt cooperation and to allow them to take the appropriate measure and actions;
- To increase the information gathering, collecting operational information from all actors involved and to establish best practices on debriefing of migrants to obtain intelligence, thus improving the risk assessment that underpin the operational activities;
- To support Host MS in identification and return activities of third country nationals;
- To prevent and combat cross-border crime by supporting the national authorities in disclosing cases of smuggling of migrants and trafficking in human beings including identification of victims;
- To establish and exchange best practices to foster practical cooperation between the authorities involved in tackling irregular migration and other cross-border crime;

## 3. Operational results

During the JO EPN Hermes 2011, 505 incidents have been reported with a total of 51 205 irregular migrants apprehended. Of the total number of incidents, 436 were inside the operational area (86.33%) and 69 outside the operational area, what clearly shows that the proper operational area was implemented.

Moreover, of the total number of incidents, 462 were incidents at sea (91.5%) and only 43 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, 144 SAR incidents were recorded with 20 012 migrants rescued.

More than half of all the migrants who arrived from Tunisia were recorded during the month of March 2011 (118 incidents - 14 018 migrants). Most migrants who arrived from Libya and unknown areas (assuming to have also departed from Libya) were recorded during the months from April to August 2011 with a total of 27 713 migrants in 150 incidents. On the other hand, in 9 incidents, were detected migrants from Egypt, Algeria and Turkey nationality.

Since the beginning of the JO EPN Hermes, 165 facilitators were arrested.

Deployed debriefing experts from MS/SAC conducted 2.229 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.