



EUROPEAN UNION

# EU OPERATIONS in the MEDITERRANEAN SEA

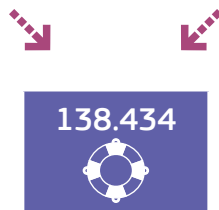
Saving lives and preventing human tragedies have been and will always be one of the main priorities of the European Union's work in managing the refugee crisis. To this end, EU Naval Operations in the Mediterranean Sea work to save lives at sea, strengthen border control and disrupt the business model of traffickers and human smugglers. Since 2015, EU operations in the Mediterranean have contributed to saving more than 400.000 people; disabled 296 vessels used by criminal networks and transferred 87 suspected smugglers and traffickers to Italian authorities.

## Border Management and Saving Lives at Sea – FRONTEX Operations Triton and Poseidon

To reinforce its capacity to save lives at sea, the EU significantly enhanced its maritime presence in 2015, tripling the resources and assets available for Frontex Joint Operations Poseidon and Triton.

**OPERATION POSEIDON** provides Greece with technical assistance with the goal of strengthening its border surveillance, its ability to save lives at sea and its registration and identification capacities. Frontex also assists the Greek authorities in carrying out returns and readmissions. Its operational area covers the Greek sea borders with Turkey and the Greek islands.

**OPERATION TRITON** supports Italy with border control, surveillance and search and rescue in the Central Mediterranean. Its operational area covers the territorial waters of Italy as well as parts of the search and rescue zones of Italy and Malta, stretching 138 nautical miles south of Sicily. On numerous occasions, Frontex vessels and aircrafts have also been redirected by the Italian Coast Guard to assist migrants in distress in areas far away from the operational area of Triton.



**FRONTEX** is the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union. It does not replace border control activities but provides additional technical equipment and border guards to EU countries that face an increased migratory pressure. Frontex relies on vessels, aircraft and other assets provided by various EU

Member States. All deployed Frontex staff and equipment are under the command and control of the authorities of the country hosting the operation. On 14 September 2016 the Commission proposal for the establishment of a European Border and Coast Guard was adopted. The new Agency will be able to acquire its own equipment and to draw upon a permanent pool of Member State experts.

It will be created out of the current Frontex but will have a stronger role in supporting, monitoring and, when necessary, reinforcing national border guards, focusing primarily on early detection and prevention of weaknesses in the management





of the external borders. Intensive preparations are on-going to implement the new regulation and to make sure the European Border and Coast Guard is up and running as soon as possible once it has been formally adopted.

## Disrupting trafficking and smuggling networks – EUNAVFOR Med Operation Sophia

To take urgent action against traffickers and human smugglers in the Central Mediterranean, **EU Naval Force Mediterranean Operation Sophia** was launched on 22 June 2015 following a decision by the European Council. Its objective is to contribute to the wider EU efforts to disrupt the business model of criminal networks in the Central Mediterranean and thus prevent further loss of life at sea.

The operation's core mandate is to identify, capture and dispose of vessels and enabling assets used or suspected of being used by migrant smugglers or traffickers. The operation is designed around 4 phases. The first phase, which has been concluded, saw the deployment of forces to build a comprehensive understanding of smuggling activity and methods. Currently the operation is in its second phase, which implies the search, boarding, seizure and diversion of smugglers' vessels on the high seas under conditions provided for by applicable international law. Future phases, subject to the necessary legal framework established by UN Security Council Resolutions, will include taking operational measures against vessels and related assets suspected of being used by human smugglers or traffickers inside coastal states territory.






All activities undertaken by the operation adhere to and are conducted under full respect of international law, including human rights, humanitarian and refugee law and the principle of *non-refoulement*.

87		smugglers & traffickers arrested by Italian authorities following EUNAVFOR Med activities
296		vessels removed from criminal organisations availability
25993		migrants rescued
178		rescue operations
38031		migrants rescued through EUNAVFOR Med aero-naval support

**On 20 June 2016, the European Council added two supporting tasks to the mandate.**

**1** Training of Libyan Coastguards and Navy, in order to enhance their capability to disrupt smuggling and trafficking networks in Libya, as well as to perform search and rescue activities to save lives.

**2** Contribution to the information sharing and support the implementation of the UN arms embargo on the High Seas off the coast of Libya, on the basis of UNSCR 2292 (2016). This will increase maritime situation awareness and limit arms flows to Da'esh and other terrorist groups.

24		troop contributing nations
1291		total personnel
6		naval units
4		helicopters
3		air assets

Operation Sophia has been named after a baby born on 24 August 2015 on board the German frigate Schleswig-Holstein, operating in the Central Mediterranean as part of the EUNAVFOR MED Task Force.

Factsheet updated on 14 September 2016