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COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

of 20.7.2021

establishing a ‘Practical Handbook’ on European cooperation on coast guard functions

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THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and in particular Article 292 thereof,

Having regard to:

Regulation (EU) 2019/473 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 March 2019 on the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA)¹, and in particular Article 8(3) thereof,

Regulation (EC) 1406/2002 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 June 2002 establishing a European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA)² and in particular Article 2b thereof,

Regulation (EU) 2019/1896 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 November 2019 on the European Border and Coast Guard and repealing Regulations (EU) No 1052/2013 and (EU) 2016/1624³ and in particular Article 69(3) thereof,

Whereas:

- (1) According to the above articles in the founding Regulations of the three EU agencies, the Commission shall, in close cooperation with the Member States, EFCA, EMSA and Frontex, make available a Practical Handbook on European cooperation on coast guard functions (hereafter, ‘the handbook’). The handbook shall contain guidelines, recommendations and best practices for the exchange of information.
- (2) The three agencies work closely together under the inter-agency cooperation framework⁴, in accordance with their legal acts, with the direct support of the European Commission. They provide enhanced support and assistance to the national authorities performing coast guard functions at national and EU level and, where appropriate, at international level.
- (3) The European Commission tasked the three agencies with developing the handbook in close cooperation with Member States’ experts.
- (4) The revised European Union Maritime Security Strategy Action Plan⁵, adopted on 26 June 2018 by the Council, recalls the importance of addressing the coast guard aspects

¹ Regulation (EU) 2019/473 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 March 2019 on the European Fisheries Control Agency, (OJ L 83, 25.3.2019, p. 18–37).

² Regulation (EC) No 1406/2002 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 June 2002 establishing a European Maritime Safety Agency, (OJ L 208 5.8.2002, p. 1).

³ Regulation (EU) 2019/1896 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 November 2019 on the European Border and Coast Guard and repealing Regulations (EU) No 1052/2013 and (EU) 2016/1624, (OJ L 295, 14.11.2019, p. 1–131).

⁴ A Tripartite Working Arrangement establishing the inter-agency cooperation between EFCA, EMSA and FRONTEX was jointly developed by the three agencies and approved by their respective governing bodies. It entered into force in March 2017 and was extended in March 2021.

⁵ <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-10494-2018-INIT/en/pdf>

of maritime security by promoting synergies between civil and military actors fulfilling coast guard functions. The Plan encourages EFCA, EMSA and Frontex to continue to deepen their inter-agency cooperation in this field.

HAS ADOPTED THIS RECOMMENDATION:

1. This recommendation establishes the handbook as a practical guide for EU civilian and military authorities when carrying out coast guard functions, facilitating close cross-border and cross-sector collaboration among them.
2. The handbook provides a transparent compilation of services and information available through the three agencies. It helps to create synergies and avoid duplication and/or redundancy of effort in the cooperation between Member States and the three agencies, resulting in economies of scale.
3. The handbook focuses on the five inter-agency cooperation areas: information sharing; surveillance and communication services; capacity building; risk analysis; and capacity sharing. The handbook is mainly limited to cross-sector subjects, and covers EU Member States and European Free Trade Association (EFTA) States.
4. The main end users of this handbook are the national authorities for each coast guard function in each Member State. The handbook aims to support national authorities in charge of planning and coordinating activities, who need to know and understand how their partners are organised and what services and cooperation they provide.
5. The ‘exchange of information’ fully respects agreed access rights to data, information and intelligence through a range of mechanisms, either manually or through automated processes/systems. It is within the limits of the agencies’ legal framework and complies with fundamental rights, including data protection requirements.
6. The handbook shall not create any new rights or duties for national authorities responsible for coast guard functions, nor shall it offer any interpretative guidance on existing roles, rules and responsibilities. The handbook shall not influence the legal obligations of Member States or agencies and shall not be used to promote aspirational activities by stakeholders.
7. This handbook is complemented by practical information including: a) catalogues of services, products, training courses, best practice guidelines and manuals of all inter-agency activities supporting coast guard functions in Member States; b) regional/international/national/bilateral/multilateral cooperation frameworks; and c) ‘country factsheets’ providing details on the structure and organisation of coast guard functions in EU Member States and EFTA States.
8. This practical information should be kept up to date by the three agencies, with input from the national authorities as regards the ‘country factsheets’. It will be displayed on an online platform operated by EFCA in close cooperation with the other two agencies and the Commission.

9. Member States should follow the guidelines, recommendations and best practices for the exchange of information contained in the handbook, cooperate between themselves to keep the ‘country factsheets’ updated, without double reporting if the information has already been made available to the agencies.
10. This Recommendation is addressed to the Member States

Done at Brussels, 20.7.2021

For the Commission
Virginijus Sinkevičius
Member of the Commission

