



# European Union Naval Force – Mediterranean Operation Sophia

Update: 31 March 2017

## Mission

EUNAVFOR MED operation Sophia is but one element of a broader EU comprehensive response to the migration issue, which seeks to address not only its physical component, but also its root causes as well including conflict, poverty, climate change and persecution.

The mission **core mandate** is to undertake **systematic efforts** to **identify, capture and dispose** of **vessels and enabling assets** used or suspected of being used by **migrant smugglers or traffickers**, in order to contribute to wider EU efforts to **disrupt** the business model of human smuggling and trafficking networks in the **Southern Central Mediterranean** and **prevent the further loss of life at sea**.

Since **7 October 2015**, as agreed by the EU Ambassadors within the Security Committee on 28 September, the operation moved to **phase 2 International Waters**, which entails boarding, search, seizure and diversion, on the high seas, of vessels suspected of being used for human smuggling or trafficking.

Last **20 June 2016**, the Council extended until **27 July 2017** Operation Sophia's mandate reinforcing it by **adding two supporting tasks**:

- **training of the Libyan coastguards and navy;**
- **contributing to the implementation of the UN arms embargo on the high seas off the coast of Libya.**

On **30 August** and on **6 September 2016**, the PSC authorized the commencement of the capacity building and training and the commencement of the contributing to the implementation of the UN arms embargo.

## Phases of the Operation

EUNAVFOR MED operation Sophia is designed around 4 phases:

- the **first** consists of the deployment of forces to build a comprehensive understanding of smuggling activity and methods, and this phase is now complete;
- **phase two** foresees the boarding, search, seizure and diversion of smugglers' vessels on the high seas under the conditions provided for by applicable international law. This activity will be extended into Territorial Waters upon the release of any applicable United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) and the concerned coastal State consent;
- the **third phase** expands this activity further; up to and including taking operational measures against vessels and related assets suspected of being used for human smuggling or trafficking inside the coastal states territory. Once again, this is subject to the necessary legal framework established by UNSCR and following coastal state consent;
- finally, the **fourth and last phase** will consist of withdrawal of forces and completion of the operation.

The European Council is responsible for assessing whether the conditions for transition between the operation phases have been met. On legal side, all of the activities undertaken in each phase adhere to and respect international law, including human rights, humanitarian and refugee law and the "*non refoulement*" principle meaning that no rescued persons can be disembarked in a third country.

## FACTS AND FIGURES



**Area of Operation:** Central part of Southern Mediterranean Sea

**Headquarters:** Rome, Italy

**Mission Launch:** 22 June 2015

**Mandate Approved until:** 27 July 2017

**Operation Commander:** Rear Admiral Enrico Credendino (IT Navy)

**Task Force's Flagship:** Italian light Aircraft Carrier GARIBALDI

**Force Strength:** At the moment operation Sophia Task Force can count on **6 ships** (1 Italian light aircraft carrier, 2 German auxiliary ship, 1 UK auxiliary ship, 1 Spanish frigate, 1 French frigate), **3 organic helicopters** (2 Italian, 1 Spanish) and **4 air assets** (2x Luxembourg, Spain and France).

**Contributing Member States:** 25 (AUT, BEL, BGR, CYP, CZE, ESP, EST, FIN, FRA, GER, GBR, GRE, HUN, ITA, LAT, LIT, LUX, MAL, NED, POL, POR, ROM, SLO, SVK, SWE)

**Operation Budget:** military assets and personnel are provided by the contributing states with the running costs and personnel costs being met on a national basis. In addition, there is a common budget of € 11.82 million for a 12 months period (until 27 July 2016) agreed and monitored by the Athena Committee of Member States. For the period 28 July 2016 to 27 July 2017, the reference amount for the common costs of EUNAVFOR MED operation SOPHIA shall be € 6.7 million.

### Partnership

Thus far, **partnership** has been the key word: partner countries, partner organisations, NGOs, international agencies are working together and sharing their experiences on how to manage - from a humanitarian point of view - something that is difficult to manage, which means people that have gone through a very difficult journey.

On this path, building on an extensive network of contacts, EUNAVFOR MED has established the Shared Awareness and De-confliction in the Mediterranean (**SHADE MED**) seminar. The event resulted in a better understanding between civilian and military actors involved in the Mediterranean Sea, enhancing mutual interaction and assisting with the development of an overall framework for coordinating different activities and to identify best practices to deal with common security challenges.

### Sophia

Sophia is a baby who was born on 24 August 2015 at 04.15 am on board the German frigate Schleswig-Holstein, operating in the Central Mediterranean Sea as part of EUNAVFOR MED Task Force.

Born from a Somali mother rescued together with other 453 migrants and disembarked on the evening of the same day in the harbour of Taranto, Sophia was named after the German ship dedicated to the Prussian princess Sophia of Schleswig-Holstein (8 April 1866 - 28 April 1952).

*"[...] I will suggest to Member States that we change the name of our Operation: instead of calling it EUNAVFOR MED, I suggest we use the name: Sophia. To honour the lives of the people we are saving, the lives of people we want to protect, and to pass the message to the world that fighting the smugglers and the criminal networks is a way of protecting human life"*

**Federica Mogherini**, Rome, EUNAVFOR MED operation Sophia Operational Headquarters, 24th September 2015

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