

Greece Signs MoU with Italy for Bergamini-class FREMM Frigates

Greece and Italy have taken a significant step toward enhancing their defence cooperation with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and a Declaration of Intent concerning the potential acquisition of 2+2 FREMM-Bergamini-class frigates by the Hellenic Navy. The agreement was signed on September 29, 2025, during the opening of the SEAFUTURE exhibition in La Spezia, Italy. The ceremony took place aboard the Italian Navy's FREMM frigate ITS Spartaco Schergat (F598), with the latest ship of the class, Emilio Bianchi (F599), present nearby. Greek Minister of National Defence Nikos Dendias, accompanied by the Chief of the Hellenic Navy General Staff, Vice Admiral Dimitrios-Eleftherios Kataras, led the Greek delegation. On the Italian side, Minister of Defence Guido Crosetto and the Chief of the Italian Navy, Admiral Enrico Credendino, were present, underscoring the high-level nature of the event. The MoU does not constitute a binding procurement contract but represents the formal beginning of negotiations, allowing Greece to pursue the acquisition of two Italian FREMMs initially, with the potential for two more once released from Italian service. The move aligns closely with Greece's Agenda 2030 defence modernization framework, which seeks to rapidly close capability gaps resulting from years of austerity following the financial crisis. Greece's goal is to build the most modern and powerful navy in its history, according to statements made by Minister Dendias.

At the center of the discussions is the Bergamini-class FREMM frigate, the Italian variant of the joint Franco-Italian FREMM (Fregata Europea Multi-Missione) program. The FREMM is a 6,700-ton multi-role frigate, capable of conducting air defense, anti-submarine warfare, and land attack missions. Designed with stealth features, modular systems, and powerful sensors, the general-purpose variant under consideration by Greece is equipped with the Leonardo Kronos radar, a 16-cell Sylver A50 vertical launch system for ASTER 15/30 missiles, a 127mm OTO Melara main gun, torpedo launchers, and comprehensive electronic warfare capability. The ships are fully interoperable within NATO and are already in service with several countries, including France, Italy, Egypt, and Morocco. Greece's potential acquisition would mark its first major surface combatant purchase from Italy and only the second Italian naval platform to enter Hellenic service since the replenishment oiler Prometheus (Etna-class) in the early 2000s.

The MoU signing comes after months of behind-the-scenes technical evaluations conducted by the Hellenic Navy. Earlier this year, Greek naval officers inspected the FREMM frigate Carlo Margottini (F592) during its visit to Piraeus in March, and more recently the lead ship Carlo Bergamini. An inspection of Virginio Fasan (F591), the second-oldest ship in the class, is also expected soon. These evaluations are focused on assessing the ships' condition, maintenance requirements, and modernization potential. Greece is considering integrating its next-generation ELSA long-range missiles onto the FREMMs, creating a common armament base with the FDI HN frigates currently being built in France. Dendias emphasized that these FREMMs, while a decade old, remain in excellent condition and offer a cost-effective way to rapidly strengthen the fleet.

The potential FREMM deal is meant to complement the acquisition of four French-designed FDI HN (Kimon-class) frigates, the first of which, Kimon, began sea trials off the coast of Brittany in July 2025. If fully realized, the FREMM acquisition would bring the total number of modern frontline frigates in Greek service to eight by the early 2030s. These ships would carry between 168 and 192 ASTER 30 missiles, depending on final VLS loadouts. Alongside the planned modernization of four Hydra-class (MEKO 200HN) frigates, the Hellenic Navy would operate a formidable surface fleet capable of power projection, area air defense, and anti-submarine warfare, reinforcing Greece's deterrence posture in the Eastern Mediterranean and Aegean Sea.

For Italy, the prospective transfer offers multiple strategic benefits. It strengthens defence-industrial ties with a key EU and NATO ally, supports regional maritime security, and allows the Italian Navy to accelerate the transition to its future fleet. The FREMMs sold to Greece would be replaced by the next-generation FREMM EVO frigates, which are expected to feature enhanced sensors, automation, and missile capabilities. Italian shipbuilder Fincantieri, which led the FREMM construction program, would play a central role in both the ship transfer and any customization or upgrades requested by the Hellenic Navy. The FREMM EVO program itself is part of Italy's broader naval renewal, and the sale to Greece would help sustain domestic shipbuilding capacity during the transition period. The broader strategic context of the deal cannot be ignored. As tensions continue in the Eastern Mediterranean, both Greece and Italy are seeking to expand their naval influence, secure sea lanes, and project stability in their maritime domains. The FREMM frigates are particularly well-suited for such missions due to their operational flexibility and interoperability with allied navies. The fact that the MoU signed aboard an operational warship, during an international naval exhibition, underscores the intent of both governments to signal strength, readiness, and cohesion.

Addressing the Greek Parliament's Committee on National Defence and Foreign Affairs prior to his departure for Italy, Dendias made clear that this MoU was not just symbolic. "This is not yet a procurement decision," he said, "but a major diplomatic and operational step forward." He added, "If we succeed in finalizing this deal, it will be a tremendous success for our country. We will possess the most capable surface fleet we have ever had." The political momentum behind the initiative is strong, as is the support from the Hellenic Navy's leadership.

Looking ahead, both parties will engage in further technical and contractual negotiations to finalize the potential purchase. Issues to be addressed include maintenance support, training, armament integration, and delivery timelines. While the timeline remains fluid, officials suggest that a contract for the first two frigates could be concluded within months, with delivery starting as early as 2026.

In summary, the FREMM MoU between Greece and Italy marks a key milestone in Mediterranean naval relations. It aligns the strategic interests of two NATO allies, supports domestic defence industries, and helps Greece rapidly modernize its surface fleet. If finalized, the deal will equip the Hellenic Navy with a powerful set of warships at a time of growing regional instability and shifting maritime balances. For both nations, it represents a shared commitment to security, cooperation, and operational excellence at sea.

Technical *Data:*

Builders:	Fincantieri, Riva Trigoso
Displacement:	6.688 t
Length:	144 m
Beam:	19.0 m
Draught:	8,68 m
Main Machinery:	CODLAG, 1 General Electric LM 2500 + gas turbine, 42.912 hp (32 MW); 4 Isotta Fraschini diesel; 11.27 hp (8.4 MW); 2 motors, 5900 hp (4.4 MW); 2 shafts; cp props; 1 azimuth thruster (1 MW)
Power:	36750 KW (49282,55 HP)
Top Speed:	28 Kt
Range:	7,000 nm
Armament:	1 OTO Melara 127/64 mm VULCANO gun; OtoBreda 76/62 mm SR-DAVIDE gun; OtoBreda 25 mm guns; PAAMS missile system with Aster 15 and Aster 30 missiles; 2 Eurotorp MU-90 Torpedo launchers; 2 SH-90A / 1 SH-90A + 1 EH-101 helicopter
Complement:	167

