



Press Release

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Countering chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear threats from outside the EU: better governance, but cooperation should be more targeted, say Auditors

EU action in partner countries to counter chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) threats from outside the EU has improved capacities and cooperation at national and regional level, but activities still need to be prioritised according to the level of risk, says a new report from the European Court of Auditors. Funding should be concentrated in areas relevant to security and an adequate risk management approach should be developed.

The EU CBRN Centres of Excellence Initiative aims to mitigate chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear threats and risks from outside the EU. Its main aim is to encourage cooperation between and within partner countries. It is the EU's largest civilian external security programme, with a budget of €130 million for the years 2014-2020.

The auditors have followed up a 2014 special report, which dealt with the set-up of the scheme. They conclude that the Initiative is contributing to mitigating threats but its credibility and sustainability hinge on its ability to adapt and address key challenges.

"Events such as the use of sarin and chlorine gas in Iraq and Syria, the Ebola outbreak in West Africa and the Fukushima nuclear reactor meltdown are stark reminders of the dangers from chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear risks," said Bettina Jakobsen, the member of the European Court of Auditors responsible for the report. "The Initiative has not yet developed an adequate risk management approach. Much effort has been put into increasing the number of partner countries, rather than concentrating efforts and funding on the countries most relevant to EU security."

The auditors acknowledge that the Initiative has promoted a culture of safety and cooperation. National teams have been appointed in the majority of the partner countries to ensure cooperation between agencies. The regional cooperation the Initiative seeks to foster has

The purpose of this press release is to convey the main messages of the European Court of Auditors' special report. The full report is available at www.eca.europa.eu.

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started, say the auditors, but there is still insufficient interaction between partner countries, as they wish to address national needs first.

The Commission provides partner countries with tools and a methodology to help them assess their own needs and develop national action plans to mitigate chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear risks. However, there is insufficient guidance on how to identify and prioritise risks.

Since 2014, the EU delegations' involvement has improved. However, they were insufficiently active in promoting the Initiative and mobilising political will, say the auditors. The lack of clear objectives, relevant indicators and data collected on the ground impaired the assessment of the outcome and impact of projects and the Initiative as a whole.

The auditors recommend that the Commission and the EEAS:

- prioritise activities on the basis of a systemic risk assessment;
- strengthen the Initiative's regional dimension;
- further strengthen the EU delegations' role in the Initiative;
- identify potential synergies and other available funding sources;
- increase accountability and visibility of activities and results through improved monitoring and evaluation;
- overhaul the CBRN web portal to allow easy access.

Notes to Editors

The ECA presents its special reports to the European Parliament and Council of the EU, as well as to other interested parties such as national parliaments, industry stakeholders and representatives of civil society. The vast majority of the recommendations we make in our reports are put into practice. This high level of take-up underlines the benefit of our work to EU citizens.

Special report 14/2018 “The EU Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Centres of Excellence: more progress needed” is available on the ECA website (eca.europa.eu) in 23 EU languages.