Can the EU’s Centres of Excellence initiative contribute effectively to mitigating chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear risks from outside the EU?


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Can the EU’s Centres of Excellence initiative contribute effectively to mitigating chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear risks from outside the EU?

(pursuant to Article 287(4), second subparagraph, TFEU)
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While management systems are set up, there are still shortcomings

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Reply of the EEAS and the Commission
Abbreviations

**CBRN:** chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (threats, goods)

**CoE:** Centres of Excellence

**EuropeAid:** Directorate-General for Development and Cooperation

**JRC:** Joint Research Centre

**EEAS:** European External Action Service

**IfS:** Instrument for Stability

**NFP:** national focal point

**NT:** national team

**RS:** regional secretariat

**TACIS:** Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States

**UNICRI:** UN Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute
Executive summary

I Since the mid-1990s, the EU has been active in mitigating risks to EU safety primarily through actions financed under the TACIS nuclear safety programme.

II In 2003, the European Council adopted two strategies, which set the stage for future actions in the area of security: the European security strategy and the European strategy against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

III One of the instruments developed following the adoption of these strategies was the Instrument for Stability, with a budget of 1.820 million euro for the years 2007–13. It addresses challenges to security in countries outside the EU and includes both a short-term and a long-term component.

IV The single biggest measure in the long-term component is the EU chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) Centres of Excellence initiative, with a budget of 100 million euro for the 2010–13 period. It provides regional platforms for tackling comprehensively all aspects of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear risks arising from natural disasters, accidental catastrophes and criminal behaviour, by involving all the key stakeholders at a very early stage, thereby fostering the development of expertise in the countries concerned.

V The initiative is coordinated and managed by the European External Action Service and EuropeAid.

VI The Court’s audit assessed whether the EU CBNR Centres of Excellence initiative can contribute effectively to mitigating risks of this kind from outside the EU.

VII The Court concludes that the EU CBRN Centres of Excellence initiative can contribute effectively to mitigating chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear risks from outside the EU, but several elements still need to be finalised.

VIII The concept of the initiative is based on a sound analysis and addresses deficiencies identified in the former TACIS programme. The comprehensive and demand-driven approach and the distinct focus on regional cooperation provide a long-term response to priorities defined in the European security strategy and the EU strategy against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction that had not been addressed until then. The initiative involves all stakeholders in the partner countries at a very early stage, which contributes to the sustainability of the initiative and ownership by the partner countries in the many regions concerned.

IX The organisational set-up of the initiative is generally appropriate, despite its complexity, but needs some adjustments. The choice of the two implementing bodies and the regions was well reasoned, and each of the bodies involved has a specific role to play. However, the regional secretariats lack technical capacity. The EU delegations do not sufficiently use their position to enhance political support in the partner countries, and liaise with the EU Member States.
Executive summary

**X**
An appropriate management system is in place and is becoming operational. However, some elements of the initiative were delayed. The initial implementation plan did not have sufficient regard to the inherent complexity of the initiative. This meant that the implementation plan could not be fully applied, as key elements, such as the needs assessments, had not yet been completed when project selection commenced. At the earlier stage of the initiative partner countries were not sufficiently involved in the selection of the projects. Some projects are in progress and monitoring systems have been set up. The Court noted that cooperation between the decision-making bodies (EEAS and EuropeAid) on one side and the implementing bodies (the JRC and UNICRI) on the other side takes place only on a bilateral basis.

**XI**
The Court makes a number of recommendations, which the EEAS and the Commission should take into account to further develop the initiative and ensure its sustainability.
Introduction

Response to challenges to the EU’s security

01
The European Union launched its chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) Centres of Excellence (CoE) initiative (hereinafter the initiative) in May 2010. The initiative is designed to strengthen the institutional capacity of non-EU countries to mitigate CBRN risks which, if not countered, may constitute a threat to the EU.

02
With a budget of 100 million euro for the 2010–13 period, the initiative is the single biggest measure of the long-term component of the Instrument for Stability (IfS). The IfS was designed to provide the European Union with a new strategic tool to address a number of global security and development challenges. This included both short-term and long-term measures with a budget of 1 820 million euro for 2007–13 (73 % for crisis reaction and 27 % for crisis prevention). The IfS provides non-EU partner countries with technical and financial assistance for risk mitigation and preparedness relating to chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear material or agents. According to the European Parliament and the Council, the measures adopted through the IfS should be complementary and consistent with measures adopted in pursuit of the EU’s common foreign and security policy.

03
Following the 1986 Chernobyl accident, the risks presented by Soviet-designed nuclear facilities in central and eastern Europe caused major concern to the international community, which increased with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of 11 newly independent states (the Commonwealth of Independent States, or CIS).

04
In 1991, the European Commission started the TACIS programme, designed to help the CIS in their transition to democratic market-oriented economies. This programme ended in 2006.

05
In the context of the TACIS programme, the EU Member States and the Commission agreed to take a collective stance on nuclear safety. They launched the TACIS nuclear safety programme with the aim of providing on-site assistance, designing safety and regulatory approaches, improving the management of nuclear waste and offering former nuclear weapons scientists of the Soviet Union employment opportunities in the civilian use of nuclear energy.


2 Example of short-term measures: support for the establishment of interim authorities and democratic and pluralistic state institutions; example of long-term measures: development of legal frameworks and institutional capabilities, for instance concerning export controls on goods that can be used for civilian and/or military or criminal purposes (‘dual-use goods’).

3 ‘Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).’

4 During the 1992–06 period, 1.3 billion euro was allocated to the TACIS nuclear safety programme.
In 2003, as a result of institutional and intergovernmental discussions about the terrorist attacks in New York and the Iraq war, the European Council adopted two strategies which set the stage for future actions in the area of security:

(a) the European security strategy\textsuperscript{5}, which set out the EU security environment and the key challenges for the EU, which were:

- terrorism;
- the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction;
- regional conflicts;
- state failure;
- organised crime.

The Council concluded that the EU needed to be more active, more coherent and better able to address these challenges, in terms of crisis reaction as well as crisis prevention.

(b) the European strategy against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction\textsuperscript{6}, which provided a roadmap for action in this area. Its priorities were, in particular:

- to support the international system for monitoring non-proliferation;
- to assist non-EU countries through capacity building;
- the establishment of legislative frameworks; and
- the creation of response plans to enable them to fulfil their obligations within these frameworks.

The concerns expressed by the EU were also addressed by a UN Security Council resolution of 2004\textsuperscript{7}. The continuing pertinence of these concerns has been evidenced by recent events in Syria.

The EU CBRN Centres of Excellence initiative

Objectives

The main objectives\textsuperscript{8} of the EU CBRN Centres of Excellence initiative are to:

- strengthen the long-term national and regional capabilities of responsible authorities and administrative infrastructure;
- support and reinforce short-term response capabilities.

Under the initiative, these objectives are addressed by:

(a) providing training and assistance to countries in the implementation of international commitments to mitigate CBRN proliferation risks;

(b) supporting national capacity to develop and enforce legal, administrative and technical measures in relation to CBRN proliferation risks;
Introduction

(c) ensuring ownership and sustainability of training and assistance activities through an integrated regional approach;

(d) providing a complete package of training and assistance covering CBRN (e.g. export control, illicit trafficking, safety and security, emergency planning, crisis response, redeployment of scientists, storage and disposal).

Overall coordination and structure

Many bodies play a role in the initiative (also see Annex I):

(a) The European External Action Service (EEAS), the body responsible for the EU foreign policy, is responsible for the strategic orientation of the initiative through the multi-annual indicative programmes of the IfS, of which the initiative is part. The EEAS also maintains regular contact with other international bodies in the area of CBRN risk management (for instance the International Atomic Energy Agency) and discusses the general strategy and priorities with them.

(b) EuropeAid — the Commission’s department for development aid — is the decision-making body and is responsible for implementing the initiative’s budget. It prepares the annual action programmes of the IfS and monitors the work of the governance team and the implementing bodies: the Commission’s Joint Research Centre (JRC) and the UN Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI). Since 2012, EuropeAid has also been managing the projects running within the initiative9, including project selection, contracting of implementing consortia10 and monitoring.

(c) A governance team of experts from EU non-governmental organisations supports the initiative by advising on governance issues, presenting the initiative to partner countries and seeking their high-level political support.

(d) The JRC and UNICRI implement the initiative. The JRC, which is the specialised department within the Commission for technical and scientific support, assists in the drafting of project proposals, the selection of projects and the needs assessments. It is also responsible for establishing and maintaining monitoring mechanisms for the projects and the initiative as a whole. UNICRI sets up the regional secretariats and assists during the establishment of structures in the partner countries, with the drafting of national action plans and organising of round-table meetings.

9 UNICRI manages the projects contracted before 2012.

10 For UNICRI those were non-profit organisations worldwide with relevant expertise; for EuropeAid those are governmental agencies of EU Member States with relevant expertise.
Each partner country —of which there are over 40 — appoints its national focal point (NFP) to coordinate the work done by the CBRN stakeholders in their country to assist with the establishment of national teams (NTs)\(^\text{11}\), to organise meetings and disseminate relevant information. Partner countries also define their needs with the help of a needs assessment toolkit and develop national action plans, in which they prioritise their needs. They then draft tailored project proposals, addressing those needs. During the further process, project proposals are enriched by a regional component if not yet included, fine-tuned by the JRC and then evaluated, ranked and selected for funding by EuropeAid. After this, project implementation consortia are contracted, and the implementation begins.

Partner countries cooperate through regional secretariats (RSs) (see Annex II for a list). The secretariats comprise two permanent staff: a head of secretariat (appointed by the host country) and a regional coordinator (employed by UNICRI). They seek to foster regional cooperation and give a regional dimension to project proposals, through:

- facilitating information sharing and coordination in the region;
- helping countries to build their capacity to assess and address needs and identify areas of expertise;
- supporting the implementation and monitoring of projects, and providing feedback on them to the implementing bodies; and
- promoting regional awareness of the initiative.

The EU delegation\(^\text{12}\) in each country participating in the initiative is regularly informed about its progress and about the related actions being implemented in that country.

Annex III illustrates the individual components of the initiative and the bodies involved for its implementation.

The EU is represented through 139 EU delegations and offices around the world. For more information, see [http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/index_en.htm](http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/index_en.htm)
The Court’s audit aimed to assess whether the EU CBRN Centres of Excellence initiative can contribute effectively to mitigating chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear risks from outside the EU. This overall audit question was broken down into the following three sub-questions:

- Is the initiative based on a sound analysis of the situation prior to 2010?
- Is the organisational set-up of the initiative appropriate to meet identified challenges?
- Is an appropriate management system in place and operational?

As the initiative is quite new (started in 2010 with first projects in 2013), the Court did not audit its outputs, outcomes and impact. Rather, it examined if the initiative’s approach, strategy and management make it likely that it would be able to reduce CBRN risks in non-EU countries.

The Court carried out the audit between October 2013 and January 2014. The audit work consisted of an analytical review of relevant documents, interviews with the Commission, EEAS, UNICRI and governance team staff, visits to two regional secretariats (Rabat and Amman) and attending a workshop carried out under one of the projects.
Observations

The concept behind the initiative is based on a sound analysis, and fosters cooperation and ownership in the regions

The EU CBRN Centres of Excellence initiative is a key response to the European security strategy and the European strategy against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The concept behind the initiative is based on a sound analysis, particularly taking into account the following deficiencies of the former TACIS programme:

- the approach was predominantly ad hoc and not all its actions were embedded in a long-term strategy;
- the implementation of the TACIS programme was top-down, with a central decision hub at the Commission, thus leaving little room for ownership by the non-EU countries. Therefore, there was a high risk that the projects and their results would not be maintained after the EU funding had ended.

The Centres of Excellence initiative presents several innovative features. It is intended:

- to be comprehensive: to address CBRN-related risks and threats, no matter if their origin is criminal, accidental or natural, and to include mitigation measures dealing with prevention, detection, response and governance issues. Box 1 below gives examples of these risks;
- to be built on an explicit demand-driven ('bottom-up') approach: experts in the partner countries identify in a systematic way the needs specific to their country in all CBRN risk areas with the help of a needs assessment toolkit (i.e. a gap analysis); they then prioritise in a national action plan the measures that need to be taken to address these risks and threats; finally they draft tailored project proposals to address the needs identified and to eliminate the gaps in their risk mitigation systems;
- to have a distinct focus on regional cooperation between the partner countries: the expertise and capacity generated through the initiative in the partner countries is shared at the regional level.

Examples of CBRN risks addressed by the initiative:

- **Chemical**: illicit trafficking of chemical material which could be used for industrial and/or criminal activities ('dual-use');
- **Biological**: epidemics like Avian influenza (bird flu), a highly infectious disease which spreads quickly across several countries;
- **Radiological**: hospital waste such as substances used in radiation therapy;
- **Nuclear**: Fukushima-type incidents, where radiological material is accidentally released into the environment.
All these new features were designed to increase ownership in the partner countries, and thus improve the sustainability of the initiative; that is, making it more likely that the results of measures are maintained when the EU funding stops.

Regional cooperation in the area of security is a key feature of the initiative. The EEAS and the Commission had good reasons to integrate this element into the initiative and focus on regional cooperation:

(a) the risks addressed have, by their nature, a cross-border character; the impact of chemical accidents and epidemics like bird flu do not stop at borders;

(b) the partner countries differ in terms of their progress in the area of CBRN risk mitigation; regional cooperation promotes best practices and partner countries can benefit from each other’s knowledge.

The intended benefits of the initiative are therefore not limited to the outputs of projects. The fact that neighbouring countries in sensitive geographical locations like North Africa and the Middle East meet to discuss and implement projects in the area of security represents an important added value, contributing, on its own, to a culture of cooperation and safety.

The international community has welcomed the initiative. It has been endorsed by the UN Security Council, the G8 Global Partnership (which established a working group on the Centres of Excellence) and NATO (where the EU is supporting NATO’s CBRN centre in Vyskov, Czech Republic).

The organisational set-up of the initiative is complex but generally appropriate

The structure of the initiative is complex due to the number of players involved, the decentralised organisation, the global scale, the heterogeneity of regions and partner countries and the joint implementation by EU and UN bodies (see paragraphs 10 to 11). However, this complexity is inherent in the approach chosen for the initiative: comprehensive, bottom-up and regional (see paragraph 17).

The choice of the implementing bodies for the initiative, JRC and UNICRI, was well reasoned. The JRC, the Commission’s in-house scientific body, provides relevant technical expertise, while UNICRI can rely on the UN’s diplomatic network when approaching potential partner countries and convincing them to participate in the initiative. Annex IV sets out the background for the choice of each of the implementing bodies, their area of expertise and the main tasks assigned to them.
Observations

24 Despite the high number of bodies involved, their roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and each body has a role to play (see paragraph 10 to 11).

25 The partner countries choose their national focal point and create a national team themselves, following guidelines and recommendations issued by the JRC and UNICRI. This autonomy is crucial for their acceptance of the initiative and consistent with its general demand-driven approach.

26 With regard to the designation of the regions in which the initiative was to run, the EEAS and the Commission, understandably, mainly chose regions with countries in the neighbourhood of the EU and/or EU-associated countries (see Annex II). However, there are a large number of regions and countries involved and therefore the demand for funds for useful projects may well exceed the limited resources available. Prioritisation of projects in the areas of most relevance to EU security may be needed to ensure that best use is made of the funds available.

27 The regional secretariats (see paragraph 10) currently have limited technical expertise. This makes it difficult for them to fulfil parts of their role, like assisting in the development and the fine-tuning of project proposals and facilitating the implementation of projects later on.

28 The EU delegations in partner countries are regularly informed about the initiative but do not yet play a sufficiently active role. They have the expertise to support the regional secretariats and national focal points. More importantly, they have diplomatic expertise that could help acquire and maintain the high-level political support in partner countries as well as raise awareness of EU involvement.

While management systems are set up, there are still some shortcomings

Delays in the implementation plan

29 The EEAS and EuropeAid did not consider the initiative’s inherent complexity when they drew up its implementation plan (see Annex III). It took longer than expected to set up structures in partner countries. This was due to political circumstances and the varying extent of high-level national support, the heterogeneous nature of the partner countries, their varying previous experience in the area of CBRN risk mitigation and the different extent to which the relevant structures (national teams for instance) had already been established.

30 This complexity delayed not only the appointment of national focal points but also the establishment of national teams.
Observations

31 The implementation plan envisaged inter alia a series of steps from needs assessment, using a specially developed toolkit, to national action plans followed by project proposals to address the needs identified.

32 The purpose of the needs assessment toolkit was to identify, in a systematic manner, the risks specific to countries in all CBRN risk areas. The development of the toolkit was already planned in a 2010 contract between EuropeAid and UNICRI. Due to the delays in implementing the initiative (see paragraphs 29 to 30), EuropeAid scheduled it again for its 2012 annual action programme.

33 In EuropeAid’s opinion, UNICRI had not sufficiently taken the administrative capacities of the partner countries into account when developing the toolkit, meaning that the end product was too complex. It therefore reallocated the task in March 2013 to the JRC, which delivered a new and simpler version in December 2013. After testing in three partner countries, it became fully available at the beginning of 2014. There are now two toolkits available which should help the partner countries prepare their national action plans.

34 After a needs assessment has been performed, national action plans should be prepared so as to put forward the measures required to address the needs identified for disaster preparedness, prevention, detection and mitigation. By the end of 2013, five partner countries had prepared draft action plans.

35 Due to all these delays, the EEAS and EuropeAid could not stick to the implementation plan as designed. Projects had started before needs were assessed and national action plans were drafted.

36 Regarding the selection of projects, most proposals come from partner countries or regional secretariats but some are also generated by the implementing bodies. While the submission of project proposals by the implementing bodies may give some impetus to the initiative, this is not in keeping with the bottom-up approach.
Observations

37 The JRC reviews all the proposals and ensures, together with EuropeAid, that they include SMART\textsuperscript{17} objectives and indicators. During the first project selection exercise EuropeAid, UNICRI and the JRC changed the proposals by merging some of them and dropping others, without always informing the originator of the proposals. This jeopardised their ownership and has been detrimental to the development of the initiative.

38 From May 2013 onwards, partner countries involved may propose projects at any moment rather than once yearly, as was the situation before. EuropeAid approves them on a case-by-case basis following discussions between partner countries, regional secretariats and relevant experts. During the discussions, participants ensure that project proposals have a regional dimension. The partner countries welcomed the new approach, as they are more involved in the procedures leading to the decision that a project proposal receives funding. Partner countries however are concerned about the delay between project proposals and project implementation and appreciate any improvement in this regard.

39 By April 2014, 40 projects (see Annex V) had been selected. The implementation of the first ones started on 1 January 2013. Most of them concern awareness raising, networking, knowledge transfer, training, capacity building and legislative upgrading frameworks (see example in Box 2).

40 UNICRI was given responsibility for managing the first 19 projects of the initiative, including selecting and contracting project implementers, according to UN rules. This meant that any non-profit organisation worldwide with relevant expertise could participate. In 2012, EuropeAid took over the management of the subsequent projects to address concerns expressed by some EU Member States, which wanted their own experts to be more involved in the work, and wished to highlight the EU’s role as donor.

41 Since EuropeAid has been organising the implementation of the projects, the project implementing consortia are built around agencies, bodies and experts from the EU Member States. Only very few agencies, bodies or experts from the partner countries participate in these consortia, despite sometimes having broad experience of the topics concerned. This might be an obstacle to the ownership of measures in the partner countries and affect the sustainability of project results. In addition, CBRN capabilities in partner countries would benefit from a greater involvement of their own expertise. This was one of the main objectives of the initiative.
### Example of a project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Project 5: Knowledge development and transfer of best practice on CBRN import/export monitoring</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Target area</td>
<td>African Atlantic façade, Central Asia, Middle East and North Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementer</td>
<td>German Office of Economics and Export Control (BAFA), Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budget (euro)</td>
<td>1 440 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objectives</td>
<td>1. Bolster countries’ capabilities in the field of import/export control through the development of dedicated procedures and guidelines to deter illegal transboundary shipments of hazardous CBRN materials;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Build trust among entities, agencies etc. involved in the field of import/export regulation at national and regional levels;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Develop a sustainable knowledge-sharing system applicable to a broad range of countries and government structures based on freely available packages of tools on CBRN import/export;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Improve regional inter-agency cooperation and standardisation with international import/export control procedures and guidelines.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Observations

Bilateral cooperation between decision-making and implementing bodies takes place, but there is no forum for wider strategic cooperation

42 During the initial phase, a coordination committee was set up, bringing representatives of decision-making bodies (the EEAS and EuropeAid) and implementing bodies (the JRC and UNICRI) together to discuss the ongoing process of setting up the initiative, including regional priorities, the choice of the projects that would be run by UNICRI and more. After the selection of the UNICRI projects had been finalised, this committee ceased to exist. Since then, the entities involved cooperate mainly bilaterally.

A monitoring system has been established

45 The Commission does not have a global overview of all projects funded by all instruments in the area of security policy, as well as CBRN risk mitigation funded by other donors.

46 EuropeAid has established a monitoring system for the initiative, based around key performance and key impact indicators. It also monitors the projects with the assistance of the JRC and of UNICRI. EuropeAid’s annual activity report also provides information on the implementation of the initiative.

47 The JRC has set up a well-developed and exhaustive website, which provides the stakeholders with up-to-date information on the project proposals, selection and implementation.

48 In its ‘Six-monthly progress report on the implementation of the EU strategy against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction’ the Council reports on CBRN risk mitigation and, inter alia, on the Centres of Excellence initiative.

49 Considering that the projects only started in 2013 (see paragraph 39), it is too early to assess the effectiveness of the monitoring system in place.

43 Several of the bodies concerned expressed the opinion that cooperation, coordination and communication could be improved between them, for instance by reviving the coordination committee as a forum for wider strategic cooperation. The committee would assist in clarifying issues and setting priorities in a more time-efficient manner, reducing the need for numerous bilateral discussions.

44 Besides the Centres of Excellence initiative, other channels exist to fund CBRN-related projects e.g. through the International Atomic Energy Agency or by agencies from EU Member States.
Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

50
On the overall audit question, the Court concludes that the EU CBRN Centres of Excellence initiative can contribute effectively to mitigating chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear risks from outside the EU, but several elements still need to be finalised.

51
As for the three sub-questions the Court concludes that:

(a) The concept of the initiative is based on a sound analysis and addresses deficiencies identified in the former TACIS programme. The comprehensive and demand-driven approach and the distinct focus on regional cooperation provide a long-term response to priorities defined in the European security strategy and the EU strategy against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction that had not been addressed until then. The initiative provides for the involvement of all stakeholders in the partner countries at a very early stage in order to contribute to the sustainability of the initiative and ownership by the partner countries in the many regions concerned.

(b) The organisational set-up of the initiative is generally appropriate, despite its complexity, but needs some adjustments. The choice of the two implementing bodies and the regions was well reasoned, and each of the bodies involved has a specific role to play. However, the regional secretariats lack technical capacity. The EU delegations do not sufficiently use their position to enhance political support in the partner countries and liaise with the EU Member States.

(c) An appropriate management system is in place and is becoming operational. However, some elements of the initiative were delayed. The initial implementation plan did not have sufficient regard to the inherent complexity of the initiative. This meant that the implementation plan could not be fully applied, as key elements, such as the needs assessments, had not yet been completed when project selection commenced. At the earlier stage of the initiative partner countries were not sufficiently involved in the selection of the projects. Some projects are in progress and monitoring systems have been set up. The Court noted that cooperation between the decision-making bodies (EEAS and EuropeAid) on one side and the implementing bodies (the JRC and UNICRI) on the other side takes place only on a bilateral basis.
Conclusions and recommendations

Recommendations

52
With regard to the initiative’s structure as it is now, the EEAS and the Commission should:

- concentrate EU funding in the areas of most relevance to EU security so to get the most direct benefit;
- increase the capacities of the regional secretariats by adding technical expertise;
- increase the role of the EU delegations, particularly in the countries where a regional secretariat has been set up.

53
As regards the management of the projects, the Commission should:

- take measures not only to involve partner countries in the initiation of projects but also in their implementation. This would increase their ownership of the measures and ensure their sustainability;
- continue efforts to improve procedures in order to decrease the time gap between project proposals and project implementation;
- improve cooperation between decision-making and implementing bodies, for instance by reviving the coordination committee.

This Report was adopted by Chamber III, headed by Mr Karel PINXTEN, Member of the Court of Auditors, in Luxembourg at its meeting of 7 October 2014.

For the Court of Auditors

Vítor Manuel da SILVA CALDEIRA
President
The structure of the initiative

Annex I

- Strategy
- Management and coordination
- Implementing bodies and contractors
- Regional secretariats
- National teams

Council
EEAS
Parliament

CBRN MS contact points
EuropeAid
Governance team
UNICRI
DG Research Centre
MS agencies

Round tables

NT
NT
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RS
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RS
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List of regional secretariats

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Countries involved</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SEA</td>
<td>South-east Asia</td>
<td>Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAF</td>
<td>African Atlantic Façade</td>
<td>Côte d’Ivoire, Gabon, Liberia, Mauritania, Morocco, Senegal, Togo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NA</td>
<td>North Africa</td>
<td>Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEE</td>
<td>South-east Europe, southern Caucasus, Moldova and Ukraine</td>
<td>Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Georgia, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia, Ukraine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CA</td>
<td>Central Asia</td>
<td>Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ME</td>
<td>Middle East</td>
<td>Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECA</td>
<td>Eastern and central Africa</td>
<td>Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda, Seychelles, Uganda, Zambia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In negotiation

| GCC         | Gulf Cooperation Council | To be determined |
Individual components of the initiative and bodies involved

1. Establishment of national teams (NT) and regional secretariats (RS)
2. Identification of capability gaps using the needs assessment toolkit
3. Preparation of national action plans to address the gaps
4. Identification at round tables of the common regional needs and actions
5. Fine-tuning and approval of project proposal
6. Contracting of Member States agencies
7. Project implementation
8. Monitoring and quality review
## Implementing bodies for the initiative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>JRC</th>
<th>UNICRI</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Full name</strong></td>
<td>Joint Research Centre</td>
<td>United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Seat</strong></td>
<td>Brussels, Belgium; in addition, 7 remote research institutes</td>
<td>Turin, Italy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Area of operations</strong></td>
<td>Scientific research, originally with a special focus on nuclear and radiological issues</td>
<td>Crime prevention and criminal justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reasons for choice as implementing body of the initiative</strong></td>
<td>— Relevant technical know-how</td>
<td>— Expertise in crime and justice affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— Successful cooperation in predecessor programmes</td>
<td>— Know-how in capacity building in non-EU countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— International recognition as an expert body in the area</td>
<td>— Previous cooperation with the European Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— Experience in project management</td>
<td>— A UN body is required, as the initiative touches on sensitive issues for partner countries in the area of security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Main tasks in the initiative</strong></td>
<td>— Provision of technical and scientific support</td>
<td>— Methodological preparation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— Assistance in the drafting of project proposals, including the design of the technical specifications</td>
<td>— Establishment of regional secretariats, including the provision of permanent staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— Support of EuropeAid in the selection of projects</td>
<td>— Assistance during the setting up of structures in partner countries (national focal points, national teams)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— Establishment and maintenance of monitoring mechanisms for projects and the initiative as a whole</td>
<td>— Drafting of national action plans together with partner countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— Performance of needs assessments together with partner countries</td>
<td>— Organisation of regional ‘round-table’ meetings, which ensure regional cooperation and help in the generation of project proposals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## List of projects currently implemented by the initiative¹

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Number</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Implementation period</th>
<th>Budget in euro</th>
<th>Countries/regions (for abbreviations see Annex II)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project 039</td>
<td>Strengthening health security at ports, airports and ground crossings</td>
<td>23.7.2013–22.7.2015</td>
<td>1 500 000</td>
<td>CA, ME, NA, SEE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project 038</td>
<td>Export control outreach for dual use items</td>
<td>1.1.2014–31.12.2015</td>
<td>2 500 000</td>
<td>CA, ME</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project 035</td>
<td>Management of hazardous chemical and biological waste</td>
<td>1.1.2014–30.6.2017</td>
<td>3 871 800</td>
<td>AAF, NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project 034</td>
<td>Strengthening capacities in CBRN response and in chemical and medical emergency</td>
<td>1.1.2014–31.12.2016</td>
<td>3 914 034</td>
<td>ME</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project 033</td>
<td>Strengthening the national CBRN legal framework and provision of specialised and technical training to enhance CBRN preparedness and response capabilities</td>
<td>15.9.2013–14.9.2016</td>
<td>2 699 069</td>
<td>AAF, ECA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project 031</td>
<td>Network of universities and institutes for raising awareness on dual-use concerns of chemical materials</td>
<td>1.1.2013–31.12.2014</td>
<td>800 000</td>
<td>International</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project 030</td>
<td>Network of Excellence for Nuclear Forensics in the south-east Asia region</td>
<td>1.1.2013–31.12.2014</td>
<td>600 000</td>
<td>SEA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project 029</td>
<td>Regional human resource development for nuclear safety, security, and safeguards management through a university master’s programme carried out in Thailand</td>
<td>1.1.2013–31.12.2014</td>
<td>340 000</td>
<td>SEA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project 028</td>
<td>Supporting development of an integrated national security system for nuclear and radioactive materials</td>
<td>1.1.2013–31.12.2014</td>
<td>1 000 000</td>
<td>SEA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project 027</td>
<td>Biorisk management</td>
<td>1.1.2013–31.12.2014</td>
<td>480 000</td>
<td>Countries in SEA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project 026</td>
<td>Prerequisite for strengthening CBRN national legal frameworks</td>
<td>1.1.2013–31.12.2014</td>
<td>300 000</td>
<td>Lebanon, Tunisia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project 023</td>
<td>Building capacity to identify and respond to threats from chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear substances</td>
<td>1.1.2013–31.12.2014</td>
<td>500 000</td>
<td>Countries in the Balkans, ME, NA and SEA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ [http://www.cbrn-coe.eu/Projects.aspx](http://www.cbrn-coe.eu/Projects.aspx)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Number</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Implementation period</th>
<th>Budget in euro</th>
<th>Countries/regions (for abbreviations see Annex II)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project 022</td>
<td>Provision of specialised technical training to enhance the first responders’ capabilities in case of CBRN incidents</td>
<td>1.1.2013–31.12.2014</td>
<td>700 000</td>
<td>AAF, SEA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project 021</td>
<td>Building regional border control capacity to identify and detect CBRN materials</td>
<td>1.1.2013–31.12.2014</td>
<td>700 000</td>
<td>AAF, SEA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project 019</td>
<td>Development of procedures and guidelines to create and improve secure information management systems and data exchange mechanisms for CBRN materials under regulatory control</td>
<td>3.1.2013–2.1.2015</td>
<td>400 000</td>
<td>International</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project 017</td>
<td>Establishing a national response plan in Ghana and Kenya for responding to unauthorised events involving chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) materials</td>
<td>15.5.2013–14.5.2015</td>
<td>240 000</td>
<td>Ghana and Kenya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project 015</td>
<td>Strengthening laboratory biosafety and biosecurity through development of a laboratory iso-bank system</td>
<td>Tendering ongoing</td>
<td>480 000</td>
<td>Countries in SEA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project 014</td>
<td>Provision of specialised and technical training to enhance the first response capabilities</td>
<td>4.1.2013–3.1.2015</td>
<td>400 000</td>
<td>SEE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project 012</td>
<td>Sharing experience between EU and south-east Asian countries on the reinforcement of legislation and regulations in the field of biosafety and biosecurity, as well as relevant laboratory management systems through regional centre of excellence — phase 2</td>
<td>4.1.2013–3.1.2015</td>
<td>320 000</td>
<td>Countries in SEA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project 011</td>
<td>Promoting good practice and inter-agency procedures for assessing the risks of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear misuse</td>
<td>1.1.2013–31.12.2014</td>
<td>1915 452</td>
<td>Countries in NA, the Balkans, ME, SEA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project 008</td>
<td>Prerequisite to strengthening CBRN national legal frameworks</td>
<td>1.1.2013–31.12.2014</td>
<td>800 000</td>
<td>Countries in SEA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project 006</td>
<td>Knowledge development and transfer of best practice on chemical and biological waste management</td>
<td>1.1.2013–31.12.2014</td>
<td>480 000</td>
<td>SEA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Number</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Implementation period</td>
<td>Budget in euro</td>
<td>Countries/regions (for abbreviations see Annex II)</td>
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<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
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<td>---------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project 003</td>
<td>Knowledge development and transfer of best practice on biosafety/biosecurity/biorisk management</td>
<td>1.1.2013–31.12.2014</td>
<td>1 920 000</td>
<td>AAF, NA, SEA, SEE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project 002</td>
<td>Building capacity to identify and respond to threats from chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear substances</td>
<td>1.1.2013–31.12.2014</td>
<td>160 000</td>
<td>Balkan countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project 001</td>
<td>Identification and strengthening of forensic capacities in the area of prevention of organised crime and illicit trafficking of chemical agents, including training and equipment for front line customs officers</td>
<td>1.1.2013–31.12.2014</td>
<td>640 000</td>
<td>Balkan countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilot 2</td>
<td>Pilot 2 — Reinforcement of legislation and regulations in the field of biosafety, biosecurity and laboratory management systems</td>
<td>1.1.2011–30.11.2012</td>
<td>375 000</td>
<td>Countries in SEA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilot 1</td>
<td>Pilot 1 — Capacity building in countering illicit nuclear trafficking</td>
<td>1.1.2011–30.6.2012</td>
<td>375 000</td>
<td>Countries in SEA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reply of the EEAS and the Commission

Executive summary

VII
The Commission and the EEAS welcome the Court’s conclusions and agree that there are elements of the Initiative that need to be finalised. Good progress has been made in implementing an Initiative that is based on a voluntary, bottom-up approach which will take time to reach a level of maturity and which should always be subject to continuing development. All the necessary tools are in place, such as the establishment of the necessary structures in most regions, the holding of round-table meetings, a needs assessment questionnaire, project funding in different regions, measures to monitor project implementation and evaluation, as well as various visibility tools. Moreover, regular meetings are organised with partner countries, implementing agencies and international organisations, as well as EU Member States’ contact points. The first national action plans are being developed in five pilot countries. Other efforts are being made to invite additional partner countries to participate in the programme. More than 20 new partner countries have expressed an interest in joining the programme. With these building blocks and the networks that have been created, the Initiative can reach an enhanced level in proving better security and risk management for the EU and participating countries.

VIII
In addition to meeting the goals of the European security strategy and the EU strategy to counter criminal activities related to the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), the Initiative reduces the risks from man-made and natural CBRN threats. Where WMD risks are present, the Initiative reinforces counter-proliferation measures, but looking at the geographic scope of the initiative, support is also provided where wider CBRN risks arise.

IX
The Commission and UNICRI bring different but complementary programme support to the Initiative. The governance team provides support on governance issues as and when required. On-site assistance will be provided to a number of regional secretariats, especially those active in the acceding, candidate and neighbourhood countries.

Now that networks are in place the Commission intends to improve technical capacity where this can be best absorbed. EU delegations are playing an increasing role in supporting the Initiative. Now that the bottom-up, voluntary basis for participation is in place, delegation support can be mobilised without being seen as the driver for regional cooperation.

X
The difference in the capacity of partner countries to take the Initiative forward has led to a somewhat uneven development.

XI
The Commission and the EEAS thank the Court for its recommendations, which will reinforce internal efforts to improve the Initiative.
Observations

21 The Initiative’s voluntary, bottom-up approach is seen as a model for engendering cooperation on complex security issues.

26 The choice of the regions was the result of a comprehensive approach where the EEAS, the Commission and countries of the regions were supported by the EU Member States which participated in the selection through dispatching experts paid for by the Commission.

The logic of prioritising the acceding and candidate countries, as well as countries belonging to the EU’s neighbourhood policy, is evident. The significance of risks and threats in other regions should not be underestimated, as Fukushima and the recent Ebola outbreak and pandemics originating from southeast Asia have demonstrated. The Initiative has an inherent flexibility which allows it to respond efficiently to global and emerging threats.

27 On-site assistance will be provided to a number of regional secretariats, especially those active in the acceding, candidate and neighbourhood countries. Steps are being taken to facilitate this process.

28 This is a priority follow-up action for the EEAS and EuropeAid, and we are developing the tools so that the delegations and Member State embassies are better placed to support the Initiative.

29 The difference in the capacity of partner countries to take the Initiative forward has led to a somewhat uneven development. Prioritising certain regions, based on EU security priorities and the capacity of partners, was an approach that responded to this specific framework of implementation.

34 All the activities within the Initiative are on a voluntary basis. The partner countries decide whether they want to develop a national CBRN action plan or not.

35 Project funding per se is not dependent on the carrying out of a needs assessment questionnaire and/or the establishment of a national action plan. In some cases the Commission takes action on the basis of specific requests from partner countries for an urgent priority problem related to CBRN risk mitigation needs to be solved.

36 Only during the early stages of the Initiative were projects suggested by implementing agencies. This occurred when there were urgent and apparent needs that could be anticipated while the bottom-up aspects of the initiative were in their initial stages of development.

37 After the first experience, a number of steps have been taken to improve the communication with partner countries on the quality requirements of CBRN-related projects eligible for EU funding. The objectives and funding criteria are now discussed regularly at the round-table meetings in the regions, at the meetings with the heads of regional secretariats as well as at the meetings with the CBRN national focal points. The project proposals previously received were often too limited in scope and frequently only of a national instead of a regional character. The JRC tracked in detail any changes made to project proposals. All the original project proposals are on file and can be reviewed at any time.
The Commission and the EEAS welcome the Court’s report on the EU CBRN Centres of Excellence. There is a need for a demand-driven and regional approach which is of great usefulness for our institutions.

(a)

We welcome the Court’s conclusions. There are elements of the initiative that need to be finalised. Good progress has been made in implementing an initiative that is based on a voluntary, bottom-up approach which will take time to reach a level of maturity and which should always be subject to continuing development. All the necessary tools are in place, such as the establishment of the necessary structures in most regions, the holding of round-table meetings, a needs assessment questionnaire, project funding in different regions, measures to monitor project implementation and evaluation, as well as various visibility tools. Moreover, regular meetings are organised with partner countries, implementing agencies and international organisations, as well as EU Member States’ contact points. The first national action plans are being developed in five pilot countries. Other efforts are being made to invite additional partner countries to participate in the programme. More than 20 new partner countries have expressed an interest in joining the programme. With these building blocks and the networks that have been created, the Initiative can reach an enhanced level in providing better security and risk management for the EU and participating countries.

Improving the EU visibility of the Initiative remains an important priority for the Commission and the EEAS.

A number of steps have been taken aimed at encouraging greater involvement of the partner countries in the work, for example by suggesting to implementing consortia to incorporate local expertise.

In comparison to other programmes, the time periods are relatively short due to the so-called N+1 rule that is applicable to the Initiative. On average, a project starts 15 months after the Commission decision on the annual action programme.

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In comparison to other programmes, the time periods are relatively short due to the so-called N+1 rule that is applicable to the Initiative. On average, a project starts 15 months after the Commission decision on the annual action programme.
51 (b)  
The Commission and UNICRI bring different but complementary programme support to the initiative. The governance team provides support on governance issues as and when required. On-site assistance will be provided to a number of regional secretariats, especially those active in the acceding, candidate and neighbourhood countries.

Now that networks are in place, the Commission intends to improve technical capacity where this can be best absorbed. EU delegations play an increasing role in supporting the Initiative. Now that the bottom-up, voluntary basis for participation is in place, delegation support can be mobilised.

51 (c)  
In some respects, variable progress was inevitable, but now that the tools are in place, implementation of the programme is more even though progress across regions will remain variable. Ways of ensuring that the good bilateral cooperation between decision-making bodies and the good bilateral cooperation between implementing partners is extended to cover all four bodies are under examination.

52 First bullet  
The Commission and the EEAS accept the recommendation. The Initiative has an inherent flexibility which allows it to respond efficiently to global and emerging threats.

52 Second bullet  
The Commission and the EEAS accept the recommendation. On-site assistance will be provided to a number of regional secretariats, especially those active in the accession, candidate and neighbourhood countries. Steps are being taken to facilitate this process.

52 Third bullet  
The Commission and the EEAS accept the recommendation. This is a priority follow-up action for the EEAS and the Commission and we are developing the tools so that the delegations and Member State embassies are better placed to support the Initiative.

53 First bullet  
The Commission and the EEAS accept the recommendation. Implementing consortia are encouraged to incorporate local expertise when carrying out the projects.

53 Second bullet  
The Commission and the EEAS accept the recommendation. In comparison to other programmes, the time periods are relatively short due to the so-called N+1 rule that is applicable to the Initiative. On average, a project starts 15 months after the Commission Decision on the Annual Action Programme. The Commission will seek to reduce further the time gap.

53 Third bullet  
The Commission and the EEAS accept the recommendation. The coordination committee, focusing on strategic and implementation issues will be revived. Its format may vary as discussions with implementing partners, such as UNICRI must respect the Commission’s Financial Regulations.
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The European Union launched its chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) Centres of Excellence initiative in May 2010. The initiative is designed to strengthen the institutional capacity of non-EU countries to mitigate CBRN risks which, if not countered, may constitute a threat to the EU.

The Court’s audit assessed whether the EU CBRN Centres of Excellence initiative can contribute effectively to mitigating risks of this kind from outside the EU. It concludes that the initiative can contribute effectively to mitigating chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear risks from outside the EU, but several elements still need to be finalised. The Court makes a number of recommendations which the EEAS and the Commission should take into account to further develop the initiative and ensure its sustainability.