

Special Report

## 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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**Special Report****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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## **Reply of the EEAS and the Commission**

**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

## 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 CBRN 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.

### 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.



## 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)<sup>1</sup>. 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<sup>2</sup> 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<sup>3</sup>, 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<sup>4</sup> 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.

- 1 Regulation (EC) No 1717/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 November 2006 establishing an Instrument for Stability (OJ L 327, 24.11.2006, p. 1).
- 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.

## 06

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<sup>5</sup>, 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<sup>6</sup>, 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.

## 07

The concerns expressed by the EU were also addressed by a UN Security Council resolution of 2004<sup>7</sup>. The continuing pertinence of these concerns has been evidenced by recent events in Syria.

## The EU CBRN Centres of Excellence initiative

### Objectives

## 08

The main objectives<sup>8</sup> 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.

## 09

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;

5 European security strategy, European Council, Brussels, 12 and 13 December 2003; see <http://www.eeas.europa.eu/csdp/about-csdp/european-security-strategy/>

6 European strategy against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, European Council, Brussels, 12 December 2003; see [http://eeas.europa.eu/non-proliferation-and-disarmament/wmd/index\\_en.htm](http://eeas.europa.eu/non-proliferation-and-disarmament/wmd/index_en.htm)

7 UN Security Council Resolution 1540 of 28 April 2004.

8 The Instrument for Stability — Multiannual indicative programme 2009–11, European Commission, 8 April 2009.

- (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

### 10

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 initiative<sup>9</sup>, including project selection, contracting of implementing consortia<sup>10</sup> 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 world wide with relevant expertise; for EuropeAid those are: governmental agencies of EU Member States with relevant expertise.

(e) 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)<sup>11</sup>, 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.

(f) 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.

## 11

The EU delegation<sup>12</sup> in each country participating in the initiative is regularly informed about its progress and about the related actions being implemented in that country.

## 12

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

11 National teams further coordinate the work and share information in their countries among institutions like ministries, agencies and research and educational facilities.

12 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)

# Audit scope and approach

## 13

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?

## 14

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.

## 15

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.

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

### 16

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<sup>13</sup>.

### 17

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.

<sup>13</sup> This is known as the 'sustainability' of donor-funded measures.

## Box 1

### 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.

### 18

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.

### 19

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.

### 20

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.

### 21

The international community has welcomed the initiative. It has been endorsed by the UN Security Council<sup>14</sup>, the G8 Global Partnership (which established a working group on the Centres of Excellence<sup>15</sup>) and NATO (where the EU is supporting NATO's CBRN centre in Vyskov, Czech Republic<sup>16</sup>).

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

### 22

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).

### 23

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.

14 United Nation Security Council statement supporting the EU Centres of Excellence, 12 April 2012.

15 'Global partnership: against the spread of materials and weapons of mass destruction: President's report for 2013', Foreign and Commonwealth Office, London, December 2013.

16 See <http://www.jcbrncoe.cz/> for more information

## 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.



### 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.

### **Systems for selecting and implementing projects are in place, but partner countries need to become more involved in them**

### 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<sup>17</sup> 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.

<sup>17</sup> SMART = specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound.

Box 2

**Example of a project**

<b>Title</b>	Project 5: Knowledge development and transfer of best practice on CBRN import/export monitoring
<b>Target area</b>	African Atlantic Façade, Central Asia, Middle East and North Africa
<b>Implementer</b>	German Office of Economics and Export Control (BAFA), Germany
<b>Date</b>	1.1.2013–31.12.2014
<b>Budget (euro)</b>	1 440 000
<b>Objectives</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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;</li> <li>2. Build trust among entities, agencies etc. involved in the field of import/export regulation at national and regional levels;</li> <li>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;</li> <li>4. Improve regional inter-agency cooperation and standardisation with international import/export control procedures and guidelines.</li> </ol>

### **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.

#### **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.

#### **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.

### **A monitoring system has been established**

#### **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'<sup>18</sup> 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.

<sup>18</sup> The latest such report was published in the Official Journal C 54 of 25.2.2014.

## 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.

### 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.

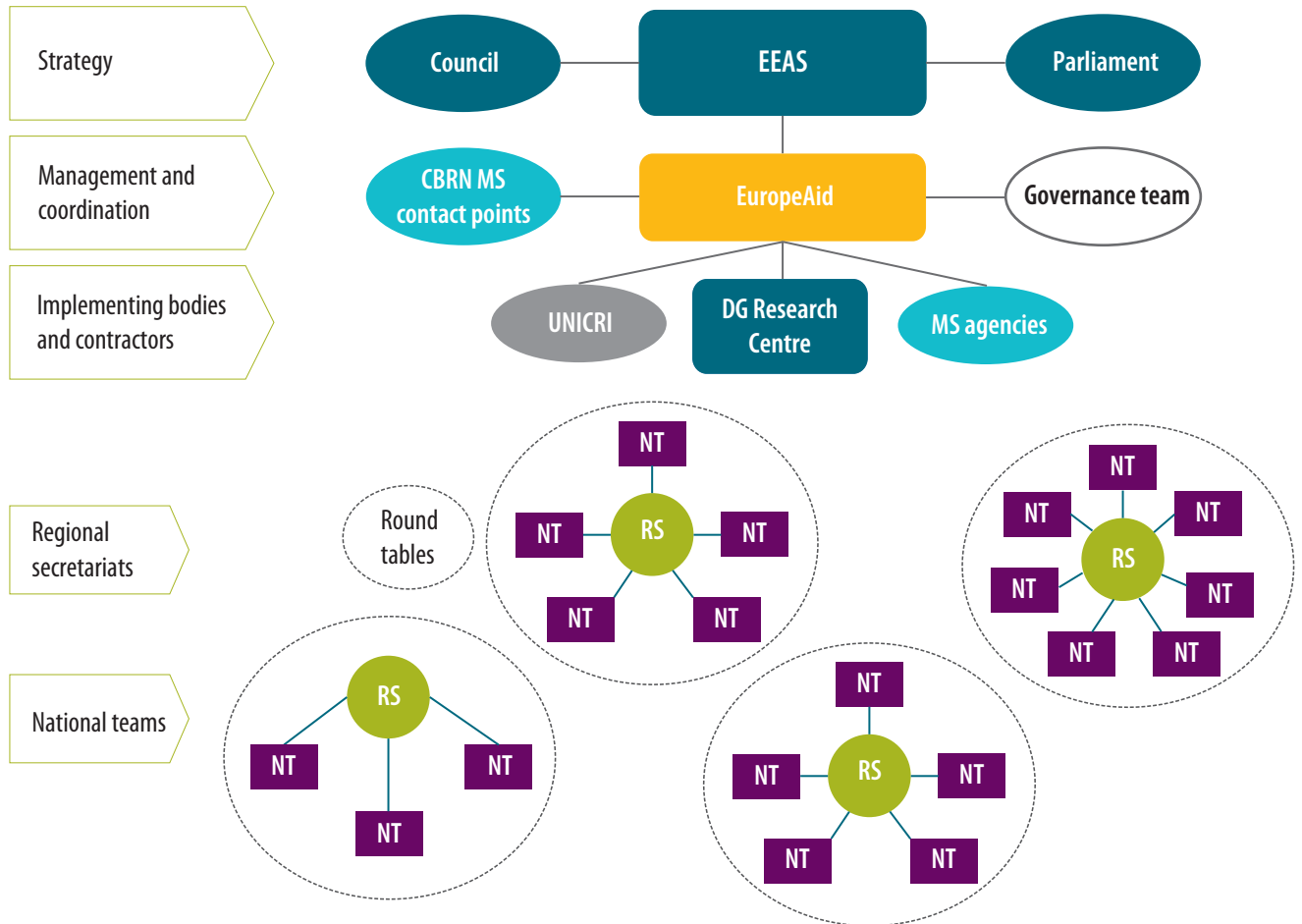
This Report was adopted by Chamber III, headed by Mr Karel PINXTEN, Member of the Court of Auditors, in Luxembourg at its meeting of 7 October 2014.

*For the Court of Auditors*



Vítor Manuel da SILVA CALDEIRA  
*President*

## The structure of the initiative



## List of regional secretariats

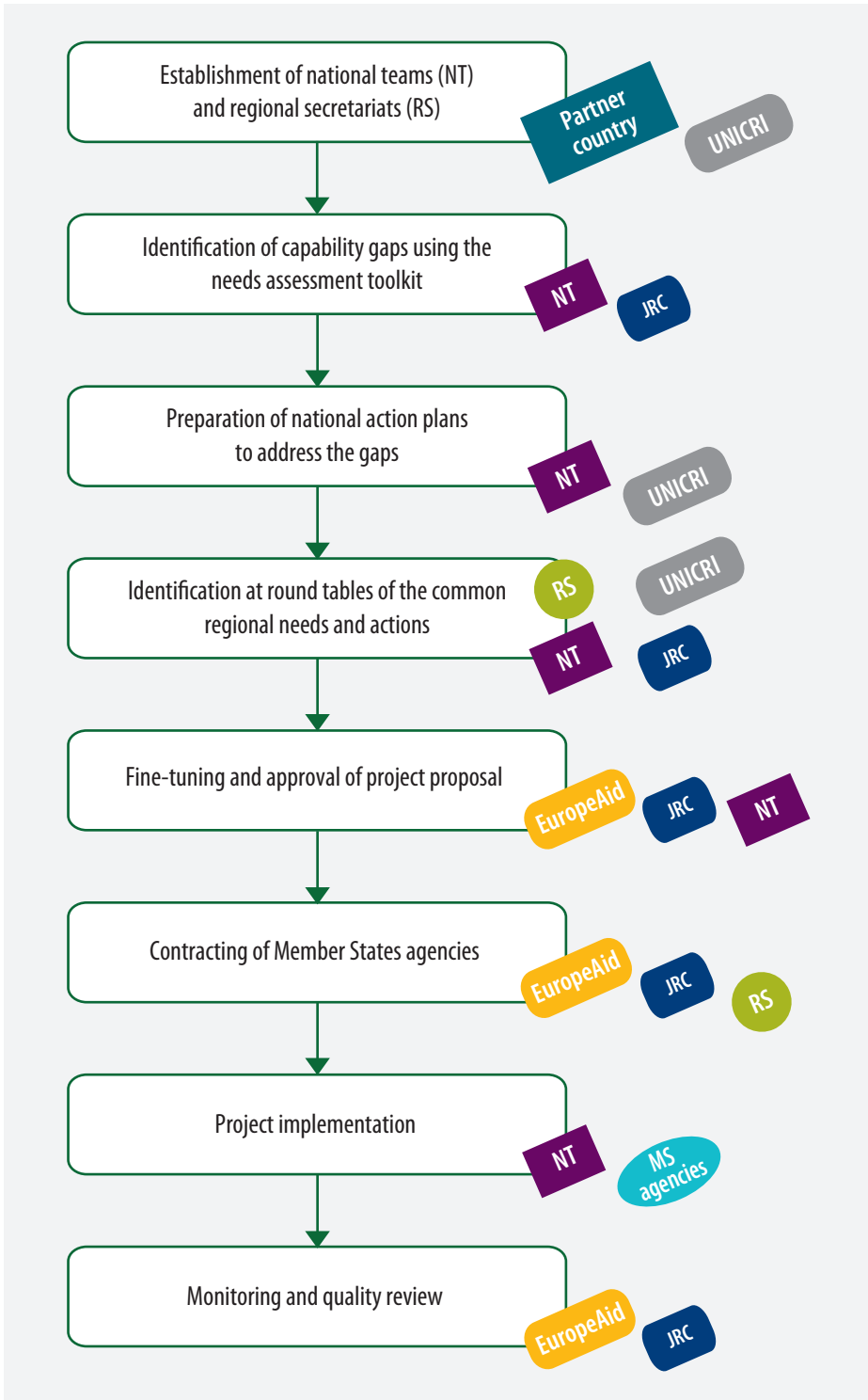
Abbreviation	Region	Countries involved
SEA	South-east Asia	Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam
AAF	African Atlantic Façade	Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Liberia, Mauritania, Morocco, Senegal, Togo
NA	North Africa	Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia
SEE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

## In negotiation

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



## Implementing bodies for the initiative

	JRC	UNICRI
<b>Full name</b>	Joint Research Centre	United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute
<b>Seat</b>	Brussels, Belgium; in addition, 7 remote research institutes	Turin, Italy
<b>Area of operations</b>	Scientific research, originally with a special focus on nuclear and radiological issues	Crime prevention and criminal justice
<b>Homepage</b>	<a href="http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/jrc/index.cfm?id=10">http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/jrc/index.cfm?id=10</a>	<a href="http://www.Unicri.it/">http://www.Unicri.it/</a>
<b>Reasons for choice as implementing body of the initiative</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Relevant technical know-how</li> <li>— Successful cooperation in predecessor programmes</li> <li>— International recognition as an expert body in the area</li> <li>— Experience in project management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Expertise in crime and justice affairs</li> <li>— Know-how in capacity building in non-EU countries</li> <li>— Previous cooperation with the European Commission</li> <li>— A UN body is required, as the initiative touches on sensitive issues for partner countries in the area of security</li> </ul>
<b>Main tasks in the initiative</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Provision of technical and scientific support</li> <li>— Assistance in the drafting of project proposals, including the design of the technical specifications</li> <li>— Support of EuropeAid in the selection of projects</li> <li>— Establishment and maintenance of monitoring mechanisms for projects and the initiative as a whole</li> <li>— Performance of needs assessments together with partner countries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Methodological preparation</li> <li>— Establishment of regional secretariats, including the provision of permanent staff</li> <li>— Assistance during the setting up of structures in partner countries (national focal points, national teams)</li> <li>— Drafting of national action plans together with partner countries</li> <li>— Organisation of regional 'round-table' meetings, which ensure regional cooperation and help in the generation of project proposals</li> </ul>

List of projects currently implemented by the initiative<sup>1</sup>

Project Number	Title	Implementation period	Budget in euro	Countries/regions (for abbreviations see Annex II)
Project 040	Strengthening health laboratories to minimise potential biological risks	1.1.2014–31.12.2016	4 495 712	CA, ME, SEE
Project 039	Strengthening health security at ports, airports and ground crossings	23.7.2013–22.7.2015	1 500 000	CA, ME, NA, SEE
Project 038	Export control outreach for dual use items	1.1.2014–31.12.2015	2 500 000	CA, ME
Project 037	MEDILABSECURE — Establishment of networks of human and animal virology laboratories and of medical entomology	6.1.2014–5.1.2018	3 626 410	ME, NA, SEE
Project 036	Further development and consolidation of the Mediterranean programme for intervention epidemiology training (MediPIET)	1.1.2014–31.12.2017	6 400 000	ME, NA, SEE
Project 035	Management of hazardous chemical and biological waste	1.1.2014–30.6.2017	3 871 800	AAF, NA
Project 034	Strengthening capacities in CBRN response and in chemical and medical emergency	1.1.2014–31.12.2016	3 914 034	ME
Project 033	Strengthening the national CBRN legal framework and provision of specialised and technical training to enhance CBRN preparedness and response capabilities	15.9.2013–14.9.2016	2 699 069	AAF, ECA
Project 032	Establishment of a Mediterranean programme for intervention epidemiology training (MediPIET)	1.1.2013–31.12.2014	440 000	AAF, ME, NA, SEE
Project 031	Network of universities and institutes for raising awareness on dual-use concerns of chemical materials	1.1.2013–31.12.2014	800 000	International
Project 030	Network of Excellence for Nuclear Forensics in the south-east Asia region	1.1.2013–31.12.2014	600 000	SEA
Project 029	Regional human resource development for nuclear safety, security, and safeguards management through a university master's programme carried out in Thailand	1.1.2013–31.12.2014	340 000	SEA
Project 028	Supporting development of an integrated national security system for nuclear and radioactive materials	1.1.2013–31.12.2014	1 000 000	SEA
Project 027	Biorisk management	1.1.2013–31.12.2014	480 000	Countries in SEA
Project 026	Prerequisite for strengthening CBRN national legal frameworks	1.1.2013–31.12.2014	300 000	Lebanon, Tunisia
Project 025	Knowledge development and transfer of best practice on biosafety/biosecurity/biorisk management	1.1.2013–31.12.2014	480 000	ME
Project 024	Development of a methodology for RN materials detection, management and protection of the public	1.1.2013–31.12.2014	600 000	Mauritania, Morocco, Senegal
Project 023	Building capacity to identify and respond to threats from chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear substances	1.1.2013–31.12.2014	500 000	Countries in the Balkans, ME, NA and SEA

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.cbrn-coe.eu/Projects.aspx>

Project Number	Title	Implementation period	Budget in euro	Countries/regions (for abbreviations see Annex II)
Project 022	Provision of specialised technical training to enhance the first responders' capabilities in case of CBRN incidents	1.1.2013–31.12.2014	700 000	AAF, SEA
Project 021	Building regional border control capacity to identify and detect CRN materials	1.1.2013–31.12.2014	700 000	AAF, SEA
Project 019	Development of procedures and guidelines to create and improve secure information management systems and data exchange mechanisms for CBRN materials under regulatory control	3.1.2013–2.1.2015	400 000	International
Project 018	International network of universities and institutes for raising awareness on dual-use concerns in biotechnology	1.1.2013–31.12.2014	399 719	International
Project 017	Establishing a national response plan in Ghana and Kenya for responding to unauthorised events involving chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) materials	15.5.2013–14.5.2015	240 000	Ghana and Kenya
Project 016	Supporting development of an integrated national nuclear security system	1.1.2013–31.12.2014	400 000	NA
Project 015	Strengthening laboratory biosafety and biosecurity through development of a laboratory iso-bank system	Tendering ongoing	480 000	Countries in SEA
Project 014	Provision of specialised and technical training to enhance the first response capabilities	4.1.2013–3.1.2015	400 000	SEE
Project 013	Capacity building and raising awareness for identifying and responding to threats from chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear materials in sub-Saharan African countries	1.1.2013–31.12.2014	319 924	ECA
Project 012	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	4.1.2013–3.1.2015	320 000	Countries in SEA
Project 011	Promoting good practice and inter-agency procedures for assessing the risks of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear misuse	1.1.2013–31.12.2014	1 915 452	Countries in NA, the Balkans, ME, SEA
Project 010	Development of e-learning courses for CBRN risk mitigation	1.1.2013–31.12.2014	388 451	International
Project 009	National response plan in Lebanon for CBRN events	1.1.2013–31.12.2014	159 900	Lebanon
Project 008	Prerequisite to strengthening CBRN national legal frameworks	1.1.2013–31.12.2014	800 000	Countries in SEA
Project 007	Guidelines, procedures and standardisation on biosafety/biosecurity	1.1.2013–31.12.2014	1 199 576	Countries in SEA, in the Balkans, Moldova
Project 006	Knowledge development and transfer of best practice on chemical and biological waste management	1.1.2013–31.12.2014	480 000	SEA
Project 005	Knowledge development and transfer of best practice on CBRN import/export monitoring	1.1.2013–31.12.2014	1 440 000	AAF, CA, ME, NA

Project Number	Title	Implementation period	Budget in euro	Countries/regions (for abbreviations see Annex II)
Project 004	Knowledge development and transfer of best practice on inter-agency CBRN response	1.1.2013–31.12.2014	959 675	SEA, SEE
Project 003	Knowledge development and transfer of best practice on biosafety/biosecurity/biorisk management	1.1.2013–31.12.2014	1 920 000	AAF, NA, SEA, SEE
Project 002	Building capacity to identify and respond to threats from chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear substances	1.1.2013–31.12.2014	160 000	Balkan countries
Project 001	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	1.1.2013–31.12.2014	640 000	Balkan countries
Pilot 2	Pilot 2 — Reinforcement of legislation and regulations in the field of biosafety, biosecurity and laboratory management systems	1.1.2011–30.11.2012	375 000	Countries in SEA
Pilot 1	Pilot 1 — Capacity building in countering illicit nuclear trafficking	1.1.2011–30.6.2012	375 000	Countries in SEA

## 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 providing 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 south-east 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.

### 38

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.

### 40

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

### 41

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.

### Common reply to paragraphs 42 and 43

The reestablishment of a coordination committee should facilitate wider cooperation and it should focus on strategic directions and implementation issues. Its format may vary as discussions with implementing partners, such as UNICRI, must respect the Commission's financial regulations.

However, bilateral cooperation remains necessary in order to discuss in depth certain issues such as contractual and financial issues.

### 45

The Commission makes all the necessary efforts to coordinate EU activities in the field of CBRN inside and outside of the European Union.

Various forums exist where coordination takes place, such as the EU CBRN action plan, various working committees at Council level, the G8/G7 Global Partnership (involving main parties and partners including those of international organisations: IAEA; WHO; Committee 1540; OPCW, ISTC and STCU) or the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism (an initiative created by the Russian Federation and the United States of America). Thanks to these coordination activities, the Commission has a global overview to the extent possible.

## Conclusions and recommendations

### 50

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.

### 51 (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.



### 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.



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