

Special Report

The EU Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Centres of Excellence: more progress needed

(pursuant to Article 287(4), second subparagraph, TFEU)



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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AAF	African Atlantic Façade
CBRN	Chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear
CA	Central Asia
DG DEVCO	Directorate General for International Cooperation and Development
ECA	Eastern and Central Africa
DG ECHO	Directorate General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
EEAS	European External Action Service
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
IcSP	Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace
INTCEN	EU Intelligence and Situation Centre
JRC	Joint Research Centre
MIE	Middle East
NAP	National action plan
NAQ	Needs assessment questionnaire
NAS	North Africa and Sahel
DG NEAR	Directorate General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations
NFP	National focal point
SEA	South East Asia
SEEE	South East and Eastern Europe
UNICRI	United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I. Since 2010 the EU has sought to mitigate chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) risks from beyond its borders through the EU CBRN Centres of Excellence Initiative (“the Initiative”). It is the EU’s largest civilian external security programme and is financed through the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace with a budget of €130 million for the years 2014-2020. The Initiative is one of the main tools¹ to mitigate CBRN threats and risks from outside the EU.

II. In order to assess the extent to which the Initiative contributed to mitigating CBRN risks from outside the EU, we looked at the risk management approach, the Initiative’s implementation in partner countries and the monitoring and evaluation systems. During this exercise we followed up the recommendations made in ECA special report 17/2014 (“Can the EU’s Centres of Excellence Initiative contribute effectively to mitigating chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear risks from outside the EU?”), which dealt with the set-up of the scheme.

III. We conclude that the Initiative has contributed to mitigating these CBRN threats, but that many challenges remain. The Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS) have fully implemented three out of six of the recommendations, contained in our earlier special report 17/2014, and partially implemented two of them. Partner countries are now more involved in the initiation and implementation of projects, the organization at regional level has been strengthened and cooperation between decision-makers and implementing bodies has improved. While some progress has been made, the role of the EU delegations and the speed of project implementation are still not satisfactory. One of our earlier recommendation which proposed to concentrate EU funding in the areas most relevant to EU security and was accepted by the Commission has not been implemented.

¹ Other actions exist such as the reinforcement of export control systems in dual use items (CBRN material with both civilian and military applications) and the redirection of scientists having dual use technology knowledge.

IV. An adequate risk management approach to the activities of the Initiative has not yet been developed for the Initiative as a whole, at the project selection stage and for the identification of partner countries' needs.

V. The Commission provides partner countries with tools and a methodology to help them assess their own needs and develop national action plans to mitigate CBRN risks. However, not sufficient guidance is given as how risks should be identified and prioritised. Despite this drawback, the needs assessment questionnaire and national action plans are still key elements that underpin the Initiative. However, the Commission cannot respond quickly enough to all partner countries' requests for assistance in identifying and prioritising their needs; this risks to seriously delay the preparation of both the questionnaires and the action plans.

VI. A number of aspects of the Initiative have been developed in partner countries in addition to the improvements resulting from our previous recommendations. The Initiative has promoted a culture of safety and cooperation. CBRN national teams have been appointed in the majority of the partner countries. Projects have delivered most of their outputs; stakeholders have especially valued operational capacity-building exercises.

VII. Regional cooperation has been initiated but it is still lacking as partner countries do not have sufficient interaction and wish to address their national needs first.

VIII. Since our earlier special report 17/2014, the EU delegations' involvement has improved. However, the EU delegations were insufficiently active in promoting the Initiative and mobilising political will. CBRN was not systematically included in the policy, security or political dialogue. Interaction between the Commission's Directorates-General and with the donor community, particularly on the question of the potential funding available, was limited.

IX. The lack of clear objectives, relevant indicators and data collected on the ground impaired the assessment of the outcome and impact of projects and the Initiative as a whole.

X. The CBRN web-based portal has considerable potential as an operational database for the implementation and management of the Initiative's activities, but is not yet an effective, complete, up to date and structured repository of activities, lessons learned and best practices.

XI. We therefore recommend that the Commission and the EEAS:

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

INTRODUCTION

1. Episodes such as the recent use of sarin and chlorine gas in Iraq and Syria and of the nerve agent VX at Kuala Lumpur airport in February 2017, the Ebola virus disease outbreak in West Africa in 2014-2016 and the Fukushima nuclear reactor meltdown in 2011 are stark reminders of the dangers that can ensue when chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) risks occur. Whether released accidentally or deliberately, chemical agents, pandemic and epizootic biological diseases, and radiological and nuclear substances can pose significant threats to global health, the environment and the economy.

2. The probability of CBRN risks materialising is considered low by the Commission, but the impact of an occurrence can be high². While most of the international community has signed international treaties and conventions³ regulating the use of CBRN weapons and materials, a number of states have not implemented them, and others have yet to ratify the agreements. The acquisition and malevolent use of CBRN components takes place, and the threat is expected to grow in the coming years⁴. In addition to the malevolent use of CBRN substances, natural and man-made accidents may occur.

² COM(2017) 610 final of 18 October 2017 “Action Plan to enhance preparedness against chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear security risks”.

³ For instance the UNSCR 1540 resolution, the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Biological Weapons Convention and the Nuclear Weapon Ban Treaty.

⁴ Pool Reinsurance Company. Terrorism threat and mitigation report. August-December 2016. Clingendael Strategic Monitor 2017.

3. At the EU level, the Commission's Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs (DG HOME) coordinates the EU's domestic CBRN policy⁵ to mitigate the associated threats and risks. As CBRN threats know no borders the EU cannot confine its actions to the EU area. Indeed, the European Council, the Council of the European Union⁶ and the European Parliament⁷ have repeatedly stressed the importance of linking the EU's internal and external security policies, which cover CBRN matters. The European Commission has also stated that "EU external action must reflect, complement and contribute to EU's internal security"⁸. The growing support for the security sectors is backed by the EU's 2016 Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy⁹.

⁵ Council conclusions on strengthening chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) security in the European Union – an EU CBRN Action Plan. Doc 15505/1/09 REV 1, 12 November 2009.

COM(2014) 247 final "Communication on a new EU approach to the detection and mitigation of CBRN-E risks".

COM(2017) 610 final.

⁶ Draft Council Conclusions on the Renewed European Union Internal Security Strategy 2015-2020, 10 June 2015, document 9798/15.

Council conclusions on European Court of Auditors' special report 17/2014 "Can the EU's Centres of Excellence initiative contribute effectively to mitigating chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear risks from outside the EU?" 26 October 2015, document 13279/15.

Joint declaration by the President of the European Council, the President of the European Commission, and the Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. 2016 EU-NATO joint declaration.

Council Conclusions on EU External Action on Counter-terrorism. Document 10384/17, 19 June 2017.

⁷ European Parliament resolution of 29 April 2015 on the Court of Auditors' special reports in the context of the 2013 Commission discharge. Document P8_TA(2015)0119.

European Parliament resolution of 9 July 2015 on the European Agenda on Security. P8_TA(2015)0269.

European Parliament resolution of 23 November 2016 on the implementation of the Common Security and Defence Policy. P8_TA(2016)0440.

⁸ SWD(2017) 278 final "Comprehensive Assessment of EU Security Policy, accompanying the document: Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European

4. The EU CBRN Centres of Excellence Initiative (“the Initiative”), managed by the Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO), is the main but not the only scheme for mitigating CBRN threats from outside the EU. DG DEVCO carries out other mitigating actions which include the reinforcement of export control systems in dual-use items (CBRN material with both civilian and military applications) and the reorientation of scientists having dual-use technology knowledge.

5. The Initiative’s main objective is to strengthen the long-term capacity of, and to foster long lasting cooperation among the national and regional authorities, and administrative bodies responsible for tackling CBRN threats¹⁰. The Initiative mainly finances capacity building projects but the benefits are not limited to projects. Its main feature is to establish and consolidate CBRN networks (or Centres of Excellence) of cooperation between and within partner countries. The network is organised around regional secretariats where knowledge and expertise is shared.

6. The Initiative is the single largest action, in financial terms, under the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP)¹¹ and the biggest EU civilian external security programme. The IcSP addresses conflict, peace and security “issues that cannot be effectively tackled under other EU cooperation instruments”¹².

Council and the Council – Ninth progress report towards an effective and genuine Security Union.

⁹ Shared Vision, Common action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union’s Foreign and Security Policy, June 2016.

¹⁰ Annual Action Programme 2017 for Article 5 of the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace: Action document for mitigation of and preparedness against risks related to CBRN materials or agents.

¹¹ Regulation (EU) No 230/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2014 establishing an instrument contributing to stability and peace (OJ L 77, 15.3.2014, p. 1).

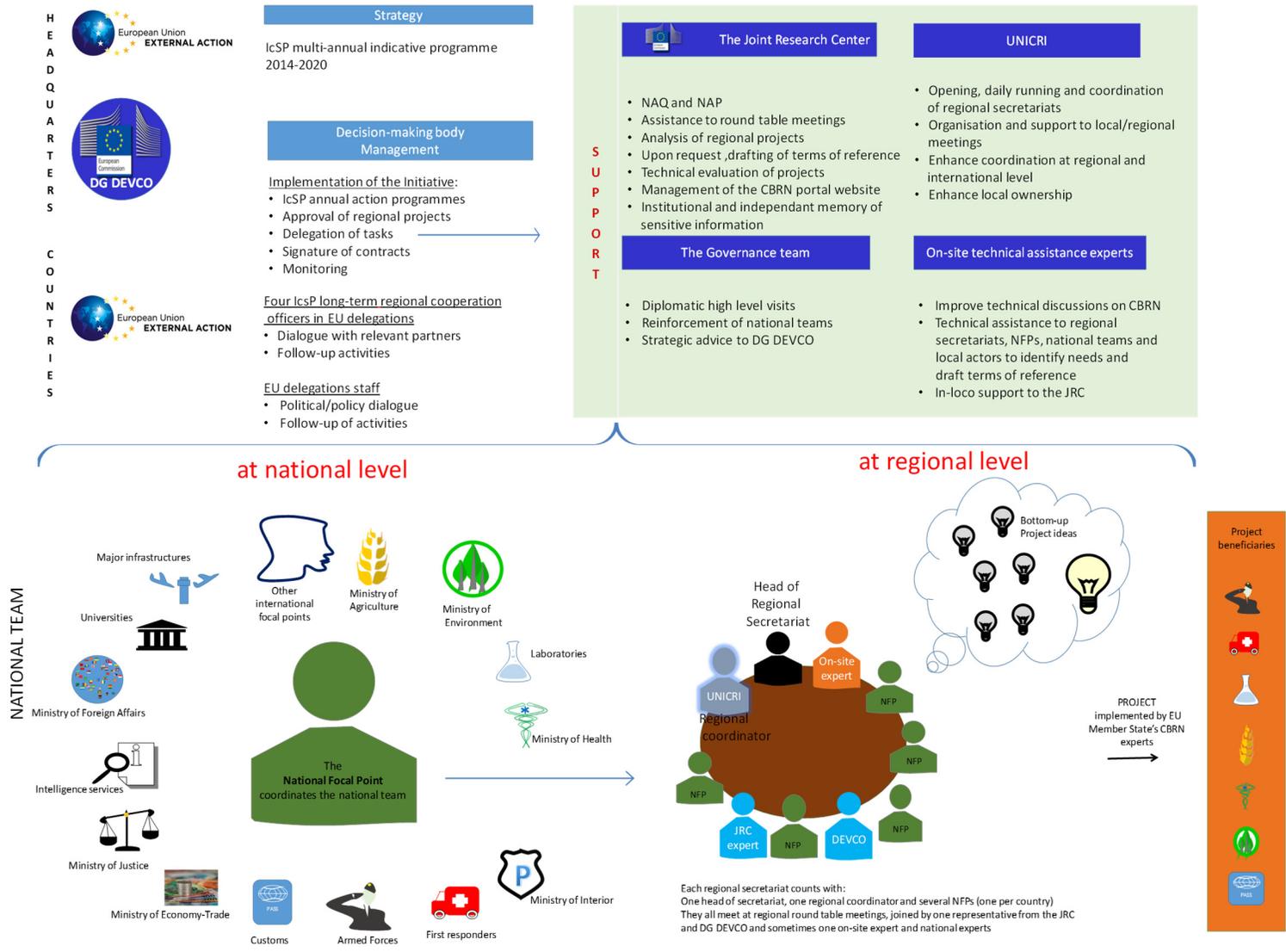
¹² Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP) Thematic Strategy Paper 2014-2020. Multi-annual Indicative Programme 2014-2017 (Annex).

7. The budget for the Initiative was €109 million for the 2009-2013 period and €130 million for 2014-2020. This means that the yearly average fell from €22 million to €19 million between the two periods (see [***Annex I***](#)).

8. The Initiative was launched in May 2010¹³. We examined its set-up in special report 17/2014: “Can the EU’s Centres of Excellence initiative contribute effectively to mitigating chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear risks from outside the EU?” We concluded that it could do so, but that several elements still needed to be finalised (see [***Annex II***](#)). The Initiative’s organisational structure, although slightly changed since the last audit, remains complex because it relies on an extensive network of both EU bodies (the European External Action Service “EEAS”, DG DEVCO, the Joint Research Centre “JRC”), non-EU actors (the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute “UNICRI”, the Governance Team, regional secretariats, national teams), CBRN experts, civilian and military stakeholders and other international organisations (see [***Figure 1***](#)). The most notable change since our last audit has been the greater involvement of the JRC and on-site experts contracted by DG DEVCO.

¹³ Pilot projects and planning were financed under the 2009 Annual Action Programme for the mitigation of and preparedness against risks related to CBRN materials or agents.

Figure 1 - Overview of the Centres of Excellence Initiative's organisation



Source: European Court of Auditors.

9. This organisation, involving many CBRN actors, the bottom-up, national and regional approaches combine to make the Initiative a unique support mechanism. Partner country governments appoint a “national focal point” (NFP), who is their primary representative for the Initiative, responsible for liaising with CBRN stakeholders at the national (national team, project beneficiaries and other local actors) and international levels.

10. The Centres of Excellence are built around eight regional secretariats (see ***Annex III***). The regional secretariats are platforms to promote and facilitate cooperation at regional and international level. They liaise with and provide support to the national focal points in their region, organise regional round table meetings, facilitate information sharing, monitor to a certain extent, the regional activities and promote the Initiative.

AUDIT SCOPE AND APPROACH

11. One of the main objectives of this performance audit of the EU CBRN Centres of Excellence Initiative was to follow-up the actions taken by the EEAS and the Commission to implement the recommendations in special report 17/2014 which were to:

- (a) concentrate EU funding in the areas of most relevance to EU security;
- (b) increase the capacities of the regional secretariats;
- (c) increase the role of the EU delegations;
- (d) involve partner countries in the initiation and implementation of projects;
- (e) decrease the time gap between project proposals and project implementation;
- (f) improve cooperation between decision-making and implementing bodies.

12. While our earlier audit concentrated on the set-up of the Initiative, this time we broadened the audit scope to include an assessment of the risk management approach, the Initiative's implementation in partner countries, and the monitoring and evaluation systems. We aimed to answer the question: Has the Centres of Excellence Initiative contributed significantly to mitigating chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear risks from outside the EU?

13. To answer this question, we addressed three sub-questions:

- (a) Have the Commission and the EEAS adopted an adequate risk management approach?
- (b) Has the Initiative been satisfactorily developed in partner countries?
- (c) Have effective monitoring and evaluation systems been established to identify, assess and report on the Centres of Excellence Initiative's results?

14. We carried out our audit between February and October 2017. We reviewed supporting documentation and interviewed representatives from the Commission (DGs DEVCO, JRC,

ECHO, NEAR and HOME), the EEAS, UNICRI, the Governance Team and participants at the 5th International Meeting of National Focal Points in Brussels.

15. We carried out audit visits to three partner countries: Georgia (June 2017), Jordan and Lebanon (September 2017). These countries are part of the Neighbourhood, the Initiative's priority area, and the first two host regional secretariats¹⁴. We interviewed the heads of the regional secretariats, the regional coordinators, on-site technical assistance experts, the national focal points, the EU delegations, 15 project beneficiaries and 3 EU contractors (project implementers). We surveyed all regional secretariats (8) and a sample of other stakeholders (listed below) in order to obtain general information on the Initiative. We analysed all the written replies received from:

- (i) the regional secretariats (5 out of 8 responded);
- (ii) national focal points (11 out of 18 responded);
- (iii) EU delegations (14 out of 18 responded);
- (iv) project implementers (6 out of 7 responded);
- (v) EU CBRN contact points (5 out of the 10 responded).

¹⁴ The South East and Eastern Europe and Middle East regional secretariats.

OBSERVATIONS

Risk based prioritisation of activities still to be achieved

Urgent need to prioritise activities and spending

16. To ensure the best use of limited resources, we recommended in special report 17/2014 to prioritise funding in the areas most relevant to EU security. According to DG HOME, the most direct CBRN risks to the EU's security lie in the Middle East and Eastern Partnership countries¹⁵, followed by the North African countries, which together represent 20 % of the partner countries. Despite this, DG DEVCO's geographical priorities (South East and Eastern Europe, the Middle East, North Africa Sahel, the African Atlantic Façade, and Eastern and Central Africa) cover 70 % of the partner countries, many of which are not regarded as having the most direct CBRN risks to the EU.

17. DG DEVCO and the EEAS have in fact encouraged more partner countries to join the Initiative. As a result, the number of partner countries has continued to grow instead of concentrating efforts on a more limited number of countries¹⁶. In October 2017, the number of partner countries had increased by 15 from 43 to 58 since our last audit (see **Annex IV**) and interest in the Initiative continues to grow¹⁷. As resources are limited, the geographical expansion implies less final assistance on average per country.

18. At the time of special report 17/2014, we looked at the systems for selecting and implementing the first 40 projects. We compared the project funding allocation from projects 1 to 40 (first period) to projects 41 to 60 (second period). **Figure 2** shows that South East and Eastern Europe, which is a priority for the EU, has been the largest overall recipient of project funding (21 %) but received less in the latest period. From project 41 onwards, the

¹⁵ Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

¹⁶ Ethiopia, Kuwait, Pakistan and Sierra Leone joined the Initiative in 2017 and Mongolia joined in March 2018.

¹⁷ Kazakhstan has expressed an interest to join.

African Atlantic Façade, which, aside from Morocco, is not part of the Neighbourhood, has been the largest beneficiary. The South East Asia region is the third highest financial recipient but is not one of the high priority risks areas. Although risks are higher in the Middle East and North Africa Sahel (see **paragraph 16**)¹⁸, these regions (except for the Gulf Cooperation Council region) have received the lowest share of funding in the second period. Overall, they received respectively 13 % and 9 % of the project funding. The regions representing the most direct CBRN risks to the EU (see **paragraph 16**) received in total 43 % of the total project allocation. Projects are therefore not prioritised on the basis of risks linked to the geographical location. This is contrary to our previous recommendation, which the Commission had accepted.

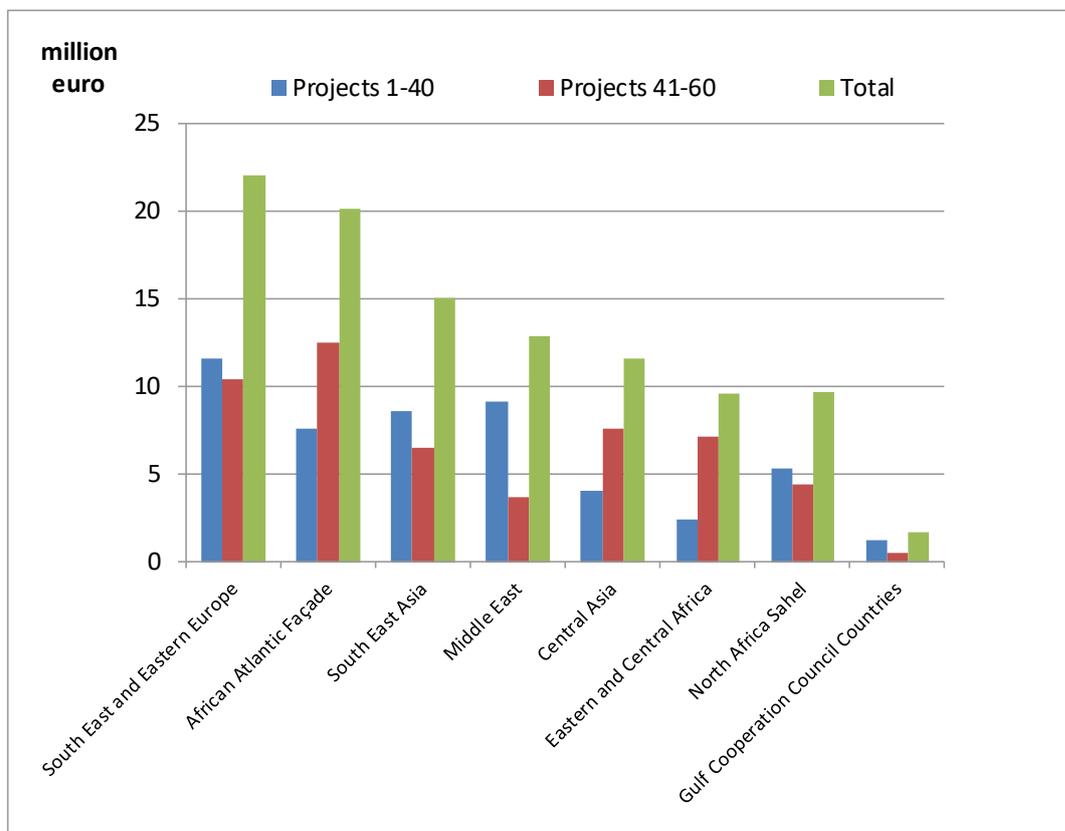
19. Following a demand-driven or bottom-up approach¹⁹, the regions submit project proposals to DG DEVCO. Yet, the Commission selects the projects to finance but it does not apply risk-based selection criteria even though its own working document commented that EU security would benefit from a more extensive use of assessments of threats and risks²⁰. Instead, project proposals are admitted on a first-come-first-served basis, which the Commission hopes will stimulate competition among the regions. In practice, the Initiative's funds are spread over a greater number of partner countries.

¹⁸ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute Yearbook 2017.

¹⁹ Partner countries (the national team) identify the needs specific to their country and discuss at regional level the actions that could take place to address common CBRN risks and threats.

²⁰ SWD(2017) 278 final PART 1/2, p. 13.

Figure 2 - Financial allocation per region from 2010 until October 2017



Source: European Court of Auditors based on data extracted from CRIS and the CBRN portal and provided by the JRC.

20. Furthermore, no thematic fields are given priority. Whereas prevention measures were the main focus of the initial EU CBRN domestic policy²¹, the IcSP legal framework²² does not specify which external mitigation measures should be prioritised (preparedness, prevention, detection or response). However, DG HOME and DG DEVCO experts recommend that, as a first step, the CBRN material should be identified and secured. We identified only three projects which were concentrated on the identification of CBRN facilities and the material therein. In addition, only five projects out of 66, representing 9 % of expenditure, tackled

²¹ Council conclusions on strengthening chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) security in the European Union – an EU CBRN Action Plan. Doc 15505/1/09 REV 1, 12 November 2009.

²² Regulation (EU) No 230/2014.

chemical risks exclusively (see **Annex V**), although the EU Intelligence and Situation Centre (INTCEN) considers this as the threat most likely to materialise.

21. In 2017, the Commission has started to use the Initiative to address more security-related matters such as counter-terrorism, the fight against cybercrime, the protection of critical infrastructures, combatting trafficking of falsified medicines, maritime security, and explosives. Because the Initiative's resources are limited, the Commission intends to fund these new activities from other budget lines while making use of the Centres of Excellence structures. However, there are still a large number of measures necessary to address traditional CBRN risks²³. National focal points have mobilised their efforts in the CBRN area and expect to see results. Expanding the Initiative to other thematic fields requires additional work, while much remains to be done in the CBRN domain.

²³ By analogy, 124 actions were required from EU Member States regarding prevention, detection, preparedness and response in the first CBRN Action Plan.

The identification of partner countries' needs and priorities still takes too long and is not based on systemic risk assessments

22. The JRC has devised a needs assessment questionnaire (NAQ) for partner countries. The questions were generic and related to subjects such as the existence or not in the partner country of a national legal framework, an institutional framework governing the safety and security of CBRN materials and facilities. The concept of risks was not embedded in the JRC's methodology and there was not sufficient guidance as to how risks should be identified and prioritised. The gaps identified through the questionnaire are the basis for the development of a CBRN National Action Plan (NAP) to mitigate these risks.

23. JRC experts assisted the partner countries' CBRN national teams²⁴ in replying to the questions but the NAQ remains a self-assessment exercise carried out by the partner countries. To carry out the NAQ and NAP exercises, the Commission recommends that the national teams include representatives from a wide range of ministries (see **Figure 1**) and other recognised contact points²⁵. Our analysis shows that the national teams did not systematically include experts drawn from the full range of CBRN fields.

24. By October 2017, 26 partner countries of 58 (45 %) had finalised their NAQ and only 18 partner countries (31 %) had devised a NAP. Four partner countries did so without applying the NAQ methodology (see **Annex I**).

25. One reason for the fact that not all partner countries have been through the NAQ/NAP processes is that it is a voluntary exercise requiring political will. Another reason why a limited number of partner countries had finalised their NAQs and NAPs is the political

²⁴ CBRN national teams coordinate the work and share information in their countries among institutions like ministries, agencies and research and educational facilities involved at various levels in CBRN risk mitigation.

²⁵ For example, contact points for INTERPOL, the World Health Organisation, the UN Security Council 1540 Committee, the Biological Weapons Convention, the Food and Agriculture Organisation, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, the International Atomic Energy Agency, the Programme for the Prevention, Preparedness and Response to Natural and Man-made Disasters, etc.

instability in certain partner countries, complicating the planning. Finally, the JRC could not respond quickly enough to all demands for NAQ/NAP assistance.

26. The growing demand from partner countries to perform the NAQ/NAP exercises and the ongoing expansion of the Initiative have put a definite strain on the JRC's human resources. The resources allocated to the Initiative have been reduced from 200 person months in 2015 to 105 in 2017. The JRC's inability to cope with its workload has resulted in significant delays in holding workshops. As at 31 October 2017, 19 months was the average time spent waiting for a NAQ or NAP workshop after filing a request or attending a previous workshop. There is a risk that momentum will be lost if the NAQ and NAP exercises are not carried out on time, thereby impairing the Initiative's credibility.

Certain aspects of the Initiative have been satisfactorily developed in partner countries

The Initiative has helped to strengthen CBRN governance in partner countries and increase regional cooperation...

27. The Initiative's two major successes are the establishment of CBRN national teams and the initiation of regional cooperation. National structures took a long time to set up, thus, delaying the implementation of activities. By October 2017, though, the vast majority of countries (see ***Annex I***) had appointed a national focal point and created a national team to ensure interagency cooperation and improve national CBRN governance. Governance is further reinforced through the NAQ and NAP exercises (see ***paragraphs 22 and 24***).

28. The regional secretariats²⁶ assist the partner countries in assessing and addressing their needs and facilitate their coordination. They contribute to the creation of a CBRN network. In special report 17/2014 we noted, however, that they lacked technical expertise. DG DEVCO fully implemented our recommendation through the deployment of six on-site technical assistance experts (known as "OSAs" and referred to hereafter as "on-site experts") to seven regional secretariats²⁷. These on-site experts contribute to building CBRN governance in partner countries through technical support to the national teams, national focal points and regional secretariats. They organise training sessions, exercises, facilitate national team meetings and prepare and attend the NAQ and NAP workshops. They also contribute to improve regional cooperation in formulating needs and projects, drafting terms of references and monitoring the implementation of regional projects. The partner countries have a positive view of these on-site-experts.

29. Regional secretariats have also improved cooperation and coordination with other international organisations²⁸ (see ***Box 1***). For example, the regional secretariats assisted six

²⁶ The regional secretariat consists of one head of secretariat and one UNICRI regional coordinator.

²⁷ One on-site expert covers two regions: North Africa Sahel and the Middle East.

²⁸ World Health Organization, the Biological Weapons Convention, the Chemical Weapons Convention, Interpol and the United Nations Security Council.

partner countries in receiving support from the Implementation Support Unit for the Biological Weapons Convention.

Box 1 – Increasing cooperation with other international organisations

Following the Ebola crisis, in October 2017 the Italian Presidency of the G7 Global Partnership and the EU CBRN Centres of Excellence organised a workshop with 11 African countries to identify measures for mitigating biosafety and biosecurity risks in Africa.

For the first time, the needs assessments and action plans developed in line with several international initiatives and obligations²⁹ were compared, enabling coordination and consolidation of existing information in relation to the various initiatives. DG DEVCO's plan is to continue this exercise to further fine-tune measures tackling the top biosafety and biosecurity priorities for future action.

30. We reported in special report 17/2014 that the partner countries were not sufficiently involved in project selection, although the Initiative was supposed to be bottom-up in nature.

31. Since project 33 (March 2013), projects are discussed at regional round table meetings and there are twice as many bottom-up projects³⁰ (20) as top-down ones (9) proposed by DG DEVCO (see ***Annex VI***). At least half of projects³¹ involve local experts in their implementation. Our recommendation, contained in our earlier special report 17/2014, has been fully implemented. The Initiative's projects now foster a greater sense of local ownership and a culture of consensus.

32. The time gap between project proposals and project implementation, which we recommended should be shortened, is still long (see ***Annex VI***) – upwards of 18 months on

²⁹ The EU CBRN Centres of Excellence Initiative, the World Health Organization's International Health Regulations, United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540 and the Biological Weapons Convention.

³⁰ Our audit scope extended to and included project 60. However, for this calculation we also took into account all projects up to project 66. The on-site technical assistance projects have been excluded.

³¹ Excluding on-site technical assistance and equipment delivery contracts.

average. The Commission has recently changed the approach for identifying the specific beneficiary needs but it is too early to determine the extent to which this new method will speed up the start of the project's activities. Therefore, we conclude that the recommendation has been partially implemented.

33. Regional action plans do not yet exist. The national action plans that have been finalised have spurred discussions on potential regional activities/projects. Moreover, the regional secretariats, sometimes with the support of the on-site-experts, gather and consolidate information on national needs in order to establish regional priorities. A home-grown regional approach has started to emerge in three regions as a result of increased trust and a greater sense of ownership (see **Box 2**).

Box 2 – Identifying regional needs

In April 2016, national experts from all the South East Asia partner countries met for the first time to discuss the regional priorities (based on an analysis of the NAQ, NAPs, previous/ongoing projects and lists of priorities). The meeting produced seven regional project proposals. While this is a positive indicator of increasing initiative, the proposals required significant revision, prompting the decision to deploy an on-site expert to the region from 2018 onwards.

The South East and Eastern Europe Secretariat analysed the existing NAPs in the region, past project proposals including those refused. They also invited the national focal points to list their priorities. Based on this information, the region adopted in 2016 a regional strategy listing 10 priorities. The region is finalising the terms of reference for a project proposal on chemical and biological waste management.

In the African Atlantic Façade, the national focal points assessed that the activities proposed by project implementers did not match local needs, because the terms of reference were not specific enough. Local experts were hired to collect information, analyse and define the actual needs, and develop project proposals. The terms of reference for two recent project proposals³² were drafted on this basis. This practice could reduce the length of the inception phase.

³² The transportation of dangerous goods, and food safety.

34. Projects have delivered some or all of their planned outputs. Many projects included training, ranging from a general introduction and awareness-raising to more operational capacity-building exercises. Projects sometimes involved study visits to EU Member States, supplied CBRN equipment, produced educational material – such as handbooks, best practice guidelines, methodology manuals and national response plans – and have fed into the adoption or revision of legislation and regulations (see **Box 3**).

Box 3 – Success story awards

The national focal points and heads of regional secretariats are encouraged to champion the Initiative's success stories. The Centres of Excellence awards presented at the 5th Annual NFP Meeting celebrated some such achievements.

Zambia received the prize for the biggest national success story for having revised its national legal framework for CBRN risk management. This resulted in the Counter Terrorism Amendment Act No 2 of 2015, leading to the creation of a national counter terrorism centre which has among its responsibilities the capacities to detect, control and respond to CBRN risks.

35. The tabletop and field simulation exercises³³ run under the auspices of the Initiative are highly valued by the partner countries³⁴ (see **Box 4**). Those surveyed said that they would like more field exercises to be funded (with relevant prior training), seeing these as the best form of hands-on learning.

Box 4 – FALCON I tabletop exercise

The Gulf Cooperation Council Countries was the last region to join the Initiative. Although no regional project has yet been developed, the regional secretariat created a dynamic in the region with the organisation in February 2016 of a workshop and tabletop exercise, focusing on nuclear detection and response, funded mainly by the United Arab Emirates and the Global Initiative to Combat

³³ Tabletop exercises comprise of a discussion among participants to identify and propose response actions. The field exercises test the operational capabilities to respond to a CBRN incident.

³⁴ For example, projects 4, 9, 17, 21, 22, 23, 33, 34, 42, 44, 46 and 47.

Nuclear Terrorism. The first of its kind, the “FALCON” exercise was designed to enhance regional cooperation and information-sharing, and improve the national scenarios adopted by each country³⁵. The Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism, the International Atomic Energy Agency and the World Customs Organization attended the event as observers.

A second exercise is planned for 2018-2019. FALCON II will focus first on building radiological detection and response capacities, and then on tabletop and field exercises.

... but important obstacles still hinder the achievement of the Initiative’s full potential ...

36. Despite the achievements noted in the previous section, important obstacles remain. These hinder the Initiative in achieving its full potential to create an interconnected CBRN community at the national, regional and international level.

... in the partner country

37. A number of factors adversely affected the degree to which CBRN governance was strengthened and risks were mitigated in the partner countries. These included limitations on the mandate and legal status of the national team as a whole, and the NFP in particular. Other obstacles included the lack of availability of national team members, political instability and funding shortfalls. The on-site experts facilitated national team meetings in a number of countries, but this support is not sustainable in the long-term.

38. The national focal points are key players of the network as they coordinate the work done by the CBRN stakeholders in their respective countries and are the national contact points for the Initiative. The Commission intends that they become the single entry point for all CBRN-related matters. However, they are often not given sufficient prominence and authority by the various institutions that constitute the national team and by their own governments.

³⁵ The United Arab Emirates hosted the event, with the participation of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the Kingdom of Morocco, the State of Qatar, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the State of Kuwait, the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Bahrain.

39. Since special report 17/2014, DG DEVCO has deployed IcSP long-term regional cooperation officers to only four EU delegations³⁶ (Nairobi, Manila, Dakar and Islamabad). The first two of these countries host regional secretariats, whereas the latter two do not. The IcSP long-term regional cooperation officers liaise with the other EU delegations in the regions to which they have been deployed. However, their responsibilities are not limited to CBRN matters alone but include other security activities³⁷.

40. The EU delegation's involvement in promoting the Initiative and mobilising political will within the country and the regions has increased but is still insufficient. CBRN matters were not systematically included in the policy, security or political dialogue. The extent of their information was often dependent on the presence of IcSP long-term regional cooperation officers in the region. There had been no CBRN involvement from the EU delegation in some countries in priority regions. Overall, we consider that the EEAS and the Commission have partially implemented our previous recommendation.

... or in the region and beyond

41. Our across-the-board analysis showed that most projects did not set regional cooperation as a primary objective, since all partner countries wish to address their national needs first. While there is a clear need to strike a balance between developing national CBRN risk mitigation capacities and reinforcing regional cooperation, the ratio of national to regional activities among the projects for which we had sufficient information, was 70:30.

42. Reinforcing CBRN networks at national and regional level is a key requirement to ensure an adequate response in case of an incident involving CBRN agents. The Initiative aims to help partner countries in cooperating and collaborating. However, regional interaction was not frequent. Regional round table meetings (see **Figure 1** and **Annex I**), where projects are discussed, are generally held twice per year but national experts are invited only once,

³⁶ The IcSP long-term regional cooperation officer post allocated to Amman has been transferred to DG NEAR.

³⁷ Such as counter-terrorism, the protection of critical infrastructure and the fight against illicit trafficking.

thereby limiting the expertise present. DG DEVCO also organises a yearly meeting with the heads of the regional secretariats alone. The national focal points and on-site experts have said that there is a need to hold more regular regional meetings, invite international experts, organise brief workshops/training sessions and run more tabletop and field exercises.

43. Currently there is no discussion forum or space to share guidelines, best practices, studies or lessons learned from international organisations or from EU projects funded under other programmes (for instance the Prevention of and Fight against Crime, the 7th Research Framework Programme, the Internal Security Fund-Police and Horizon 2020) in the CBRN area with partner countries.

... in exploring other funding possibilities

44. The future of the Initiative depends to a large extent on the implementation of the national action plans. These NAPs list many measures (see examples in **Annex V**) which cannot be carried out in full using national budgets and Initiative resources alone, whereas other sources of funding exist and can be used such as for instance, the European Neighbourhood Instrument, the European Development Fund or the Instrument for Nuclear Safety Cooperation.

45. The NAP is a key document for facilitating donor coordination in the CBRN field and thus for directing further resources towards national capacity-building (see **Box 5**).

Box 5 – Development of the Georgian national action plan

In 2015, Georgia adopted its 2015-2019 CBRN national action plan. Although it was not developed using the Initiative's needs assessment methodology, Georgia's NAP was one of the first adopted among the partner countries.

It includes 30 priorities and 118 specific measures. The Interagency Coordination Council of Georgia meets annually to discuss implementation of the NAP. Donors are also invited to this event.

A key outcome of the special Donor Coordination meeting in November 2017 was a needs assessment document, compiled by the Georgian side, which should help donors, including the EU, in planning their assistance in the field of CBRN. Two EU Member States offered assistance on emergency medical response/civil protection and the training of CBRN military units. Additionally, a

major non-EU donor announced that all future CBRN-related assistance to Georgia would be aligned with the NAP.

46. The EU delegations can play a significant role in identifying other sources of funding. They can include CBRN topics such as food safety, bio-safety, bio-security, chemical pollution, safety standards, CBRN legal frameworks in projects funded in traditional development sectors (e.g. agriculture, environment, health, justice). However, most of EU delegations surveyed have not sought additional funds for the CBRN activities.

47. The vast majority of the surveyed EU delegations indicated that donor coordination meetings with EU Member States had not yet taken place.

48. Despite the fact that the Neighbourhood is a priority area for the Initiative and the EU generally, DG NEAR's involvement has been limited to date. Greater interaction of DG DEVCO with other Commission Directorates-General, for instance DG NEAR and DG ECHO, would also make it easier to fill the identified gaps that the Initiative has not been able to address.

Inadequate monitoring and evaluation

49. The Initiative should disclose the results achieved, in order to steer future strategic and operational choices, and to generate the level of interest and political engagement needed for its success.

50. While having overall responsibility for monitoring the Initiative, DG DEVCO relies on other stakeholders for the necessary feedback. They collect information, monitor and evaluate the Initiative's activities through:

- (a) a CBRN Centres of Excellence web-based portal ("the portal");
- (b) steering committee meetings with project implementers;
- (c) coordination committees with the EEAS, the JRC, UNICRI, the Governance Team and on-site experts;
- (d) reports from UNICRI, the Governance Team, on-site experts and project implementers;

- (e) results-oriented on-the-spot monitoring missions;
- (f) JRC evaluation reports.

The portal: a potential information and monitoring tool

51. The portal is a restricted-access web-platform which should, according to DG DEVCO, include all project documentation. It is also intended to inform stakeholders of planned activities, publish minutes of key meetings and contact lists. However, the information published is sporadic, incomplete, poorly structured and not easily accessible in a user-friendly (or mobile-friendly) format. The JRC is responsible for maintaining the portal, but it relies on DG DEVCO to provide project documentation. Currently, the portal is not fulfilling its potential as an operational and management tool (see ***Annex VII***), or as a forum for discussion (see ***paragraph 43***).

52. Project implementers rely on the portal to learn from previous projects. As the portal is incomplete and does not include an inventory of project outputs, project implementers do not systematically have access to this information. This has resulted in a certain duplication of activities. For instance some introductory CBRN training programmes have been repeated in several projects without re-using similar produced material, which could have reduced project costs.

Other monitoring tools

53. DG DEVCO, the JRC, the regional secretariats and national focal points did not systematically collect and consolidate information anywhere outside the portal either. The high number of actors involved, poor record-keeping and incomplete project information complicate and impair the Commission's oversight, monitoring and evaluation of projects.

54. DG DEVCO followed up project activities at steering committee meetings. However, poor record-keeping by DG DEVCO prevented us from confirming that regular meetings had taken place and that the contractual obligations had been respected.

55. We recommended in special report 17/2014 that cooperation be improved between decision-making and implementing bodies by, for instance, re-establishing the coordination

committee. These meetings resumed in 2014 and usually took place twice a year. They facilitated the management of the Initiative by providing a global overview of the activities carried out by the different key actors³⁸. The recommendation, in our previous special report 17/2014, is considered to be fully implemented.

56. DG DEVCO also monitors results on the basis of on-the-spot visits carried out by external experts. At the time of our audit, only six results-oriented monitoring reports had been finalised for 60 projects implemented through the Initiative, one of these reports being the on-site technical assistance. Results-oriented monitoring visits were not carried out on projects implemented by the JRC, although these cannot be evaluated by the JRC itself.

The evaluation of results is not satisfactory

57. The lack of clear, well-defined objectives, together with the absence of relevant outcome/impact indicators at both the Initiative and project level³⁹, made it impossible to assess the results in terms of improved capacities to mitigate and prepare for CBRN risks and threats. In addition, the Initiative's achievements could not be measured because the projects' outcomes and impact were not linked to the overarching objectives.

58. The JRC is responsible for all project evaluations but has outsourced most project evaluations to external experts, since September 2016. All evaluations have been desk-based and rely on the input from the JRC. We found that one third of the evaluations had not been completed due to insufficient availability of project documentation (see [paragraph 51](#)).

59. Despite being desk-based, the final evaluations took on average 19 months after publication of the final reports (and even longer after project completion). The mid-term

³⁸ DG DEVCO, the EEAS, the on-site expert, UNICRI and the Governance Team.

³⁹ For almost 70 % of the projects.

evaluations were not finalised until the projects were almost complete. Recommendations, where they were made, were often effectively redundant as it was too late to apply them⁴⁰.

60. The fact that most projects are stand-alone activities, unaccompanied by a longer-term plan, is not conducive to their sustainability. The vast majority of projects we examined lacked provisions for ensuring the sustainability of their outcomes. Even if some projects have provided first responders with CBRN equipment, many partner countries lack basic equipment, often making the activities implemented too advanced for their technical capacities. As CBRN is not the highest priority, national funding is limited, putting the continuation of the achieved outcomes in jeopardy. Only a handful of training activities – including training-of-trainer exercises – have continued beyond the end of the project.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

61. The Initiative is the EU's largest civilian external security programme. The concept embraces a unique regional and interagency approach, involving many actors (see **paragraphs 8 to 10**). Overall, the Initiative is one of the main tools to mitigate CBRN threats and risks from outside the EU (paragraph 4). We conclude that the Initiative has contributed to mitigating these CBRN threats, but that many challenges remain (see **paragraphs 16 to 60**).

62. The Commission and the EEAS have fully implemented three out of six of the recommendations, contained in our special report 17/2014, and partially implemented two of them (**Annex II** and **paragraphs 11, 16 to 21, 28, 30 to 32, 39 to 40 and 55**). Partner countries are now more involved in the initiation and implementation of projects, the organization at regional level has been strengthened and cooperation between decision-makers and implementing bodies has improved. While some progress has been made, the role of the EU delegations and the speed of project implementation are still not satisfactory (**paragraphs 27 to 48**). One of our earlier recommendation, which proposed to concentrate

⁴⁰ For example: project 6 final evaluation recommended to “improve the management of time and financial resources. If resources are insufficient, identify this early on to project oversight”. Project 22 ex-post evaluation recommended to “broaden the definitions of the emergency response disciplines to include a broader base of stakeholders, to include medical providers”.

EU funding in the areas most relevant to EU security and was accepted by the Commission, has not been implemented (see **paragraphs 16 to 21**).

63. The Initiative's success hinges on the ability to adapt and address the key challenges which it now faces. The recommendations that follow, which are designed to address the shortcomings arising from the audit, aim to further strengthen and sustain the Initiative.

64. An adequate risk management approach to the activities of the Initiative has not yet been developed for the Initiative as a whole, at the project selection stage and for the identification of partner countries' needs (**paragraphs 18 to 23**).

65. The Commission provides partner countries with tools and a methodology to help them assess their own needs and develop national action plans to mitigate CBRN risks (see **paragraphs 22 and 23**). However, not sufficient guidance is given as how risks should be identified and prioritised (see **paragraph 23**). Despite this drawback, the needs assessment questionnaire and national action plan are still key elements that underpin the Initiative. However, the Commission cannot respond quickly enough to meet all partner countries' requests for assistance in identifying and prioritising their needs; and this risks to seriously delay the preparation of both the questionnaires and the action plans (see **paragraph 26**).

Recommendation 1

Prioritise activities on the basis of a systemic risk assessment

The Commission and the EEAS should:

- (a) carry out a joint EU analysis identifying external CBRN risks to the EU to comprehensively link internal and external action.

The Commission should:

- (b) embed systemic risk assessments into the needs assessment and national action plan methodologies;
- (c) respond quickly to all partner countries requesting assistance to finalise their needs assessment and national action plan exercises.

Target implementation date: June 2019.

66. A number of aspects of the Initiative have been developed in partner countries in addition to the improvements resulting from our previous recommendations. The Initiative has promoted a culture of safety and cooperation (see **paragraphs 22 and 31**). CBRN national teams have been appointed in the majority of the partner countries. Projects have delivered most of their outputs; stakeholders have especially valued operational capacity-building exercises (see **paragraphs 34 to 35**).

67. Regional cooperation has been initiated but it is still lacking as partner countries do not have sufficient interaction and wish to address their national needs first (see **paragraphs 33, 41 to 43**).

Recommendation 2

Strengthen the Initiative's regional dimension

The Commission should increase the number of regional activities, such as field and tabletop exercises.

Target implementation date: December 2019.

68. Since our earlier special report 17/2014, the EU delegations' involvement in the Initiative has improved. However, they were insufficiently active in promoting the Initiative and mobilising political will (see **paragraphs 39 and 40**). CBRN was not systematically included in the policy, security or political dialogue.

Recommendation 3

Further strengthen the EU delegations' role in the Initiative

The Commission and the EEAS should jointly:

- (a) assign CBRN responsibilities to designated focal points and/or IcSP long-term regional cooperation officers in all the EU delegations;
- (b) include CBRN in the policy, security and political dialogue.

Target implementation date: December 2018.

69. Interaction between the Commission's Directorates-General and with the donor community, particularly on the question of the potential funding available, was limited (see **paragraphs 44 to 48**).

Recommendation 4

Identify potential synergies and other available funding sources

DG DEVCO and the EEAS should work together with other relevant Commission Directorates-General, in particular with DG NEAR, as well as with other donors in order to identify potential synergies and available funding sources which could be better used to support CBRN activities.

Target implementation date: June 2019.

70. The Commission's monitoring and evaluation was inadequate owing to incomplete and sporadic information, poor record-keeping and insufficient partner country involvement (see **paragraphs 51 to 60**). The lack of clear objectives, relevant indicators and data collected on the ground impaired the assessment of the outcome and impact of projects and the Initiative as a whole.

Recommendation 5

Increase accountability and visibility of activities and results through improved monitoring and evaluation

The Commission should:

- (a) translate the Initiative's overall objective into more specific objectives that can be used at project level, enabling results to be measured from the project level up to the national, regional and Initiative-wide level;
- (b) define outcome and impact indicators allowing the Initiative's effectiveness to be assessed against the set objectives.

Target implementation date: December 2019.

71. The CBRN web-based portal has considerable potential as an operational database for the implementation and management of the Initiative's activities but it is not yet an effective, complete, up to date and structured repository of activities, lessons learned and best practices (see [paragraphs 51 to 59](#)).

Recommendation 6

Overhaul the web-based portal to allow easy access to all the information concerning the Initiative's activities

The Commission should ensure that:

- (a) all relevant information is available on its web-based portal with the appropriate levels of access authorisation;
- (b) best practices and guidelines are accessible through the CBRN portal.

Target implementation date: December 2018.

This Report was adopted by Chamber III, headed by Mr Karel PINXTEN, Member of the Court of Auditors, in Luxembourg at its meeting of 24 April 2018.

For the Court of Auditors

Klaus-Heiner LEHNE

President

The Initiative in numbers

Period	2009-2013	2014-2017	2020
Budget	€109 million Yearly average = ± 22	€76 million Yearly average = ± 19	€130 million
Allocated	€97 million for projects €41 million for assistance (capacity building and governance)		

Source: European Court of Auditors based on CRIS.

8 regions and 58 partner countries in October 2017

Number of	AAF	NAS	SEEE	MIE	GCC	ECA	CA	SEA	Total
Partner countries	10	6 (+1)	10	3	3	11	5	10	58
NFPs	10	6	10	3	3	11	5	9	57
National teams	10	1	9	3	0	10	3	8	46
Round table meetings	12	7	14	9	5	9	6	13	NA
Finalised needs assessment questionnaires	6	1	4	2	1	5	3	4	26
Finalised national action plans	4	0	3	1	0	4	0	6	18

Source: European Court of Auditors based on JRC documents, on-site technical assistance reports, round table meetings minutes and CRIS.

Follow-up of the recommendations included in special report 17/2014

Recommendations	Current status	References in the text
Concentrate EU funding in the areas of most relevance to EU security so to get the most direct benefit.	Not implemented	Paragraphs 16 to 21
Increase the capacities of the regional secretariats by adding technical expertise.	Fully implemented	Paragraph 28
Increase the role of the EU delegations, particularly in the countries where a regional secretariat has been set up.	Partially implemented	Paragraphs 39 to 40
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.	Fully implemented	Paragraphs 30 to 31
Continue efforts to improve procedures in order to decrease the time gap between project proposals and project implementation.	Partially implemented	Paragraph 32
Improve cooperation between decision-making and implementing bodies, for instance by reviving the coordination committee.	Fully implemented	Paragraph 55

Source: European Court of Auditors.

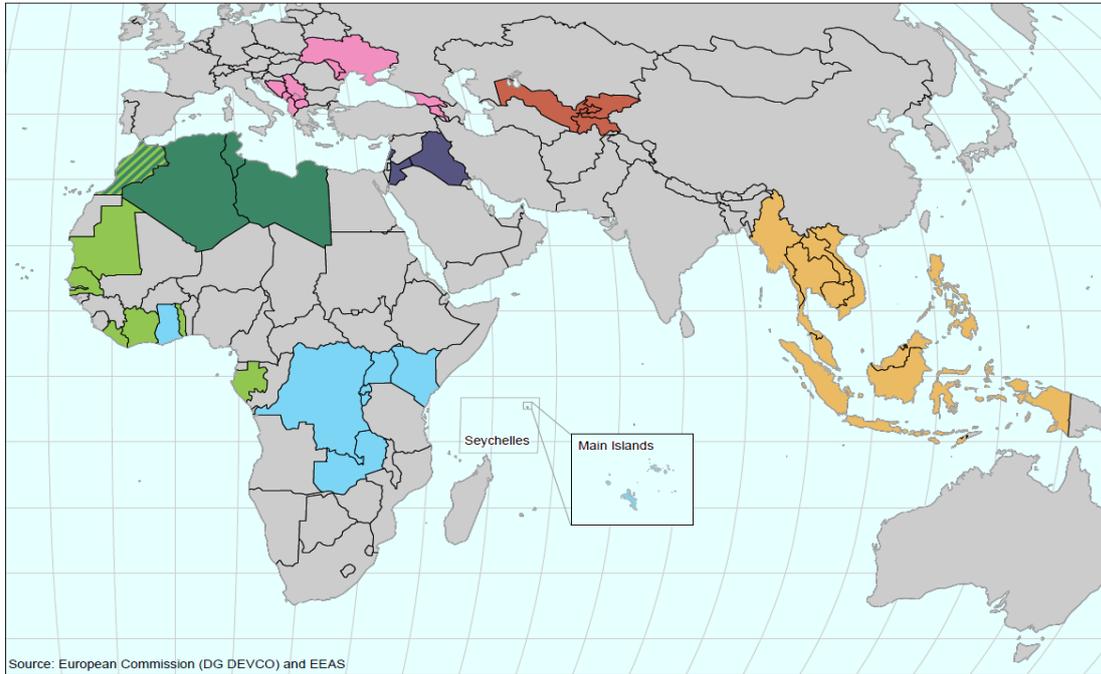
Regional secretariats and partner countries in October 2017

Abbreviation	Region	Countries involved
SEA	South East Asia	Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam
AAF	African Atlantic Façade	Benin, Cameroon, Ivory Coast, Gabon, Liberia, Mauritania, Morocco, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo
NAS	North Africa Sahel	Algeria, Burkina Faso, Libya, Mali, Morocco, Niger, Tunisia
SEEE	South East and Eastern Europe	Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Georgia, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia, Ukraine
CA	Central Asia	Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan
MIE	Middle East	Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon
ECA	Eastern and Central Africa	Burundi, Democratic republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Seychelles, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council Countries	United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Saudi Arabia

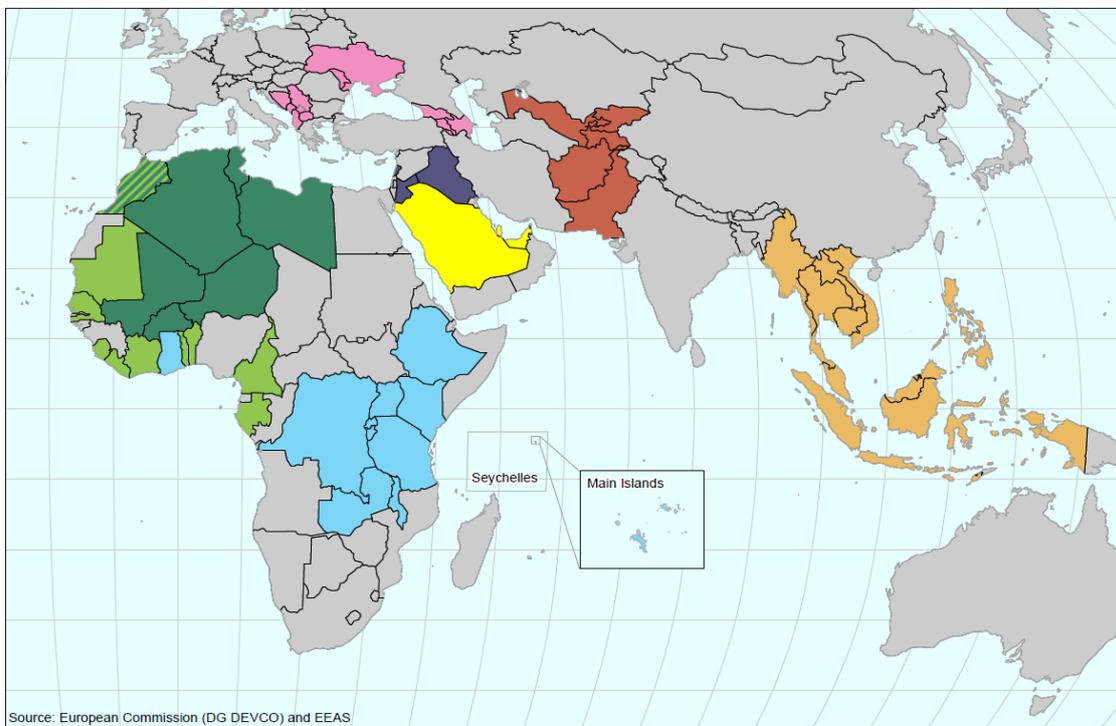
Source: European Court of Auditors based on DG DEVCO and the EEAS.

Geographical distribution of the Initiative

In January 2014



In October 2017



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this maps do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the European Union.

Legend:

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| ■ AAF: African Atlantic Façade | ■ GCC: Gulf Cooperation Council | ■ SEA: South East Asia |
| ■ CA: Central Asia | ■ MIE: Middle East | ■ SEEE: South East and Eastern Europe |
| ■ ECA: Eastern and Central Africa | ■ NAS: North Africa Sahel | |

Examples of CBRN priorities extracted from the National Action Plans from four partner countries

CÔTE D'IVOIRE

CBRN

- Improve chemical waste management capacities

CBRN

- Improve measures to prevent infectious diseases
- Improve the capacity to manage medical or biological waste, including its transport and incineration
- Improve biosecurity measures in laboratories, hospitals and research centres
- Improve the management of food- and medicine-related risks, and prevent the risks associated with genetically modified organisms

CBRN

- Improve radioactive waste management capacities

CBRN

- Set up CBRN emergency first-response teams
- Set up a sub-regional CBRN training centre

LEBANON

CBRN

- Strengthen the legal framework on chemical security and incident response
- Classification and risk assessment of high-risk chemical facilities
- Map national authorities handling chemical security tasks

CBRN

- Strengthen legislation on biological security and licensing
- Enhance security and risk assessment of biological materials and facilities
- Upgrade training and equipment for detection and analysis of biological substances

CBRN

- Set up a national institution in charge of nuclear security
- Improve radiological and nuclear information protection and cyber security
- Reinforce physical protection of radiological and nuclear materials

CBRN

- Strengthen and test the national emergency plan in relation to CBRN incidents
- Implement a CBRN training programme for first responders
- Make an inventory of CBRN facilities and critical infrastructure

LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

CBRN

- Update the chemical legal framework in line with international standards
- Develop a national classification system and inventory of hazardous chemical substances
- Augment chemical detection and monitoring capacities at borders and for imported products
- Strengthen laboratories capacities

CBRN

- Review existing legislation to ensure it covers all aspects of biological risk mitigation and is aligned with newly signed international treaties
- Enhance surveillance and detection capacity at borders
- Strengthen laboratories capacities

CBRN

- Strengthen human resource capabilities for nuclear law development and implementation
- Establish the nuclear regulatory authority
- Establish a licensing system and an inventory of radioactive materials and facilities

CBRN

- Clarify which national authority is responsible for respective CBRN risk mitigation tasks, including CBRN response
- Conduct public health awareness raising campaigns, ensuring messages reach rural and remote areas

GEORGIA

CBRN

- Align national legislation with the Chemical Weapons Convention
- Map high-risk chemicals of concern
- Ensure safe management of hazardous chemicals with environmental and human health impact

CBRN

- Enhance public preparedness to biological incidents
- Implement national biosafety and biosecurity norms and procedures
- Ensure alignment with requirements and obligations of the World Health Organisation's International Health Regulations, the World Organisation for Animal Health, Biological Weapons Convention, UN Security Council Resolution 1540

CBRN

- Conduct national and trans-boundary table-top and field exercises
- Procure radiological detection equipment, measurement devices, personal protective equipment
- Develop standard operating procedures for coordinated incident response and emergency operations systems

CBRN

- Strengthen nationwide interagency coordination

Source: UNICRI's posters based on the information shared by the Ivory Coast, Lebanon, Lao's people democratic Republic and Georgia.

List of projects

No	Project title	Budget (€)	Region	Bottom-up	Formulation of idea	Start date	End date	CBRN areas covered
66	MEDISAFE – Combating illicit traffic and enhancing the safety of medicines in Eastern and Central Africa	In preparation	ECA	hybrid				CB
65	Strengthening chemical and biological waste management in Central Asia countries for improved security and safety risk mitigation	3 000 000	CA	Y	2.06.16			CB
64	EU P2P - Export Control Programme for dual use goods 2017	3 000 000	NAS, SEEE	N				RN
63	Provision of specialized CBRN equipment for the training of personnel in charge of cross-border control	1 000 000	NAS	Y	Related to P 55			CBRN
62	On-site Technical Support to CBRN Centre of Excellence (CoE)	In preparation	SEA	NA				CBRN
61	Sound management of chemicals and their associated wastes in Southeast Asia (SEACHEM)	2 999 815	SEA	Y	3.4.14	1.9.17	1.9.20	C
60	Support to the Centre of Excellence of Eastern and Central Africa in Nuclear Security	3 500 000	ECA	Y		8.11.16	7.11.19	RN
59	Strengthening the CBRN Centre of Excellence Regional Secretariat for the Gulf Cooperation Council Region	285 000	GCC	NA		15.9.15	14.9.16	CBRN
58	Provision of specialized equipment for CBRN forensics in the SEEE CoE Region	1 871 115	SEEE	Y	8.4.14 related to P 57	15.1.17	30.4.18	CBRN
57	Strengthening crime scene forensics capabilities in investigating CBRN incidents in the South East and Eastern Europe Centres of Excellence region	1 399 670	SEEE	Y	8.4.14		14.1.20	CBRN
56	On-site technical assistance 2 On-site technical assistance to the chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear Centres of Excellence Secretariats in Algiers and Tashkent	2 130 250	CA, NAS	NA			10.11.19	CBRN
55	Strengthening cross-border capacity for control and detection of CBRN substances	3 500 000	NAS, AAF	Y	2.7.13		30.9.19	CBRN
54	Capacity building for medical preparedness and response to CBRN incidents	2 999 965	MIE	Y	26.2.14		17.7.19	CBRN
53	Strengthening the national legal frameworks and provision of specialized training on bio-safety and bio-security in Central Asian countries	5 000 000	CA	Y	25.3.15	22.12.15	21.12.18	B
52	Provision of specialized CBRN equipment for first responders in in the SEE CoE Region	1 697 563	SEEE	Y	10.7.13 related to P 44	11.12.15	10.6.18	CBRN
51	On-site technical assistance to the chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear Centres of Excellence secretariats in Georgia, Kenya and Morocco	2 969 700	SEEE, CA, AAF	NA		15.9.15	14.9.18	CBRN
50	Provision of specialised equipment to enhance CBRN preparedness and response capabilities	2 634 042	AAF, ECA	Y	1.4.14	1.10.15	30.6.19	CBRN

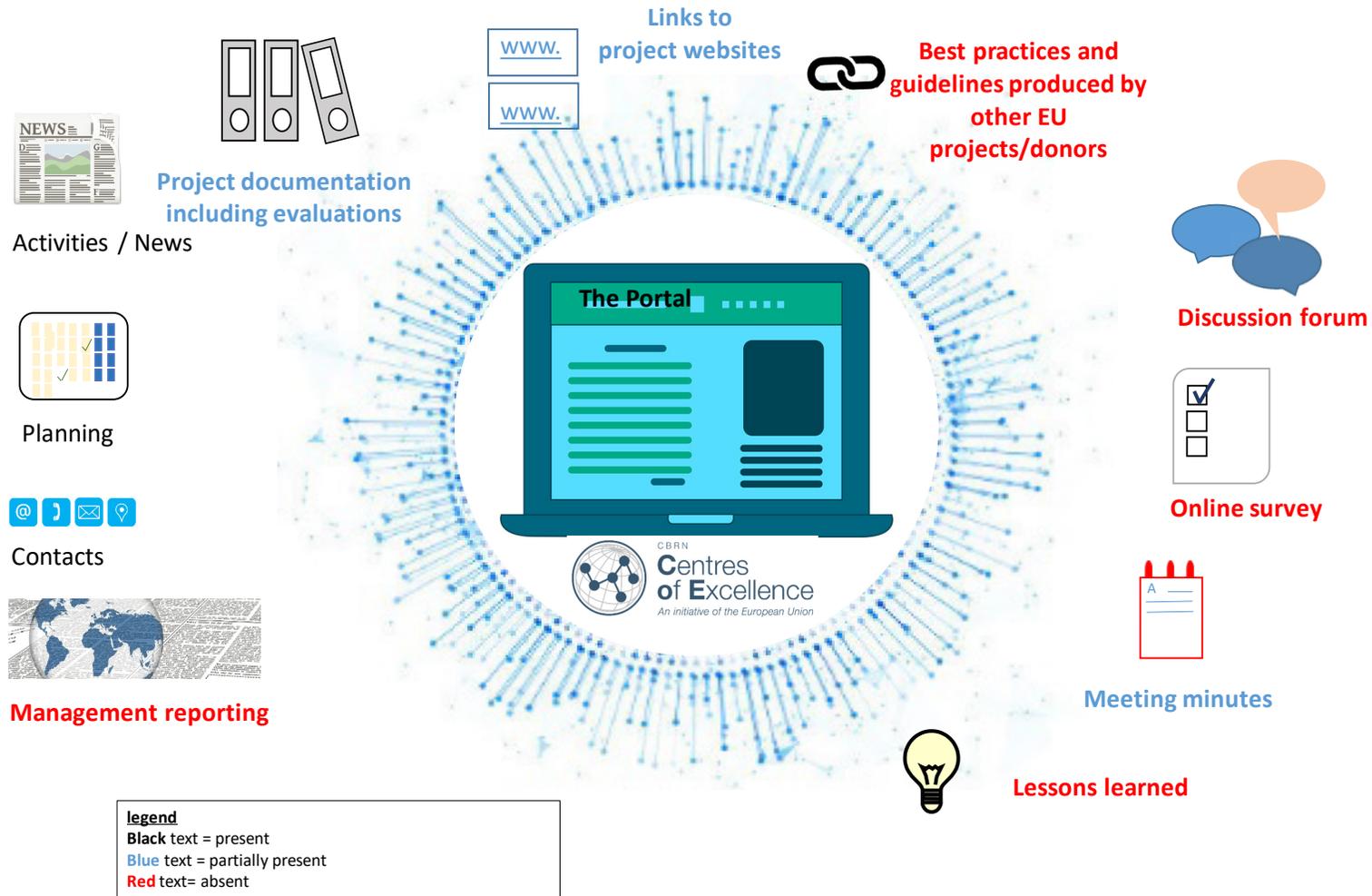
No	Project title	Budget (€)	Region	Bottom-up	Formulation of idea	Start date	End date	CBRN areas covered
49	One Health Project in Pakistan	927 608	CA	N		5.1.15	4.1.18	B
48	Improved regional management of outbreaks in the CBRN centres of excellence partner countries of the African Atlantic Façade region.	3 499 600	AAF	Y	1.6.14	1.1.16	31.12.18	B
47	EU outreach programme for dual use items - South-East Asia	3 472 100	SEA	Y	3.4.14	1.9.15	31.8.18	CBRN
46	Enhancement of CBRN capacities of South East Asia in addressing CBRN risk mitigation concerning CBRN first response, biosafety and biosecurity, awareness raising and legal framework	3 000 000	SEA	Y	3.4.14	10.7.15	9.7.18	CBRN
45	Establishment of a Mobile Laboratory for in situ interventions on VHF outbreak sites in combination with CBRN Capacity Building in Western Africa (EUWAM-Lab)	2 579 854	AAF	N		18.9.14	17.11.17	B
44	Strengthening CBRN first response capabilities and regional cooperation in South East Europe, Southern Caucasus, Moldova and Ukraine	2 953 550	SEEE	Y	10.7.13	1.1.15	30.4.18	CBRN
43	EU outreach programme for dual use items	2 249 250	SEEE, MIE, GCC, NA S CA	N		1.9.15	30.6.17	CBRN
42	Chemical safety and security in the Central and Eastern African region	2 978 000	ECA, AAF	Y	6.5.14	5.1.15	4.1.18	C
41	High risk chemical facilities and risk mitigation in the AAF region	3 000 000	AAF, NAS	Y	1.6.14	1.1.15	31.12.17	C
40	Strengthening Health Laboratories to minimize potential biological risks	4 495 712	SEEE, NAS, MIE, CA	N		18.12.13	17.12.17	B
39	Strengthening Health Security at Ports, Airports and Ground crossings	1 432 757	CA, GCC, MIE, NA S	N		24.7.13	23.11.15	B
38	Export control outreach for dual use items	3 500 000	CA, MIE	N		30.12.13	29.7.19	CBRN
37	Preventing Vector Borne Diseases around the Mediterranean and Black Sea regions by creating new networks MEDILABSECURE	3 626 410	SEEE, MIE, NA S	N		6.1.14	5.7.18	B
36	Further development and consolidation of the Mediterranean Programme for Intervention Epidemiology Training ("MediPIET")	6 400 000	SEEE, MIE, NAS	N		1.1.14	31.12.17	B
35	AAF- Waste management	3 871 800	AAF	Y	20.3.13	1.1.14	31.12.17	CB
34	Strengthening Capacities in CBRN Response and in Chemical and Medical Emergency	3 914 034	MIE	Y	1.9.12	23.12.13	22.6.17	CBRN
33	Strengthening the National CBRN Legal Framework & Provision of specialized and technical training to enhance CBRN preparedness and response capabilities	2 699 069	AAF, ECA	Y	20.3.13	15.9.13	28.2.17	CBRN
32	Establishment of a Mediterranean Programme for Intervention Epidemiology Training (MediPIET)	400 000	MIE, NAS, SEEE, AAF	N		1.1.13	31.12.14	B
31	Network of universities and institutes for raising awareness on dual-use concerns of chemical materials	614 883	CA, MIE, AAF, NAS,	Y		21.12.12	20.4.15	C

No	Project title	Budget (€)	Region	Bottom-up	Formulation of idea	Start date	End date	CBRN areas covered
			SEEE, SEA					
30	Network of Excellence for Nuclear Forensics in South East Asia Region	600 000	SEEE, SEA	Y		21.12.12	20.12.16	RN
29	Regional Human Resource Development for Nuclear Safety, Security and Safeguards Management through a University Master's Programme carried out in Thailand	624 451	SEA	Y		21.12.12	20.3.16	RN
28	Supporting development of an integrated national security system for nuclear and radioactive materials	1 000 000	SEA	Y		21.12.12	20.12.16	RN
27	Bio-risk management	480 000	SEA	Y		21.12.12	30.6.15	B
26	Prerequisite to strengthening CBRN national legal frameworks	299 936	MIE, NAS	Y		17.12.12	16.12.14	CBRN
25	Knowledge development and transfer of best practice on bio-safety/bio-security/bio-risk management	434 010	MIE	N		12.12.12	11.4.15	B
24	Development of a methodology for RN materials detection, management and protection of the public	599 830	AAF	Y		18.12.12	17.12.17	RN
23	Building capacity to identify and respond to threats from chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear substances	492405	AAF, SEEE, MIE, NAS, SEA	N		10.12.12	9.12.14	CBRN
22	Provision of specialised technical training to enhance the first responders' capabilities in case of CBRN incidents	677 766	AAF, SEA	Y		17.12.12	16.12.14	CBRN
21	Building regional border control capacity to identify and detect CRN materials	700 000	AAF,SEA	Y		21.12.12	20.12.16	CRN
20	not contracted							
19	Development of procedures and guidelines to create and improve secure information management system and data exchange mechanisms for CBRN materials under regulatory control	400 000	AAF, CA, ECA,MI E, NAS, SEEE, SEA	N		01.03.13	30.6.15	CBRN
18	International Network of universities and institutes for raising awareness on dual-use concerns in bio-technology	399 719	AAF, CA, MIE, NAS, SEEE, SEA	N		01.03.13	31.12.14	B
17	Establishing a National Response Plan in Ghana and Kenya for responding to unauthorised events involving chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) materials	240 000	ECA, AAF	Y		15.05.13	15.5.15	CBRN
16	Supporting development of an integrated national nuclear security system	400 000	NAS, AAF	Y		01.01.13	30.9.15	RN
15	Strengthening laboratory bio-safety and bio-security through development of a laboratory iso-bank system	480 000	SEA	N		01.08.13	30.6.15	CBRN
14	Provision of specialised and technical training to enhance the First Response Capabilities (CBRN FRstCap)	400 000	SEEE	N		01.04.13	31.3.15	CBRN

No	Project title	Budget (€)	Region	Bottom-up	Formulation of idea	Start date	End date	CBRN areas covered
13	Capacity building and raising awareness for identifying and responding to threats from chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear materials in Sub Saharan African countries	319 924	ECA	N		01.01.13	30.6.15	CBRN
12	Sharing experience between EU and South East Asian countries on the reinforcement of legislations and regulations in the field of bio-safety and bio-security, as well as relevant laboratories management systems through Regional Centre of Excellence - phase 2	320 000	SEA	N		01.04.13	31.3.15	B
11	Promoting good practice and interagency procedures for assessing the risks of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear misuse	1 915 452	AAF, MIE, NAS, SEEE, SEA	N		01.01.13	31.12.14	CBRN
10	Development of e-learning courses for CBRN risk mitigation	399 806	AAF,CA, ECA, MIE, NAS, SEEE, SEA	Y		01.01.13	31.3.15	CBRN
9	National Response Plan in Lebanon for CBRN Events	159 900	MIE	N		01.01.13	31.12.14	CBRN
8	Prerequisite to strengthening CBRN national legal frameworks	800 000	SEA	Y		01.01.13	30.6.15	CBRN
7	Guidelines, procedures and standardisation on bio-safety/bio-security	1 199 576	SEEE, SEA	Y		01.01.13	31.3.15	B
6	Knowledge development and transfer of best practice on chemical and biological waste management	480 000	SEA	Y		01.01.13	31.12.14	CB
5	Knowledge development and transfer of best practice on CBRN import/export monitoring	1 440 000	AAF,CA, MIE, NAS	N		01.01.13	31.12.14	CBRN
4	Interagency CBRN Response Programme (ICP)	959 675	SEEE, SEA	Y		01.01.13	31.12.14	CBRN
3	Knowledge development and transfer of best practice on bio-safety/bio-security/bio-risk management	1 920 000	AAF, NAS, SEEE, SEA	Y		01.01.13	30.6.15	B
2	Building Capacity to identify and respond to threats from Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear substances (CBRNcap)	160 000	SEEE	N		01.01.13	31.3.15	CBRN
1	Identification and strengthening forensic capacities in the area of prevention of organised crime and illicit trafficking of chemical agents, including training and equipment for the line officers	640 000	SEEE	N		01.01.13	31.3.15	C

Source: CBRN portal and CRIS.

Information contained or not in the portal



REPLIES OF THE COMMISSION AND THE EEAS TO THE SPECIAL REPORT OF THE EUROPEAN COURT OF AUDITORS

"THE EU CHEMICAL, BIOLOGICAL, RADIOLOGICAL AND NUCLEAR CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE: MORE PROGRESS NEEDED"

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

III. The Commission and the EEAS agree with the Court's conclusion. However, they disagree with the Court's comments in relation to the non-implementation of the recommendation to concentrate EU funding in areas most relevant for EU security.

The bottom-up, all hazards and voluntary approach is the main feature of the CBRN Centres of Excellence (CoE) Initiative, while promoting and supporting regional cooperation in the CBRN field, with a view to contributing to the EU protection from outsider threats, represent its overarching goal.

Objective 3 of the revised EU CBRN Action Plan (Communication COM(2017) 610) entitled "*Action Plan to enhance preparedness against chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear security risks*" recognizes the full potential and achievements of the Initiative, notably in the context of creating a "mirroring effect" when strengthening cooperation with the Initiative and other international actors in order to contribute to EU internal security.

According to these fundamental features, the Initiative shall be seen as a long-term effort to build effective regional CBRN risk mitigation capacities. Its first years of implementation were dedicated to building confidence within and between partner countries, in order to lay down the foundation for them to discuss security related matters and propose regional projects focusing on increasingly sensitive, security-related domains. However, given the bottom-up and voluntary approach, such a process cannot be forced in order for the Initiative not to lose its credibility. The Initiative reached a stage of maturity and high-level confidence with partner countries in the last two years, which now allows for in depth cooperation on CBRN security. Increased confidence, participation and support towards the Initiative by partner countries allowed the Commission to start steering regional roundtable discussions and guide project proposals. Such developments were not homogenous, as each of the 8 regions presents its own peculiarities and is affected by a number of factors influencing the Commission's decision in terms of funding allocation. Therefore, although the Commission is aware and convinced that the EU Neighbourhood shall represent the primary focus of the Initiative and the first recipient of its projects, the situations in some of the neighbouring regions and its impact on the feasibility of certain actions has also to be taken into account.

For example, in the Middle East (MIE), partner countries interest in pursuing regional cooperation is hindered by the crisis in Syria, the situation in Iraq and the flows of refugees and displaced people they have caused. Such events pushed Jordan, Iraq itself and Lebanon (MIE CoE members) to focus more on domestic issues rather than on regional cooperation.

The North Africa and Sahel (NAS) region, where cooperation started later than in other regions, is also affected by regional crises linked to the situation in Libya. Despite such difficult conditions, the CoE Regional Secretariat managed not only to keep cooperation going, but to launch a project in the field of border control, an area where building regional capacities is key to enhance EU security from threats related to organized crime, drugs and human trafficking.

Sensitive topics have also started to be addressed in the South East and Eastern Europe (SEEE) region, where a project aimed at "Strengthening crime scene forensics capabilities in investigating CBRN incidents in the South East and Eastern Europe region" through sharing of information and organization of sub-regional exercises was recently launched.

With regard to CoE regions located beyond EU neighbourhood, it is important to point out that their relevance for EU security should not be underestimated when it comes to CBRN. This is true, in particular, for the Biological field: human and animal diseases such as Ebola and Avian Flu both originated outside of the EU neighbourhood, but posed concrete risks to EU citizens' public health and its economy. The CoE contributed to prevent such risks through several projects dealing with outbreaks management in the African Atlantic Façade and South East Asia regions. In this view, it is worth noticing that distance does not represent a guarantee for protection. This is ultimately the reasons why the Commission (DG DEVCO) is considering building a bridge between the EU Neighbourhood and the other regions in the field of biosafety and biosecurity: actions outside of the EU Neighbourhood should mirror actions in it, and the successful Mediterranean Programme for Intervention Epidemiology Training (MediPIET) programme could serve as a model.

For instance, the implementation of CBRN risk mitigation activities in the Eastern & Central Africa (ECA) region is important, as CBRN security in this part of the world could easily impact other regions, including the EU. Project 60 on strengthening nuclear security in the ECA region helps strengthen nuclear policy regimes, in order to prevent trafficking in dangerous radiological and nuclear (RN) materials, including RN orphan sources. Such high-risk RN materials are at risk of being trafficked through ports to elsewhere in the world. The same applies to the laboratories in the ECA region, from where pathogens and biological agents could be stolen (in view of insufficient security measures to protect these laboratories).

In addition to these efforts, the draft Action Document 2018 on Climate Change foresees a primary role for the CoE, which is indicated as the platform to sensitize partner countries on climate change security via their national teams and National Focal Points (NFPs). The document also provides additional resources to the CoE, in order to launch and finance new projects addressing the risks posed to the EU and its Neighbours by migration of disease vectors due to climate change. This action will build on the biosecurity networks established by P37 MEDILABSECURE and Projects 32 and 36 supporting the MediPIET Programme.

In light of these considerations, the Commission believes that the assessment of whether the present recommendation should be considered fulfilled or not shall be based on a more complex and composite definition of "areas most relevant to EU Security", taking into account the nature and scope of CBRN risks and threats, as well as the fundamental features of the CBRN Centres of Excellence Initiative.

IV. The Commission and the EEAS agree that a comprehensive and systematic risk assessment approach covering intentional, natural and accidental risks (which has been started) will benefit the initiative and will better show its value, both for the partner countries and regions and the EU itself.

Within the scope of the Initiative, the tools and expertise provided by the Commission to the partner countries allow for the identification of hazards (based on the 300 questions of the needs assessment questionnaire - NAQ) and of risks based on the listing of capabilities which are absent or partially satisfactory (identified as gaps in the NAQ results). These findings are the basis for the development of a CBRN National Action Plan (NAP) to mitigate the risks identified. During the discussions, the national team is requested to prioritise these actions according to their prior information on the probability of the specific risk to be prevalent in the country. This approach has triggered the interest of the partner countries and of the Commission teams in a more comprehensive and objective risk assessment methodology, (with the support of the onsite assistance) which has been under discussion and is in the process of being embedded in the NAQ-NAP process. This upgraded risk assessment tool will align with the risks identified during the NAQ exercise and become part of the discussions of the CBRN NAP document to support the prioritisation of NAP actions.

In order to reinforce the risk based approach, the Commission services and the EEAS started to use additional sources of information and risks assessments produced by either open sources, commercial sources or classified sources.

However, it needs to be outlined that security related information sources cover mainly intentional risks and therefore do not cover the full range of CBRN risks (natural, accidental) addressed by the CoE Initiative. Non-intentional risks (accidental, natural) are therefore assessed by complementary methodologies, which are being gradually integrated into the CoE methodology.

V. The risk assessment component will be reinforced and embedded into the needs assessment and national action plan methodology. This should serve to raise the partner countries' awareness for the importance of performing a risk assessment, to introduce possible approaches and guidance, as well as to better support them when prioritising actions.

In addition, the increasing relevance and number of Table Top and Field Exercises will enhance the risk assessment, as they will help identifying lack of capacities in partner countries and the risks posed by it.

VI. In addition to this, the Initiative has established a consolidated regional and worldwide network of Focal Points dealing with CBRN issues, trusting each other and exchanging information even outside of official CoE meetings.

A very recent (March 2018) evidence of success (indirect impact of the CoE network) took place in African Atlantic Facade (AAF) region, where the National Focal Point of Burkina Faso, informed by his authorities about the theft of Radiological material in the country, immediately informed the National Focal Point of Mali in order to discuss possible measures to address the issue and activate border cooperation via the CoE.

VII. Regional Secretariats and National Focal Points understand that they can progressively become a one stop shop or single entry point in the region to tackle CBRN regional and national matters. They play a key role in this coordination, in supporting the set-up of regional events (e.g. Rabat West Africa post Ebola workshop in October 2017), in the development of regional action plans or in preparing the grounds for regional table top or cross-border exercises.

As an example of such regional cooperation, the Central Asia CoE secretariat was proposed in March 2018 by the chair of BACAC (the Biosafety Association for Central Asia and the Caucasus) to share the organisation of their annual regional conference in late 2018, in close connection with the ISTC and the on-going CoE project 53.

VIII. The process towards a greater involvement of EU Delegations in the Initiative was started by the Commission services and the EEAS jointly. Some progress has been achieved, regular and closer contacts with Regional Secretariats, implementers and the Governance Team are now in place. Some Delegations provided crucial support in bringing key partner countries on board (Ethiopia, Mongolia, Pakistan, Sierra Leone), or giving new strength to their participation by raising the political attention towards the Initiative.

Reaching full involvement of all Delegations in the 59 CoE partner countries is a rather ambitious goal considering the shrinking budget, increasing workloads and the time needed to complete this process. However, the Commission and the EEAS are confident in affirming that the pursuit of this goal is on track.

In January 2018, to reach more systemic engagement of EU Delegations in partner and potential partner countries and to increase the political visibility of the Initiative in the country(ies) of their accreditation, respective Heads of Delegation (HoD) have been invited through an official note to take specific actions.

Moreover, since late 2017, the Initiative has been introduced on the agenda of political dialogues/"security clusters".

The work of the Regional Cooperation Officers based in Dakar, Islamabad, Manila and Nairobi resulted in Delegations of the respective regions being much better informed about CBRN CoE activities.

IX. Adjusted sub-objectives and performance indicators have been introduced by the EEAS in the IcSP Multiannual Indicative Programme 2018-2020, following a discussion with the Commission.

An exercise of improving the indicators and log frames has been started with an external consultant in order to improve the programming documents, terms of reference and also the reporting.

X. The EU CBRN CoE portal is an important tool of collaboration for an initiative, which is fully decentralised and active in 8 regions of the globe. It is acknowledged that it has reached its capacity limit. The portal is by nature a collaborative one, and has evolved as the initiative has grown to the current 60 countries, with the consequent need for adjustments. The structure of the current portal is being updated.

Due to the quick evolution of IT technologies, a decision has been taken to work in parallel on the back office development of a new portal, based on a different standard software protocol, which will improve its portability, maintenance, upgrading and sustainability. The JRC is currently conducting the feasibility study for this development.

XI. The Commission and the EEAS accept all of the Court's recommendations.

INTRODUCTION

2. CBRN is an evolving threat and there are indications of a growing trend, especially regarding chemical substances.

4. Indeed, DG DEVCO is ensuring the link and avoiding duplication between the mentioned actions, all having the goal to mitigate CBRN risks. In particular, the dual use export controls component of the EUPartner to partner Initiative is managed by DEVCO in the framework of the CBRN CoE (Projects 38, 43, 47, 64); while the International Science and Technology Center (ISTC) and the Science and technology Center in Ukraine (STCU) have been supported by and involved as implementer in several projects (53, 52, 50), activities and exercises (Sunkar, Lionshield).

9. Part of the role of EU Delegations in the context of the CoE Initiative is to liaise with national authorities and Embassies of EU Member States in the respective countries in order to ensure that NFP's work is well known and supported by both of them. Political support is crucial for the National Focal Point's CBRN coordination work to be effective.

OBSERVATIONS

16. See also reply to paragraph III.

DG HOME focuses mainly on intentional risks and logically focuses on the immediate threats for the EU at its borders. The CoE Initiative is a long term programme aiming at preventing all hazards risks (not only intentional but also accidental and natural). CoE activities include regional projects but also on-site technical assistance (OSA), NAQs, NAPs and support to CBRN overall governance. All activities are serving the same purpose and are complementary to each other. The project share in terms of funding should therefore not be considered isolated from the rest of the activities.

The Southern Mediterranean neighbourhood (NAS and MIE) is indeed a priority but also a very complex area where regional projects have been difficult to start before a sufficient level of confidence and maturity, as explained below.

The MIE is a region which has been facing a very complex security situation for years. Such conditions have made extremely challenging the goal to foster regional cooperation among the CoE partner countries. Rather, Lebanon, Iraq and Jordan are much more focused on their national issues and needs. Nevertheless, discussion and exchanges have continued: the Commission believes that this should be considered a success of the Initiative by itself.

Furthermore, DG DEVCO has already started to approach MIE CoE partners as a priority in the framework of its new Training and Tutoring Programme supported by the CoE (P68), with a view to enhancing their CBRN capacities. At the same time, DG DEVCO is pushing EU Delegations to encourage the use of other financing Instruments (mostly the Development Cooperation Instrument - DCI, the European Neighbourhood Instrument - ENI) to fulfil national needs on a bilateral basis. The idea behind both these actions is to use other means to pursue the same CoE capacity building goals, as addressing partners' needs makes them also ready to relaunch regional cooperation at the right moment. Against this blueprint, the importance of keeping discussion going in the CoE framework, despite the relative stall of projects and activities, is clearly paramount.

As for the SEEE region, which counts 10 countries including from the Western Balkans and the Caucasus, it has effectively addressed challenges of interest for the EU, as countries have started focusing on "hard security" topics, including RN Forensics and First Response to CBRN incidents, also organising joint exercises testing the impact of the projects.

In the NAS region, cooperation has started later than in the others, but quickly reached issues as crucial for the region itself as for EU security interest. P55, by aiming at "*Strengthening cross-border capacity for control and detection of CBRN substances*" has an impact on the fight against terrorism and organised crime. The difficulties met by the project are due to the fact that it addresses highly sensitive topics and addresses partner countries' "hard security" structures, including military.

17. The Commission and the EEAS are aware of the limited resources available. This is indeed the reason motivating the decision not to extend the CBRN CoE geographically to include the Southern part of Africa (South Africa, Namibia, etc.) nor South or Central America, despite the global scope of the Initiative and its goals. Only a very small number of potential partner countries, mainly in the EU's (wider) neighbourhood, representing the main "gaps" in the Initiative's coverage within existing Regional Secretariats, is targeted, as they bring important CBRN related risks/assets (e. g. Kazakhstan), or are considered as an asset per se for their presumed capacity to stimulate stagnating regional cooperation/development of the Initiative (Kuwait).

The in kind contribution from partner countries contributes to increase the level of resources available to CBRN risk mitigation, as well as the additional funding from bilateral assistance from EU or non EU countries (e.g. Poland and the United States in SEEE; France and Germany in AAF).

Yet, although it is true that geographic expansion implies less financial assistance on average per country, it is also true that the scope and goal of the Initiative is to support regional cooperation, as by nature CBRN risks know no national borders. Ethiopia, Kuwait, Pakistan or Azerbaijan are all new CoE partner countries which reinforce the CoE regional cooperation impact. During the recent Central Asia round table in Dushanbe (March 2018), Pakistan for example has offered to share its high level biological and RN capacities with its CA partner countries.

If projects were limited to smaller numbers of countries, they would not impact CBRN security as effectively as if one whole region is covered. Therefore, the increase in number of partner countries

shall rather be viewed as a way to complete the Initiative and ultimately improve the results of its CBRN risk mitigation goals and, by reflection, EU security.

In addition, the Commission used the good reputation of the CBRN CoE among partner countries and its network to target the countries the EU showed a strategic interest in working with: this was the case for Afghanistan, then for Pakistan and Ethiopia (which are now members), but also for Nigeria and Egypt, which the Commission has engaged in bilateral talks although they did not yet join the Initiative.

Finally, the intrinsic nature of the CoE Initiative shall be recalled: its bottom-up and voluntary approach would have made it unnatural for the Commission services/EEAS to reject countries committing to participate to regional efforts to mitigate CBRN risks and fight CBRN threats.

18. The explanation to this shift of project funding can be articulated along two lines.

First, with regard to the CBRN sector, the notion of "risk for the EU" should not be limited to the EU neighbourhood. As explained in the reply to para III, latest risks for the EU in the Biological field were human and animal diseases (Ebola and Avian Flu) originating outside of the Neighbourhood. In these cases, projects dedicated to the AAF and SEA did prioritise an immediate EU interest, although outside of their neighbourhood. This example shows how, especially in the Bio field, distance does not represent a guarantee for security. Therefore, the Commission is convinced that the focus on the Neighbourhood is very important but should not be too strictly conceived, considering the nature of the CBRN risks. Along these lines DG DEVCO is exploring the possibility to use the neighbourhood based MediPIET programme (project 36) as a model to launch similar projects in other regions, with the goal to prevent and mitigate risks in the Bio field.

The implementation of CBRN risk mitigation activities in the Eastern and Central Africa (ECA) region is important, as CBRN security in this part of the world could easily impact other regions, including the EU. Project 60 on strengthening nuclear security in the ECA region helps strengthen nuclear policy regimes, in order to prevent trafficking of dangerous radiological and nuclear (RN) materials, including RN orphan sources. Such high-risk RN materials are at risk of being trafficked through ports to elsewhere in the world. The same applies to the laboratories in the ECA region, from where pathogens and biological agents could be stolen (in view of insufficient security measures to protect these laboratories).

Second, the peculiar conditions of some EU neighbouring regions, as explained in the reply to paragraph III, negatively affected the capacity of roundtables to formulate regional projects, as well as the Commission's decisions on the opportunity to fund them. For example, a national focus by partner countries in the MIE region did not favour project proposals with regional scope, which is the ultimate goal of the Initiative. In the North Africa and Sahel region cooperation started later than in other regions, but a project on a very sensitive and important topic such as border control was launched in such a delicate region. Difficult situations in both those areas have been for the Commission both an opportunity to launch projects on very "hard security" related topics and indeed a challenge in terms of number of projects.

The situation is different for the SEEE. The region is one of the most advanced among the eight CoE regions in terms of partners' commitment and willingness to cooperate and exercise together on sensitive topics (like recently on RN forensics). This region has been selected to test a new Commission initiative for a CBRN research competition that will be launched in June 2018 during the annual meeting with all NFPs. SEEE was the first to benefit from a closer connection with the NATO CBRN Centre of Vyskov in 2017, and first to integrate DG HOME Horizon 2020 projects like EDEN and e-notice reinforcing the CBRN internal-external dimension as priority settled in the new EU CBRN Action Plan. DG DEVCO has already engaged its geographic Directorates and DG NEAR in order to use funding from DCI and ENI to fund projects tackling bilateral issues.

19. The selection of projects on a first come first served criteria should not be necessarily be seen at *stricto sensu*. It is rather a sign of priority given to projects that are most mature to be funded prior to others which deserve further consultation or regional cooperation (like in the NAS region where it took time to get the first mature regional project, P55). One of the most recognized achievements of the CoE is that it was able to establish a true CBRN worldwide community. In this sense, positive imitative dynamics are encouraged by the choice to support with funding the most active members and regions.

Stimulating positive competition among the 59 partner countries was also, ultimately, the objective of the "success story" awards launched at the latest Annual National Focal Point meeting.

With regard to the extension of partner countries, see reply to paragraph 17.

20. Overall, the bottom-up nature of the Initiative allows the Commission to steer and guide discussions, but not to force partner countries to discuss topics and launch projects in domains (even within the CBRN spectrum) which are not considered as shared regional needs. Doing so would hinder the credibility of the Initiative and put the progress achieved by the Initiative, even in sensitive fields, at risk.

In fact, several among the projects in the list categorized under "CBRN" do tackle the C and B component, as well as (sometimes) the RN too. For example, P54 "Capacity building for medical preparedness and response to CBRN incidents" covers the whole CBRN spectrum, but was developed following demands from the region after the Sarin chemical attacks in Syria; in this case training people in the chemical field meant also contributing to Bio capacity building. The same reasoning can be applied to projects 34, 46 and 54. Moreover, projects aimed at strengthening the national CBRN legal frameworks shall also be considered as covering issues in this entire field (i.e. P33).

However, the Commission agrees that, in consideration of the evolution of the Initiative towards more security-oriented themes, cooperation with INTCEN shall be strengthened. Due to the introduction of objective 3 entitled "Building stronger internal-external links and engagements in CBRN Security with key regional and international EU partners") in the new "Action Plan to enhance preparedness against chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear security risks" dated 18 October 2017 (see COM (2017) 610 final), more systematic inter-institutional cooperation is envisaged.

21. The Commission agrees with the Court on the need not to undermine the Initiative by expanding it far beyond its thematic reach, especially considering the structural work that focusing on new topics implies in terms of expansions of capacities within the National Teams.

However, the Commission and the EEAS believe that the CoE structures' potential to support other actions of EU interest funded by different budget lines should be used in the best interest of the EU to pursue goals related to CBRN security.

In this sense, expansion of the Initiative to other thematic fields (namely explosives) is directly linked with political tasking resulting from the implementation of the EU Global Strategy "mirroring" effect, see "Action Plan to enhance preparedness against chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear security risks" COM(2017) 610 final.

Ultimately, the bottom-up approach of the Initiative could be seen as an insurance against the risk to go too far beyond CBRN: several partner countries and Regional Secretariats have in fact already expressed their concern about this possibility.

In light of these considerations and developments, it is also the Commission's opinion that the interpretation of the CBRN domain shall not be too extensive, and be limited to those risks at the

intersection between CBRN and organised crime (such as falsified medicines and their trafficking) and shall anyway be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

22. The Commission will embed the risk assessment component into the needs assessment and national action plan methodology. This should serve to raise the partner countries' awareness for the importance of performing a risk assessment, to introduce possible approaches and guidance, as well as to better support them when prioritising actions.

23. The composition of the National Team is the full responsibility of the Partner Country and NFP, as well as the involvement in the NAQ/NAP process of other national experts that are not part of the National Team. Nevertheless, the Commission often proposes additional participants which may be taken into consideration by the NFP.

The Commission has been recruiting OSA teams also based on the specific needs in each region, also with a view to fill identified capacity gaps.

Currently, all the regions are covered by the On-site assistance.

25. It is supposed that increasing the political visibility of the Initiative will stimulate political will of partner countries to implement NAQ/NAP processes.

Due to the implementation of an overall policy of staff reduction which is producing its impacts in terms of staff dedicated to the CoE Initiative, it has been extremely challenging in 2017 to accompany all partner countries in their request to perform the NAQs and NAPs.

The JRC is preparing a tentative schedule for 2018 and 2019 addressing the different requests received from the partner countries. While ensuring that the NAQ-NAP methodology is fully respected when partner countries are assisted by the European Commission and that the process is under its lead, the JRC will count on the support provided by the OSA experts and/or external experts. Resources (experts availability and budget for travel and meetings) to carry out NAQs and NAPS have been increased for the year 2018 and 2019.

26. The fact that partner countries are now queuing up to receive NAQ and NAP support should be seen as a positive sign of the Initiative advancements. Data on national CBRN needs are very often sensitive, and for this reason it took a while before partners were willing and confident in sharing this information with an external actor as the EU. However, this hesitation phase seems to be over now, and a positive, competitive dynamic to show commitment towards the Initiative and/or to show the NAP as an achievement has subbed in.

In this sense, the CoE Initiative is a bit a victim of its own success, as the Commission now needs to increase its capacity to provide technical support in quantitative terms, despite a clear lack of resources to do this.

37. Institutional recognition of and political support to the NFP usually depends on the importance attached by high level political authorities to the CoE Initiative. Increasing the political visibility of the Initiative is targeted by more systemic involvement of EU Delegations in the Initiative's promotion, including diplomatically supporting the role of NFPs. The role of Regional Cooperation Officer, where exists, is also essential.

Visibility of the Regional Secretariats is also important. For this reason, DG DEVCO has decided to increase the budget for Regional Secretariats' activities starting in 2018.

38. The instruction sent by the EEAS on January 26, 2018 to the Heads of EU Delegations in CoE partner countries explicitly pursue this objective by asking, inter alia, to develop activities aimed at "increasing awareness of the Initiative, its objectives and outcome among EU Member States, relevant international organisations and other important donors", an "exercise that could also result

in the progressive transformation of the NFP/National Team in the single point of entry for all CBRN related projects and activities in their respective countries".

In order to enhance NFPs prominence, it is essential that DG DEVCO and the EEAS work together to step up coordination and cooperation among NFPs themselves, Regional Secretariats and the EU Delegations. The starting point could be simple, logistic coordination: EU Delegations shall be encouraged to organize either Roundtables or ad hoc informal meetings with the Head of Regional Secretariat and some NFPs from the region in the Delegations, also involving EU Member States Embassies, as well as local authorities. Costs would be contained, especially considering the increasing visibility/logistics budget granted to Regional Secretariats, but the impact would be significant in terms of visibility and the authority for the NFP.

39. In order to emphasize the importance of the role of Regional Cooperation Officers for the Initiative, a joint EEAS/DG DEVCO note was sent on February 21, 2018 to those EU Delegations where such a support was considered necessary.

40. The process towards a greater involvement of EU Delegations in the Initiative was started by DG DEVCO and the EEAS jointly. Some progress has been achieved. Regular and closer contacts with Regional Secretariats, implementers and the Governance Team are now in place. Some Delegations provided crucial support in bringing key partner countries on board, or giving new strength to their participation by raising the political attention towards the Initiative.

Reaching full involvement of all Delegations in the 59 CoE partner countries is a rather ambitious goal to achieve in 3-4 years, considering the shrinking budget, increasing workloads and the time needed to complete this project. However the Commission and the EEAS are confident in affirming that the pursuit of this goal is on track.

Most recently, the EEAS Secretary General further accelerated this process by sending official Notes to the attention of Heads of Delegations in CoE partner countries (January 2018) as well as to the EEAS Deputy Secretary General for Political Affairs and Regional Directors (November 2017) in order to increase the involvement of EU Delegations and the political visibility of the Initiative respectively.

The work of the Regional Cooperation Officers based in Dakar, Islamabad, Manila and Nairobi resulted in Delegations of the respective regions being much better informed about CBRN CoE activities. In South-East Asia, it has become common practice that Delegations deliver opening speeches at project events. The officers also enabled outreach to diplomatic representations of EU Member States.

The Initiative gained political visibility when a CBRN CoE Panel with NFPs, the Regional Secretariat, UNICRI and EC JRC took place in the framework of an EU co-chaired ARF Workshop on "Raising awareness and promoting ARF cooperation on chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) risk mitigation" held in the Philippines in September 2015.

The Initiative was part of the actions mentioned in the BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN Plan of Action to strengthen the ASEAN-EU Enhanced Partnership (2013 - 2017) and is part of its successor, the ASEAN-EU Plan of Action (2018 – 2022). It was also part of the ASEAN-EU Work Plan to combat terrorism and transnational crime (2014 - 2017). CBRN CoE actions have been constantly reported against the plans.

41. Although DG DEVCO acknowledges that several projects ended up focusing more on the developing capacities of partner countries rather than on a regional level, it is also true that no regional approach can be fully pursued in absence of proper national capacities.

In addition, several projects carried out were indeed regional in scope and approach - MediPIET targeted the entire EU neighbourhood; P41 on High Risk Chemical Facilities and Risk Mitigation in the AAF Region; and P48 on Improved regional management of outbreaks in the CBRN Centres of Excellence Partner Countries of AAF.

42. The organization of meetings is among the Regional Secretariats' activities for which DG DEVCO has decided to increase the regional Secretariats' budget starting in 2018.

From 2016 on, DEVCO has started to include Table Top and Field Exercises in all relevant projects.

The reinforced exchanges between the services of DG DEVCO, DG ECHO and DG NEAR dealing with disaster management regional programmes and exploring the possibility of some common exercises and training, starting from the countries of common interest where the centres are established (Algeria, Morocco, Jordan, Georgia), will all aim to consolidate the initiative and transform it into a unique and powerful network.

44. The Commission and the EEAS fully agree with this point. Indeed, they have already started engaging relevant Geographic Directorates in DG DEVCO as well as DG NEAR in order to establish synergies and increase sources of funding for the Initiative.

This process is facilitated by the fact that the regional network which has been established via the CoE allows other EU bodies to use the Initiative as a platform for their programmes and projects.

An example of CoE adaptability is provided by the draft Action Document 2018 on Climate Change, which foresees a primary role for the CoE, which is indicated as the platform to sensitize partner countries on the climate change security nexus via their national teams and NFPs. The document also provides additional resources to the CoE, in order to launch a new project addressing the risks posed to the EU and its neighbours by migration of diseases and their vectors due to climate change.

Furthermore, exploratory discussions are being held for a possible transfer of MediPIET (currently funded under CoE projects 32 and 36) to DG NEAR after 2019 as a European Neighbourhood asset. If successful, such a model can be repeated for other CoE projects, especially in the EU neighbourhood.

46. The instruction sent on January 26, 2018 by the EEAS to the Heads of EU Delegations in CoE partner countries explicitly pursue this objective (see also reply to paragraph 38). The invitation to "appoint a staff member within the political section of the Delegation to work as a contact point in the country(ies) of your accreditation" shall also stimulate EU Delegations to implement this task.

The EU Delegations in SEA region are supporting partner countries in using their (draft) NAPs to explore funding opportunities from other donors. For example, in an EU co-chaired ARF Workshop on "Raising awareness and promoting ARF cooperation on chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) risk mitigation" held in the Philippines in September 2015, time was allocated to "match making sessions" where partner countries could meet potential donor countries and international organisations (World Health Organisation - WHO, Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons - OPCW, International Atomic Energy Agency).

48. The Commission agrees with the observation. Exchanges of information between DG DEVCO and NEAR/ECHO already exist but could become formal.

With regard to Georgia, DG ECHO joined a DG NEAR led identification mission for the annual action programme (AAP) on security, rule of law and crisis prevention and management in January 2018. Also based on the needs assessment provided by the Government of Georgia, DG NEAR is

defining assistance on CBRN in the 2018 AAP. Through further engagement the EU will address the structural weaknesses in the national CBRN coordination.

In addition, since the end of 2017, DG NEAR and DG DEVCO have been exploring the feasibility of handing over the MediPIET project to DG NEAR as of 2020.

50. One of the main tasks of the Regional Cooperation Officers (staff of DG DEVCO) is the monitoring of the initiative in their respective regions. Their information is combined with the contractual monitoring of the Project Manager in DG DEVCO. Information from other stakeholders is considered and includes the tools mentioned by the Court.

The Commission agrees that the overall log frame (including outcome/ impact indicators) from the project level to the level of the initiative needs to be better defined. By using a comprehensive and systematic risk assessment approach, and by using NAQs and NAPs as tools to measure the progress in the partner countries, this will be possible to achieve in the near future.

Partner countries' involvement in the monitoring of projects is increasing. Several Regional Secretariats recently decided to organise regularly (2 to 4 times a year) progress meetings in the secretariats gathering all project implementers, in addition to 6-monthly progress meetings with the European Commission.

51. The EU CBRN CoE portal is an important tool of collaboration for the Initiative, which is fully decentralised and active in 8 regions of the globe. The portal is by nature a collaborative one, and has evolved as the Initiative has grown to the current 60 countries, with the consequent need for adjustments. The structure of the current portal is being updated.

Due to the quick evolution of IT technologies, the decision has been taken to work in parallel on the back office development of a new portal, based on a different standard software protocol, which will improve its portability, maintenance, upgrading and sustainability. The JRC is currently conducting the feasibility study for this development. This includes streamlining the levels of access and roles of registered users, reorganising the structure of the document repository module and reactivating a forum for discussions. The JRC will continue updating the CoE Portal as project-related documents and deliverables are available to the JRC, which are stored with appropriate levels of access.

Best practices and guidelines of other EU CBRN projects (either funded under the EU CBRN AP or under the Security Research programme when possible) will be made accessible through the CoE Portal.

52. Progress reports (6-monthly) are made available to the regional secretariat and NFPs. Access to specific project deliverables is subject to prior approval of partner countries (clause of confidentiality for country specific sensitive information).

The CoE project-related documents and deliverables are stored in the CoE Portal with appropriate levels of access and viewing/editing rights. In order to have a more user-friendly repository of documents, a reorganisation of the documents' repository module structure is being developed, as well as a more streamlined scheme regarding the viewing/editing rights.

53. As acknowledged in reply to paragraph 51, systematic collection of information and record keeping from all the actors involved should and will be improved. However, this will remain difficult until the portal will not be fully operational and reliable, which has not always been the case in the past, leading to confusion and the mentioned incompleteness of information.

54. See replies to paragraphs 51 and 53.

56. The ROM evaluation (managed by DG DEVCO Headquarters for all units) is not carried out for all projects, but only for a limited sample of projects according to priorities given by Heads of Unit on a yearly basis and with a budget of more than 1 million Euro.

This, of course, does not mean that the Commission does not need to ensure appropriate project monitoring and evaluation additional tools in order to look after project results. This is why JRC has been tasked to carry out systematic technical evaluation of all CoE projects.

57. The Commission recognizes this weakness in terms of objectives, indicators, as well as the need to develop a clear link between them. In order to fill this gap, DEVCO and JRC are already working on the development of indicators using the efforts already carried out in the field of export control of dual use items as a basis. In parallel, the greater focus of the Initiative on the organization of regional and sub-regional Table top and Field Exercises will also contribute, as exercises can serve as indicators of the impact of projects.

58. An additional effort is being done in order to ensure that the CoE Portal is updated regularly with project-related documents available to the JRC. The CoE Portal is used as a repository of documents produced in the scope of the evaluation process.

In some cases, the evaluation was complemented by feedback collected from other sources than the project-related documentation.

The gathering of information for evaluation purposes is done systematically at project steering committees and by means of specific feedback forms (for the training components). Since two years, both high level experts from Member States and the OSA experts are also involved and their feedback is used.

59. Due to the implementation of an overall policy of staff reduction which is producing its impacts in terms of JRC staff dedicated to the CoE Initiative, in agreement with DG DEVCO, the JRC appointed and coordinated independent research and innovation experts in the C, B and RN fields for the evaluation of project implementation according to the DG DEVCO approved evaluation methodology.

Standardised evaluation reports were issued for each project by the team of experts assigned to the task, under the supervision of the JRC Task Force. Moreover, the JRC is making efforts to get the evaluation of CoE projects up to date and issue the evaluation reports in time for specific actions to be taken on possible recommendations, and improvement has already been achieved.

60. Increasing the involvement of EU Delegations is hoped to reinforce the sustainability of results reached through implementation of the projects in the framework of the Initiative's as well.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

62. The Commission does not agree that the recommendation to concentrate EU funding in areas most relevant from EU security has not been implemented.

See reply to paragraph III as well as replies to paragraphs 16, 17, 18 and 19.

65. The Commission will embed the risk assessment component into the needs assessment and national action plan methodology. This should serve to raise the partner countries' awareness for the importance of performing a risk assessment, to introduce possible approaches and guidance, as well as to better support them when prioritising actions.

Recommendation 1

The Commission and the EEAS accept the recommendation.

(a) The EEAS and the Commission services will explore the possibility to carry out such an analysis.

Interactions with DG HOME and its CBRN Advisory Group involving the newly appointed CBRN coordinators from EU Member States will continue and will be reinforced where appropriate and where synergies might be found (e.g. mapping of existing CBRN training facilities and experts; participation in cross border table top and field exercises).

(b) The risk assessment component will be embedded into the CoE needs assessment and national action plan methodology. This should serve to raise the partner countries' awareness for the importance of performing a risk assessment, to introduce possible approaches and guidance, as well as to better support them when prioritising of actions.

(c) The Commission (DG DEVCO and JRC) has prepared a tentative schedule for 2018 and 2019 addressing the different requests received from the partner countries. While ensuring that the NAQ-NAP methodology is fully respected when partner countries are assisted by the European Commission and that the process is under its lead, the JRC will count on the support provided by the OSA experts and/or external experts and appropriate mission resources will be dedicated.

Recommendation 2

The Commission accepts the recommendation and it has already started implementing regional activities including field and table top exercises at regional and sub-regional level.

CoE Regional round table show a continuous increasing level of ownership and degree of initiatives for regional networking, cooperation and set up of activities as well as outreach towards international or regional organisations (African Union, ASEAN, ISTC, STCU, WHO, OPCW, Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, 1540 United Nations Security Council Resolution Committee, Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, BACAC, etc.).

The possibility of organizing joint exercises and training with on-going programmes of disaster management managed by DG ECHO and DG NEAR will be further explored.

Recommendation 3

The Commission and the EEAS accept the recommendation.

(a) The EEAS and the Commission will explore the possibility to extend the CBRN responsibility to the Counter terrorism experts in those delegations where they have been nominated.

(b) CBRN is already included in some of the security dialogues. In the future it can be done on a more regular basis.

Recommendation 4

The Commission and the EEAS accept the recommendation.

DG DEVCO has already started discussion with DG NEAR and its own relevant Geographic Directorates, as well as with DG ECHO on disaster management.

Recommendation 5

The Commission accepts the recommendation.

The JRC and the existing DG DEVCO Results Oriented Monitoring external support team are providing support to DG DEVCO for the improvement and streamlining of the indicators and alignment between the Multiannual Indicative Programme, Annual Action Programmes and implemented projects.

Recommendation 6

The Commission accepts the recommendation.

The EU CBRN CoE portal is an important tool of collaboration for an initiative which is fully decentralised and active in 8 regions of the globe. The portal is by nature a collaborative one, and has evolved as the Initiative has grown to the current 60 countries, with the consequent need for adjustments. The structure of the current portal is being updated.

Due to the quick evolution of IT technologies, a decision has been taken to work in parallel on the back office development of a new portal, based on a different standard software protocol, which will improve its portability, maintenance, upgrading and sustainability. The JRC is currently conducting the feasibility study for this development.

(a) The structure of the current CoE Portal is being updated. This includes streamlining the levels of access and roles of registered users, reorganising the structure of the documents' repository module and reactivating a forum for discussions. The JRC will continue updating the CoE Portal as project-related documents and deliverables are available to the JRC, which is stored with appropriate levels of access.

(b) Best practices and guidelines of other EU CBRN projects (funded either under the EU CBRN AP or under the Security Research programme when possible) will be made accessible through the CoE Portal.

Event	Date
Adoption of Audit Planning Memorandum (APM) / Start of audit	25.4.2017
Official sending of draft report to the Commission and the European External Action Service	2.3.2018
Adoption of the final report after the adversarial procedure	24.4.2018
Official replies of the Commission and the EEAS received in all languages	25.5.2018

The EU CBRN Centres of Excellence Initiative is the main scheme for mitigating chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear threats and risks from outside the EU. Although these risks are low, there are signs that they are on the rise and, if they were to materialise, their impact on the global health, environment and economy could be high. This Initiative aims to strengthen partner countries' capabilities through capacity-building projects and a network for cooperation. We examined whether the EU CBRN Initiative had mitigated the CBRN threat, concluding that it did but that many challenges remain. We make a number of recommendations for improving the Initiative.



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