

CBRN Centres of Excellence

A Networking Approach Towards CBRN Risk Mitigation

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Abstract:

The trafficking and criminal use of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) material is one of the main challenges on the international agenda.

To address this emerging threat the European Commission, with UNICRI as implementing agency, is setting up CBRN Centres of Excellence (CoE). Rather than using an ‘ad hoc’ approach, with short-term projects related to a specific problematic in a specific area, which has shown some potential but also certain limits concerning sustainability and the satisfaction of regional requirements, CoE aims to set up a cooperating network that facilitates CBRN risk mitigation.

To establish the CBRN Centres of Excellence, UNICRI and the European Commission rely on the four principles for sustainable international and regional cooperation. The four pillar strategy includes: (i) a *comprehensive approach*, incorporating all international, regional and national CBRN components into a common approach; (ii) *national policy*, encouraging the improvement of national CBRN policy to respond to countries needs and maximize the use of existing resources related to CBRN risks; (iii) creating *local ownership*, recognizing that the primary responsibility for preventing CBRN trafficking and mitigating the CBRN risk should lie with partner countries; (iv) *decentralized network*, setting up a flexible network in which all stakeholders have a sense of ownership and that can rapidly adapt to new situations, without enforcing central control. The paper will describe all elements of the four-pillar strategy and how this strategy will facilitate the set up CBRN Centres of Excellence.

Introduction

The trafficking and criminal use of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) material is one of the main challenges on the international agenda. To address this emerging threat the European Commission, with UNICRI as implementing agency, is setting up CBRN Centres of Excellence (CoE). Rather than using an ‘ad hoc’ approach, with short-term projects related to a specific problematic in a specific area, which has shown some potential but also certain limits concerning sustainability and the satisfaction of regional requirements, CoE aims to set up a cooperating network that facilitates CBRN risk mitigation. The CBRN Centres of Excellence is a network of regional initiatives dedicated to CBRN risk mitigation, which aims to achieve the following specific objectives:

- identification of CBRN capacities at international, regional and local level;
- identification and prioritization of CBRN-related problems;
- allocation and optimization of CBRN responses that are needed in terms of expertise, training,

- technical assistance or equipment;
- development of guidelines and best practices for CBRN risk mitigation
- collection and analysis of CBRN data;
- implementation of national and regional projects in close coordination with other international initiatives.

The CBRN Centres of Excellence has been designed relying on a strategy of four principles for sustainable cooperation. This paper will describe all elements of the four-pillar strategy for international and regional cooperation in the CBRN field and explain how this strategy will facilitate the set up CBRN Centres of Excellence.

The Four Pillar Strategy

To establish the CBRN Centres of Excellence, UNICRI and the European Commission rely on the four principles for sustainable international and regional cooperation. The four pillar strategy includes: (i) a *comprehensive approach*, incorporating all international, regional and national CBRN components into a common approach; (ii) *national policy*, encouraging the improvement of national CBRN policy to respond to countries needs and maximize the use of existing resources related to CBRN risks; (iii) creating *local ownership*, recognizing that the primary responsibility for preventing CBRN trafficking and mitigating the CBRN risk should lie with partner countries; (iv) *decentralized network*, setting up a flexible network in which all stakeholders have a sense of ownership and that can rapidly adapt to new situations, without enforcing central control.

(i) a comprehensive approach

Knowledge and expertise needed to mitigate CBRN risks are available at national, regional and international level. However, the CBRN issue is often dealt with in a fragmented way - each area addressed in isolation. This is surely not efficient and, potentially, it may even be counterproductive. No single organization possesses all necessary resources, expertise and statutory power to successfully deal with all aspects of the problem. The Implementing Body, composed of UNICRI and Joint Research Centre (JRC) of the European Commission, proposes the development of a Comprehensive CBRN Approach that incorporates all international, regional and national CBRN components into a common strategy. A holistic approach is needed so that all stakeholders, while operating autonomously, can establish common goals, identify and manage resources necessary to achieve these goals, clearly allocate responsibilities and tasks, elaborate functioning channels of communication, create a security culture based on common learning, and ensure that lessons learnt are incorporated and absorbed by the whole system. The CBRN approach will gather and assemble information, increase the level of common knowledge and transfer best practices from an area/partner country to another to avoid duplication of efforts. From this perspective, the holistic approach will not overlap with existing initiatives but it will complement them, creating synergies and links not available to date.

(ii) national policy

To improve national technical expertise, support and guidance are fundamental. However, in order to effectively enhance national capacity and capabilities, it is crucial that technical and financial support is combined with policy development. The development of National CBRN Policy that combines all different CBRN components will enable countries, with the support of the Centres of Excellence, to respond to their needs and maximize the use of existing resources in the area of CBRN risk mitigation. Without policy development, countries cannot ensure that technical and financial support are effectively absorbed and used by concerned stakeholders. The Centres of Excellence will provide comprehensive strategic options and technical tools that CBRN security planners and policy-makers should take into consideration to develop a comprehensive CBRN Policy.

(iii) local ownership

The primary responsibility for preventing CBRN trafficking and mitigating the CBRN risk should lay on partner countries. Therefore, it is important that countries act as owners of the initiative from the very outset of the project. This will facilitate the assessment of national needs and design of national policies in the area of CBRN risk mitigation. This approach intends to generate genuine ownership of policy and its implementation by national bodies. The political commitment of countries and the sense of ownership of the project are fundamental for the medium and long-term sustainability of the initiative.

(iv) *decentralized network*

Coordination with International Organizations and other stakeholders, in particular major donors, is essential to ensure good quality assistance and avoid duplication of efforts. In order to have a flexible network in which all stakeholders have a sense of ownership and that can rapidly adapt to new situations central control should be avoided. A decentralized CBRN network should be established with key bodies at international and regional level facilitating the interaction among the different contacts and ensuring that various projects and initiatives are carried out in compliance with common guidelines and agreed upon policies. A key element of a decentralized network is the allocation of tasks, as the mean of enhancing the skills and experience of each stakeholder and, subsequently, of the network as a whole.

The CBRN Centres of Excellence Initiative

Following the four principles, the CBRN Centres of Excellence is designed as a decentralized network of experts, aiming to improve regional capacity and national policies, relying on national CBRN teams who will become the owners of the initiative. As show in figure 1. the CoE network is composed of: National Teams of CBRN experts, Regional Centres, an Implementing Body and a Coordination Committee.

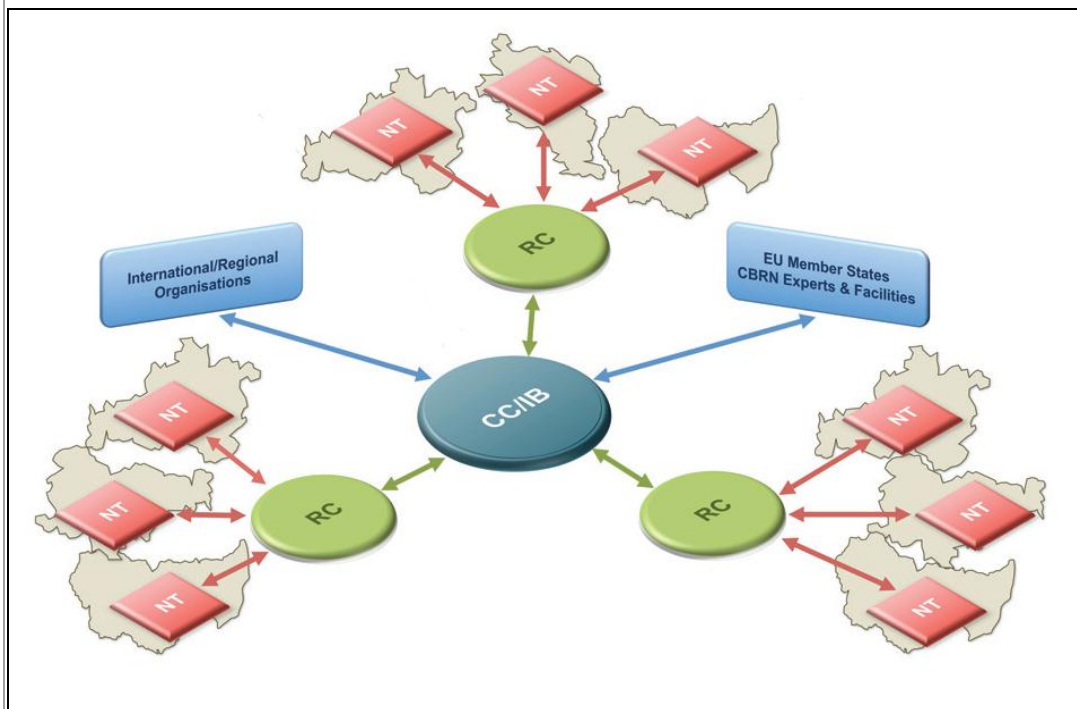


Figure 1. Structure of the Centres of Excellence Network

For the purpose of implementing the initiative, National Focal Points will be appointed by the partner countries and will assist in the setting up of **National Teams**. These teams will have the task of assessing the country's needs and supporting national strategy in the area of CBRN risk mitigation. The National Teams will rely on existing national structure(s) rather than setting up new and parallel structures. Each Team would be composed of experts from all relevant bodies such as the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Industry and Trade, depending on the country's own arrangement. They would ultimately involve first responders such as police, customs and border guards.

The National Teams will work in close cooperation with the **Regional Centre**, which will facilitate technical support to help the Teams achieve their objectives. More specifically, The Regional Centres will

analyse the information provided by the National Teams, review countries' needs and prepare project proposals to address potential gaps (e.g. technical support, supply of specific expertise, equipments and training). Moreover, the Regional Centres will utilise a capabilities map to identify possible regional resources to address countries' needs. Where no regional resources exist, international resources will be utilised.

The **Implementing Body** of the CoE Initiative is composed of UNICRI and JRC and is in charge of the support, planning and execution of the CoE activities at local and regional level. The Implementing Body will develop and maintain CBRN guidelines, together with participating Regional/International Organizations and other stakeholders. The CBRN methodology will provide criteria for assessing countries' needs. The methodology for the assessment of needs will include key areas such as: analysing how resources are applied and managed; assessing organizational capacity of the national structures to achieve the desired results; reviewing national CBRN policies including laws and regulation levels; developing capacity to build and manage partnership with relevant stakeholders, including civil society, academia and the private sector. The CBRN methodology will also provide criteria for assessing capabilities of participating countries of the Centres, International/Regional Organisations, EU Member States and other partner countries. This assessment will generate a database of CBRN experts, facilities and entities that will be potentially used as part of the initiative. All information will be accessible to all Regional Centres and National Teams through a secure IT platform (the "CBRN CoE Portal").

Based on the methodology proposed by the Implementing Body, country needs and expertise offered by countries and Regional/International organizations, are collected by the Regional Centres. To address specific needs with available resources, project proposal will be developed in cooperation with the countries and the Implemented Body. The project proposals will be submitted to the Coordination Committee. The **Coordination Committee** is composed of European Commissions DG AidCo and DG RELEX and will rely on the technical support of UNICRI and JRC. Once the Coordination Committee has approved the project proposal, contracts will be prepared for the implementation of the project. See figure 2 for a detailed overview of the cycle of activities.

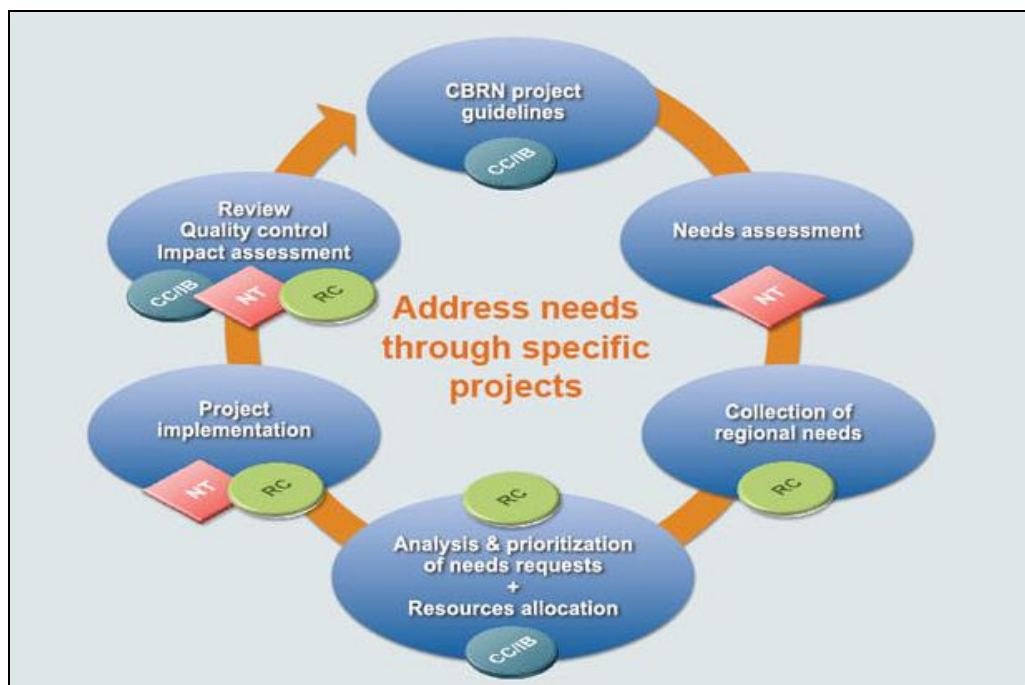


Figure 2. Cycle of Activities

Conclusions

For the construction of the CBRN Centres of Excellence the four principles for sustainable international cooperation are of fundamental importance; combining all international, regional and national CBRN components and incorporating them into a *comprehensive approach* and encouraging National CBRN Teams to review and improve their *national policy*, through need assessment and the implementation of specific projects. The establishment of a National Team that will be in charge of conducting its own need assessment creates *local ownership*. To adapt easily to country needs the CBRN CoE will rely on a *decentralized network*.

Moreover, an important aim of the Centres of Excellence is create synergies with other initiatives and avoid duplication. Existing capacities within EU Member States and the Commission, including the JRC, and Regional/International Organizations in the field of mitigating CBRN risks will be leveraged by the CBRN CoE initiative. EU Member States and Regional/International Organizations will be informed about the initiative through meetings. The CoE network will be used to disseminate best practices among partner countries and EU Member States. In close coordination with the Implementing Body, EU Member States and Regional/International Organizations are invited to provide thematic support based on their capabilities and the needs of the partner countries. The JRC will facilitate the mobilisation of such capabilities within the EU.

An effective strategy to deal with the CBRN threats requires a high level of collaboration among various potential stakeholders. As an international initiative, the CBRN Centres of Excellence will benefit from the cooperation with many Organizations.

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