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New EU training centre to combat illicit trafficking of nuclear and radioactive materials

The European Commission has today launched a new European nuclear security training centre (EUSECTRA) in Karlsruhe. The training centre will instruct front-line officers, trainers and experts on how to detect and respond to illicit trafficking of nuclear or other radioactive materials. EUSECTRA offers hands-on training using a wide variety of radioactive and nuclear materials and a broad selection of equipment and measurement instruments. Indoors, one of the training areas simulates airport conditions, equipped with a pedestrian portal monitor and an x-ray conveyor. Outdoors, training is provided on a variety of scenarios, providing 4 different types of radiation portal monitors. Overall, more than 30 measurement and detection tools are used in training. The centre enhances the European Commission's Joint Research Centre's (JRC) training activities carried out in this field at the Karlsruhe and Ispra sites.

European Commissioner for Research, Innovation and Science Máire Geoghegan-Quinn said: *"Nuclear security is a major global challenge in the 21st century. Training and international cooperation in detection are key elements in our response to the threat of illicit trafficking of radioactive and nuclear materials. This new training centre is contributing at the cutting edge of research and technology in this field."*

"This training centre will make emergency personnel much better equipped to prevent and tackle nuclear incidents. Rare as they are, such incidents may have terrible consequences. EUSECTRA will not only help to protect European citizens but will also serve as a point of reference for other organizations in this field", said Cecilia Malmström, Commissioner for Home Affairs.

Located at the JRC's Institute for Transuranium Elements (ITU) premises, the training centre was set up in the framework of the EU chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) action plan adopted by the European Council in 2009. The training programmes were developed in collaboration with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the US Department of Energy. Representatives from these organisations also took part in the inauguration.

Aside from the focus on trafficking of materials, EUSECTRA will enhance cross-border cooperation and experts' networking, and provide a centralised knowledge management tool. Advanced training in material detection and identification, management of radiological crime scenes and development of national response plans are also provided.

Background

A series of pilot and focused sessions for front-line officers, trainers and experts have already been provided involving participants from many countries in North and Central Africa, Central Asia, Southeast Asia, CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) countries and Europe.

The EUSECTRA premises also include new nuclear safeguards training laboratories for nuclear inspectors from the European Commission (Euratom) and the IAEA, who have been trained for the last 20 years on a variety of techniques by the JRC.

The chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) action plan was adopted by the European Council in December 2009. The Council encouraged the EU Member States and the Commission to promote an enhanced security culture by focusing on the enhancement of knowledge in the field of CBRN security by way of improved risk assessments and preparedness, research, the exchange of best practices and joint training and exercises.

The action plan also encouraged the planned EUSECTRA to provide nuclear and radiological security related training and to support and complement such activities at national level.

The JRC has been chosen by the Directorate-General for Home Affairs for the implementation of the training centre due to its recognition as a centre of competence by national and international authorities in the field of nuclear safeguards (inspection and verification of peaceful use of nuclear materials) and its long track record of successful training in this area. The JRC has also been involved for two decades in the implementation of many projects in the field of nuclear detection and forensics outside European borders through the TACIS programme (Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States) and through the EC pre-accession instruments.

Nuclear security relates to the prevention, detection and response to illicit trafficking of nuclear or other radioactive materials and is mainly a national responsibility. Nuclear safeguards relates to the activities of ensuring that nuclear materials are used only for their intended peaceful uses, by the implementation of nuclear accountancy systems and independent inspections. They are based on international agreements that allow national and international authorities such as the IAEA and the European Commission to verify the continued peaceful use of nuclear materials.

Further information on the EUSECTRA inauguration and activities:

<http://itu.jrc.ec.europa.eu/index.php?id=36&type=0&iEntryUID=246&iEntryPID=68>

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