Findings and recommendations for the decontamination of casualties

The seminar concentrated on chemical incidents but it was agreed that most recommendations apply to all CBRN incidents and there should be one system to cope with all types of incident.

In most countries the medical sector is the weakest part of the integrated approach.

Decontamination has two goals: to decontaminate the casualties and to avoid secondary contamination of personnel, equipment and institutions (hospitals).

The most effective method for decontamination is to undress patients as soon as possible.

The procedures for undressing, triage, basic life support etc have to be evidenced-based by research.

Member States (MS) should develop their capabilities in this area at least to a minimum level and dedicate sufficient resources to reach that goal.

Preparedness has to be improved by defining scenarios in order to limit the consequences of a CBRN threat or incident.

Best practices and emergency guidelines should be developed, relying on existing MS practices and documents, by exchanges of techniques and common exercises, focusing on decision making processes and Standard Operating Procedures, for example, for mass decontamination as well as decontamination of casualties.

Cooperation between MS should be developed including trans-border cooperation, designing modules in the framework of the EU Mechanism and considering reinforcement between MS as precautionary measures, for example for major international events.

Interoperability of equipment is recommended and achievable.

Need for European inventory of decontamination units. Need for national stockpiles of antidotes and drugs as well as logistics.

Means of detection need to be developed and laboratory capacity improved.

Training is paramount for all personnel, especially for first responders (Emergency Medical Service, Fire brigades, Police units ...) coping with CBRN incidents.

Training shall provide for basic as well as special skills.

Every service involved needs special main topics in training in addition to an understanding of joint procedures and interoperability.

Training has to be subject to quality management principles.

Requested support from the Commission:
Organise focused experts meetings on the abovementioned subjects.
Promote common exercises.
Collect and promote best practices by supporting research for evidence-based results.
Promote cross-border cooperation and possibly pre-planned reinforcements.