

EU sets up first stockpile to respond to chemical and nuclear emergencies in Finland

By **Olivia Bizot** • Updated: 17/01/2023



Members of the Radio Protection service wear protective suits and measure radioactivity on a person during a nuclear exercise at the CEA Cadarache, France, Jan. 17, 2012. - Copyright AP Photo/Claude Paris

The European Union is ramping up its preparedness for possible chemical and nuclear emergencies as Russia's invasion of Ukraine nears the one-year mark with a stockpile of items to be set up in Finland, it was announced on Tuesday.

A total of €242 million has been allocated to Finland by the European Commission to create the bloc's first strategic reserve against chemical, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) threats for use by all member states.

"Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has confirmed the need to strengthen EU CBRN preparedness," Janez Lenarcic, European Commissioner for Crisis Management, said.

The stockpile, he added, "will provide the EU with a significant safety net enabling a quick and coordinated response at EU level."

The new reserve will include critical medical countermeasures, such as vaccines and antidotes, medical devices and field response equipment to ensure better protection in preparation and in response to biological, radiological and nuclear accidents.

The rescue equipment and medical supplies are intended to protect both first responders and civilians.

The reserve "is an essential element in our work to prepare and strengthen health security in the EU", Health Commissioner Stella Kyriakides said.

Finland shares a 1,300-km border with Russia and is located close to the Baltic states, which fear an escalation of the war in Ukraine that could lead to the use of nuclear weapons or to a nuclear accident.

The Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant in Ukraine was in March captured by Russian forces and has since repeatedly come under fire, raising fears of nuclear disaster.

“The stockpiles to be established in Finland will improve the European Union’s strategic preparedness and readiness to respond to different kinds of threats, especially in Northern Europe and the Baltic Sea region,” Finland’s Minister of the Interior Krista Mikkonen said. “In the changed security environment, the EU’s joint preparedness is more important than ever.”

The EU’s aim is to strengthen chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear expertise in the bloc and to ensure that capabilities and response teams can be deployed anywhere across the continent.

“Individual countries do not have sufficient measurement capacity and expert resources to respond to large-scale radiation accidents, and this project is a welcome addition to European preparedness for radiation incidents,” Karim Peltonen, Director of Finland's Radiation and Nuclear Safety Authority, said.

The reserve is to be ready for use from 2024 and aims to dispatch supplies to a disaster or crisis area within 12 hours of an offer of assistance being accepted.

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