



JOINT PRESSE RELEASE

PROACTIVE EU project held its second field exercise in conjunction with project eNOTICE and the Joint NBC Defence School

(Rieti, Italy, 16 November 2022), The EU H2020 funded project PROACTIVE ("PReparedness against CBRNE threats through cOmmon Approaches between security praCTitioners and the Vulnerable civil society"), coordinated by the UIC Security Division, held its second field exercise in conjunction with the EU funded H2020 project eNOTICE.

The event took place on 16 November in Rieti, Italy and was hosted by Italian Joint NBC Defence School at their Military Training area "NUBICH". PROACTIVE consortium partners worked together with the Joint NBC Defence School and the University of Rome "Tor Vergata" in the planning and execution of the exercise.

The joint action was an inter-agency exercise, involving the Italian Army, the specialised fire brigade, the Carabinieri and train staff.

This exercise CBRNe scenario consisted of an urban train station, with passengers already on a train awaiting departure and others still on the platform, when suddenly a burst is heard, followed by intense and dense smoke, which was simulated with artificial fog. Passengers are aided by the local train staff to evacuate the station. Due to the nearby location of a freight train transporting chlorine, the event is suspected to be a chemical incident. As such, the specialised CBRN fire brigade are called in to evacuate the non-ambulatory persons (of which there were a few, simulated by the use of mannequins), while the CBRN Defence Specialist Units from the Army are called in to decontaminate the affected civilians as well as perform identification and sampling activities. Thanks to the analysis of the CBRN experts, it is discovered that the element is not chlorine but rather nontoxic refrigerant gas, and the remaining civilians do not need to undergo decontamination.

A unique feature of this exercise is that project PROACTIVE recruited and involved members of the public as role play volunteers, as opposed to the frequent practice in training exercises when experts or actors play the role of the victims. In this joint exercise, the volunteers who played the role of the victims were civilians with little to no prior knowledge of CBRNe incidents. Out of these, some volunteers represented vulnerable groups, such as older persons, persons with vision or hearing impairments or persons with reduced mobility.

The volunteers that underwent evacuation, were then asked to wait in the warm zone until the decontamination tents could be set up. Following this, they went through the decontamination process which consisted of a medical check, disrobing, showering and rerobing. All the involved practitioners experienced first-hand the additional technical and communication challenges linked to the decontamination process of persons with vulnerabilities. Overcoming these gaps is in line with PROACTIVE's main goal, which is to increase practitioner effectiveness in managing large, diverse groups of people in a CBRNe environment.

The exercise presented an opportunity for first responders to personally learn the needs and expectations of civil society. The exercise also allowed PROACTIVE to observe key challenges for future scenarios that will be addressed further in our project. Lessons learned were collected through debriefing workshops just after the exercise.

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