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**Protect
and
Secure
Worship**

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Center for Social
Innovation



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PROSECUW

Protection of Religious Heritage: A Comparative Study Among Four EU Member States and Recommendations for Training, Education and Communication

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“When people are attacked because of their religion or beliefs, all of society is diminished. Together, we can help prevent attacks against religious sites and contribute to guaranteeing the safety of the faithful to worship in peace.”

- António Guterres, United Nations Secretary-General



THE PROSECUW PROJECT

A European initiative on the protection and security for places of worship



The general objective of PROSECUW is to enhance protection at places of worship in European countries by setting up cooperation between public authorities (especially law enforcement agents), religious leaders and congregants aiming at a better understanding of, security threats, promotion of awareness raising activities and the creation of manuals for sharing best practices and relevant tools among EU stakeholders.

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THE PROSECUW PROJECT

A European initiative on the protection and security for places of worship



PROJECT RESULTS

- Transnational PROSECUW Mapping and Research Report
- Awareness Raising Social Media Campaign
- Documentary with digital storytelling from victims of religious hate crime and commentary from religious leaders
- Creation of a best practices manual and policy recommendations based on the project's training activities will be ready to be shared EU-wide
- E-learning platform and pedagogical materials and tools
- Capacity Building for Beneficiaries and Stakeholders - for the cooperation of public authorities and faith leaders as well as for professionals who work in the security field.
- PROSECUW Hubs for Communal and Educational Actors Empowerment and Collaboration

OVERALL SCOPE:

Increase security and protection in houses of worship of individuals, families, people in need of every single religion can pray, express their faith unafraid, EU-wide and also around the world

- The present paper shares the field research results which are focusing on the social ecosystem analysis in the four partner countries - Cyprus, Greece, Germany, and Portugal - while findings from the desk research for the EU are also presented.
- The PROSECUW research team conducted desk and field research by drawing on recent literature reviews, policy papers, scientific articles, national and European regulations and laws, as well as through questionnaires with relevant stakeholders (i.e., religious leaders, law enforcement agents, community leaders).

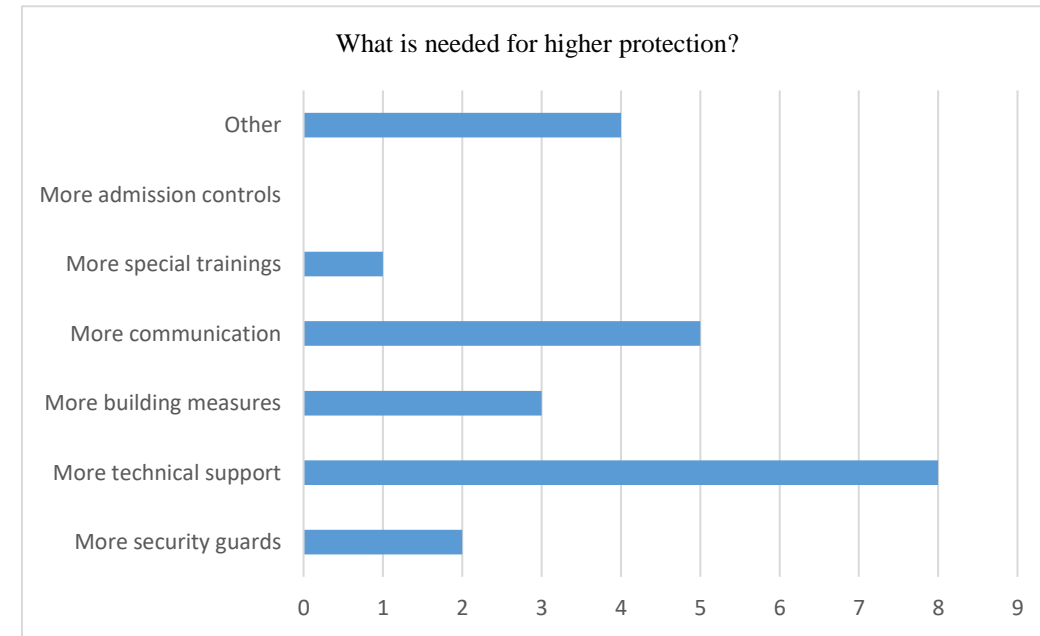
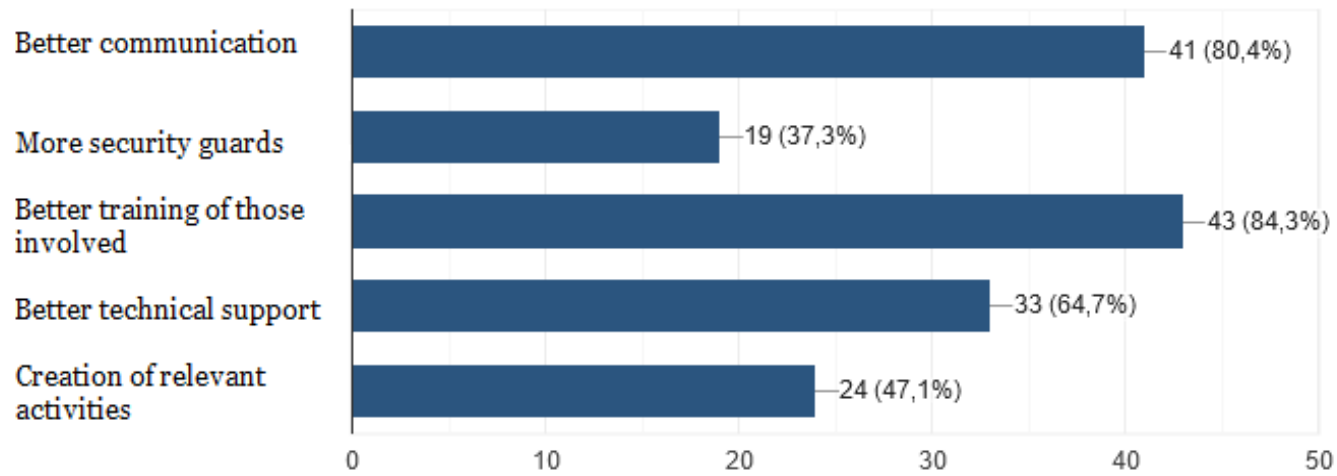
Ecosystem Mapping on Security and the Protection for Places of Worship in the EU



According to the European Commission, there are two major growing dangers to places of worship (and religious heritage): Islamic fundamentalism and far right extremism. Places of worship are powerful symbols and soft targets for such extremists as they wish “to send a political message, spread radical ideologies or instill fear.”

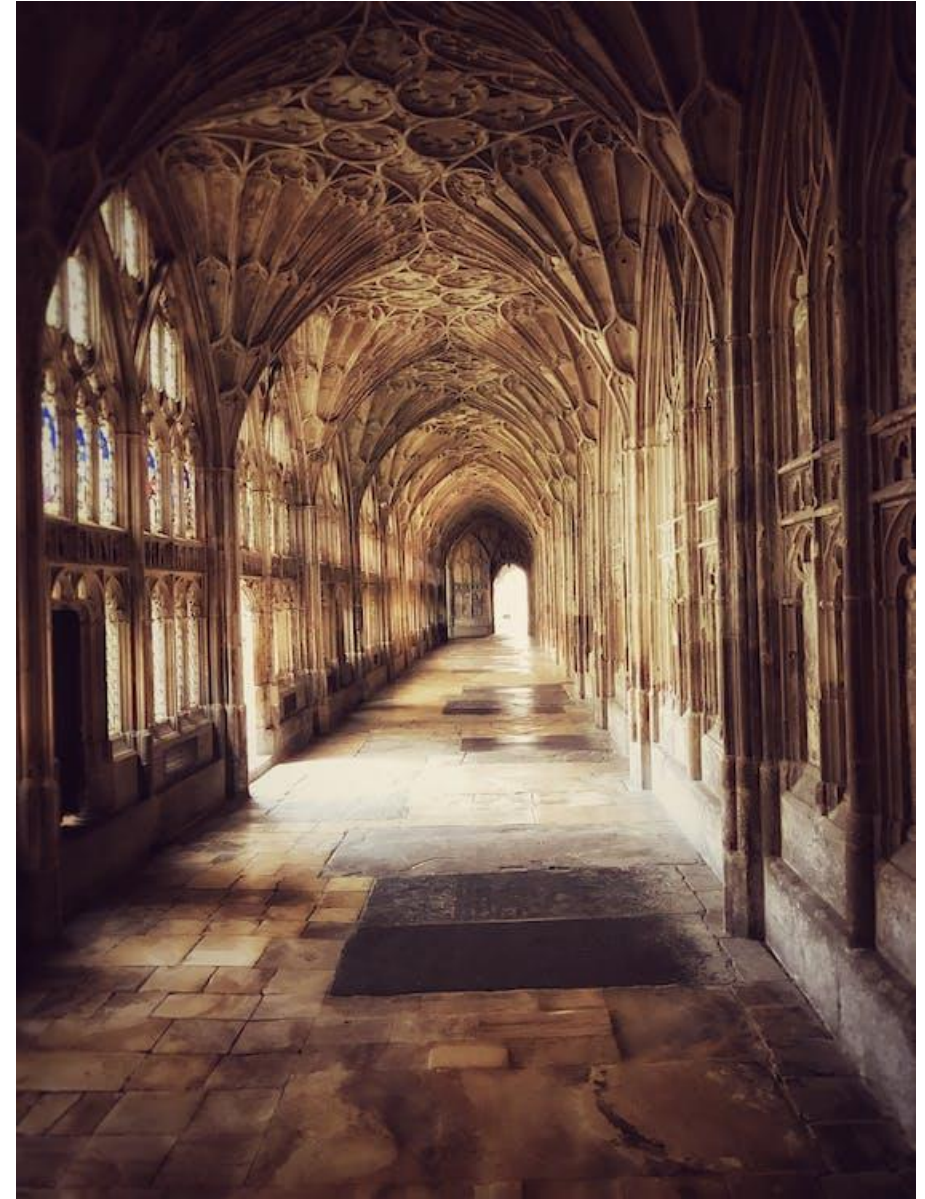
In this line, those “places of spirituality and contemplation [are] designed to promote inclusiveness and a feeling of welcoming and openness” and therefore are not often equipped with security measures – apart from many Jewish institutions that must deal with security threats perpetually.

Therefore, places of worship constitute an “easy and attractive target”.



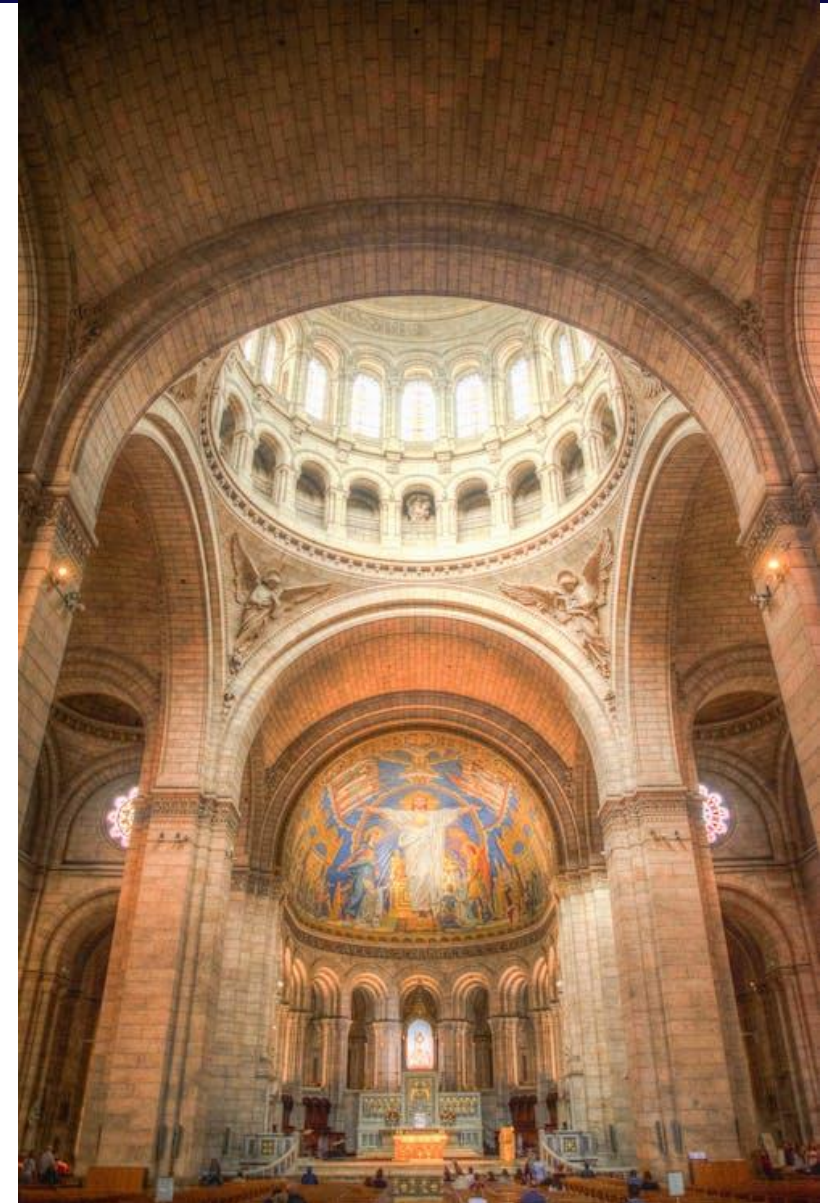
CYPRUS (n=51)

- Most of respondents (62,7%) believe that minority religions (e.g., Muslims, Jews) are the most vulnerable and are subjected to prejudice and bias, thus there should be extra protection measures for them.
- Regarding the biggest challenges towards the protection of places of worship, the answers were varied.
- The most common challenge that the respondents are facing in places of worship is not having many effective measures of protection at their disposal. Many think that lack of information and education on diversity of religion and culture is a key challenge along with the lack of awareness raising campaigns that could enhance safety in places of worship.
- Lastly, some participants consider the extreme views of fundamentalists as a challenge.
- A small number of participants also refer to protection challenges such as robberies, vandalism, and the abandonment of historical and cultural places of worship.



GREECE (n=50)

- 68% of respondents underlined the reinforcement of a mutual understanding of the different religious views
- 34% underlined the need of more communication and an exchange of views with the people involved.
- 24% asked for more control at the entrances of the temples
- 14% said that there is a need for more technical support
- 12% for more measures at the actual buildings
- 46% answered that that minority religions need extra attention.
- Biggest challenge they face is prejudice and fanaticism that prevails nowadays at societies and mostly at religious communities.



GERMANY

- Need to feel safer they stated clearly that they wish for more technical support and more communication.
- Most of them discussed the differences between religious minority and majority groups and suggested that minority religions, especially if there is a migrant background, need more protective measures than majority ones

PORTUGAL

- 41 percent of respondents believed anti-Semitism was a problem in Portugal, and 18 percent believed it had increased over the previous five years.
- The interviewees quote as problems threats against Jews in public places, vandalism and desecration of Jewish cemeteries and in short anti-Semitism acts that occurred occasionally
- One of the biggest challenges faced by those working in places of worship is respect among people from different religions as well as practical concerns such as how to communicate security matters, especially under pressing/threatening situations.
- Some even suggested the increase of security officers paid by the government.

Different States, Different Challenges



- Despite the different backgrounds, needs and contexts, there is one common thread revealed through the research that connects both majority and minority, local and migrant congregants:

Increased communication and understanding among members of different religious communities and further training and education for acceptance of diversity are seen as key means for the protection of these important aspects of religious heritage

Recommendations to Increase Security at Places of Religious Heritage



1. Establish Hubs for Empowerment and Collaboration between various stakeholders to establish a shared space for exchange and transfer of “Communities of Practices”.
2. Training Program that will arm relevant stakeholders with the appropriate skills to properly respond to and prevent hate crimes and protect the congregants as much as possible
3. Digital storytelling through the development of a Documentary for the engagement of, and communication to, professionals, civil societies, faith-based leaders, religious communities, and the general population
4. Awareness raising activities are key including social media campaigns, and local seminars combined with Q&A sessions to inform everyday people and local communities about the protection plans considered by authorities

Documentary Trailer





PROSECUW