



ACTION SHEETS

**PRACTICAL STEPS FOR
PROTECTING PLACES OF
WORSHIP**



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INTRODUCTION

PARTES PROJECT

The PARTES project, funded by the European Union and bringing together 15 partners from 10 European countries, proposes a comprehensive prevention model for the protection of Places of Worship that is evidence-based, inclusive, and participatory. In order to effectively combat security threats posed to religious places, it is essential to understand the underlying violent extremist phenomenon and its concrete manifestations in relation to these targets, and to include this knowledge in mitigating measures. It also needs to involve religious communities in policies and measures and educate the broader population on toxic extremist rhetoric, but also specific features and manifestations of various faiths.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

- Map the specific threat landscape of involved religious communities (including cyber threats).
- Assess and derive lessons learned on vulnerabilities and existing security concepts of involved religious communities and exchange best practices on protective measures Europe-wide.
- Establish cooperation and communication structures and channels between religious communities and local authorities.
- Develop proactive and preventive security measures
- Carry out trainings and workshops with religious and local authorities.
- Raise awareness among the wider population about the threat and strategies of extremist organisations targeting Places of Worship, and involve them in prevention strategies.

PARTES wants to make a significant contribution to the improvement of the overall protection of public spaces through the creation and enhancement of Places of Worship's preventive and security concepts. This is achieved by taking the threat landscape, the online dimension and pre-attack or preventive phases and measures into account, as well as by newly established communication structures with authorities.

GUIDANCE

In response to the identified challenges and the stated project goals, the "Action Sheets" at hand were developed as a practical tool. These sheets reflect the insights gathered during the PARTES project and aim to address the vulnerabilities of Places of Worship that became evident throughout the research. They offer clear, actionable solutions and best practices collected from all over Europe to improve safety and security of Places of Worship.

The recommended measures involve a variety of activities, such as promoting communication between different stakeholders, creating forums for inter-faith dialogue, and providing training on security measures, both physical and digital. They compile best practices from each partner country engaged in PARTES, which can be adapted to different national contexts. The result is a catalogue of ready-to-use, customizable solutions that will also support upcoming capacity-building trainings conducted in the course of the project - and beyond.

The listed actions are designed to tackle immediate threats to Places of Worship as well as to create long-term preventative strategies, all while working closely with local authorities and other faith-based organizations.

One of the key outcomes of our project work is the PARTES Guardian Approach, which lays the foundation for the practical actions described in these Action Sheets. This approach will be made public in unison with the Action Sheets at hand. Together they form a short compendium on what can and should be done to better protect Places of Worship, beyond mere hard security measures, for more secure societies and a more secure Europe.



1

Community and Civil Society Involvement





EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS TO COMBAT ANTISEMITISM

CONTEXT

The General Secretariat for Religious Affairs of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs in collaboration with the Jewish Museum of Greece, engaging schools across the whole Greece, developed this best practice with the aim of fostering historical awareness and empathy among young people. By engaging with the history of the Holocaust, students learn the importance of tolerance and the dangers of prejudice and hatred. Additionally, the creative process of making short films allows students to deeply connect with the material and express their understanding in a meaningful way.

TARGET GROUP

The target groups can be divided between:
Students, particularly in secondary education;
Teachers and educational institutions;

BEST PRACTICE ADDED-VALUE

Expected impacts of this best practice:

- **Historical Engagement:** Students engage deeply with the history of the Holocaust, specifically focusing on the experiences of Jewish children and Greek Jews during the Second World War.
- **Creative Expression:** A contest allows students to express their thoughts and feelings through short films, fostering a personal and emotional connection with the subject matter.
- **Educational Progress:** Participation involves exploring primary and secondary historical sources, turning students into researchers and enhancing their understanding of historical events.
- **Cultural Awareness:** Awareness of the local history of Jewish communities in Greece.

ACTION PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- **Step 1: Annual Contest Announcement.** The General Secretariat for Religious Affairs and the Jewish Museum of Greece collaborate to announce the contest to schools across Greece. Themes for the contest are selected to focus on various aspects of the Holocaust.
- **Step 2: Student Research and Film Creation.** Students, guided by their teachers, conduct research using primary and secondary sources. Teams of students create short films reflecting their understanding and emotions on the topic.
- **Step 3: Submission and Evaluation.** Films are submitted to a panel of judges, including historians, educators, and members of the Jewish Museum of Greece. Evaluation is based on historical accuracy, creativity, and emotional impact.
- **Step 4: Awards and Educational Visits.** Winning films are selected, and the creators are awarded with an educational visit to the State Museum of Auschwitz-Birkenau in Poland.



INTER-RELIGIOUS PACT

CONTEXT

The Italian Brescia Prison and Territory Association has observed how the lack of interaction and understanding among various religious and cultural groups in many cities leads to social fragmentation and potential misunderstandings. Thus, this local initiative of the city of Brescia, which involves representatives from different religious groups and is managed by NGOs and community members, served as inspiration for this good practice.

TARGET GROUP

The target groups are: the representatives of various religious groups; Foreign individuals who do not or cannot access formal educational channels; Local NGOs and religious communities; Volunteers teaching the national language; Broader community stakeholders.

BEST PRACTICE ADDED-VALUE

This best practice intends to:

- Promote knowledge and understanding of different religions and cultures through organized events.
- Facilitate interactions among individuals who would otherwise not engage with one another.
- Offer cultural actions such as Italian language lessons taught by volunteers, targeting those who do not or cannot access formal education channels.
- Foster a safe and cohesive environment through the collaboration of all relevant community stakeholders.

ACTION PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- Step 1: Organization of interfaith and cultural initiatives. Plan and execute events that bring together individuals from different religious and cultural backgrounds. Include activities such as interfaith dialogues, cultural festivals, and joint community service projects.
- Step 2: Language education. Recruit and train volunteers to teach the national language to foreign individuals who do not or cannot access formal educational channels.
- Step 3: Develop outreach programs specifically for women, young adults, and elderly people who face barriers to integration. Provide tailored language classes and cultural orientation sessions to meet their needs.
- Step 4: Engage with local NGOs, religious communities, and other stakeholders to ensure a collaborative approach. Encourage community members to participate and contribute to the initiative, fostering a sense of shared responsibility.



INVOLVING THE COMMUNITY AND THE CIVIL SOCIETY

CONTEXT

The aim of this activity, suggested by the association and project partner 'Les Militants des Savoirs', is to gather testimonies from the victims of attacks and to create a play based on these accounts. The aim is to present this play to young high school students and religious communities to foster mutual understanding and resilience in the face of acts of hatred and violence. This action was inspired by previous actions carried out after the attacks on the Ozar HaTorah Jewish school in Toulouse.

TARGET GROUP

Victims of the attack and their families; Young high school students; Religious communities (Muslim, Jewish, Christian) and Educational and cultural players;

BEST PRACTICE ADDED-VALUE

- Gathering testimonies through individual and collective workshops to transform personal stories into collective memory.
- Collaboration with a playwright to adapt the testimonies into a play performed by high school students.
- Public presentation of the play at interfaith meetings and in schools, followed by discussions to strengthen mutual understanding.
- Strengthening inter-generational and inter-religious dialogue.
- Using art as a means of resilience and transmitting collective memory.
- Raising young people's awareness of the issues of violence and terrorism through an artistic approach.

ACTION PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- Step 1: Gathering testimonies from victims and witnesses of the attack. The project director gathers poignant accounts from victims and witnesses, reflecting the trauma of the attack. These accounts will be transformed into dialogue for the play.
- Step 2: Collaboration with playwrights and young people to write and stage the play. The aim is to build on these testimonies to create a campaign to raise awareness of the consequences of terrorist violence. It recounts the tragic events and explores the victims' emotions and need for resilience.
- Step 3: Theatrical performances in high schools and at interfaith meetings, followed by debates with participants. The play should be presented to high-school students and various religious communities to open up an inter-generational and inter-religious dialogue on tolerance, peace and collective memory. The project would aim to transform pain into a means of learning and solidarity.



2

Establishing Communication Channels





ROUNDTABLES TO FOSTER DIALOGUE BETWEEN STAKEHOLDERS AND RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

CONTEXT

Several gaps in communication were identified by project partner FUNDEA during different stages of their research. Either the communication channels were non-existent, or they existed but were poorly structured or excluded certain stakeholders. Therefore, they developed this good practice, which has already proved its effectiveness in enabling the players involved to express their ability to anticipate and find solutions to the conflicts and problems that have arisen.

TARGET GROUP

The target groups can be divided between key stakeholders and religious communities, which include NGOs, religious volunteers, government institutions, universities, CSOs and educational institutions.

BEST PRACTICE ADDED-VALUE

The core aim of the “Roundtable for dialogue” is to promote a common strategy of action that contributes to the peaceful coexistence of the society and to encourage problem solving in a collaborative manner. Participation in these roundtables enables each social group in a society to feel that its voice is being listened to and that it has channels for expressing its concerns and problems. It shows society that there are peaceful ways of expressing and resolving grievances, which makes other unconventional/violent means less attractive.

However, it must be stressed that the willingness of the actors to participate and the creation of a basis of trust between them are key to the success of the initiative. It requires a progressive process and the full involvement of the stakeholders.

ACTION PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- Step 1: Mapping communication channels. Identify gaps in current communication channels and plan the implementation of roundtables for dialogue.
- Step 2: Identify key participants. Determine the stakeholders (can be NGOs, religious confessions, government institutions, universities, CSOs and educational institutions) to be involved in the roundtables, ensuring representation from all relevant groups.
- Step 3: Decide on the Roundtable type. Decide on the types of roundtables (local/national, interfaith, or sector-specific) based on the needs assessment and the frequency of meetings (weekly, monthly, or annual) and establish guidelines for participation and discussion.
- Step 4: Ensure sustainability. Foster a long-term commitment from all stakeholders, emphasizing the importance of continuous engagement and collaboration.



ESTABLISHING COMMUNICATION CHANNELS WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT AUTHORITIES

CONTEXT

Recent incidents targeting Places of Worship have revealed a clear lack of communication between religious institutions and local emergency authorities. All too often, police have arrived at attack scenes without knowledge of the building layout, leading to confusion and delays in securing the premises. Project partner Diakonija proposes a proactive approach to ensure that both police and firefighters are familiar with the religious community and layout of their buildings, thereby improving emergency response.

TARGET GROUP

The target group includes the leadership of religious organisations and local emergency authorities, primarily local police forces and firefighters.

BEST PRACTICE ADDED-VALUE

Best practices would include:

- Establishing clear communication protocols. Ensure all leaders have up-to-date contact information for local police, firefighters, and other emergency services.
- Fostering collaboration with local emergency services to develop action plans for potential emergency scenarios.
- Creating a clear and unified emergency plan for Places of Worship in the area. The plan must be effective and accessible, providing clear instructions on evacuation and ensuring rapid action.
- Offering training to staff and volunteers on evacuation protocols and immediate response.

ACTION PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- Step 1: Ensure reliable and constant communication channels between the religious organisation's leadership and local emergency authorities. Designate a person to be responsible for these communication protocols.
- Step 2: Provide general information on the main types of attacks and their characteristics, as well as the area and vulnerabilities of the site.
- Step 3: Invite local firefighters to a board meeting to familiarize themselves with the building layout and exits, and to assist in setting up an evacuation plan.
- Step 4: Invite local firefighters to your board meeting to meet you, review the building layout and exits, and set up an evacuation plan.



INTER-RELIGIOUS PLACE OF WORSHIP

CONTEXT

Project partner VPN's aim, which is reflected in this best practice, is to counter the prevailing idea that religions are unable to work together. To do so, the German NGO drew on Initiatives like the "House of One" in Berlin demonstrating how collaborative construction projects can foster interfaith dialogue and cooperation. Thanks to this type of initiative religious dialogue and cooperation turn into dialogue through the methodology of 'building' together.

TARGET GROUP

The main target groups involved in this action are religious communities and their leadership, civil society, architects, artists, engineers and government authorities.

BEST PRACTICE ADDED-VALUE

The construction process is co-designed by Jewish, Muslim and Christian architects, volunteers, civil society and religious community members to create a joint inter-religious Place of Worship. While this may not be feasible in every city and every local context, it is possible to take elements of this idea and implement it in other areas. In Stuttgart, for instance, a small sukkah is currently being built to host interfaith dialogues, exhibitions and workshop formats discussing anti-Muslim racism and antisemitism. These projects highlight how collaborative efforts in shared spaces can promote peaceful coexistence and dispel misunderstandings.

ACTION PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- Step 1: Engage with local religious communities, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders to understand the current state of interfaith relations and identify areas for improvement.
- Step 2: Decide on the type of collaborative project (e.g. shared construction projects, community events, dialogue sessions) based on the needs assessment, the local context and the participants involved.
- Step 3: Appoint a planning committee composed of representatives of the various religious communities, civil society and local authorities to oversee the project. Be prepared to address any challenges or conflicts that arise during the project through open and respectful dialogue.
- Step 4: Identify reliable funding sources from local government, religious institutions, NGOs, and other potential sponsors. Ensuring effective collaboration and total commitment to guarantee the viability of the project.



JOINT COMMUNICATION TO ADDRESS THE STIGMATISATION OF RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

CONTEXT

Following the murder of a Christian priest in Algeciras by a jihadist, Muslim and Catholic authorities issued a joint public statement condemning the attack and affirming that 'this does not represent Islam, Islam is a religion of peace'. FUNDEA, an NGO based in Spain and PARTES project partner, believes that by doing so, they have helped to avoid the stigmatisation of religious communities and to delegitimise the likely attempt by extremist groups to exploit the victim's grief. This approach, inspired by the religious communities of Melilla, aims to develop and normalise joint initiatives between different religious beliefs in order to deliver a message of tolerance, particularly after controversial events.

TARGET GROUP

The target group involves the religious communities as well as public authorities.

BEST PRACTICE ADDED-VALUE

The growing stigmatisation and dehumanisation of religious communities, such as the Muslim community, has increased their risk of being attacked. This is exacerbated when media coverage of attacks/hate crimes and online hate speech polarise debates and discussions about religion. These dynamics contribute to increasing stigmatisation and exclusionary views, creating rejectionist sentiments towards religious communities and legitimising certain violent attitudes against them. However, joint initiatives can counter this phenomenon. They include creating channels of trust between religious communities, enabling them to make joint public statements condemning acts of violence or hatred that occur in their society. This shows the local population the unity of the different religions and their common stance against violence and hatred. These symbolic public statements also help to prevent the exploitation of victims by extremist groups.

ACTION PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- Step 1: Create communication channels. The religious communities develop a good relationship that allows them to maintain a fruitful communication.
- Step 2: Joint public statements. Trustful channels between religious communities allow them to make joint public statements condemning acts of violence or hatred that occur in their society.
- Step 3: Involve public authorities. The involvement of the public authorities and other stakeholders, such as the police force or representatives of the State, enhances the effectiveness of these initiatives.



FORMAL COLLABORATION PROTOCOLS BETWEEN RELIGIOUS ENTITIES

CONTEXT

This best practice, proposed by project partner IPS, is based on the formal protocol for collaboration between Porto's religious communities, which aims to strengthen interfaith relations by reducing the risk of conflict and improving collective security efforts. By fostering ongoing communication and cooperation, this practice enables Places of Worship to be better protected through a united and coordinated approach.

TARGET GROUP

Local religious communities, including the Catholic Church, Islamic community, Jewish Community, and other religions and faiths in the territory; Local government and civic organizations involved in promoting social cohesion; General public and broader local community.

BEST PRACTICE ADDED-VALUE

- The establishment of written and formal collaboration protocols to promote interfaith dialogue.
- An enhanced mutual understanding and respect among different religious communities.
- A structured approach to addressing common concerns and fostering cooperation.
- A reinforced tradition of peaceful coexistence and integration of diverse religious groups.

ACTION PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- Step 1: Conduct initial meetings with leaders of the different religious communities to discuss the objectives and scope of the collaboration. Identify areas of common interest and potential activities to promote interfaith dialogue.
- Step 2: Develop a draft of the collaboration protocol outlining the goals, roles, and responsibilities of each religious community. Include provisions for regular meetings, joint activities, and mechanisms for conflict resolution.
- Step 3: Organize interfaith events and workshops to introduce the collaboration protocol to the broader community. Encourage participation from members of all religious communities to ensure inclusivity and broad-based support.
- Step 4: Finalize the collaboration protocol with input from all religious communities. Hold a formal signing ceremony with representatives from each community to publicly endorse the protocol.
- Step 5: Establish a schedule for regular interfaith meetings and events. Create committees to plan and execute activities outlined in the protocol.



INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE IN PRISON

CONTEXT

The Italian Brescia Prison and Territory Association proposes a good practice approach based on its work in Brescia, which promotes interfaith projects within prison walls. This initiative is considered relevant in the field of P/CVE within prisons because it helps prisoners safely manage their religious belief, avoiding the risk of having to rely on auto declared Imams that can facilitate the circulation of dangerous ideologies and spread negative feelings towards the so called non-believers.

TARGET GROUP

Muslim prisoners; prison administration and staff; central penitentiary administration responsible for authorizing Imams; Imams and religious leaders; NGOs and organizations promoting inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue.

BEST PRACTICE ADDED-VALUE

The authorization of Imams to enter prisons and assist Muslim prisoners is a significant step forward. This initiative aims to:

- Provide spiritual support and guidance to Muslim prisoners.
- Prevent the spread of radical thoughts within the prison environment.
- Foster inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue, contributing to a more peaceful and understanding prison atmosphere.
- Engage NGOs to enhance inter-religious projects within prisons, leveraging their expertise and resources.

ACTION PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- Step 1: Selection and authorization of qualified Imams. Simplify the complex procedure for selecting and authorizing Imams to enter prisons. Ensure a transparent and efficient evaluation process by the central penitentiary administration to assess the suitability of Imams for this role. The shortage of qualified Imams should be addressed by recruiting and training more individuals to serve in prisons, as well as providing incentives and support for Imams willing to undertake this challenging role.
- Step 2: Expand inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue projects within prisons, perhaps collaborating with NGOs in the field to implement and promote these projects, ensuring they reach a wider audience within the prison population. Coordinate with other stakeholders such as community leaders and organizations to maintain consistency in approaches and share best practices.
- Step 3: Establish a system for regular monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of Imams' work and inter-religious projects. Use feedback from prisoners, Imams, and prison staff to continuously improve the programs.



TRANSLATION OF INSCRIPTIONS

CONTEXT

In Portugal, the translation of Qur'an inscriptions in the Lisbon Mosque directly promotes transparency and understanding, reducing misconceptions and prejudices. This practice proposed by project partner IPS intends to foster religious literacy, which can mitigate long-term risks of radicalisation and enhance the overall security of the Place of Worship by fostering a more informed and respectful community.

TARGET GROUP

Non-Arabic speaking visitors to mosques; Muslim communities aiming to promote integration with local communities; religious leaders seeking to provide accurate information about the Qur'an and Islam; Policy makers and community organizers interested in fostering inter-cultural dialogue and understanding.

BEST PRACTICE ADDED-VALUE

- Serving as a model for promoting transparency and understanding.
- Translating religious texts helps demystify the content, making it accessible and comprehensible to a broader audience.
- Providing direct access to the authentic teachings of the Qur'an in order to reduce prejudices and misconceptions.
- Fostering a common understanding of the religious text to contribute to the prevention of radical interpretations and promote harmonious coexistence.

ACTION PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- Step 1: Identify mosques and other religious sites that could benefit from multilingual Qur'an inscriptions. Consult with religious scholars, translators, and community leaders to ensure accurate and respectful translations.
- Step 2: Develop high-quality translations of the Qur'an in local languages. Design and produce inscriptions that can be displayed alongside the original Arabic text in a clear manner.
- Step 3: Organize workshops and informational sessions to introduce the initiative to both Muslim communities and the broader public. Encourage dialogue and feedback from visitors to continuously improve the implementation.
- Step 4: Regularly review the impact of the inscriptions on visitor understanding and community perceptions. Gather and analyze feedback to assess the effectiveness and identify areas for improvement.



SETTING UP AN INTER-RELIGIOUS INITIATIVE

CONTEXT

Muslims and Jews have long-shared a common history. However, tensions are known to increase at times, in particular due to geo-political events. Although the recent conflict in the Middle East is not necessarily a religious one, both antisemitism and islamophobia have grown exponentially since. In response to this situation, project partner EFSAS has organised several inter-religious meetings in the Netherlands to create a space for discussions and exchange of opinions between different religious groups.

TARGET GROUP

This best practice is aimed at local religious communities, involving all religions and faiths present in the area, local authorities, as well as the general public.

BEST PRACTICE ADDED-VALUE

Over the last decades, many inter-faith initiatives have sought to bridge the gap between different religious groups. Some initiatives have focused on regional conflicts, whereas others have focused on the traditions and values shared between different religions. These initiatives share one common denominator: getting to know each other and creating dialogue.

ACTION PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- Step 1: Ask yourself how you can increase self-awareness about your own religious identity. What does your religion mean to you? How does it shape your identity and perspectives?
- Step 2: Having identified the fundamentals, start bringing people on board. Having a personal 'click' can be helpful at this stage. Creating a diverse team can help to bring new people on board.
- Step 3: Start by talking about your personal life and get to know each other, focus on similarities. Try to refrain from immediately diving into controversies until a foundation of trust is established.
- Step 4: Once the group is ready to start discussing difficult topics, focus on open dialogue rather than a debate. Focus on how things personally affect you and most importantly, listen to the other. Ask each other questions. You don't need to agree with someone in order to understand each other.
- Step 5: Think about the impact you can make on your environment. If you notice tensions arising, consider getting more people involved with your initiative and how these tensions can be reduced.



CREATING SPACES FOR INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE WITHIN MUNICIPALITIES

CONTEXT

Inspired by 'Toulouse Fraternité - Conseil de laïcité', a consultative body set up by the Toulouse city council in France, this initiative aims to encourage people to live together and prevent tensions by enabling each community to understand each other better within a framework of mutual respect. The ultimate goal is to strengthen the channels of communication between different religious communities and local authorities by creating spaces for inter-religious dialogue within municipalities.

TARGET GROUP

Representatives of religious communities (Muslim, Jewish, Christian, Buddhist); local authority representatives; secular citizens and associations.

BEST PRACTICE ADDED-VALUE

- Creating spaces for dialogue within municipalities to encourage exchanges between representatives of different religions and secularists.
- Regular organization of thematic meetings on secularism, the role of religions in the state and the prevention of religious tensions.
- Promotion of a series of conferences on religious practices to better know and understand other communities.
- Improving intercommunity dialogue and preventing religious tensions.
- Involvement of local authorities in promoting respectful coexistence.
- Building inclusive citizenship and awareness of secular principles.

ACTION PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- Step 1: Creation of inter-faith and secular groups within municipalities. Setting up a framework within municipalities to welcome representatives of different religious communities (Muslim, Christian, Jewish, Buddhist, etc.) and encourage constructive exchanges on themes linked to co-existence and secularism.
- Step 2: Organisation of regular meetings on specific themes, such as the role of religious communities in the state, the place of religion in the public sphere, secularism, the management of public spaces, or joint actions to promote peace.
- Step 3: Setting up joint actions such as conferences, public debates and inter-religious initiatives (e.g. Toulouse Fraternité, Conseil de laïcité). For example, a cycle of conferences could be organised, with meetings dedicated to each religion (for example, Judaism and Islam), enabling participants to learn more about the practices and beliefs of other communities, while respecting the principles of secularism.

3

Mitigating Cybersecurity and Online Threats



GUIDELINES FOR HANDLING HATE SPEECH ON ONLINE PLATFORMS

CONTEXT

Diakonija, a church-founded charity in Latvia with a strong online presence and project partner, emphasises the importance of religious communities understanding how to regulate online discourse. They have proposed best practices for training moderators within these communities. By equipping moderators with the necessary knowledge and tools, the effectiveness of managing and mitigating hate speech can be significantly enhanced. Fostering an environment of respectful discourse can help reduce the incidence of hate speech and set a positive example for online communities.

TARGET GROUP

The target group includes religious organisations and their staff, social media platforms, and law enforcement authorities.

BEST PRACTICE ADDED-VALUE

- Providing guidelines and resources on effective content moderation strategies, including the use of automated tools and human moderators.
- Fostering collaboration with social media platforms to streamline reporting processes for harmful content.
- Developing a unified reporting system for members of religious communities to report incidents of hate speech. The system should be user-friendly, with clear instructions on reporting offensive content and ensuring swift action.
- Offering training to staff and volunteers on identifying and addressing hate speech effectively.

ACTION PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- Step 1: Effective content moderation strategies. Create comprehensive and user-friendly guidelines and resources on content moderation for religious institutions.
- Step 2: Reporting protocols. Create clear guidelines for using social media hate speech reporting tools and for reporting incidents to relevant authorities, including law enforcement.
- Step 3: Trainings and seminars. Organise regular training sessions and/or seminars for staff and volunteers on identifying and managing online hate speech.
- Step 4: Awareness campaigns. Develop educational materials, such as brochures, videos, and infographics, to highlight the consequences of hate speech and the importance of respectful communication.



STRENGTHENING THE CYBERSECURITY OF RELIGIOUS ORGANISATIONS

CONTEXT

PARTES project partner Diakonija, a church-founded charity based in Latvia, engaged experts to develop a proactive approach to assist religious organisations in safeguarding against cyber attacks. Robust cybersecurity measures offer several benefits, including protection of sensitive information, continuity of services, mitigation of financial and reputational risks, compliance and legal protection, resilience in the face of evolving threats, and safeguarding of essential documents.

TARGET GROUP

The primary audience are key personnel within religious organisations, encompassing diverse roles with specific responsibilities and varying degrees of access to sensitive information.

BEST PRACTICE ADDED-VALUE

- Collaborating with cybersecurity experts and local authorities to provide tailored training sessions and resources.
- Establishing communication channels for the prompt reporting and response to cybersecurity incidents.
- Scheduling and conducting regular security audits to identify vulnerabilities, assess the effectiveness of current security measures, and implement necessary improvements.
- Using reputable antivirus software, enabling multi-factor authentication, and maintaining vigilance against social engineering attacks.

ACTION PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- Step 1: Implement a router with built-in capabilities, including a hardware firewall, regional connection blocking, domain name filtering, and built-in VPN functionality.
- Step 2: Avoid using free email accounts or free cloud storage services. Instead, establish a secure environment for sharing information through encrypted email services and prioritise secure cloud storage solutions.
- Step 3: Utilise a VPN connection every time you access the internet, whether on a phone or computer. Choose a reputable VPN provider.
- Step 4: Conduct document audits to identify which documents are critical to your organisation. Create digital copies of these documents and store them in a secure cloud drive. Obtain apostille-certified copies of critical documents and store them in a safe location outside the country in the event of national crisis.



4 Enhancing Knowledge on Data Protection Procedures



SETTING UP A RELIGIOUS DATA PROTECTION NEWSLETTER INITIATIVE

CONTEXT

Religious communities have to manage their own data protection, under Article 91 of the European General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). This provision allows them to apply their own data protection laws under certain conditions. However, practitioners within these religious communities face challenges in staying informed about how their respective institutions regulate data protection, as well as keeping up with developments from religious data protection authorities and courts. There is a growing need for resources and practical guidelines that address these issues while also providing guidance on the broader intersection of theology, religious practices, and fundamental rights. To address them, consulting with a special data protection newsletter is considered a best practice.

TARGET GROUP

Practitioners within religious communities, particularly data protection officers in churches, synagogues, mosques, and other institutions

BEST PRACTICE ADDED-VALUE

The German-language blog and newsletter “Artikel 91 Blog” has been established as a valuable resource for data protection officers, legal professionals, and others working within churches, synagogues, mosques, and religious communities. By providing regular updates on new (and country-specific) regulations, court decisions, and the evolving practices of religious data protection authorities, the newsletter helps to ensure relevant stakeholders remain well-informed and compliant on this topic. Additionally, a similar blog could serve as a platform to offer training opportunities or mentoring on religious data protection.

ACTION PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- Step 1: Start by identifying the needs of your target audience and understand that their specific challenges and information needs will guide the content of your output.
- Step 2: Create a content plan that includes regular updates on how different religious communities handle their data protection, news from religious data protection authorities, and developments in court rulings. Incorporate opportunities for training on data protection issues specific to religious communities.
- Step 3: Assemble a list of potential subscribers, focusing on individuals and professionals within religious institutions who would benefit from this specialised information.
- Step 4: Ensure that your newsletter respects the privacy of its subscribers and is in line with the principles of the data protection it promotes.
- Step 5: As the newsletter/platform gains traction, consider collaborating with other organisations, experts, or training providers in the field to enhance content and expand your reach.



5

Strengthening Security Measures of Places of Worship



BASIC MEASURES FOR THE SAFE OPERATION OF A PLACE OF WORSHIP

CONTEXT

Over the past few decades, Places of Worship have unfortunately become targets of acts of vandalism or criminal actions, disrupting their operation and posing a threat to their safety and security. To mitigate these threats, basic protective measures are proposed for the safe operation of a Place of Worship, offering several key benefits and ensuring the safety and well-being of the congregation and staff. Basic protective measures are not just about preventing harm but also about fostering a secure, welcoming, and resilient environment that supports the mission and values of the Place of Worship.

TARGET GROUP

The main audiences involved are religious communities and their leadership, emergency and safety personnel.

BEST PRACTICE ADDED-VALUE

These measures can be physical, procedural, or behavioral, and their added value includes:

- Safety and Security
- Crisis Response Capability
- Regulatory Compliance
- Protection of Assets
- Longevity of Facilities
- Increased Confidence
- Positive Public Image and Community Trust

ACTION PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- Step 1: Exterior lighting. The presence of adequate lighting significantly reduces delinquency.
- Step 2: Security cameras. The visible presence of security cameras and signs indicating that the area is under video surveillance act as a deterrent.
- Step 3: Alarm system. The presence of an alarm system and signs is a significant preventive measure.
- Step 4: Security. The information that an area is under surveillance and the substantive guarding of it, either permanently or through frequent patrols by security vehicles, are also effective deterrents.
- Step 5: Fire safety plan plan can promptly mitigate fire damage.
- Step 6: Evacuation plan. The existence of a safe evacuation plan can provide a secure escape route and prevent overcrowding.
- Step 7: Assimilation & training. The assimilation of the above basic measures, as well as training in handling and drafting security plans, is a fundamental prerequisite for an effective implementation.



RESPONSE TO EMERGENCY INCIDENTS

CONTEXT

As Places of Worship are soft targets, it is crucial to ensure their preparedness for responding to emergencies effectively. Fostering cooperation between police authorities and religious communities is paramount, facilitating the timely and accurate reporting and exchange of information on violent and non-violent incidents. This collaborative approach is essential for developing a cohesive strategy for the protection of Places of Worship, ensuring effective response protocols and the proper implementation of planned security measures.

TARGET GROUP

The target group includes religious communities and their leadership, emergency and safety personnel, and local police forces.

BEST PRACTICE ADDED-VALUE

The added value of a well-prepared response to emergency incidents in a Place of Worship is significant, providing crucial benefits across several dimensions. It provides the foundation for informed decision-making, efficient resource allocation, and ultimately, saving lives and mitigating damage. Knowledge empowers emergency responders to act decisively, efficiently, and effectively, thereby minimizing the impact of the incident and safeguarding lives and property. In particular, provides understanding of the roles and responsibilities of different teams enhances coordination and efficiency, understanding of the potential dangers involved helps in determining protective measures and evacuation plans, incident identification for initiating the appropriate response.

ACTION PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- Step 1: Training and education of personnel. The training and ongoing education of personnel in Places of Worship on how to respond to an emergency incident is of paramount importance. Regular exposure to the following steps can help alleviate anxiety and panic that may arise from a malicious act and enable mechanical execution of the correct actions.
- Step 2: Informing the authorities. The police has rapid response forces that can swiftly and effectively contribute either to suppressing an action or to informing the relevant authorities for its handling. The presence of a panic button can be particularly helpful in situations where telephone communication is not possible.
- Step 3: Accurate information provided to authorities. For a more effective response to an incident, the personnel at the Places of Worship should provide accurate information about the time and location of the unlawful activity, the type of unlawful activity, characteristics of the perpetrators, and any other useful information.
- Step 4: Implementation of security plans. The immediate implementation of security plans will lead to minimized impacts.



MONITORING ACTS AGAINST RELIGIOUS SITES

CONTEXT

The initiative launched by the General Secretariat for Religious Affairs (GSRA) in Greece to record acts against religious sites, which started in 2015, inspired this best practice proposed by project partner KEMEA. Acts against religious sites in Greece pose a significant threat to Places of Worship. These incidents need a systematic approach to measure and assess the risks and threats faced by religious communities in the country. The annual reports generated from the GSRA's initiative provide a detailed account of incidents per religion, offering clear insights into the types and frequencies of threats. The reports also serve as a critical tool for measuring and assessing the general threat levels faced by Places of Worship in Greece and enhance understanding of the landscape of religious threats and contribute to more effective risk evaluation. Ultimately, they offer a comprehensive database that can be used for policy formulation, security planning, and preventive measures.

BEST PRACTICE ADDED-VALUE

This initiative is considered a good practice as the explicit and comprehensive recording of violent acts can help significantly in understanding the landscape and evaluating the overall risk. It allows authorities to identify patterns and trends in religiously motivated violence, enabling them to allocate resources more effectively. Additionally, it helps in raising awareness and fostering interfaith dialogue to prevent future incidents. By documenting these acts, the initiative also provides a valuable database for researchers and policymakers.

TARGET GROUP

Religious communities; government agencies and authorities, including the General Secretariat for Religious Affairs; law enforcement and security agencies; researchers and analysts studying religious freedom and security; advocacy groups and NGOs focused on religious rights and protections.

ACTION PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- Step 1: Data collection and recording to expand the systematic recording of incidents against religious sites and ensure accurate and detailed documentation of each incident, including type, location, and affected religious community.
- Step 2: Compile the recorded data into annual reports, including analysis and trends observed over the years to identify any emerging patterns or new threats.
- Step 3: Utilize the reports to conduct thorough risk assessments for different religious communities. This can be achieved by collaborating with other stakeholders such as security agencies to evaluate and respond to identified threats.
- Step 4: Use the findings from the reports to inform governmental policies on religious freedom and security and consequently develop targeted action plans and preventive strategies based on the assessed risks.



ENHANCING COMMUNICATION BETWEEN POLICE FORCES AND THE COMMUNITY

CONTEXT

This initiative proposed by project partner IPS aims to build trust and collaboration between law enforcement and citizens, directly contributing to the safety and protection of Places of Worship. This best practice responds to the need to take proactive measures to ensure the safety of public spaces and communities and to strengthen community involvement and participation in safety initiatives.

TARGET GROUP

Urban and rural communities; police and other national and local law enforcement agencies; local government entities, including Municipal Security Councils; civil society actors, residents' associations, and other community organizations.

BEST PRACTICE ADDED-VALUE

- Proximity policing for a proactive and collaborative approach to public security, fostering close connections between police and citizens.
- Trust-based relationships that enable effective information gathering and early detection of potentially threatening behaviors and incidents.
- Municipal Security Councils and Prevention and Security Groups to provide formal mechanisms for community participation and ensure that citizens' concerns are addressed.
- Regular meetings and anonymous feedback channels to ensure that recommendations are actionable and protect the identity of individuals raising concerns.

ACTION PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- Step 1: Evaluate the current state of proximity policing practices and community-police relations in various municipalities. Identify areas with significant gaps in trust and communication that need immediate attention.
- Step 2: Train Public Security Police, National Republican Guard, and Municipal Police on the principles and practices of proximity policing. Encourage regular interactions between police officers and community members to build rapport and trust.
- Step 3: Ensure that Municipal Security Councils are active and meet every six months as mandated. Promote public awareness about the role and functions of Municipal Security Councils and how citizens can participate.
- Step 4: Organize workshops, town hall meetings, and other forums to engage the community in discussions about public security. Encourage citizens to share their concerns and suggestions through both formal and anonymous channels.



ISLANDS OF LIGHT (“LICHTINSELN”)

CONTEXT

The initiative, launched by various religious communities in Vienna together with the City of Vienna, demonstrates how different religious communities and local authorities can be effectively involved in security and crisis cooperation. It has both a direct security objective and a symbolic one: to manage crises and show that different religions work together and welcome everyone, regardless of their origin.

TARGET GROUP

The main groups targeted by this best practice involve residents and visitors of the city center of big cities during a crisis, crisis management teams of the city, various religious groups and their communities.

BEST PRACTICE ADDED-VALUE

- The establishment of contact points within religious community spaces to serve as crisis response centers.
- The role of volunteers from diverse religious communities to provide assistance and information, ensuring inclusivity and accessibility for all.
- An improved coordination between the city's crisis management team, religious groups, and amateur radio operators to ensure smooth operations during a crisis.
- Regular exercises and exchanges to maintain preparedness and effective collaboration.

ACTION PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- Step 1: Identify and confirm the participation of religious groups and secure spaces within their facilities that are at least 20 square meters in size and equipped with seating. Collaborate with the city's crisis management team to define roles, responsibilities, and communication protocols.
- Step 2: Recruit and train volunteers from the participating religious communities to assist during crises. Equip each contact point with necessary supplies, such as candles or lanterns for visibility, and ensure proper signs.
- Step 3: Conduct test runs to coordinate activities between staff, amateur radio operators, and the city's crisis management team. Regularly schedule drills and simulation exercises to ensure readiness and smooth operation.
- Step 4: Inform the public about the availability and location of these contact points through community outreach and public information campaigns. Highlight the inter-denominational nature of the contact points, emphasizing their accessibility to all people without restriction.



INTERFAITH DIALOGUE IN ROMANIA

CONTEXT

The practice of Interfaith Dialogue in Romania aims to address the problem of religious intolerance and potential conflicts resulting from misunderstandings and lack of communication between different religious communities. This project garnered official backing, lending credibility and support to interfaith discussion activities while ensuring that religious groups feel recognised and safeguarded.

TARGET GROUP

All religious communities, in particular religious minorities, religious leaders, scholars, and practitioners across these faiths, as well as the broader public.

BEST PRACTICE ADDED-VALUE

The Interfaith Dialogue initiative is significant for several reasons:

- It promotes religious tolerance by fostering understanding and respect;
- it helps create an inclusive and harmonious society, mitigating potential conflicts;
- it prevents religious conflicts by providing a platform for open communication that helps address misunderstandings and tensions before they escalate into conflicts;
- it facilitates collaboration as it encourages religious communities to work together on social issues, showcasing the positive impact of unity among diverse faiths;
- it counters extremism by challenging stereotypes and prejudices, and contributes to a society more resilient against extremist ideologies.

ACTION PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- Step 1: Interfaith Forums: Organizing forums, such as the "Interfaith Conference of Cluj-Napoca," where religious leaders and scholars can discuss common challenges and foster peaceful coexistence.
- Step 2: Religious freedom initiatives: Promoting religious freedom through organizations like the Interconfessional Institute for Research, Interreligious, and Intercultural Dialogue (INTER), which work to ensure that all religious communities have the freedom to practice their faith. Educational Initiatives: Incorporating interfaith dialogue, religious studies, and multiculturalism into the university curricula, and organizing conferences to educate students and scholars on these topics.
- Step 3: Local interfaith groups: Establishing local groups in cities and towns to build relationships among religious communities through joint prayer services, community projects, and cultural exchanges.
- Step 4: Social and political engagement: Shaping policies on religious education, freedom, and holidays through interfaith dialogue, thereby influencing social and political landscapes in favor of religious harmony.



EARLY WARNIG SYSTEM OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY

CONTEXT

The Jewish Community in Vienna has implemented an Early Warning System (EWS) for community members, taking a proactive approach to protect the community from potential threats. This initiative ensures that risks, such as antisemitic attacks or other security concerns, are identified early, allowing for quick and effective responses.

TARGET GROUP

The target group includes Jewish communities and their leadership, emergency and safety personnel, and local police forces.

BEST PRACTICE ADDED-VALUE

This best practice allows threats to be relayed to community members within minutes, allowing them to respond in a timely manner by following the instructions (e.g. avoid a certain public space or lock doors of Jewish Places of Worship). This helps to:

- improve the safety and security of the Jewish community by providing timely alerts about potential threats;
- enable the community to take proactive measures to protect members and property from harm, and
- implement best practices to ensure that the EWS operates within legal frameworks and upholds ethical standards, protecting the community from potential liabilities.

ACTION PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- Step 1: Community members subscribe to a service that warns them of relevant security incidents and sends them general updates as well as instructions on ongoing security developments.
- Step 2: The notifications are sent via short text messages by the Jewish community's security center. This center is permanently in direct contact with police and security agencies, and is informed of any threats almost immediately.
- Step 3: At the same time, the instructions and even the knowledge about a threat are kept secret from the public, ensuring operational security, as a major advantage over communication via social media.
- Step 4: This early warning system also considers reports by citizens via emergency channels or the general reporting form of the community, thereby institutionalising bi-directional communication between community leaders and community members.



RESPONDING TO A MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS IN A PLACE OF WORSHIP

CONTEXT

A mentally challenged person entering a Place of Worship may create a situation that some might perceive as threatening. During the PARTES research phase, project partner EFSAS recognised this common challenge shared by many Places of Worship. Such cases require a sensitive and balanced approach to ensure safety while upholding the values of compassion and inclusion.

TARGET GROUP

This practice targets worshippers and members of the religious group, religious leaders, security personnel, medical staff, police authorities; Places of Worship volunteers and staff, and mentally challenged individuals.

BEST PRACTICE ADDED-VALUE

- A compassionate response to the event, balancing safety and security, while upholding the values of the religious community;
- Mental health training and preparedness for staff and volunteers, who should be ready to handle such situations in a calm and effective way;
- The engagement of the community by addressing social issues and fostering an inclusive environment;
- Awareness raising on recognizing signs of mental distress, techniques for calming tense situations, and guidelines on when to call for professional assistance.

ACTION PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- Step 1: Provide training for staff, volunteers, and religious leaders on how to interact with a mentally challenged individual in a compassionate and safe way, including de-escalation techniques and mental health awareness. It is recommended to establish a written protocol.
- Step 2: Provide an immediate response by assessing the situation, engaging with compassion and de-escalating techniques. Use non-confrontational language. Practice active listening and clear speech. Avoid using jargon or complex terms that might confuse or frustrate the individual.
- Step 3: Ensure the safety of the targeted group. If needed, call for support from trained personnel or medical staff and contact local authorities, clearly communicating the situation and the presence of a mentally debilitated individual.
- Step 4: After the incident, debrief and review the protocols. Update the protocols if needed. Discuss with the congregants the situation and assuage any concerns.



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