# D2.1 Protecting Places of Worship in Europe:

A Review of Literature and Future Research Trends

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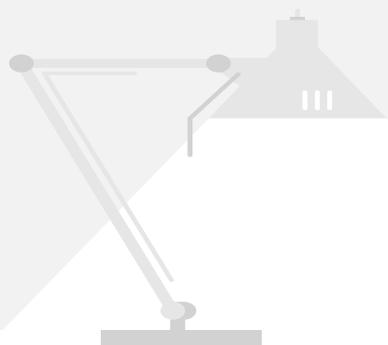
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| Brief abstract | The document is an overview of the previously published works on the topic of protection of places of worship. Starting with the analysis of the efforts made by the EU and the UN to protect places of worship (PoWs) from various hazards, it discusses the recommended measures, including vulnerability assessments, public awareness campaigns, physical protection, and stakeholder cooperation. The literature review shows that gaps in PoW protection persist. The document identifies these gaps and suggests areas for future research, such as the effectiveness and acceptability of protective measures, the impacts of securitisation on religious adherents and communities, and multi-religious cooperation. It also explores the vulnerability factors of PoWs, the methods of attacks on them, and the enabling factors. Additionally, the report examines the importance and value PoWs hold in the communities. The report concludes by emphasising the importance of a multi-religious cooperation process to strengthen responses, increase dialogue, and reduce violent threats to society. It advocates for combining vulnerability assessment models and ethnographic research to understand the needs and perceptions regarding PoW protection. The report is a valuable resource for policymakers, religious leaders, and community members interested in promoting religious harmony, tolerance, and the security of PoWs. |

## List of acronyms/abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| Protone | PROTONE: Protect the Places of Worship - Harmonizing Diversity |
| PoW | Places of Worship |
| CSO | Civil Society Organisation |
| FBO | Faith-Based Organisation |
| EC | European Commission |
| GDPR | General Data Protection Regulation |
| VAM | Vulnerability Assessment Methodology |

## Glossary table

| | |
|---|---|
| Faith-based Organisation | A non-profit organisation associated with or inspired by religion or religious beliefs |
| General Data Protection Regulation | A Regulation in EU law on data protection and privacy in the EU and the European Economic Area |
| Places of Worship | A specially designed structure or consecrated space where individuals or a group of people come to perform acts of devotion, veneration, or religious study |
| Post-secularism | It is a term that has emerged in various disciplines, including sociology, to reflect religion's move back into the public sphere and the need to take into account the voice of religious actors in any contemporary analysis of society (Possamai A.) |
| Post-organisational Terrorism | Terrorism characterised by the rise of loose networks, small cells and lone actors who, while adhering to the ideas of groups or networks, might not have any known affiliation to them (CDCT 2022) |

## Introduction

The sanctity and peace of places of worship have been increasingly compromised in recent years. These spaces, which are meant to be havens of tranquillity, community, and spiritual nourishment, have become targets of violence and hatred. The threats they face are not only physical but also ideological, stemming from a range of sources, including religious extremism, ethno-nationalist terrorism, and even secular intolerance.

In an era of escalating religious and secular threats, the security of places of worship (PoWs) has emerged as a top priority at the national and international levels. This report provides an in-depth analysis of the current initiatives, challenges, and prospective directions in the field of PoW security, with a concentration on the EU context. The protection of PoWs involves not only physical security but also the preservation of cultural heritage, the promotion of religious liberty and social cohesion, and the development of safety measures. As a result, various stakeholders, including governments, international organisations, religious communities, and civil society organisations, have taken notice of the issue.

This report begins by analysing the initiatives taken by the EU and the UN to protect PoWs from various hazards. The section then delves into the specific measures recommended by these organisations, such as vulnerability assessments, public awareness campaigns, physical protection, and enhancing cooperation between various stakeholders. Nevertheless, voids persist in the protection of PoWs despite these efforts. This report identifies these voids and suggests areas for future research, such as the effectiveness and acceptability of protective measures, the insecurities generated by securitisation, and the short- and long-term effects of securitisation on religious adherents and their surrounding communities. A multi-religious cooperation process is proposed to strengthen responses, increase dialogue, and reaffirm the roles religious communities play in reducing violent threats to society. This report seeks to contribute to the ongoing efforts to safeguard these vital spaces and the communities they serve by providing a comprehensive overview of the current state of PoW security and identifying areas for future research.

The report also discusses the concept of PoWs as 'soft targets' and the factors that contribute to their vulnerability. It highlights both structural and behavioural factors, such as the open-door policy of many places of worship and the lack of integrated security systems in older buildings. The report also discusses the modus operandi of attacks on PoWs, including improvised explosive devices, active shooting incidents, vandalism, and advanced technologies. It further explores the enabling factors of attacks on PoWs, including government policies, the performance of state security agencies, and issues with reporting hate crimes. The report also acknowledges the differences in security cultures among the Abrahamic religions (Christian, Jewish, and Muslim) and seeks to develop a multi-religious cooperation process to strengthen and coordinate responses,

increase dialogue, and reaffirm the roles religious communities play in reducing violent threats to society. The report concludes by contextualising the methodologies of the Vulnerability Assessment Model (VAM) and ethnographic research in the field of the protection of PoWs, arguing that a combination of the two approaches can provide a granular understanding of the current needs for protection, the perceptions of security enforcement and the citizens' reception, as well the perceived impact in the neighbourhood.

The report is a valuable resource for policymakers, religious leaders, and community members interested in promoting religious harmony and tolerance and enhancing the security of places of worship. By focusing on similarities and differences between the three Abrahamic communities in how they perceive and react to threats, relevant actors may be better informed on the needs of specific religious communities. These nuances are important when developing a multi-religious approach to enhancing security and dialogue around the protection of PoWs across Europe that is sustainable, inclusive, and mindful of the strong capabilities of PoWs in influencing everyday life.

# 1. Background

This section is an overview of EU and international initiatives aimed at securing places of worship from religious and secular threats. It also gives a quick overview of the main EU projects that have addressed this issue. In the conclusion of this section, we summarise the main recommendations and gaps emerging out of these projects and discussions that can be further explored in PROTONE.

## EU and UN Interventions aimed at securing places of worship:

The protection of places of worship in the EU falls under the activity of DG HOME, the European Commission's Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs, which is tasked with the protection of public spaces from terrorist threats. In 2019, the European Commission produced the document 'Good Practices to Support the Protection of Public Spaces' that indicated four key areas of intervention:

1) Assessment and Planning: introducing vulnerability assessments to facilities to be fully prepared for insider or outsider attacks, developing security plans for buildings and events, training relevant staff in case of attacks, and developing crisis management plans.

2) Awareness and Training: carrying out public awareness campaigns aimed at recognising and reporting suspicious behaviour and developing security training programmes for employees of facilities.

3) Physical Protection: integrating security and physical protection into the design of facilities and events, introducing barriers and detection technology.

4) Cooperation: strengthening public-private communication and clarifying roles and responsibilities for protection, and developing practical recommendations and guidance materials that can be consulted by various stakeholders.

In parallel, in 2019, the United Nations proposed the 'Plan of Action to Safeguard Religious Sites' that listed recommendations aimed at protecting religious sites and also, maintaining religious peace and continued inclusive use of PoWs. The recommendations are for states, religious leaders, civil society organisations, and online providers in the two areas of prevention and preparedness – response. Part of the UN's Plan of Action is mapping of religious sites around the world to produce an online interactive tool where best practices for safeguarding are documented across the globe. In 2022, UNAOC and UNOSAT launched an interactive map of religious sites in Sweden.[1]

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[1] This map can be found at https://forsafeworship.org/sweden/.

In 2020, the EU Security Strategy for 2020-2025 also took into consideration the protection of public buildings, including PoWs.

In January 2021, the UN adopted resolution 75/258, 'Promoting a culture of peace and tolerance to safeguard religious sites' with practical recommendations.

In May 2021, DG HOME produced the 'EU Quick Guide to Support the Protection of Places of Worship' aimed at giving practical information for the protection of places of worship'. The Quick Guide is not meant for protection from large-scale terrorist attacks or places of worship that have high vulnerability but is rather aimed for everyday protection and building of awareness around low-level attacks. The Guide includes a vulnerability assessment model that is intended for use by PoWs of different sizes and structural characteristics.

Responding to the increasing need for the protection of places of worship, the Internal Security Fund initiated a call for EU-based projects on the protection of places of worship. In 2021, the European Commission funded six projects for the protection of PoWs.[2] They are: *SOAR Project* – Protecting Religious Spaces in Europe; *PROSECUW* – Protection and Security for Places of Worship; *PROTECTOR* – Protecting Places of Worship; *SHIELD* – Solutions to Enhance Interfaith Protection of Places of Worship from Terrorist Danger; *ProSPeReS* – Protection System for large gatherings of People in Religious Sites; *SASCE* – Safe and Stronger Communities in Europe.

The projects aim to create security frameworks for the protection of PoWs and disseminate prevention and targeted training information to be implemented at places of worship and the community at large, along with large-scale awareness campaigns. The projects integrate a security-by-design approach that takes into consideration the structural characteristics of places of worship and the behaviours that they enable (for congregants: openness and vulnerability; for attackers: possibilities of breaching barriers and attacking). The security-by-design approach is intended not only for large-scale attacks but presupposes a holistic definition of threat that includes smaller but equally impactful attacks, threats, and breaches. The projects also focus on the surrounding areas around PoWs where religious celebrations and events may take place to ensure that PoWs are not isolated from the community and continue practising their religious activities openly. Another theme addressed in the projects is building strong links between PoWs, community organisations and the larger society to avoid treating PoWs as highly securitised counter-terrorism spaces but rather as valued structures that have the potential to bring communities together and reduce ideological tensions in society.

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[2] This information is obtained from Artur Sybicki's article in the Polish publication *Terrorism – studies, analyses, prevention* (Sybicki, 2021).

## Points for Further Research

The PROTONE project furthers the research conducted so far by focusing on the effects of security threats and responses on PoWs and the surrounding community. By pairing the vulnerability assessment with ethnographic research, the project intends to employ a more granular understanding of the need for protection, the perceptions of security protection and their effects on PoWs and the surrounding communities. Research questions may include:

- Are protective measures corresponding effectively to the security needs of PoWs?
- Are protective measures perceived favourably by PoWs and the surrounding community?
- Who benefits most from protection, and who benefits least? How can we increase the positive reception of POW security by different actors?
- What insecurities are being produced in the process of securitising PoWs, and how can future protective measures acknowledge and reduce them?
- What are the short and long-term effects of the securitisation of PoWs on faith-goers and their surrounding communities?

While strengthening the prevention and protection of PoWs and religious communities is a main pillar, the project also aims to enhance inter-faith cooperation and cross-learning based on discussions on protection and prevention. The project acknowledges that there are differences in security cultures (how religious communities and their PoWs respond to threats – see section 4 in the report) between the three Abrahamic religions (Christian, Jewish, Muslim). By taking into consideration these fragmented security cultures, the PROTONE project will develop a multi-religious cooperation process to strengthen coordinated responses, increase dialogue, and reaffirm the roles religious communities play in reducing violent threats in society.

## 2. Security Risks

This section begins with an overview of terrorist attacks on PoWs in the EU, with special attention given to selected EU member states relevant to our study. We then explore the *what, the how, and the why* of attacks, where we develop key concepts in this project, including a pluralistic definition of threats and an ideological matrix of attacks. The latter includes incel, right-wing terrorism, left-wing, and jihadist terrorism, as well as 'non-affiliated' terrorism in Europe.

## The *What*: Data on Attacks Against Religious Communities in Europe

According to EUROPOL (2022), the highest number of terrorist attacks in Europe is classified as jihadist terrorism. The number of these attacks is declining (in comparison to 2019 and 2021), and, at the same time,

increasingly trained national security services are able to foil these attacks. What we will discuss below are the attacks on religious communities and PoWs in particular.

According to Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) 51% of hate crime (in 2020) was directed against religious communities and targeted places of worship (OSCE/ODHIR, 2021). Data from PEW also shows that Europe has the highest percentage of damage to the property of religious communities in the world (Pew Research Center, 2022). According to OSCE reporting for 2021, the majority of attacks against religious communities in Europe are attacks against property (OSCE/ODHIR, 2022). Among the religious communities, Christian communities faced the highest percentage of attacks against property, specifically churches. However, Muslim communities face the highest percentage of violent attacks against people, and the highest percentage of threats in general, followed by Jewish communities.

*Figure 1: OSCE/ODHIR's Hate Crime Data 2021.*
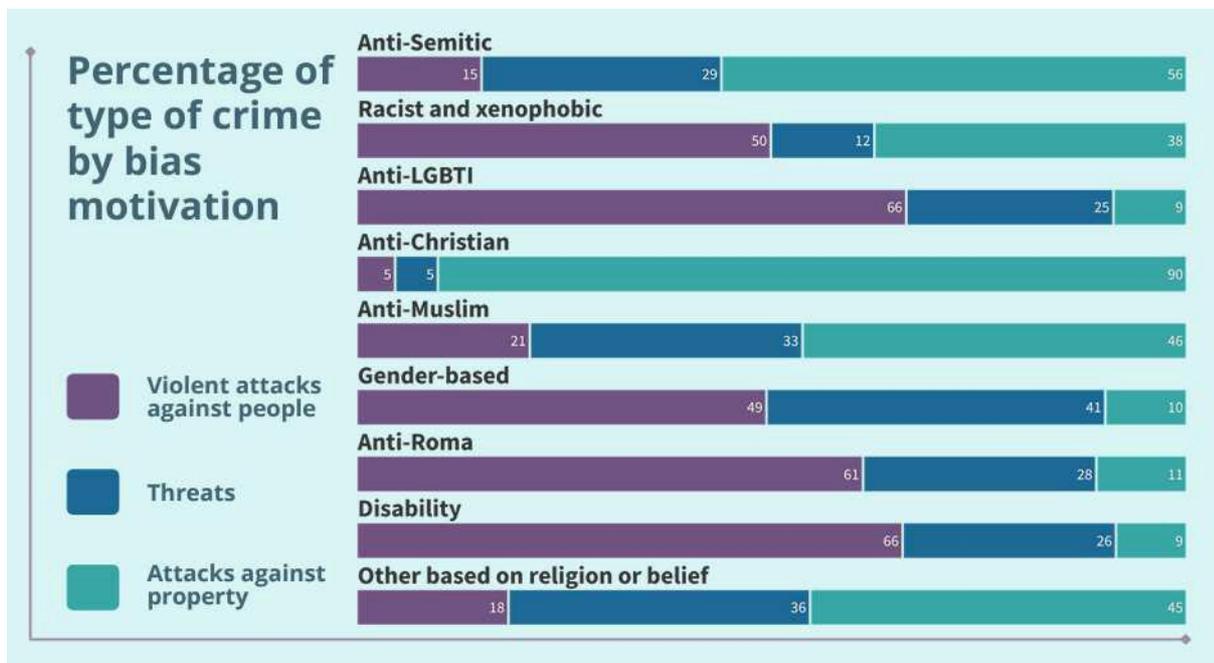


This is consistent with studies that focus on anti-religious hostility in Europe. Based on the 13-indicator Social Hostilities Index developed by PEW to measure hostility against religious communities by individuals and groups,[3] France, Germany, Belgium, and UK exhibit high hostility against religious communities, and Spain and Italy exhibit moderate hostility.[4]

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[3] PEW's Social Hostilities Index includes 'religion-related armed conflict or terrorism, mob or sectarian violence, harassment over attire for religious reasons and other forms of religion-related intimidation or abuse'.

[4] PEW reports that the Social Hostilities Index rose from 1.7 in 2019 to 1.8 in 2020.

**Figure 2: Social Hostilities in Europe (Pew Research Center, 2022).**
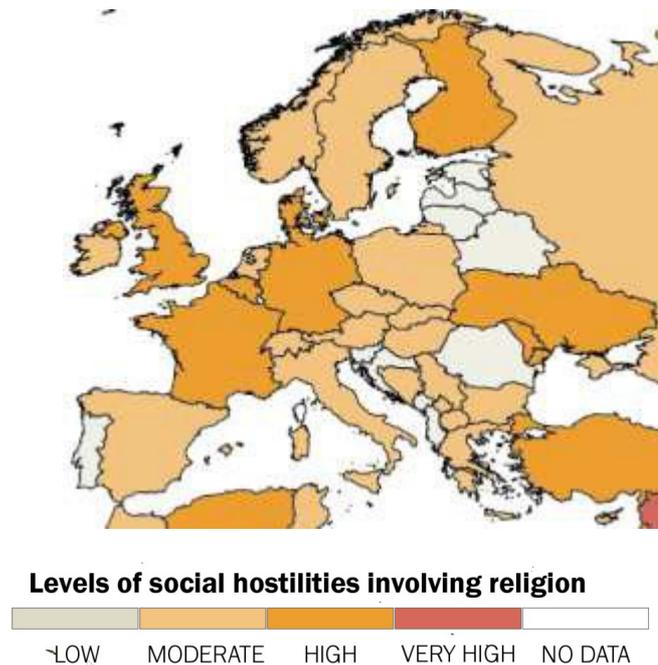


## Risk in Jewish Communities

According to recent data, Jews in Europe feel that antisemitism is on the rise. The 2021 Hungary-based Action and Protection Foundation study surveyed 16,000 respondents in 16 EU member states and found that anti-Semitism was the strongest in Greece, Poland, Slovakia and Romania, while the least anti-Semitism was found in Sweden, Netherlands and the UK. Among the findings, the highest number of anti-Semitic attacks was found in Germany, although Germany placed somewhere in the middle in regard to perceptions of anti-Semitism. EU analysts and representatives of Jewish communities are also reporting the trend of Jews leaving Europe for the US or Israel in the context of an anti-Semitic secular European society (Höltgen, 2022).

In response to these alarming developments, the Council for Europe produced a document of Recommendation on Preventing and Combating Antisemitism. The European Commission also presented the 'Strategy on Combating Antisemitism and Fostering Jewish Life (2021-2030)' with the expectation that EU member states will adopt their national anti-Semitic strategies and fund projects fostering Jewish life in Europe.

## Risk in Christian Communities

According to a report by the Observatory on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians in Europe, anti-Christian hate crimes in Europe increased by 70% between 2019 and 2020. The freedoms of Christians are most restricted in France, Germany, Spain, Sweden and the UK. The report found that the largest threat came from secular intolerance, which takes the form of hate speech, inability to express religious views in the education system and very strong online harassment. France and Germany have the highest frequency of hate crimes, and

Spain and France have the most severe hate crimes driven by secular intolerance. According to the OSCE data for 2020, there were 980 attacks against Christian communities in Europe that centred around robbery, assaults on priests and anti-church graffiti by pro-abortion activists. The latter was the highest in Poland, where the Church's stance on abortion is a divisive issue in Poland's public space. The European Parliament found that most of the overall attacks were taking place in France, and the most common form of attack was the vandalism of churches (European Parliament, 2016).

In response to this, the European Parliament in 2016 passed the Motion for a Resolution on anti-Christian sentiment and the protection of Christian buildings in Europe.

## Risk in Muslim Communities

In many European states, Islamophobia is supported by state-sponsored discriminatory legislation. The most serious examples are Austria and France. In Austria, the 'Vienna Forum on Countering Segregation and Extremism in the Context of Integration' is a political move to battle political Islam that spills into cultural, social and personal spheres. In 2022, Austrian Integration Minister Susanne Raab also increased the annual budget of the 'Documentation Center Political Islam' by more than three folds, which has left Muslim populations in Austria highly alert and afraid of being wrongfully targeted (Bayraklı & Hafez, 2023). France's anti-separatist bill is another example where the state-sponsored battle against political Islam is leaving Muslim populations agitated and afraid of expressing their religion publicly.[5] In the UK, the government's PREVENT strategy to fight Islamist extremism also disproportionately focuses counter-terrorism activities on the UK's Muslim communities. Such state-sponsored approaches to rooting out political Islam enable an environment of Islamophobia that may legitimise violence against Muslim communities (Amnesty International, 2022). Anti- Muslim attitudes spill over to those defending or protecting the human rights of Muslims, who are sometimes accused of being terrorists themselves (ibid., p. 3).

According to findings in the 2016 report 'Forgotten Women' by the European Network Against Racism, Muslim women suffer from hate crimes, discrimination at work, and online harassment more than Muslim men. Muslim women are identified by their dress and are attacked in public spaces. The most common attack are insults, spitting, and other intimidating actions. The report also found that Muslim women are the least likely to report hate crimes and tend to normalise the attacks against them. So far, hate crime legislation do not contain a gender angle that is necessary for protecting women.

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[5] France's anti-separatist bill officially titled the 'Bill comforting the respect of the principles of the Republic' was passed in December 2020. Under the banner of fighting Islamism, the law incudes tighter restrictions on online activities, homeschooling, and the receiving of funds from organisations. However, critics have voiced concern that the bill legitimises far-right discourse in France against Muslims (Yeung, 2021).

Religious communities are targets of increasing secular intolerance across Europe. However, there are some differences between the three Abrahamic religions that are worth mentioning. Jews in Europe have a long and violent history of Anti-Semitism that continues permeating in European society. For Muslim communities, religion and migrant backgrounds are often conflated in public discourse, and discriminatory discussions against Muslims flare up during political crises such as the peak of the refugee crisis (2015-2019) and recent international jihadist organisations (2012- ongoing).

## PoWs as Soft Targets

PoWs are notorious for being soft targets. We identify both structural and behavioural factors behind this classification.

*On the behavioural level:*

- Large numbers of congregants are confined in a limited space and might be in an inattentive state towards their physical surroundings, including having their phones turned off.

- PoWs usually have an open-door policy to members and non-members alike to increase social embeddedness and openness of the faith to all. In fact, research (from the US) shows that places of worship are vulnerable to increased violent attacks and property damage on site and at the neighbourhood level because of the combination of decreased social control capabilities of congregants and high foot traffic in places of worship (Wo, 2023) This research shows that PoWs being soft targets extends to neighbourhoods being soft targets as well.

*On the structural level:*

- Older PoWs do not have an integrated security system into the building's structure and cannot easily introduce new ones. They also have multiple entrances, which increases the risk of being attacked from different vantage points (SOAR, 2022),

- According to SOAR, PoWs are versatile and can be used as meeting spaces for diverse activities that need separate security protection. For example, during religious festivals or special events, PoWs may use some public spaces around their designated spots, which requires protection both inside and outside and a trained staff that does not look intimidating but is ready to act in case of an emergency. Another issue is that there are diverse people who are in PoWs at different times, such as tourists, congregants, and passers-by from different ages, gender and cultural backgrounds, which makes it challenging to come up with a one-size-fits-all security system (European Forum for Urban Security, n.d.)

The SOAR Baseline Research report also points to the fact that, since resources on the protection of PoWs are limited, these resources are usually divided into several security activities that do not ensure 100% effectiveness in one security protocol (p. 13).

# The *How*: Modus Operandi and the Ideological Matrix of Attacks

## Modus Operandi

*IEDS:* The most common modus operandi are explosive devices. Military explosives are difficult to obtain; hence perpetrators have been increasingly using IEDs (Improvised Explosive Devices) with instructions easily available on the internet. Ingredients and products used in IEDs are readily available to perpetrators. An additional advantage of using IEDs is that perpetrators hold an operational advantage by having remote access and control of time (Pethő-Kiss, 2020).

*Active shooting* incidents in and around places of worship are the most deadly but also the most rare. The most notable in the past five years are Christchurch (mosque, 51 congregants killed) and Halle (synagogue, 2 killed).

*Vandalism, Property Destruction, Burglary, Arson:* includes graffiti (on churches), throwing excrement at congregants in PoWs, and other attacks that are meant to harm or humiliate religious communities and desecrate their spiritual spaces. More serious attacks are property damage and arson.

*Blasphemy:* Muslims consider indecent caricatures of the Prophet and the burning of Qurans religiously blasphemous. Events include the breaking-in to a mosque and burning of over 50 Qurans in Corsica in 2015 (Al-Jazeera, 2015) and the recent burning of the Quran in Sweden near the Turkish embassy as part of a protest (Rankin, 2023).

*Advanced Technologies:* Terrorists are using advanced technologies that include drones and encrypted messaging for online hate crimes (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2022). Security chiefs pointed to the potential use of drones in biological attacks in large spaces (Martin, 2019), which could potentially be used on attacks against large gatherings in PoWs.

*New Trends:* According to 2022 EUROPOL data, attacks have also increased against soft targets by perpetrators who used simple weapons. Another alarming trend is the 'copycat trend' (UNAOC, 2019), where perpetrators broadcast their crimes to incite others to do the same. The Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Christchurch attack indicated that the Christchurch shooter had 'operational security'. Operational security is the 'awareness and minimisation of behaviours that might attract attention from public sector agencies (Royal Commission of Inquiry into the terrorist attack on Christchurch Mosques on 15 March 2019, 2020). According to a recent report (Duquet, 2018), active shooters in recent jihadist terrorist attacks slipped under the radar of security

agencies, as none of them was a member of a high-level organised crime group. Some were tied to the criminal underworld as mid-level criminals, but the majority were low-level criminals with no connections to surveilled organisations. These trends show that perpetrators are becoming more aware of security responses and how to navigate them, and can slip under the radar of security institutions.

## Enabling Factors of Attacks

The main enabling factor of violent attacks against PoWs is increased polarisation and intolerance in society against religious communities. However, EU governments play a very critical role in managing this intolerance. Other enabling factors such as the performance of security agencies, reporting behaviour, loopholes in the acquisition of weapons, and reporting mechanisms, play a large role.

*Government Policies:* EU countries have individual laws related to the governance of religion. According to the findings in PEW's 13th annual report on Government Restrictions Index, which measures government laws, policies and actions that restrict religious beliefs and practices, we see the following trends:

*Figure 3: Pew Research Center's Government Restrictions Index (2022)*

| Europe 45 countries | baseline year, ending JUN 2007 | | previous year, ending DEC 2019 | | latest year, ending DEC 2020 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| COUNTRY | GRI | SHI | GRI | SHI | GRI | SHI |
| Albania | 0.8 | 0.2 | 1.9 | 0.0 | 1.9 | 0.0 |
| Andorra | 0.9 | 0.0 | 2.4 | 0.0 | 2.4 | 0.0 |
| Austria | 2.6 | 1.1 | 4.4 | 2.1 | 4.5 | 2.2 |
| Belarus | 5.9 | 1.4 | 5.7 | 1.4 | 5.8 | 1.1 |
| Belgium | 4.0 | 0.9 | 3.9 | 3.9 | 3.3 | 4.5 |
| Bosnia-Herzegovina | 1.5 | 2.4 | 2.8 | 2.5 | 2.8 | 2.0 |
| Bulgaria | 4.0 | 2.2 | 5.6 | 4.0 | 4.5 | 2.2 |
| Croatia | 0.7 | 2.0 | 2.2 | 0.5 | 2.9 | 1.0 |
| Czech Republic | 1.0 | 1.2 | 2.4 | 1.1 | 2.3 | 1.8 |
| Denmark | 2.5 | 1.2 | 4.1 | 3.7 | 4.4 | 4.4 |
| Estonia | 1.1 | 0.8 | 1.4 | 0.4 | 1.4 | 0.4 |
| Finland | 0.6 | 0.8 | 2.5 | 3.0 | 3.3 | 3.7 |
| France | 3.3 | 3.4 | 4.6 | 3.5 | 5.4 | 4.7 |
| Georgia | 2.2 | 4.7 | 3.6 | 3.3 | 3.9 | 2.9 |
| Germany | 3.1 | 2.1 | 3.2 | 5.9 | 3.3 | 4.0 |
| Greece | 5.2 | 4.4 | 4.4 | 3.2 | 3.9 | 2.2 |
| Hungary | 0.3 | 1.0 | 2.8 | 3.0 | 3.1 | 2.0 |
| Iceland | 2.6 | 0.4 | 3.7 | 1.0 | 3.6 | 1.7 |
| Ireland | 0.6 | 0.4 | 1.5 | 3.0 | 1.0 | 2.4 |
| Italy | 2.0 | 1.9 | 2.9 | 1.7 | 2.9 | 2.9 |

| Europe 45 countries (cont.) | baseline year, ending JUN 2007 | | previous year, ending DEC 2019 | | latest year, ending DEC 2020 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| COUNTRY | GRI | SHI | GRI | SHI | GRI | SHI |
| Netherlands | 0.4 | 1.0 | 3.8 | 2.6 | 2.8 | 2.1 |
| North Macedonia | 2.2 | 1.5 | 2.8 | 3.0 | 2.2 | 2.2 |
| Norway | 1.5 | 1.0 | 3.2 | 1.5 | 3.1 | 2.7 |
| Poland | 1.0 | 0.9 | 3.5 | 2.6 | 3.3 | 1.8 |
| Portugal | 0.3 | 0.0 | 1.0 | 0.1 | 0.6 | 0.8 |
| Romania | 4.8 | 5.5 | 4.8 | 1.7 | 5.3 | 1.3 |
| Russia | 5.8 | 3.7 | 8.2 | 4.5 | 8.2 | 3.2 |
| San Marino | 0.1 | 0.0 | 0.6 | 0.0 | 0.6 | 0.0 |
| Serbia | 3.1 | 1.5 | 3.4 | 2.1 | 3.1 | 1.8 |
| Slovakia | 2.8 | 1.9 | 3.0 | 2.9 | 2.8 | 1.8 |
| Slovenia | 0.6 | 1.0 | 1.8 | 0.9 | 1.8 | 1.0 |
| Spain | 2.0 | 1.6 | 4.3 | 4.2 | 3.8 | 3.0 |
| Sweden | 1.2 | 0.7 | 2.6 | 1.5 | 3.1 | 2.9 |
| Switzerland | 1.2 | 1.7 | 2.6 | 3.5 | 2.4 | 3.4 |
| Ukraine | 2.6 | 1.9 | 4.7 | 4.8 | 4.2 | 4.9 |
| United Kingdom | 1.6 | 1.6 | 3.2 | 5.2 | 2.8 | 4.4 |

When we look at the data on countries that are concerned with the PROTONE project, we see that government restrictions are noticeably high in Austria and France (above 4.5). Next are Spain, Belgium, and Germany (above 3.3). The country reporting the lowest levels of government restrictions is Italy (2.9). National legislation corroborates this. In 2021, France approved the anti-separatism bill that Muslims, who are the country's largest minority, strongly contested because of the limits on religious freedoms and restrictions of religious expression in civil service (Ganley, 2021). In Italy, Islam is not recognised as an official religion. Pushing for recognition and access to public funds, Italy's Muslim leaders called for a National Pact for an Italian Islam. The Pact is not a constitutional agreement and has, in fact, increased the presence of the Italian state in religious affairs, such as holding sermons in Italian, training imams, and managing their PoWs.

*Performance of state security agencies*: State security agencies are often understaffed with limited budgets to counter the new wave of terrorism that hit Europe since 2015. Notable examples are Belgium, where language issues and inter-departmental politics have led to it being internationally identified in 2015 as 'the weakest link in Europe' (Blenkinsop, 2015). Another example is France that in 2016 had six intelligence units that were divided across the ministries of Defence, interior and economics (Chrisafis, 2016). Leaders of EU countries have put the restructuring of national security agencies at a top priority.

*Issues with reporting:* In their baseline report, SOAR synthesised data[6] from European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights to show that not all EU countries have a public (or internal police) list of bias indicators for hate crime reporting. Belgium, Netherlands and Austria do not have any bias indicators. When reporting hate crimes, France and Germany require a different form of reporting that is separate from general crime reporting. Such bureaucratic steps may deter reporting. SOAR also indicated an 'alarming' finding that Belgian police do not have internal guidance on how to record a hate crime. On the side of victims of attacks on PoWs, there is not enough data showing the reporting behaviour. The data from a survey conducted on mosques across the UK shows that 42% of mosques experienced a religiously motivated attack in the last three years. 85% of these mosques reported the attacks to the police. Out of these reports, 28% reported that police increased security measures, whereas 38% reported no police action (Muslim Census, 2022). Another factor is reporting fatigue. According to the European Union's Fundamental Rights Agency's survey (2018), antisemitism in Europe 'is so common that it has become normalised (p. 12)'. According to findings, 79% of respondents who reported anti-Semitic harassment did not report the incident. The reasons given were that they felt that nothing would be done (48% of respondents), it was not serious enough to warrant a report (43%), or it would be inconvenient or troublesome (22%). These findings show that numbness and inconvenience need to be overcome to reach high rates of reporting.

*Budgetary Issues:* The EU body (namely the Internal Security Fund, with the 2022 PROTECT program) allocated EUR 14 500 000 for enhancing the protection of places of worship. Individual EU countries have different schemes, which will be discussed in part 4 of this report. These are direct responses to calls from religious communities to increase grant money for protection.

*Online Encouragement and Normalised Public Culture:* It is worthwhile to inquire how online public reactions to attacks contribute to increased agitation and dehumanisation against religious groups. This, for example, was one of the intentions of the Christchurch attacker, who live-streamed his attack for 17 minutes. Although taken from the context of India, anthropologist Moyukh Chatterjee (Chatterjee, 2023) shows how highly publicised political violence against minorities amidst unclear legal terminologies can become a normalised form of governance. Although this is an extreme case, it indicates what can happen when, in the absence of accurate legal terminologies, attacks against religious minority groups may become normalised.

*Acquisition of weapons:* Although active shooter incidents are rare, they are the deadliest. IEDs (improvised explosive devices) are more accessible and also cause high casualties. In 2017, the United Nations Security

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[6] SOAR report that the authors obtained data from the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights' two reports Hate crime recording and data collection practice across the EU (FRA 2018a:21–24) and Experiences and perceptions of antisemitism – Second survey on discrimination and hate crime against Jews in the EU (FRA 2018c:56), and from the Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey (EU MIDIS-II) – Being Black in the EU (FRA 2019b:9–10) (SOAR, 2022)

Council adopted resolution 2370 to prevent terrorists from obtaining weapons. In UNOCT report (2022) 'Preventing Terrorists from Acquiring Weapons Technical Guidelines', they highlight the 'upstream measures' to prevent the acquisition of weapons and 'downstream measures' to respond to attacks. The report indicates the need for good practices such as more national counter-IED policies that are centralised and managed under one governing body to prevent any loopholes, and also increased training of counter-IED capability development for security agencies and the public at large. Handguns are relatively easily obtainable in Europe, automatic rifles less so, unless the buyer is connected to an organised crime group (Duquet, 2018). A key issue is the cross- border movement of firearms due to the EU's lax border policies within Europe and low data sharing and tagging of weapons between EU countries.

## The Ideological Matrix of Threat

Over the last three years in the West there has been a significant shift in the instigators of such terrorism. Religious terrorism declined by a considerable 82% in 2021, but politically motivated terrorism increased by five times (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2022). The Council of Europe Committee on Counter-Terrorism (CDCT) also identified that since 2019 there has been a steady rise in right-wing terrorism by lone wolves who are connected to extremist communities online. The primary perpetrators of terrorism are individuals or groups who are rarely linked to formal organisations and act individually, often inspired by the online groups they are part of (Council of Europe, 2022).

As for attacks on places of worship, there is also an alarming rise of right-wing terror cells, especially in Germany, where between 2019 and 2020, there has been a 100% increase in individuals connected to underground terror groups that planned 'revenge attacks on places of worship and were intercepted by police (Connolly, 2020). Other political attacks include political-ethnic tensions, also in Germany, where PKK groups were behind a number of attacks against mosques reported in 2022 and called for targeted violence against Turks in Germany (Winter, 2018). Right-wing extremism is also becoming increasingly intertwined with incel culture (Wilson, 2022). While incel culture is built on misogynistic outlooks on the world, right-wing extremism is built on a white nationalist outlook. These ideologies can be 'mutually escalatory (ibid.)'. In addition to this, the Covid-19 pandemic intensified online activity and isolation, which increased individuals' susceptibility to radicalisation into right-wing, left-wing, and anarchist terrorist groups (EUROPOL, 2022, p.15).

These developments in religious, political, ethnic, religious, racial, and misogynistic threats should be understood as an ideological matrix of threat against Europe's religious communities. SOAR Baseline Research Report (2019) identifies individuals or groups belonging to a diverse range of ideological groups as 'subcultural hate communities.' According to their research, these communities construct the 'other' or the 'enemy' through

harmonising between different ideologies. This makes the tracing and isolation of one ideology from another increasingly difficult.

Another challenge is defining what constitutes terrorism. This is a difficult undertaking, as specifying *what* terrorism defines the modes of persecution of the perpetrator. This in itself requires coordination across EU countries that have different legal understandings of terrorism (Huff & Kertzer, 2018). This is also a worldwide problem. Organisations such as the United Nations are unable to propose a comprehensive treaty to fight terrorism because individual member states cannot agree on a unified definition (ibid.).

However, there are attempts at conceptualising this phenomenon. According to the Council of Europe Committee on Counter-Terrorism (CDCT) Report on Emerging Terrorist Threats (2022), there has been a major shift in modus operandi from organised terrorism in Europe to what they identified as 'post-organisational terrorism':

Post-organisational terrorism, characterised by the rise of loose networks, small cells and lone actors who, while adhering to the ideas of groups or networks, might not have any known affiliation to them.

Compared to jihadist or right-wing terrorism, where the ideological factors are clear, post-organisational terrorism is a jumble of divergent ideologies, and perpetrators may mix and match from different, often ideologically diverse online ecosystems (Council of Europe, 2022).

The PROTONE project recognizes that in order to fully understand what motivates attacks on places of worship, a nuanced and versatile conception of anti-religious ideology is needed. In the following paragraphs, we aim to show what lies behind the tensions between subcultural hate communities and religious communities. We also aim to debunk how the threat to religious communities does not necessarily stem from tensions between 'secularism' and 'religion' but rather secularism as an ideology can become polarising in the context of religious decline and increased migration flows to Europe.

## The *Why*: Secularism as an Ideology

In the wake of 9/11 and the subsequent global war on terror, the dominant narrative of threat to Europe was considered jihadist terrorism. However, in the past decade, the nature of the threat has been changing and now encapsulates broader, non-religious ideologies. In addition to this, physical spaces and online Muslim communities have come under increasing attack that warrants a broader conceptualisation of threat that is inclusive and reflective of the reality of attacks on the ground.

There is a strong trend to identify new post-organisational terrorism defined above as part of 'secular' terrorism against religious communities. This requires a breakdown of secular vs religious life in Europe and an understanding of what secularism as an ideology entail.

At the heart of a secular state are two pillars: separation of religion from state and, relatedly, the freedom of belief (or non-belief) (Casanova, 2009). These two principles are linked and mutually constitutive. The first pillar is secularism, understood as 'statecraft' or 'secularity', which is the base of Europe's secular civic institutions. The second pillar, however, can develop into an 'ideology' in itself that goes beyond its rationalised function for state secularism (Jiménez Lobeira, 2014). Secularism as an ideology is generative of ideological tensions when put in the face of another ideology, such as religious ideology.

In fact, secularism can be emotive. Jiménez Lobeira writes,

'Secularity 'denotes a feature that characterises a certain atmosphere, or a political arrangement or a style of government. 'Secularism', like many other'-isms', implies a movement or a promotion of ideology, doctrines or belief systems. (391)

There are two drivers that are affecting ideological tensions in Europe. The first is that European are becoming less religious. According to the Pew Research Center study on Christians in Western Europe (2018), in all listed EU countries, there is a decrease in religious affiliation when raised religious and an increase in non-affiliation.

**Figure 4: Pew Research Center (2018) data on declines for Christianity ad on the increase of the religiously unaffiliated in Western Europe.**



**Declines for Christianity mirrored by gains for religiously unaffiliated**

% who say they were/are ...

| | Raised Christian | Currently Christian | NET Change | Raised unaffiliated | Currently unaffiliated | NET Change |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Belgium | 83% | 55% | -28 | 12% | 38% | +26 |
| Norway | 79 | 51 | -28 | 15 | 43 | +28 |
| Netherlands | 67 | 41 | -26 | 22 | 48 | +26 |
| Spain | 92 | 66 | -26 | 5 | 30 | +25 |
| Sweden | 74 | 52 | -22 | 21 | 42 | +21 |
| Denmark | 80 | 65 | -15 | 16 | 30 | +14 |
| France | 75 | 64 | -11 | 17 | 28 | +11 |
| Portugal | 94 | 83 | -11 | 4 | 15 | +11 |
| Finland | 85 | 77 | -8 | 14 | 22 | +8 |
| Germany | 79 | 71 | -8 | 17 | 24 | +7 |
| Ireland | 88 | 80 | -8 | 7 | 15 | +8 |
| Italy | 88 | 80 | -8 | 8 | 15 | +7 |
| Austria | 86 | 80 | -6 | 11 | 16 | +5 |
| Switzerland | 81 | 75 | -6 | 15 | 21 | +6 |
| United Kingdom | 79 | 73 | -6 | 17 | 23 | +6 |
| **MEDIAN** | **81** | **71** | | **15** | **24** | |

Note: All changes are statistically significant.
Source: Survey conducted April-August 2017 in 15 countries. See Methodology for details.
"Being Christian in Western Europe"

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Modernisation plays a critical role in the decline of religious socialisation in society (Molteni & Biolcati, 2023). In fact, most of Europe's youth consider themselves religiously unaffiliated:

*Figure 5: Europe's Young Adults and Religion (Bullivant, 2018)*



1.3 Detailed breakdown of 16-29 year-olds' religious affiliation in 22 European countries (ESS 2014-16)
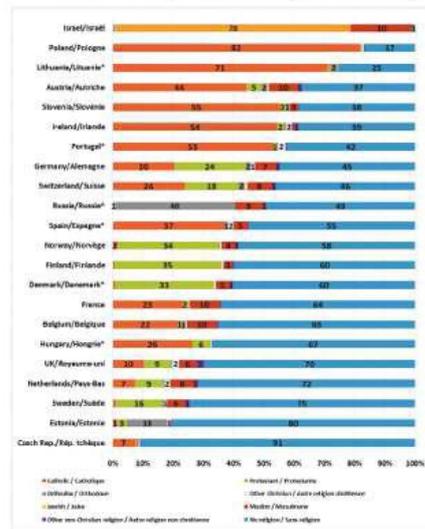
Using a minority hypothesis, in the face of increased non-affiliation in society, religious groups may feel threatened and turn inwards (Stahl, 2010). This is due to a crisis of 'uncertainty' and 'authority' that is waning. Data shows that individuals who identify as religious in a secular society are more likely to participate more fully and commit more strongly to their religion (Wilkins-Laflamme, 2014).[7] This is a form of protecting religious purity and actively choosing a religion, especially during atmospheres of imposed secularity. Wilking-Laflamme shows how individuals who 'choose' religion in the context of secularity tend to distance themselves from secular ideology.

The second factor is increased migration to Europe and projections of a high percentage of Muslim populations in the future.

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[7] Wilking-Laflamme's work comprises Catholic and Protestant religions in the UK, US and Canada.

*Figure 6: Projections of Muslim Population Growth (Pew Research Center, 2017).*

### Amount of growth in Europe's Muslim population depends on future migration

*Muslim share of Europe's population under different migration scenarios*

▶ PROJECTED

○14.0% High

○11.2% Medium

10%—

2016 4.9%

○ 7.4% Zero migration

5%....

3.8%○

4.6% 2015

2010 '15 '20 '25 '30 '35 '40 '45 2050
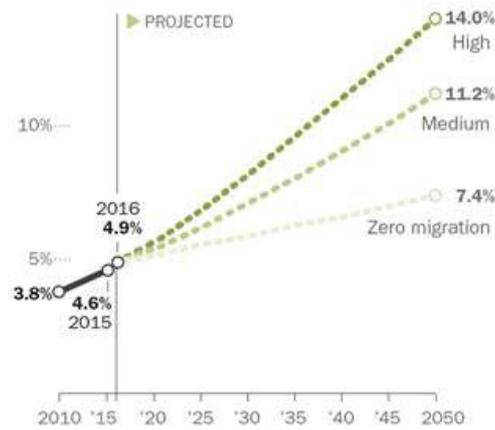
Note: In zero migration scenario, no migration of any kind takes place to or from Europe. In medium migration scenario, regular migration continues and refugee flows cease. In high migration scenario, 2014 to mid-2016 refugee inflow patterns continue in addition to regular migration. Europe defined here as the 28 countries of the European Union plus Norway and Switzerland. Estimates do not include those asylum seekers who are not expected to gain legal status to remain in Europe. Source: Pew Research Center estimates and projections. See Methodology for details. "Europe's Growing Muslim Population"

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As a reaction to this projection, findings show that most Europeans want to restrict migration from Muslim countries.

**Figure 7: Data on attitudes towards migration of Muslims to Europe (Goodwin et al., 2017).**
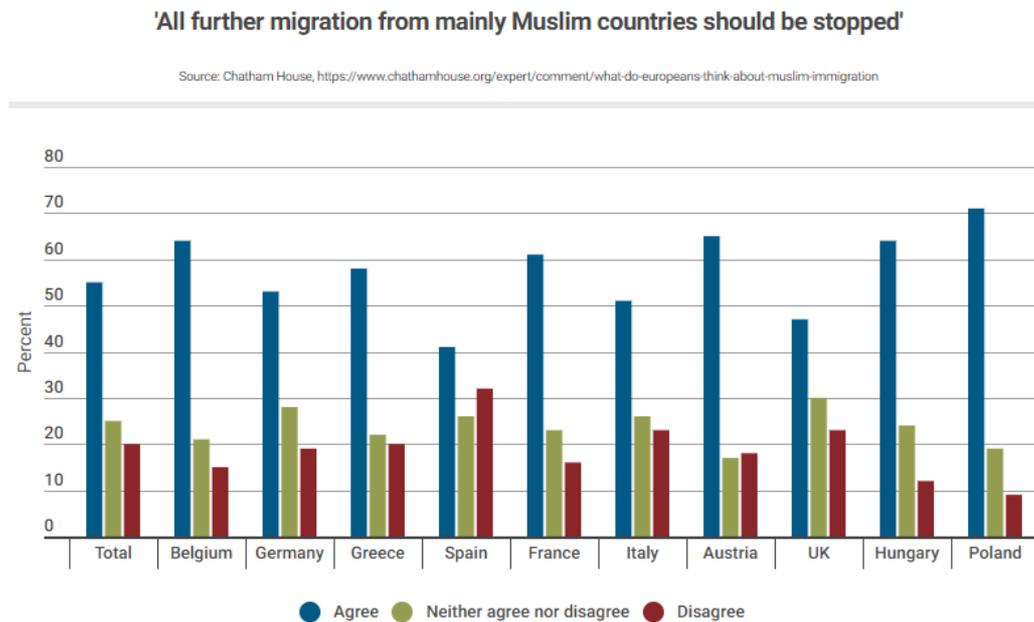


It is evident that religion in Europe's public space is increasing with higher numbers of migrants with Muslim backgrounds. Taking into account that 1) religious non-affiliation among Christians in Europe is declining, and those who continue to practise their religion are feeling that they are a minority and turning inwards, and 2) Muslim migrants are increasing, we begin to paint a picture of an increasing intolerance by secular society towards religious communities. Backing this claim, using survey analysis, (Ribberink et al., 2018) show how the religiously unaffiliated in Europe contest religion. According to their findings, polarisation between non- religious and religious groups is the highest in the most secularised Western countries, specifically countries that have Catholic heritage. These findings are applicable to highly secularised France, for example, where the attacks on religious communities in the name of secularism are high.

Although data on polarisation between the religiously affiliated and unaffiliated is relevant, it is important to move the discussion beyond tensions between the 'secular' and the 'religious'. In the following paragraphs, what Europe's post-secular society means will be added to add nuance to the argument that the tension is primarily between a secular majority and a religious minority.

## Post-Secularism: What is it?

Scholars of religion have been writing about Europe's entry into the post-secular phase (Dillon, 2010; Gorski & Altinordu, 2008). Liberal philosophers such as Jurgen Habermas (Habermas, 2008) understand post- secularism as the resurgence of religion in highly secularised societies where religions are strictly separated from civic life. Habermas writes, 'religion maintains a public influence and relevance, while the secularistic certainty that religion will disappear worldwide in the course of modernization is losing ground (p. 4).'

Post-secularism scholars argue that given that Europe's legal and civic foundations are founded on Judeo-Christian values, secular European societies cannot continue functioning in the secularised 'aftermath of Judeo-Christianity' without the interference or re-emergence of ideological values into the core of civic life.[8] When conceptualising 'secular society' then, it is imperative to take into account that secularism can also evoke emotional, spiritual and ideological values, and hybridise them into new forms of belief.

Recent work by scholars of migration also opens the discussion that secularism is not anti-religious. Monica Martinelli (2020) writes,

The end-point of this process [secularism] is no longer only atheism as a strong position taken up towards faith but concerns all the alternative forms to believing which qualify our times, ranging from interpretations of agnosticism and laicism, which express a certain indifference towards questions of faith, to new forms of spirituality, up to the emergence of a fluctuating religiosity, often completely modelled and withdrawn into the subject, but sometimes maintaining some reference to a traditional religion in the background. (74)

Going back to the rise in post-organisational terrorism, we may want to think that attacks against PoWs and religious communities go beyond the secular versus religious binary and analyse how tensions in society are a result of the emergence and fluctuation of different ideologies (religious, political, gender) at different times. Given the decline of organised religion for the majority of Europeans, new trends of identity formation and community building (much of it online) are impacting the ways that individuals are developing and expressing their belief systems. Post-organisational terrorism is also an indication that perpetrators are not committing to one ideological organisation (jihadist, right-wing, left-wing, etc.) but are dispersed across different ideologies that are heightened during critical events.

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[8] A very relevant example is the Lautsi case where the European Court of Human Rights ruled that hanging crosses in Italian schools is not a violation of the European Convention of Human Rights.

## 3. Preserving Cultural and Community Significance

This section is dedicated to the review of PoWs as central structures within a religious community. This section first reviews the attitudes towards PoWs and then describes in detail the various significances (and uses) of PoWs in civic, educational, spiritual, and cultural areas as well as community building. The section ends with the main challenges faced by PoWs today.

### Attitudes towards Places of Worship

Data (from 2017) shows that non-practising Christians are the largest religious group in Western Europe:

*Figure 8: Figure showing that non-practising Christians are Europe's largest group (Pew Research Center, 2018).*
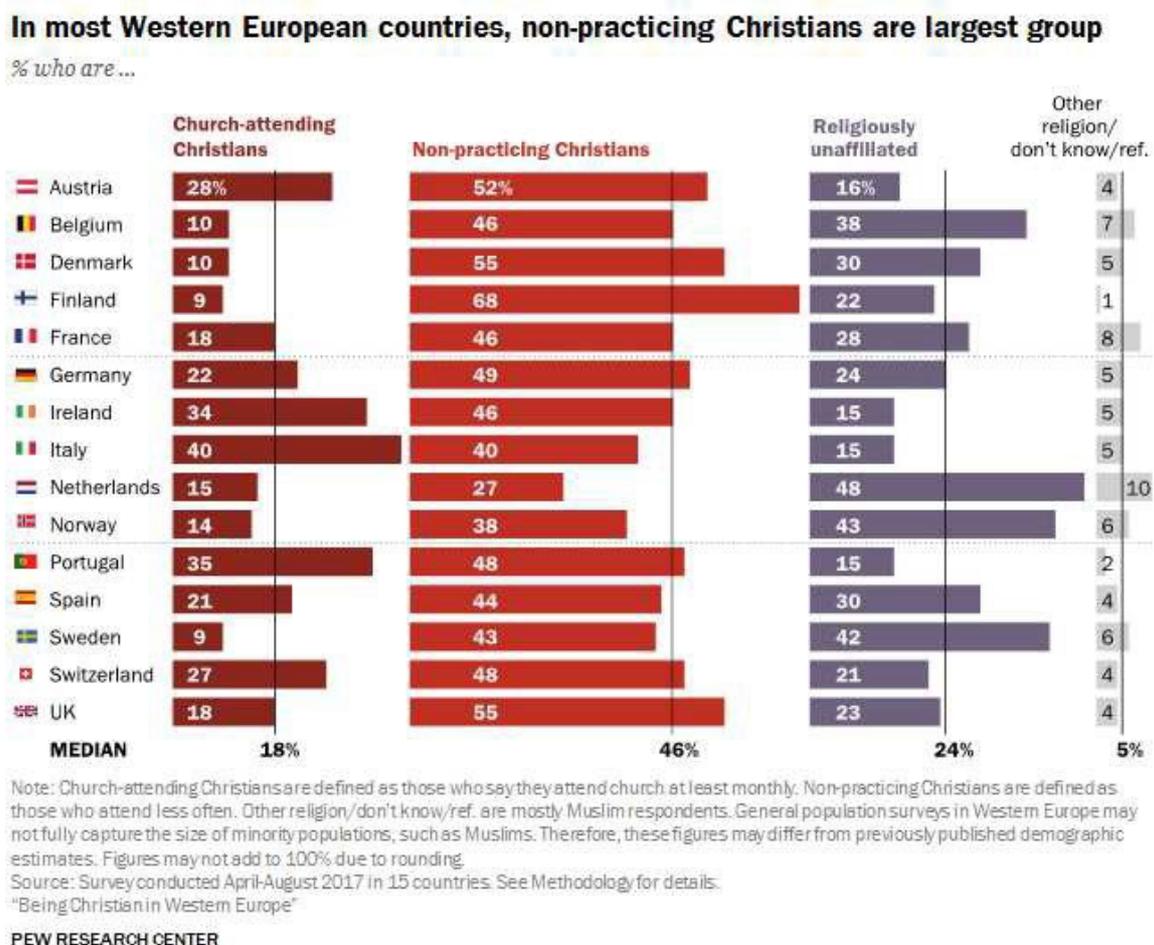


These findings are relevant because despite being non-practising Christians, these populations express positive views toward churches and find them important for community-building and serving the poor. The attitudes of non-practising Christians towards religious institutions are not quite as favourable as those of

church-attending Christians, but they are more likely than religiously unaffiliated Europeans to say churches and other religious organisations contribute positively to society:

***Figure 9: 62% of Western Europe's general population believes that churches play an important role in helping the poor (2018).***

**Christian identity in Europe remains a religious, social and cultural marker**

*Across 15 countries, median % who ...*

| | General population | Church-attending Christians | Non-practicing Christians | Religiously unaffiliated |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Religious beliefs** | | | | |
| Believe in God as described in the Bible | 27% | 64% | 24% | 1% |
| Believe in other higher power or spiritual force | 38 | 32 | 51 | 28 |
| **Religion in society/politics** | | | | |
| Say government should support religious values and beliefs | 36% | 58% | 35% | 14% |
| Agree churches and other religious organizations play an important role in helping poor and needy | 62 | 78 | 62 | 48 |

Large-scale data on the perception of PoWs, especially on synagogues and mosques across different religions, is scarce. However, some studies may offer an idea of the standing of religious spaces in society. PEW shows that 36% of the general population thinks that governments should support religious values and beliefs. However, when it comes to the perception of churches in society, 62% of the general population agrees that churches and religious organisations play a positive role. Church-attending Christians have the highest rate (78%), followed by non-practising Christians (62%) and the religiously unaffiliated (48%). These studies show that churches are still perceived positively by the largest group in Western Europe (non-practising Christians).

## Significance of Places of Worship

I.    Spiritual

A sociological study by Shampa Mazumdar and Sanjoy Mazumdar (2004), shows how religion is important to fostering attachment to 'place'. This study sheds light on the attachment of religious groups to their PoW. The sociologists argue that attachment to place is a socialisation process that comprises individual and collective processes that organise spiritual and social life. Believers experience their lives in religious acts and rituals (baptism, marriage, etc.) that are crucial for experiencing devotion, especially when experienced with others. The need to congregate with others in a place of worship is part of experiencing religion and reaching the highest form of spirituality (ibid., p. 389). PoWs are also designed in a particular way to transport believers to experience higher levels of spirituality. Maintaining their structure, cleanliness, and accessibility have a strong impact on believers. For believers, place and religion are reciprocal and gain meaning by being experienced with others.

2. Cultural and Historical

Historically, PoWs in Europe were the centre of social and religious life, which is reflected in the location of PoWs in urban settings. Churches and synagogues were typically the central structure in the neighbourhood around which the built environment began growing. The oldest preserved synagogue is in Prague, Czechia. The lives of Jewish communities in Europe were continuously threatened over the centuries, and the synagogues that survived from the mediaeval and early modern periods show how synagogues were used as spaces for community building, religious education and safety in the face of constant threat. Under Christian laws prevalent in Europe, synagogues could not be larger than a neighbouring church and were accepted in very specific locations (Heller, 2019). Under Nazism, many of Europe's synagogues were damaged, looted, or repurposed for other activities.

In the Christian religion, PoWs also include sites of pilgrimage, such as Lourdes and natural sites. PoWs in Europe hold value in architecture but are also filled with wealth and art. Several are converted into museums. Foundations such as the *Monumentenwacht* in the Netherlands or *Oeuvre Notre Dame* in France help in restoring and maintaining PoWs, but more funding is needed. PoWs, mainly churches and shrines, make up a huge part of Europe's religious tourism. The best known are the Chartres Cathedral in France, Covadonga in Spain, Koln Cathedral in Germany, and the Vatican in Rome and Westminster Abbey, where tourists outnumber pilgrims (Nolan & Nolan, 1992). To reduce the interactions between tourists and pilgrims, many of these PoWs organise exclusively religious visits in specific times of the year. Ruins are placed under the management of secular authorities, and visits are charged (ibid, p. 74).

The oldest mosque in Western Europe is in Berlin, Germany. Due to the Christianisation of most of Europe, Western Europe's old mosques were destroyed or converted to other structures. In territories closer to the Ottoman Empire that today fall under Hungary, Greece, Bulgaria, and other Balkan countries, mosques are more common and are much older. Today's mosques in Europe, however, are more contested as they are a relatively new phenomenon (1960s onwards). Muslim immigrants who came to Europe were temporarily given abandoned spaces, factory halls and unused churches to practise their religion, with the expectation that their residence would be temporary (Sunier, 2005). However, as Muslim communities grew more integrated, the need for their own PoWs increased. Lacking state funds, Muslims self-fund the rent or purchase of space for their PoWs, which included garages, private houses and offices. For the public, Muslim PoWs were not integrated into old urban plans and therefore appeared as 'infringements'. The need to build Muslim PoWs is also a matter of representing identity, which is a more contested issue for Muslims in Europe generally. Mosques for European Muslims are a 'third space' (Bhabha, 1990) where they hybridise between the identities they left behind in their home countries and their newly acquired European identities. It is also a haven for safety in a political and social environment where Muslims generally feel unwelcome (Werbner, 1996).

3. Welfare and Social Programs

PoWs have an effect on alleviating poverty by providing welfare and services to congregants and their surrounding community. PoWs also administer social programs to youth and the elderly, which increases social cohesion amongst community members (see below). For Christian ethnic minorities in Europe, churches are important social spaces for refuge. For example, the European body Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe works on anti-discrimination legislation and engages in dialogue on the inclusivity of asylum seekers, undocumented migrants, and the Roma and Sinti communities in general that face racial discrimination across Europe.

4. Civic

Although religious groups are framed as opponents of secularism, data shows that groups that regularly attend religious services have higher rates of participation in secular civic life than those who do not attend religious services. For example, higher attendance at mosque activities has been correlated with a higher interest in politics, voting, and contacting politicians for civic projects and activities. Mosque regulars also have membership in secular organisations and political parties. For the case of church attendance, data from the US points to higher voter turnout and political mobilisation among church attendees. Further analysis of this data suggests that people who attend church activities build up communication and organisation skills such as planning meetings, reaching out to non-affiliated members in the community and spreading awareness campaigns. Second, church members feel connected to their religious community, and they translate these community bonds further into political communities (Gerber et al., 2016).

***Figure 10: Rate of political engagement by Muslims who attend religious service in Europe (POMEPS, 2018).***



Figure 2. Rates of political engagement by regular religious service attendance across Muslims in Europe
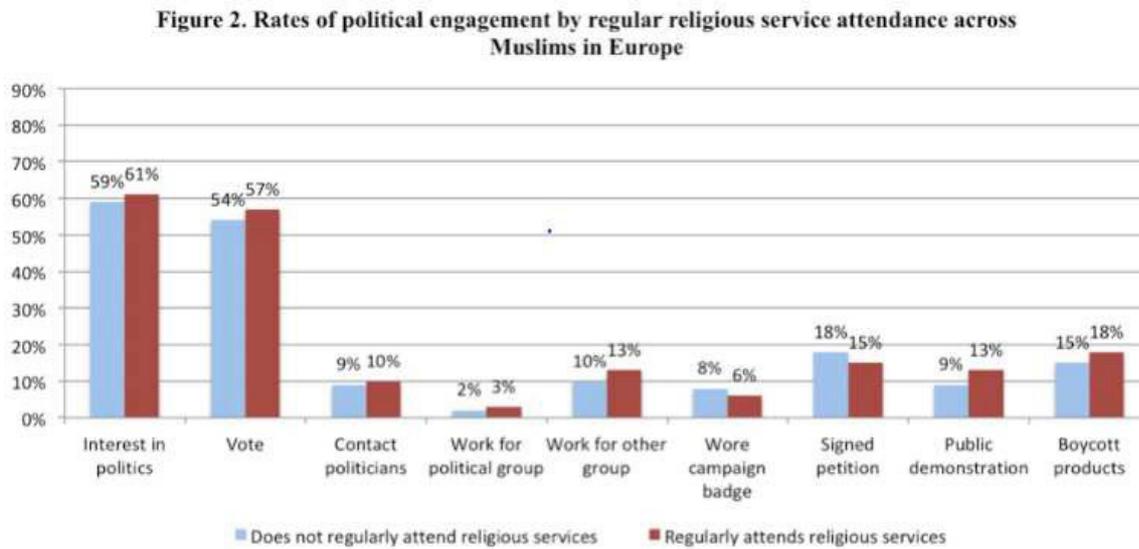
PoWs increase a society's social capital – or 'social ties, mutual cohesion and trust and a willingness to intervene for the common good (Wo, 2023, p. 2). Scholars of religion show how PoWs increase social capital in two ways. First, through building ties between congregants and neighbourhood residents, and second, through bridging between local authorities, institutions and civil society. The capacity of building social capital has a dimension of relationship-building but also organising and creating an impact on both the level of the congregation and the neighbourhood (Putnam, 2000).

## Main Challenges Faced by Places of Worship

Not all PoWs have the same challenges. In fact, there are noticeable differences. While mosques suffer from over-securitisation, Jewish worshippers fear entering synagogues due to the threat of anti-Semitic attacks. Churches across Europe, especially after the Covid-19 pandemic, are attracting fewer congregants, and many are closing down.

Mosques

European governments included mosques as part of their counter-terrorism agendas to fight jihadist terrorism. In light of counter-terrorism laws, often applied in the context of protecting secular liberties, mosques have been transformed into spaces for potential radicalisation, vulnerable to external ideologies and foreign funding, instead of spaces that are inclusive and impactful in fighting radicalisation. European countries such as Austria, France, Netherlands, and Belgium, launched contested initiatives of containment and management of mosques activities, including controlling Friday sermons and closing down mosques over claims of monitoring foreign influence (Bouattia, 2021; Eddy, 2018; Jabkhiro, 2022). These trends point to an over-securitisation of

mosques and to the narrative that Islam is a 'problem in Europe'. The longer-term impacts of over-securitisation may have adverse effects on women, in particular, who plays an important role within their religious groups in de-radicalisation and counter-extremism (Brown, 2008). Such oversight in the governmental approach is a serious one. The effects of the political discourse around mosque securitisation also include discrimination and racism (European Network Against Racism, 2020). According to the findings of this report, European legislation that targets radicalisation into extremist groups was first intended for Muslim communities and later changed to a more inclusive language. Living under suspicion also decreases intra-communal solidarity because Muslims are afraid of bringing negative attention to family and community members connected to their mosques.

Another issue is the construction and permission to build mosques in Europe. Countries like France, for example, have bureaucratic hurdles that limit the building and/or completion of the construction of mosques (Onishi & Méheut, 2021). Muslims are voicing the need for more mosques in Europe; however, issues such as obtaining permits and funding (that are in most countries restricted to self-funding and non-governmental resources) are big, insurmountable obstacles.

Churches

Christian religious spaces are the most likely to suffer from property damage among the three Abrahamic religions. The highest property damage occurs in Poland due to the divisive issue of abortion rights in Polish public space and the perceived alliance of the Church with a right-wing government (Higgins, 2022). Arson and other violent attacks are also rising, the latest being a deadly machete attack in Spain in January, where an assailant killed a church official and injured a priest (Al-Jazeera, 2023).

However, the biggest challenge to churches in Europe is the decline of church-going and the closing down of churches. The Covid-19 pandemic had a huge impact on church activities, as church leaders were unable to reach pre-pandemic levels of attendance. Online worship increased while churches were closed down (or had limited activity) during the lockdown (Jenkins, 2023). However, the closing down of churches is mainly driven by the enlargement of 'unaffiliated' Christians or non-religious groups in society in general. The graph below visualises this reality, where only 22% of Western Europeans regularly attend church:

*Figure 11: Western Europeans continue to identify as Christians (Pew Research Center, 2018).*



**Most Western Europeans continue to identify as Christians, though few regularly attend church**

*Across 15 countries, median % ...*
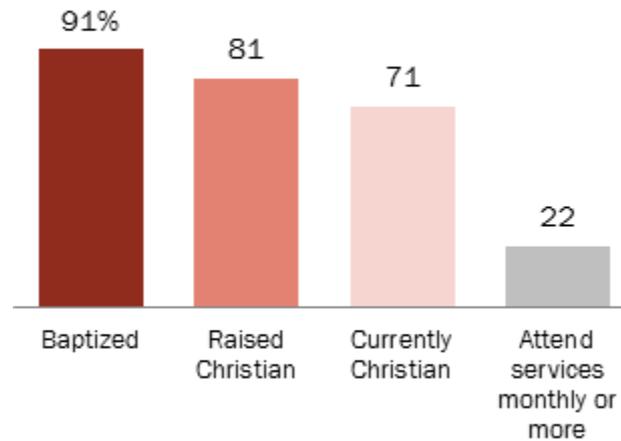
Source: Survey conducted April-August 2017 in 15 countries. See Methodology for details.
"Being Christian in Western Europe"

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There is also some variation between European countries. According to PEW data (2018), the following graph shows that Italy has the highest frequency of church attendance, followed by Ireland and Portugal, while Belgium has the lowest frequency of attendance.

**Figure 12: Western Europeans seldom attend church services (Pew Research Center, 2018)**

**Attending religious services 'seldom' or 'never' is the norm in Western Europe**

*% who say they attend religious services ...*

| | Weekly/ monthly | A few times a year | Seldom/ never |
|---|---|---|---|
| Italy | 43% | 18% | 39% |
| Ireland | 37 | 22 | 41 |
| Portugal | 36 | 22 | 42 |
| Austria | 30 | 22 | 48 |
| Switzerland | 29 | 18 | 53 |
| Germany | 24 | 23 | 53 |
| Spain | 23 | 11 | 66 |
| France | 22 | 16 | 62 |
| United Kingdom | 20 | 22 | 58 |
| Netherlands | 18 | 18 | 64 |
| Norway | 16 | 24 | 60 |
| Denmark | 12 | 36 | 51 |
| Belgium | 11 | 20 | 68 |
| Sweden | 11 | 25 | 63 |
| Finland | 10 | 33 | 58 |
| **MEDIAN** | **22** | **22** | **58** |

Note: Don't know/refused responses not shown.
Source: Survey conducted April-August 2017 in 15 countries. See Methodology for details.
"Being Christian in Western Europe"

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Lower church attendance is leading to church closure. Hundreds of churches across Europe are going on sale or are being converted into spaces of communal activities, like, for example, the Church St. Joseph in Arnhem, Netherlands that has been converted into a skating park (Bendavid, 2015). Cathedrals, in particular, are expensive to maintain and repair. The effects of pollution and climate change are also worsening the structural aspects of cathedrals (Dege, 2022).

Synagogues

Jewish communities lost most of their synagogues across Europe in the last century. Before 1939, estimates show that there were 22,000 synagogues. Nowadays, out of the surviving synagogues, only 718 (at the time of writing, in 2018) are in use (Sherwood, 2018). Cultural organisations, such as the Foundation for Jewish Heritage, launched projects to document synagogues across Europe built before 1939 in efforts to preserve and save them as part of the Jewish cultural heritage. The biggest challenge to synagogues today is the fear of congregants attending religious ceremonies in synagogues due to increased vulnerability. As we explained in the previous section, European Jews perceive a normalised anti-semitism that manifests in increased threats to physical safety, increased property attacks against PoWs and a public atmosphere of animosity. A poll (in 2016) shows that synagogue attendance is decreasing in the face of these fears (Zieve, 2016). Jewish congregants voice that they are too scared to attend services, in particular on holy celebrations. These fears are countered with hard regulations – the constant presence of armed police officers, the need to produce one's passport, and questioning

(including on religious knowledge) (Lipstadt, 2022) – that limit the Jewish community's interactions with their surroundings.

## 4. Security Culture

Building on the previous section, we now review the effects of attacks against religious communities in Europe on PoWs and the surrounding community. In this section, we expand on what we understand as *security culture* – the attitudes and behaviours that PoWs and the surrounding community adopt in response to increased hate crimes. By understanding security culture and programmers, policymakers can have a clearer idea about how communities are responding to threats and what security measures need to be adopted. We look at the security cultures developed by each of the three Abrahamic communities in different local contexts and analyse how it impacts the responses to threats. In the second section, we summarise the general impacts of adopting a security culture on PoWs and religious communities.

### How Religious Groups Perceive and React to Hate Crimes

As attacks on religious communities and their PoWs are increasing, communities are responding in different ways across religions. Using original research, SOAR (Baseline Report) identified three ways respondents understand changes to their security climates. First, respondents used critical incidents (SOAR, 2022, p. 48- 51) such as Oslo in 2011, Paris in 2015, Brussels in 2016, Halle in 2019, and the murder of Samuel Paty in 2020 to mark important shifts in the security climate. These violent attacks fed and magnified public discourses propagated by politicians and the media surrounding refugees and migrants in the past decade. We find that this experience in shifting security climates is more applicable to communities that understand themselves as a 'majority' (i.e. Christian communities) and are now faced with new threats that destabilise their experiences of long-term security. Second, the SOAR report found that respondents reflected on their own personal experiences as migrants and religious minorities, indicating that they feel more vulnerable and under threat than they did 10 or 15 years ago. This suggests a difference in migrant communities between a 'manageable' level of difference and threat that they felt previously and the now very magnified and publically propagated discrimination. Finally, the SOAR project finds that religious minorities express their struggles as part of a longer historical process of racialised discrimination that they knew was always there but had been masked or hidden under the banner of inclusion and multiculturalism. This finding is relevant for Jewish and Muslim communities that have always been vulnerable to stigmatisation but are now finding platforms to document and express Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. SOAR's research findings suggest that religious groups are also normalising threats and finding ways to hide their religious identities. In the following paragraphs, we expand on the behaviours that PoWs are developing in such a security climate.

Raised Awareness:

*Situational Awareness by Congregants:* Congregants across all PoWs have had to learn situational awareness – careful reading of the atmosphere inside and around PoWs and heightened observation of new suspicious individuals in their spaces.

*Assessment of PoWs Structural Characteristics:* Faith leaders and security stakeholders have raised responsibility in identifying vulnerabilities in PoWs. The EU Quick Guide to Support the Protection of Places of Worship stresses the need for familiarity with the risk assessment process and provides guiding questions and security checklists for PoWs to increase protection (DG HOME, 2021).

*Increased Training for Detecting and Responding to Security Threats:* The SOAR project already offers security awareness training for places of worship in EU countries.

More Visible Deterrents Inside and Outside of PoWs

Deterrents can successfully foil violent attacks. For example, the attacker in Halle, Germany, was unable to enter the synagogue and increase his number of victims because of a strong lock on the door. Visual deterrents such as locks, cameras, and barriers may decrease the likelihood of an attack and are being employed in PoWs across Europe.

Calls for Recognition and Legislation

For Jewish and Muslim communities specifically, recognition works on two levels. First, there are increased efforts to identify Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia in practical and legal terms and to target propaganda against Jews and Muslims. In 2015, the EU appointed the Coordinator on combating anti-Muslim hatred, a position that works on fostering positive relationships between Muslims and the larger society and develops tools and resources to identify and report hate crimes. Organisations such as the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights also developed training for prosecutors, law enforcement, educators and civil society organisations for the protection of Muslim communities against hate crimes. Similarly, the EU Commission's Coordinator on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life works on the representation, protection, and strengthening of Jewish communities in Europe. However, there is a second level – the recognition of Islam (in particular) within EU member states that should be treated more seriously. In Italy, for example, Islam is not recognised as an official religion, a situation that allows vilification by right-wing parties (Altomonte, 2021).

Calls for Prevention

The restriction of violent attacks is a very immediate priority. However, prevention is equally important. The United Nations Plan of Action to Safeguard Religious Sites (2019) recommends both preventative and preparedness/response action points for the protection of PoWs. In both cases, state leaders, religious leaders and civil society organisations are expected to use their positions to pacify communities as part of an effective response. Given that violent attacks often have a snowball effect (where one attacker inspires others to attack after them), prevention is the strongest asset. Under prevention, the UN highlights the need for online education and differentiates between hate speech and online hate speech, which is more difficult to trace and control. In May 2019, policymakers signed the Christchurch Call to Action to eliminate Terrorist and Extremist Content Online, which recommends action points for tech companies and online providers.

## What PoWs Do in the Face of Attacks

Synagogues

In general, synagogues no longer have an open-door policy. Volunteers are positioned at the entrance to check the identities of the congregants. In some cases, attendance is confirmed via WhatsApp in the days prior to attending the synagogue (O'Leary, 2019). Synagogues are also increasingly hiring private protection and security guards that can be found guarding synagogues and schools. Jewish institutions have a long history of coming under attack and have had decades to develop comprehensive plans against car bombs, snipers, and other attacks. The burden of financing these preventive measures has, for the most part, fallen on the Jewish communities themselves. In the past few years, this has been changing. Statesmen in Europe are working on proposals to secure funding for the protection of Jewish PoWs.

In a few countries, administrative obstacles (resulting from having, for example, a federal or canton system) or funding schemes underwent changes and updates in response to security threats against synagogues. For example, the Ministry of Interior in Germany appoints security personnel (usually police officers) to protect Jewish institutions during religious festivals, such as Yom Kippur. The federal state system in Germany has different protection and funding directives/schemes for funding. For example, North-Rhine Westphalia has more protection and has recently signed an agreement with the Jewish community that includes an annual budget of €3 million for security infrastructures such as doors, cameras, and panic rooms (Thurau, 2019).

In the UK, the Home Secretary allocated £15 million for the protection of synagogues and schools. The focus is on acquiring alarm and monitoring systems within PoWs but also on tackling online hatred and threats picked

up by state agencies. As such, the Home Secretary is increasing funding for police security (Home Office, 2023). The Home Secretary will also chair meetings for the Jewish Community Police, Crime and Security Taskforce, which comprises security personnel, Jewish non-profit organisations, and other partners to decide on preventative measures against anti-Semitic hate crimes. The UK has the security funding 'The Places of Worship Protective Security Funding Scheme' that all faiths can apply to for funding protective measures for PoWs.

In 2019, the Swiss government adopted the 'Decree on Measures to Ensure the Protection of Minorities with Special Security Needs' and proposed a working group composed of minorities, municipality and canton representatives to coordinate protective responses. The Federal Office also launched funding cycles (beginning in 2020) on the Confederation level that Jewish communities can apply to in order to receive security technologies. 23 out of the 27 applications (2020-2022 funding cycle) were approved for the protection of Jewish PoWs, which also indicates urgency. The Federal Council responded favourably to these needs, increasing the annual budget from CHF 500,000 to CHF 2.5 million in all as of 2023 (Swiss Federation of Jewish Communities, n.d.). Due to Switzerland's decentralised administration, individual cities and cantons are being called upon to provide more funding.

In Belgium, the military took on the role of protection of places of synagogues. Such protection began after the Charlie Hebdo attacks in 2015 and continued until 2021, when the federal government ended military protection and placed police protection instead. Belgian Jewish communities expressed that such a development increased their vulnerability to attacks. However, at the same time, Jewish leaders and congregants also expressed relief at the absence of military presence, which intimidated congregants and made them feel that they were in constant danger (Sharon, 2021).

These few examples show that:
- Decentralisation may play a role in delaying forming of security and funding bodies for the protection of Jewish PoWs.

- Jewish communities have felt vulnerable for decades and developed robust security systems that they need to update to respond to new emerging trends of threat.

- Despite increased funding for Jewish communities, Jews are still calling for more protection, preferably for police and not the military at the places of worship.

Mosques

According to ODHIR's Hate Crime Data 2021, Muslim religious groups have the highest number of violent attacks perpetrated against them and the highest number of threats among all three Abrahamic religious communities. Muslims in general, feel they are targets of state-sponsored discriminatory laws and security mandates (Amnesty International, 2022). Contested bills, such as France's anti-separatism bill, are linked with higher restrictions on mosques. Muslims therefore are doubly vigilant – vigilant to prevent hate crimes against them and their PoWs, and vigilant not to criminalise themselves in the eyes of the law. In fact, the regulation of Islam in Europe is tightly linked to the regulation of immigration. Most Muslims in Europe have an immigrant background – it creates a 'double-bind' situation. State authorities regularly monitor – covertly and overtly – Muslim communities, a practice which has normalised suspicion of Muslims within society and played a role in the diminishing of their human rights (ibid.).

Muslim dress is visible and invites harassment and attacks on public transport and in the streets. According to ODIHR's 'Understanding Anti-Muslim Hate Crimes' report, Muslims are choosing not to attend religious services, disguising themselves in public and downplaying their physical appearances (OSCE/ODHIR, 2020). Muslims are not only targeted in their PoWs but in openly identifiable spaces such as schools, halal shops, and areas where they live. These behaviours create environments of isolation for the Muslim community, which may have detrimental effects on well-being and may also lead to reactive behaviour. Muslims in Europe also feel that they are paying the price of individual attacks and that they are being targeted as communities whenever any attack takes place in Europe. 'Self-defence' as sentiment is increasing among Muslim communities (ibid., p. 22-23). In 2022, the UK government allocated £24m for the protection of mosques against hate crimes, which is a positive step compared to EU member states that do not have such funds for the protection of mosques.

The above discussion shows us that:

- Mosques are over-securitised, and Muslims, most of whom have an immigrant background, fear retaliation and targeting.

- Over-securitisation has an impact on obtaining funding for protection. In places (like France) where authorities limit freedoms on construction and funding channels for building mosques, funding for protection is a politically sensitive issue.

- By constructing mosques as a 'problem' or hotbeds for radicalisation, Muslim communities turn inwards and isolate themselves, which may have reactive effects further down the line.

Churches

Christianity is the biggest religious group in Europe, and there are thousands of churches across the EU. Protecting them all is not feasible, and therefore prevention and response to attacks are primarily dealt with by church officials and churchgoers themselves. Our research brought up very little data that is exclusively related to the security culture of churches since most studies take into consideration targeted minorities. In the case of violent crimes and large-scale attacks, EU member states have deployed security to protect churches. In France, after a perpetrator stabbed three individuals in Nice in October 2020, President Emmanuel Macron deployed soldiers for the protection of churches and schools ('France Attack', 2020).

Another issue specific to churches in Europe is that the ownership details of churches are often complicated. Churches own properties and often make arrangements with regional authorities or municipalities to use church-owned buildings. These issues become important when identifying whom the duty to protect falls. An example of this is the UK's Protect Duty (or Martyn's Law) to protect public spaces. Complicated church ownership rights may give rise to accountability issues in the case of failure to protect churchgoers (Evangelical Alliance, 2021).

We learn the following:

- In some countries, such as Poland, churches play a major political role. Although attacks on churches are hate crimes, there are also underlying political issues that need to be considered in individual countries. This puts churches at an increased risk of attacks since the driver is political, not only ideological.

- The large number of churches across Europe makes it difficult to protect them all equally. Ownership rights also complicate the duty of protection.

## Main Challenges of Developing a Security Culture

Sustaining Openness

Christopher Scheitle and Jeffrey Ulmer (2018), in a very relevant article, discuss how security measures introduced in PoWs are seen by congregants as decisions that take away from the 'sacredness' of their spaces. Based on 52 interviews with religious leaders in churches, mosques, and synagogues in the American Midwest, they analyse the balance that faith leaders need to strike between being secure and remaining open and welcoming. Securing PoWs with barriers, CCTVs, metal detectors, and guards affects the relationships between the congregation and its attendees. Scheitle and Ulmer find that PoW leaders were more willing to impose security measures, whereas attendees did not outright accept them. In one of the interviews for their article, they described how faith leaders worried about transforming their sacred spaces into 'armed encampments' that drive

away attendees. To mitigate such feelings, some PoWs ask guards to dress in non-military outfits when they are within PoWs.

Attracting Newcomers

Another key issue for their interviewees of Scheitle and Ulmer was preserving the identity of the congregation. Due to security risks, they found that PoWs had to close down outreach activities to minimise attention drawn to them. Activities included reaching out to the poor and gaining new followers, which paradoxically are the activities of a successful mission. By minimising visibility, these congregations are going against their very religious duties.

Ensuring Sustainability of Security (and Funding)

As the examples in Belgium and France show, security agencies need to withdraw protection from PoWs at some point. Security equipment also needs regular updating and protection against malware and online attacks. As attackers will learn the protective measures that PoWs are employing for security, attacks may take different shapes (see New Trends section in Part One). Updates to security provisions are also heavily dependent on funding from governments and from religious communities themselves. Although in the past few years, several governments have allocated budgets for countering Anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, and hate crimes in general, the bulk of prevention will have to fall on education and cooperation between religious communities, civil society, and stakeholders in government.

Over-securitising PoWs

As discussed under the above 'Mosques' section, over-securitising has a negative impact on congregants who face racial and legal discrimination. Over-securitising also has an impact on perceptions of POWs. Maxim Samson's work on congregations in Chicago (Samson, 2020) shows how security issues became a 'proxy' for the place of religious groups in American society. Mosques and synagogues are at the heart of discussions on security, which slowly defines them as vulnerable elements in society that cannot be incorporated easily into society's cohesive whole. Samson also shows how over-securitising PoWs renders them, out of necessity, increasingly private entities that require funds for security. Over-securitised PoWs also tend to change congregational behaviour to maintain maximum levels of security, which generally changes the relationship between faith leaders and attendees and congregants' relationship with religion. A key issue here is ensuring that PoWs maintain control of religious experiences and continue being spaces for community and outreach. Oversecuritising may have adverse effects on religious communities, especially from migrant backgrounds, that rely on PoWs for support and well-being.

# 5. Socio-Cultural Narrative in the Surrounding of Places of Worship

In this section, we discuss neighbourhood perceptions of PoWs and tensions that can originate from the vicinity of PoWs.

The most visible tensions arise between communities and mosques, and synagogues. Islam's public visibility in the European public sphere has a disruptive effect on tacit and explicit public imaginaries of a secular society. Nilufer Gole, a scholar of Islam in Europe, writes about the creation of 'new publics' that are

Not pre-established and consensual entities but constituted by manifestation of differences, their confrontation with each other and their mutual transformations. Confrontation leads as well to a process of 'interpenetration' that comprises physical proximity, force and incursion in one another's cultural domain. (Gole, 2011, p. 390)

Interpenetration is most visible in discussions over mosque building and use. In 2009, based on the results of a referendum, Switzerland banned minarets. The right-wing party Alternative fur Deutschland proposed the same ban in 2016, along with a ban on the burqa. These state decisions portray Muslims as outsiders whose culture cannot be integrated into European society. Highly public anti-mosque building campaigns are also a site of discrimination. The sociologist Chris Allen (Allen, 2014) analysed Facebook groups against the building of the Dudley Mosque in the UK by engaging in online discussions. He found that the most common themes were related to issues of space, planning, and investment, along with identity and heritage that online users felt the mosque was challenging. Allen also drew connections between the community and political disconnection that the Facebook users felt and their opposition to building a mosque in their area that made the Muslim community highly visible and, by extension, replaceable to theirs.

Socio-cultural tensions also arise from assumptions that Muslims avoid integration into European society. However, data shows otherwise. According to a study conducted by Bertelsmann Stiftung (Bertelsmann Foundation, 2017), 'Muslims in Europe: Integrated but not Accepted', Muslims in Europe are successfully integrated in the five European countries that the study covers (Germany, Austria, UK, Switzerland and France). The authors define integration as 'the extent to which opportunities for participation are realised and plurality—based on the constitution—becomes viable (p. 5).' The report shows that Muslims attained successful linguistic integration and are well-integrated into each country's educational system. Muslims also view inter-religious relationships as normal and have close contact with non-Muslims in their community. They also express a very high connection to the countries where they live, especially Muslims in France and Switzerland. Despite these positive statistics in integration, Muslims struggle to obtain desirable employment that corresponds to their educational qualifications. But despite successful patterns of integration, non-Muslim Europeans express a high percentage of rejection of Muslims as neighbours. This is highest in Austria, where Jews are more accepted as neighbours.

*Figure 13: Muslims are highly rejected as neighbours in five European countries (Bertelsmann Foundation, 2017).*



FIGURE 3: **Rejection as neighbors\*** (in %)

\*Question: "I'm going to read you a list of various groups of people. For each group, please tell me whether you would not want to have them as neighbors or whether it doesn't matter to you: [each group of people]." The figure shows, for each group, the percentage of those who responded "would not want to have them as neighbors."

Source: 2017 Religion Monitor, random sample of non-Muslim population in each country, valid cases

BertelsmannStiftung

Different data collected across the EU paints a more positive picture. According to PEW's research report 'Being Christian in Europe', most Europeans would accept Jews and Muslims as neighbours:

**Figure 14: Acceptance of Muslims and Jews as neighbours in Europe (Pew Research Center, 2018).**

**Muslims as neighbors**

*Would you be willing to accept Jews/Muslims as neighbors?*

|  | Jews | | | Muslims | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | Yes | No | Other/DK/ref. | Yes | No | Other/DK/ref. |
| Austria | 85% | 8% | 7% | 77% | 13% | 10% |
| Belgium | 94 | 4 | 2 | 91 | 7 | 3 |
| Denmark | 97 | 2 | 1 | 91 | 8 | 1 |
| Finland | 93 | 5 | 2 | 83 | 14 | 3 |
| France | 90 | 7 | 3 | 85 | 11 | 4 |
| Germany | 86 | 8 | 6 | 77 | 13 | 10 |
| Ireland | 82 | 10 | 8 | 75 | 14 | 11 |
| Italy | 77 | 12 | 11 | 65 | 21 | 14 |
| Netherlands | 99 | 1 | 0 | 96 | 3 | 1 |
| Norway | 98 | 1 | 0 | 92 | 6 | 2 |
| Portugal | 85 | 10 | 5 | 83 | 11 | 6 |
| Spain | 87 | 8 | 4 | 86 | 11 | 3 |
| Sweden | 96 | 2 | 1 | 90 | 8 | 2 |
| Switzerland | 86 | 8 | 6 | 76 | 13 | 10 |
| United Kingdom | 88 | 9 | 3 | 78 | 16 | 5 |
| **MEDIAN** | **88** | **8** | **3** | **83** | **11** | **4** |

Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding. Further analysis of the data shows that those who do not give a clear response are more similar in their characteristics to those who say "no" than those who say "yes."
Source: Survey conducted April-August 2017 in 15 countries. See Methodology for details.
"Being Christian in Western Europe"

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER**

Among the listed countries, Italy, Ireland and Portugal are the highest to not accept Jews as neighbours, while Italy, the UK, Ireland and Finland scored higher than the rest in not accepting Muslims as neighbours. However, on average, 88% of Europeans would accept Jews as neighbours, and 83% would accept Muslims.

Also, according to PEW, 67% of Europeans know a Muslim, whereas 39% know a Jew. The familiarity of Europeans with Muslims is expected to grow with the projected increase of Muslims in Europe. Jews have been declining in Europe, and there might be fewer opportunities in the future for exposure to the Jewish community.

**Figure 15: Percentage of Europeans who personally know Muslims and Jews (Pew Research Center, 2018).**

**Majorities in nearly every country say they personally know atheists and Muslims, but fewer know Jews**

*% who say that they personally know someone who is …*

| | Atheist | Muslim | Jewish |
|---|---|---|---|
| Austria | 71% | 62% | 42% |
| Belgium | 63 | 73 | 30 |
| Denmark | 57 | 68 | 33 |
| Finland | 63 | 35 | 19 |
| France | 81 | 79 | 55 |
| Germany | 74 | 67 | 39 |
| Ireland | 63 | 59 | 44 |
| Italy | 66 | 52 | 41 |
| Netherlands | 58 | 72 | 40 |
| Norway | 70 | 69 | 31 |
| Portugal | 52 | 31 | 18 |
| Spain | 73 | 60 | 18 |
| Sweden | 73 | 71 | 39 |
| Switzerland | 77 | 66 | 50 |
| United Kingdom | 76 | 71 | 55 |
| **MEDIAN** | **70** | **67** | **39** |

Source: Survey conducted April-August 2017 in 15 countries. See Methodology for details.
"Being Christian in Western Europe"

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Jews face high anxiety about their surroundings. According to the study 'Young Jewish Europeans: Perceptions and Experiences of Anti-Semitism' (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2019), Jews avoid certain locations in their neighbourhood because they don't feel safe. Jews tend to cluster in locations where there is easy access to synagogues, kosher shops and schools and also where they are close to others who share their cultural and religious traditions. Jewish clusters are found more in the UK and France than in Germany. The report indicates that younger Jews are more likely to avoid areas in their neighbourhood where they might face discrimination or violence in comparison to older Jews. This age factor is worth considering while designing the PROTONE research guide.

*Figure 16: Young Jews tend to avoid places in their neighbourhood more often than older cohorts (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2019).*



Figure 27: Proportions of Jewish Europeans in different age bands who avoid certain places or locations in their local area or neighbourhood because they do not feel safe there as a Jew (%)[a]

Notes:  [a]  Question: B25. Do you ever avoid certain places or locations in your local area or neighbourhood because you don't feel safe there as a Jew? Items as listed in the figure.

Source:  GESIS Data Archive, ZA7491, 2019
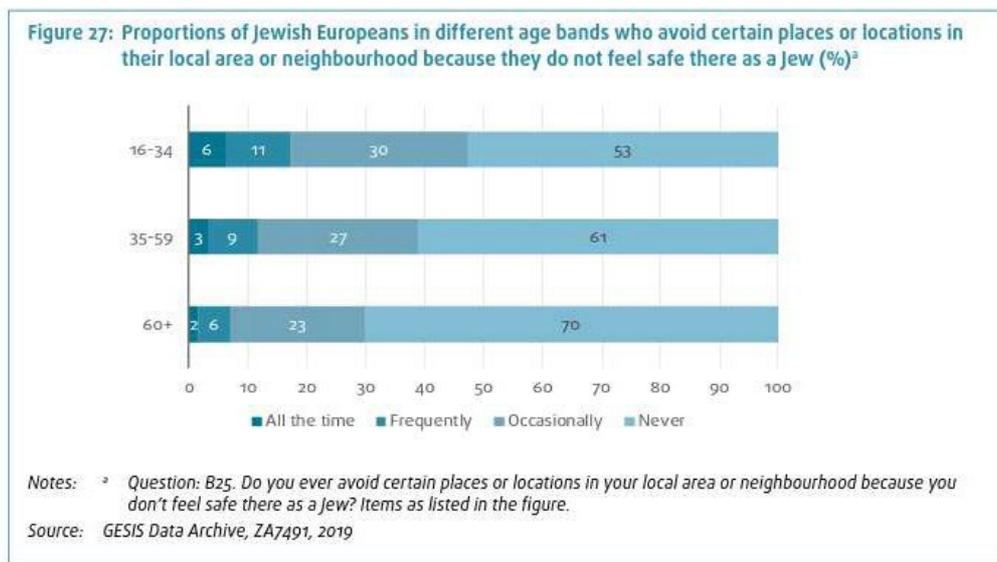
As for Christian communities, the public's attitudes towards churches are not a polarising issue. As discussed in the previous sections, the largest group in Europe are non-practising Christians with positive views towards churches and Christian organisations (Pew Research Report, 2018). More specifically, most Europeans believe that churches and Christian religious institutions hold society together by helping the poor and acting as a bridge between communities. However, Europeans also rarely contribute financially to churches.

More ethnographic work is needed to understand the dynamics between PoWs and their surrounding communities. Some works, such as that of anthropologist Omar McRoberts (McRoberts, 2003), who works on churches in low-income urban areas in Boston, US, show how churches in such locations may turn inwards and isolate themselves from their surrounding impoverished communities. By creating the binary of 'church' vs 'street', McRoberts shows how the church often conceives of the street as an 'other' that needs to be saved, either by proselytisation or by serving the poor. More work is needed on European churches' conceptions of their surroundings and vice-versa in order to develop a holistic understanding of the influence churches have on their surrounding communities and how individuals who are in need of community are attracted to them.

Similarly, there are nuances to be found within Muslim Europeans who may find mosques too conservative or liberal for their tastes. In Germany, newly resettled Syrian refugees find the country's older, more established Arab mosques too conservative and their teachings too focused on identity politics and victimisation, which newcomers to the country are not in the mindset to hear (Su, 2017). On the other hand, Turkish mosques hold their sermons and offer their community activities in Turkish. Syrian refugees in Germany mostly rely on churches and secular organisations that support refugees and that are paid directly by the government.

Due to increased monitoring and penalisation of Islamophobia and Anti-Semitism, online spaces for discrimination are more covert and more policed by members. For example, Chris Allen's (2014) analysis of the Dudley mosque Facebook discussions in 2012 would be impossible today as the discussions would be considered a violation of Facebook's community standards. Understanding socio-cultural narratives in the vicinity of PoWs requires observation of behaviours and interactions between the neighbouring community, congregants and faith leaders, which the PROTONE project will address through ethnographic research.

## 6. Research Methods

A key point of innovation in the PROTONE project is the inclusion of the surrounding environment as a site of intervention and prevention. The vulnerability assessment model (VAM) can be used to identify individuals, communities, and PoWs that may be at higher risk of attacks to develop targeted interventions for prevention and counter-terrorism. The model is also useful to identify the levels of security awareness and preparedness of response of congregants and their surrounding communities in case of a threat. By employing a human-centred approach to security, the project will involve neighbourhood residents, local civil society organisations and political actors to grasp socio-cultural relationships between PoWs and their surroundings. In order to capture these relationships between various stakeholders, the PROTONE project will incorporate an ethnographic approach in the research methodology.

A range of research questions could be asked to ensure that relevant human-centred research is conducted to support the process of protecting PoWs. Some examples include:

1. What are the perceptions of the local community towards the targeted religious group, and how might these perceptions influence the vulnerability of religious places of worship to attacks?
7. How do patterns of social interaction and spatial organisation in the surrounding area affect the vulnerability of religious places of worship to attacks?
8. What are the experiences of individuals who have been radicalised or have engaged in extremist activities, and what factors contributed to their radicalisation?
9. How do different religious groups interact with each other and with the wider community, and what factors facilitate or hinder interfaith dialogue and cooperation?
10. How do discourses of race, racism, and racialisation intersect with discourses of extremism and security, and what are the implications for CVE policy and practice?

Applying ideas from spatial anthropology and critical terrorism studies could help shed light on the spatial and social dynamics of religious places of worship and their surrounding environments and how these may contribute

to the vulnerability of such places to attacks. For example, a spatial analysis could help identify areas that are more or less vulnerable to attacks based on factors such as visibility, accessibility, and proximity to other landmarks or institutions. A critical terrorism studies approach could help uncover the underlying political and social factors that contribute to the emergence of extremist groups and the motivations of those who conduct attacks.

Wider issues of race, racism, and racialisation could also be important to consider in this research, as these issues can intersect with discourses of extremism and security in complex and sometimes problematic ways. For example, certain religious groups may be disproportionately targeted for surveillance or suspicion based on racial or ethnic profiling, which can contribute to feelings of marginalisation and alienation among those communities. A deeper understanding of these issues can help inform more effective and equitable CVE policies and practices.

## The Vulnerability Assessment Model (VAM)

When considering PoWs in Europe, the vulnerability assessment model can be used to identify factors that may make these places more susceptible to attacks and to develop targeted interventions to prevent and counter them.

Some of the factors that may contribute to vulnerability in religious places of worship could include:

1. Location and visibility: Places of worship that are located in areas that are more isolated or less visible may be at higher risk of attack. Similarly, places of worship that are visible or have a high profile in the community may be more likely to attract attention from attackers.
2. Physical security: The level of physical security measures, such as barriers, locks, cameras, and security personnel, can affect the vulnerability of a place of worship to attack.
3. Social and cultural factors: Factors such as religious or ethnic tensions in the surrounding community or a history of conflict or violence in the area could also increase the risk of attack.
4. Ideological factors: Places of worship that are associated with a particular ideology or belief system may be at higher risk of attack if they are perceived as a threat by violent extremists who oppose that ideology.

Based on these factors, interventions could include increasing physical security measures at the place of worship, promoting interfaith dialogue and understanding to reduce social and cultural tensions, and monitoring and countering extremist propaganda that targets particular religious groups.

In 2019, DG HOME produced the Vulnerability Assessment Tool (VAT), an on-site vulnerability assessment aimed at protecting public places from attacks. The VAT is a Microsoft Excel workbook of 6 spreadsheets,

each dedicated to the phase an individual is in when approaching and ultimately entering a public space. In each phase, the researcher indicates 1) the threat type, 2) situations (of threat), 3) measure types, and 4) assessment. These inputs are then used to develop a list of consequences and probabilities that are then put into a risk matrix.

For example, the manual 'PRoTECT – Public Resilience Using Technology to Counter Terrorism' elaborates on consequences and probabilities, each with an allocated risk (low, medium, or high).

*Figure 17: Chart for vulnerability assessment used by PRoTECT (2021)*



By using the risk matrix, the overall risk of a threat can be determined:

*Figure 18: Matrix for vulnerability assessment used by PRoTECT (2021)*
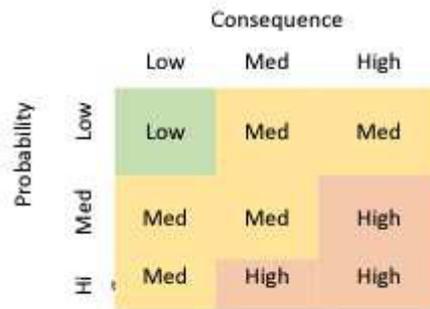


Figure 3 Example of a risk matrix

The VAT determines the risk identification and risk assessment of possible outcomes.[9] The EU Vulnerability Assessment Tool methodology is used in relevant projects for the protection of POWs, such as ProSPeRes, and PRoTECT, that incorporates municipal actors into the protection of public spaces.

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[9] Information about the EU VAT is consulted with Manual for vulnerability assessment of the PRoTECT project – Public Resilience using Technology to Counter Terrorism (2021).

Incorporating the VAM into PROTONE's Research Questions

By using the model as a framework to direct the research and analysis, it is possible to incorporate the development of a vulnerability assessment model into the research priorities listed above. Specifically, researchers could use the model to identify the key factors that contribute to the vulnerability of religious places of worship to attacks and to guide the selection of research questions that will help uncover those factors. For example, if the vulnerability assessment model identifies physical security measures as a key factor contributing to vulnerability, research questions could be developed to explore the effectiveness of different security measures, the reasons why some places of worship may be more or less likely to implement certain measures, and the potential unintended consequences of heightened security measures on the surrounding community. Similarly, if the model identifies social and cultural factors as key contributors to vulnerability, research questions could be developed to explore the social and cultural dynamics of the local community, the factors that contribute to tensions or conflicts between different religious groups, and the potential for interfaith dialogue and cooperation to reduce vulnerability. Overall, the vulnerability assessment model can provide a useful framework for developing research questions and guiding the analysis of data, helping researchers identify the most salient factors and develop targeted interventions to prevent and counter violent extremism in religious places of worship.

In the PROTONE project, the EU VAT can be utilised to identify risk and preparedness of reaction, specifically concerning PoWs and their surrounding neighbourhoods. The following information can be inserted into the VAT to gain an understanding of what constitutes risk:

- Review of security policies, procedures, protocols, and organisational security;
- Comprehensive threat analysis (sources of threats: terrorism, environment, insider threat etc.)
- Identification of the costs and consequences of risk (monetary, social, psychological, operational etc.)
- Determination of risk solutions and mitigation measures.

The additional value added to the VAM in the PROTONE project is the inclusion of ethnographic data from field research. The following questions can be asked to obtain additional information to enrich the risk assessment of PoWs, as well as the effects that increased security may have on risk vulnerability.

Possible anthropological and sociological research questions that could be asked to develop a vulnerability assessment model concerning religious places of worship in Europe:

1. How do patterns of social interaction and spatial organisation in different regions of Europe affect the vulnerability of religious places of worship to attacks?
2. What are the historical and contemporary religious dynamics in Europe, and how do they influence the vulnerability of religious places of worship?
3. What are the attitudes of different religious groups towards each other, and how do these attitudes contribute to vulnerability?
4. What are the experiences of different religious communities with discrimination and prejudice, and how do these experiences contribute to vulnerability?
5. What are the local community's perceptions towards the targeted religious group, and how might these perceptions influence the vulnerability of religious places of worship to attacks?
6. How do different religious groups interact with each other and with the wider community, and what factors facilitate or hinder interfaith dialogue and cooperation?
7. What are the physical security measures currently in place at different religious places of worship, and how effective are these measures in reducing vulnerability?
8. What are the potential unintended consequences of heightened security measures on the surrounding community, and how can these be mitigated?
9. What are the experiences of individuals who have been radicalised or have engaged in extremist activities, and what factors contributed to their radicalisation?
10. What are the potential social and cultural factors that contribute to the vulnerability of religious places of worship, and how can interventions be developed to address these factors?

## Ethnographic Methods

Ethnographic research captures the granularity of the relationships between a POW and its surrounding community. However, very few qualitative works investigate the effects of increased protection of PoWs on congregants and their relationships with religion more generally. Scheitle and Ulmer's work (2018) in the American Midwest is one exception that shows how congregants do not quickly accept or adhere to increased security measures.

Spatial ethnography, in particular, could be useful in documenting the affective and embodied dynamics of security surrounding PoWs on two levels – to capture vulnerabilities and possible security threats and also to understand the attitudes and behavioural effects of increased security on PoWs and their surroundings.

Recent work in human geography by Sara Fregonese and Sunčana Laketa (2022) attempts to capture atmospheres of fear and terror in European cities in the wake of the 2015 Paris attack and 2016 Brussels attack. They push for an *atmospheric urban geopolitics* that 'maps the every day felt experiences and affective dynamics of terrorism and security responses in the city (p. 9).' In the PROTONE research, the focus is on the neighbourhood and local interactions between PoWs and the surrounding community. However, methods from human geography on a city scale are useful as they include research methods emerging from feminist theory on experiencing *everyday* insecurities and constant atmospheres of terrorism that undergird daily life. The authors also show that atmospheres are not produced top-down by state-led interventions (such as counter-terrorism and, in the case of PoWs, increased police presence and anti-terrorist practices) but are picked up and magnified by multiple actors across scales. In the PROTONE project, the role of PoWs and neighbourhood residents in creating, resisting, or avoiding atmospheres of insecurity and terrorism and the ways in which they interact with these atmospheres will be a cornerstone of the project's ethnographic research.

As the project focuses on the neighbourhood level, it is important to factor in space as a provider, enabler or inhibitor of security. For the latter, recent work in anthropology is pushing towards a spatial understanding of security and the treatment of security as an ethnographic object of study. The work of anthropologists Setha Low and Mark Maguire (Low & Maguire, 2019) aims to fill a gap in anthropological theory and research methods by introducing a conceptual framework where security is produced spatially. They write:

The challenge of understanding security today is both spatial and temporal; it includes the examination of infrastructural interventions and the discursive and symbolic practices that make up its paths, links, and trajectories. In this regard, security is an ethnographic object. (p. 13)

Gluck and Macguire define security spaces as 'securityscapes' constructed by an amalgamation of practices, discourses, and histories that produce 'a cultural code for living as well as a material map of their social and political production (p. 12)'. For example, they treat gated communities and CCTV technologies as securityscapes that produce novel forms of politics and citizenship. Setha Low's work on American gated communities shows how the security of homes and neighbourhoods within a gated community starts with the control of the protection of a confined space but then takes on the meaning of racialised citizenship, legal and architectural arrangements, and local politics that privilege racial segregation and suburban cultural whiteness. Low's work shows how securitising spaces becomes a cultural code for the expression of inequalities. The example of gated communities is very relevant to PROTONE's work on securitising PoWs. The conception of threat and security of PoWs and their surroundings may create new cultural codes for a living and new social and political arrangements that may privilege inclusive or exclusive state/neighbourhood/POW practices.

There are additional ethnographic research methods that can capture the affective and embodied concepts of security and insecurity in a neighbourhood around PoWs. Walking, for example, is a powerful tool to

understand how security spaces and mobility flows are constructed in particular neighbourhoods. This tool is well integrated into ethnographic research methods. Writing on walking as a research tool, human geographer Morag Rose (Rose, 2020) highlights the importance of walking as a method to understand everyday spaces but also how they are perceived and moved around by particular neighbourhood individuals and groups. In the following points, we share Rose's classification of walking activities and add notes on how this method can be used for the PROTONE project:

1) *Lone Walking:* The ethnographer takes notes on how PoWs are situated within the neighbourhood (whether they are the centre of the neighbourhood/peripheral to it/invisible, etc.) and how the urban space interacts with PoWs. The ethnographer also documents the barriers or open passageways that complicate or facilitate access to PoWs. The ethnographer will also carefully consider the roads leading towards or away from PoWs and take note of the overall moods and atmospheres around them.

2) *One-on-one interviewing while walking around the neighbourhood*: The ethnographer can conduct interviews with congregants and neighbourhood residents while walking around the neighbourhood to open conversations about accessibility, the embeddedness of PoWs in the neighbourhood and overall attitudes towards PoWs that are felt in the very moment of walking. Visual stimulation is an aid to interviewing and encountering certain physical objects like barriers, gates, and CCTVs and can prompt immediate information exchange.

3) *Walking with groups of people*: This could be a cultural tour or with a neighbourhood or civil society organisations that have particular aims (i.e. protecting cultural heritage, environmental activism, etc.). The ethnographer observes how PoWs are integrated into these tours and takes notes of how groups conceive of the role of PoWs in their activities, as well as how securitising them affects neighbourhood activities.

The rich ethnographic methods used in studying places of worship are also relevant here. Emerging anthropological perspectives on materiality and religion show how material religious objects (such as religious dress or PoWs) interact with religious subjects. New studies are showing the connections between religious structures, in particular, and religious subject formation. In the book edited by Oskar Verkaaik, *Religious Architecture: Anthropological Perspectives,* the authors use the term 'interactionism' to denote the process of negotiating the design and use of PoWs and the ways that religious subjects interact with these structures to produce behaviour, beliefs and ideologies (Verkaaik, 2013).

A few works on how the use of PoW creates meaning for congregants could be useful in PROTONE's ethnographic methodology. For example, Richard Irvine works on a Catholic monastery in the UK where congregants use the monastery's architectural spaces to create rituals that separate them from the demands of a fast-paced and increasingly secularised world. By using the PoW architecture in a way that facilitates ritual,

congregants attempt to create a 'counter-factual' reality that opposes secularism found outside the monastery (Irvine, 2013). Another example is the Essalam Mosque in Rotterdam which has long been called the biggest mosque in Europe. By analysing how congregants use the space and complementing ethnographic research with discourse analysis, the author Pooyan Tamimi Arab shows how the size of the mosque creates identity politics that are situated within a Dutch public space that emphasizes secularism. Tamimi Arab interviewed visitors to the mosque, as well as janitors and other staff, emphasising in his interview questions the space and architecture of the mosque to obtain information on how the mosque is used and what identities it creates in the process (Tamimi Arab, 2013).

Ethnographic studies that focus on religious experiences by the use of space are not only important for understanding how congregants relate to their PoWs. They also show what meanings are formed through the use of spaces, what symbolisms are being created by building PoWs in particular ways, and how PoWs offer spaces that challenge, comply, or harmonise public discourses on religion's place in society.

## 11. Conclusion

In conclusion, this report underscores the urgent need for comprehensive, multi-faceted strategies to safeguard places of worship across Europe. The threats faced by these sacred spaces are complex and diverse, encompassing physical violence, ideological extremism, and even societal intolerance. Addressing these threats requires a concerted effort from all stakeholders, including policymakers, security agencies, religious leaders, and communities.

The report has highlighted the commendable initiatives undertaken by the European Union and the United Nations to protect PoWs. However, it is clear that these efforts need to be complemented by national and local strategies that consider the specific vulnerabilities and needs of each place of worship and its community. The report has also shed light on the unique challenges different religious communities face, including Christian, Jewish, and Muslim communities. It is crucial that any security measures implemented are sensitive to these differences and are designed to protect all communities equally. Furthermore, the report has emphasised the importance of viewing PoWs not merely as potential targets of violence but as vital community hubs that foster social cohesion and interfaith dialogue. The securitisation of these spaces should not come at the expense of their openness and accessibility. Instead, security measures should aim to enhance the sense of safety and inclusivity within these spaces, thereby strengthening their role as pillars of our communities.

In the face of increasing threats to places of worship, it is more important than ever to reaffirm our commitment to peace, tolerance, and respect for diversity. This is not just a matter of security but a fundamental issue of human rights and dignity. The report has identified several areas for further research, including the effects of security threats and responses on PoWs and their surrounding communities, the perceptions and reception of protective measures, and the potential insecurities produced in the process of securitising PoWs. These research directions will be crucial in informing future protective measures and policies.

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