



Summary statement

- Due to recent attacks, the domain of protection of public spaces has been gaining attention in the European Union. Despite increased efforts, in particular following the adoption of an EU Action Plan to support the protection of public spaces in 2017, the need for more action was voiced during the 14th CoU event. Decision making related to the protection of urban spaces must find a balance between maintaining the open character of public spaces and providing sufficient security measures. In doing so, accurate risk assessment are needed to consider possible scenarios and consequences.
 - Public spaces are usually governed at the local level, thus it is essential to consider urban authorities and operators when developing strategies and policies towards the protection of urban public spaces.
- One such initiative at EU level is the Urban Agenda Partnership on security in public spaces (initiated by the Commission and coordinated by the cities of Nice and the European Forum for Urban Security).
- The European Commission furthermore encourages the application of security by design in the protection of public spaces – that is, to integrate security measures from the start of the initial phases of the project planning and design process. Such approach allows for the integration of both more efficient and more aesthetic protection solutions.
 - Moving forward, the protection of public spaces will be a dedicated topic in the European Commission's security research agenda.

Introduction

This CoU brief summarises the topic Protection of Public Spaces and relevant EU-funded projects that participated in the 14th Meeting of the Community of Users (CoU) on Secure, Safe and Resilient Societies that took place 16 – 19 September 2019 at the BAO convention centre in Brussels. The Community of Users is a DG HOME initiative that aims to improve information transfer of research outputs and their usability by different categories of

stakeholders. During the meetings and thematic workshops, policy updates and information about H2020 projects are provided and interactive discussions facilitated to ensure that solutions and tools resulting from research will reach users.

Scope and relevance

As a response to recurring terrorist attacks in many European cities during the past few years, the European Commission stepped up its efforts in this area and published in October 2017 the EU Action Plan to support the Protection of Public Spaces. In it, the European Commission commits itself to support Member States through fostering an exchange of good practices, establishing and facilitating networks, providing guidance material, involving stakeholders (including local actors and the private sector) and providing dedicated funding (which has resulted in, amongst others, the inclusion of the protection of public spaces as a separate topic in the most recent H2020 call and the ISF REGIO call). It has also triggered an advancement in the cooperation between research and policy with a focus on the use of technologies for the protection of public spaces.

Cooperation between the different stakeholders and across different levels (i.e. the local, regional and national level) is essential in the domain of protecting public spaces. To facilitate exchanges between these groups and foster the exchanges of best practices, DG HOME has established three fora: 1. a Policy Group, consisting of policy makers from Member States; 2. a Practitioner's Forum, where law enforcement practitioners and EU funded networks in this area meet (this includes among others, AIRPOL, ENLETS, RAILPOL, EUHRSN, ATLAS); and 3. an Operator's Forum, consisting of private actors from different sectors (e.g. hospitality, shopping malls, transport hubs) to encourage public-private cooperation.

Following the exchanges that took place within and among the groups, an overview of best practices was compiled which served as the basis for the Commission Staff Working Document¹ on good practices. Examples of such good practices presented in this document include:

- Assessment and planning: the need to carry out **vulnerability assessments** of venues, for which the dedicated EU vulnerability assessment tool can be used as well as the creation and implementation of **security and crisis management plans**
- Awareness and training: to develop and implement an internal **security awareness and security training programme** for staff as well as **awareness campaigns for the general public**;
- Physical protection: the need to **assess security and physical protection issues, including access to a facility or event and appropriate detection technologies** from the beginning of the design process;

- Cooperation: to establish **trustful and timely public-private communication and cooperation**, especially in regard to a specific risk and threat information exchange.

The European Union is supporting the activities to advance the protection of public spaces through providing funding. In 2017, the European Commission published a call under the Internal Security Fund – Police on protection of public spaces and critical infrastructure against terrorist threats, worth over EUR 25 million. Fifteen projects were selected; eight of which have a focus on protecting public spaces, namely: SafeCi, PACTESUR, SECUR-CITIES, STEPWISE, PRoTECT, Pericles, SHERPA and SKYFALL. In 2018, a follow-up call with a budget of EUR 9.5 million was published focussing on public-private cooperation in the protection of public spaces.

In the security research part of Horizon 2020, the Protection of Public Spaces has so far been addressed in different areas. Relevant projects were funded mainly under topics in the areas of Fighting Crime and Terrorism (FCT), Infrastructure Protection (INFRA) and Disaster Resilient Societies (DRS). However, given its high policy relevance in the last years, a dedicated topic on security for smart and safe cities (including public spaces) with an indicative budget of EUR 16 has been introduced in the work programme 2019. Proposals are currently being evaluated and projects are likely to start in the first half of 2020.

The Urban Innovative Actions Call by DG REGIO provided another opportunity for advancement of the ability of the EU to protect its public spaces. A call with a total budget of EUR 100 million was published under the Urban Innovative Actions (of which a part was reserved for Protection of Public Spaces). Security was among the topics of the call. Three projects have been chosen, namely: BeSecure-FeelSecure by the city of Piraeus (EL), TO-nite by the city of Turin (IT) and SURE of the city of Tampere (FI).

In addition, the Urban Agenda Partnership on Security in Public Spaces was launched in 2019 and aims to develop an action plan on measures to secure urban environments. Only recently, the domain of protection of public spaces has become a separate topic in the European Commission's H2020 research calls. While the domain shows some similarities with the field of Critical Infrastructure Protection; the differences between the two remain dominant. Differences in the type of risk, the nature of the protection required, the required capabilities to perform and attack and the risk of cyber attacks cause the two domains to differ significantly and, thus, justify the choice for a separate call for protection of public spaces.

¹ SWD(2019) 140 final

A number of key challenges in the domain of protection of public spaces were discussed during the 14th CoU event. These include the fundamental struggle of policymakers with the open nature of public spaces; whereas openness is inherently related to these spaces, it also enhances their vulnerability significantly. This is closely linked to the notion that total protection of all public spaces is impossible. Due to the openness and the large amount of individuals making use of open spaces, a total absence of attacks cannot be guaranteed. The debate also turned towards the role of local communities as public spaces are managed by municipalities.

Therefore, local authorities are essential actors in this domain. Finally, the role of cultural heritage in public space protection was discussed. Cultural heritage generally attracts much visitors and, thereby, can be understood as a target for attacks. Simultaneously, attacks to cultural heritage also impact a communities' values and sense of identity. To this end, the need for security by design was emphasised to allow for a more holistic approach towards the protection of public spaces.

Current debates and stakeholder perspectives

This section describes how the topic is relevant for different stakeholder groups.

Policymakers

Policymakers cope with the challenge of protecting public spaces without harming their 'openness'.

Whereas in the past, authorities made use of ad-hoc security measures, nowadays they increasingly have shifted towards security by design where security measures are considered from the planning and design of public spaces.

By applying security by design, security is no longer perceived as a stand-alone topic. Instead, it is approached as an integrated element, alongside aesthetics, liveability, use and safety in the design and planning of public spaces. By considering security from the early phases of the design, measures tend to conflict less with existing services and utilities as they are integrated with the environment in a more natural way. Security by design allows for more cost-efficient measures in comparison to ad-hoc measures. The European Union actively promotes the application of the security by design concept and has developed a number of guidance documents²:

- Guideline for selecting proper security barriers³ (and a review of existing guidance material⁴)
- Policy report on soft target / public space protection⁵
- Guideline on the calculation of blast loads for application to structural components⁶
- Guideline for the protection of buildings and guidelines for specific operators will be published in the near future

The number of guidelines produced by the European Commission illustrates the relevance of research in the domain of protection of public spaces. In an effort to better understand which measures and technologies are currently available and how they could be applied to advance the protection of public spaces, policymakers have been increasingly liaising with the research community. From the side of policymakers, an increased interest in technological applications can be observed and during discussions at the 14th CoU event, researchers were invited to address this gap.

Furthermore, the need was voiced to involve local communities and authorities in developing plans to protect public spaces. With local municipalities bearing (part of) the responsibility for the protection of urban spaces, these actors need to be involved to allow for the development of inclusive and sustainable protection plans.

In addition to the guidelines outlined above, the following policy documents were also mentioned during the 14th CoU event:

- Action Plan to support the Protection of Public Spaces⁷, which outlines the enhanced support of the EU to the Member States in protecting and reducing the vulnerability of public spaces. The Action Plan outlines increased financial support, guidance materials, exchanges of best practices and efforts to improve cooperation between local and regional actors and the private sector;
- Commission Staff Working document: good practices to support the protection of public spaces⁸ presents the good practices identified in the public-private Operators Forum, which now form the basis for further work in this area.

2 ec.europa.eu/newsroom/pps/item-detail.cfm?item_id=653933&utm_source=pps_newsroom&utm_medium=Website&utm_campaign=pps&utm_content=Defining%20the%20Concept&lang=en
3 Available upon request: JRC-PUBLIC-SPACES@ec.europa.eu
4 ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/publication/eur-scientific-and-technical-research-reports/review-vehicle-barrier-protection-guidance
5 ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/publication/eur-scientific-and-technical-research-reports/review-soft-targetpublic-space-protection-guidance
6 publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/bitstream/JRC87200/lbna26456enn.pdf
7 COM(2017) 612 final
8 SWD(2019) 140 final

Local and regional authorities

Local and regional authorities play an important role in the protection of public spaces, since they are in the frontline to design solutions to respond and prevent security threats. The urban Agenda Partnership on Security in Public Spaces composed by urban authorities, Member States and observers such as URBACT and UN Habitat was therefore established in January 2019. As outlined in its [Orientation Paper](#), published in June 2019 the Partnership will focus on three priorities: urban planning and design, technology for smart and safe cities, and managing security and sharing public space. The partnership is now in the process of developing an Action Plan, where a limited number of concrete actions to be implemented over the next 2,5 years. The actions will address issues related to better regulation, better funding and better knowledge, the three pillars of EU policymaking and implementation, as elaborated in the [Pact of Amsterdam](#).

Research

Recent events have led to an increased interest of policymakers into available technologies and solutions to protect urban spaces more effectively. The heightened amount of available funding in this domain is an illustration of this surge and during the 14th CoU event, researchers were encouraged to develop innovative solutions in this domain. Further exploitation of the Internet of Things and sensor networks was presented as a possible avenue for further securing urban spaces. Nevertheless, such systems would require interoperability and, thereby, pose an additional opportunity for the research community.

On top of the development of novel solutions, the need for standardisation in the domain of protection of public spaces was voiced. An example of an area that is in need of standardisation is the testing of physical protection measures, such as barriers.

Industry & SMEs

Whereas the relationship between policymakers and researchers is improving, additional efforts are required to engage with industry and SME actors. The domain of protection of public spaces would

benefit from including these stakeholders in order to allow for a smooth transition of research outcomes to the development of actual products. This is particularly relevant taking into account the increased attention for the concept of security by design, which requires engagement from industry players.

Civil society

Civil society serves as a vital stakeholder in the domain of protection of public spaces. The protection of urban spaces, by definition, includes the safety and security of citizens. As the presentation on the role of cultural heritage in the protection of public spaces indicated, many public spaces do not merely provide a venue for communities to meet, they also represent the community's values and shape the identity of a group. To this end, attacks to such public spaces do not only present a physical threat to the lives and wellbeing of individuals but they also threaten the foundations of a culture, society or community. This dual threat causes the protection of public spaces to be pivotal to civil society and (local) communities.

Nevertheless, civil society should not merely be perceived as a (potential) victim. According to some of the local authorities represented in the Urban Agenda Partnership mentioned above, designing mechanisms to empower citizens and directly involve them into the design of security strategies and solutions is essential to ensure local ownership. Bottom up processes and initiatives where community members play and active role and come up with innovative ideas should be encouraged but also require some training and capacity building efforts - for local authorities as well as community members. Individuals can contribute to safeguarding urban spaces via technologies, as the projects LETSCROWD and GHOST illustrated. Via smartphone applications, citizens can actively (by reporting situations) or passively (by sharing data from their home appliances) participate in more effective protection of public spaces. Nevertheless, such data sharing activities inevitable bring forward questions related to the privacy of citizens and the way in which such large amounts of data should be prioritised and dealt with. There is also the need to develop these tools to an European level and assuring the maintenance of such systems.

Relevant projects

Activities conducted as part of the following projects were outlined by project representatives during the Protection of Public Spaces session at the 14th CoU meeting:

- LETSCROWD⁹ (finalised; May 2017 - October 2019) focused on the challenges preventing effective implementation of the European Security Model with regards to mass gatherings. The project aimed to do so providing security policy practitioners and Local Enforcement Authorities (LEAs) with a dynamic risk

assessment methodology for the protection of crowds during mass gatherings, a policy making toolkit for decision making of security policy makers (including a database, statistics and an analytical tool for policies modelling) and a set of human centred tools for LEAs including real time crowd behaviour forecasting, innovative communication procedures, semantic intelligence applied to social networks and the internet, and computer vision techniques.

9 cordis.europa.eu/project/rcn/210210/en

- PREVENT¹⁰ (ongoing, May 2019 - August 2020) focuses on pre-empting attacks in public transport by enabling earlier tracing terrorists and potentially dangerous objects, tracking detected individuals or situations and coordinating the response of security forces. PREVENT implements a progressive and iterative process to deliver six jointly defined Common Security Scenarios that capture threats and vulnerabilities. Based on a gap analysis and roadmap, it also delivers a vulnerabilities- and threats taxonomy directly applicable to the public transport world.
- City.Risks¹¹ (finalised, May 2015 - May 2018) aimed to increase the perception of security of citizens by activating their participation in communities, through which information and interventions can be provided. Both to proactively protect citizens from falling victims to criminal activities as well as to reactively provide more timely and effective response and assistance. The project was geared towards making the citizens' smart phones the modern tool for increasing their personal and collective sense of security. The project has developed an ecosystem of mobile services that transform the smart phone or the tablet into a tool that collects, visualises and shares safety-critical information with the authorities and communities.
- GHOST¹² (ongoing, May 2017 - May 2020) responds to the complexity of cybersecurity challenges in smart-homes. GHOST envisions to lead a paradigm shift in consumer cybersecurity by successfully coupling usable security with transparency and behavioural engineering. The envisaged user experience will systematically trigger security-friendly behaviour aiming at establishing appropriate 'habitual behaviours'. Hereby, GHOST will increase cybersecurity resilience, boost usability & automation and enhance the competitiveness of European ICT security industry.

Possible synergies

For an overview of related projects funded prior to 2018, see section 4 (Critical Infrastructure Protection and Urban Built Environment) of DG HOME, "Community of Users on Secure, Safe and Resilient Societies – Mapping Horizon 2020 and EU-funded Capacity-Building

Projects under 2016-2018 Programmes". The projects referenced within this section of the aforementioned document are universally geared towards tackling similar subjects as those discussed in this brief, and thus have the potential of exhibiting synergies with them.

Challenges

During the 14th CoU meeting, the European Commission repeatedly emphasised that public spaces should remain open and that the character of such venues will need to be safeguarded keeping security measures in mind. The application of security by design provides a potential avenue for maintaining openness while applying security measures. However, attention should be paid to ensure that the aesthetics and authenticity of a public space are maintained. This is particularly the case for public spaces that form cultural heritage as those soft spaces represent a society's values and shape its identity. However, not only cultural heritage sites require such vulnerability assessment. As the number of public spaces is too vast to adequately protect all of them, risk assessments are needed to establish scenarios and to develop protection strategies accordingly.

As effective protection of public spaces requires involvement of stakeholders across different levels (i.e. local, regional, national and European), cooperation in this domain may pose a challenge. In addition, with civil society being one of the key actors in this field; engagement of the (local) communities is another essential element in the development of sound protection plans. The ways in which the public should be engaged in this regard remain to be further explored. Closely linked to this question is the discussion on privacy and data management; asking the public to share data on security matters requires a strong data collection plan.

¹⁰ cordis.europa.eu/project/rcn/222624/factsheet/en
¹¹ cordis.europa.eu/project/rcn/196894/en
¹² cordis.europa.eu/project/rcn/210233/en

Way forward

While the cooperation between policymakers and the research community has intensified over the last years, the domain of protection of public spaces would benefit from more regular exchanges between the two types of stakeholders. This would help the research community to better understand the needs of the policymakers whereas policymakers would obtain a more accurate idea of which potential solutions are 'out there' already. Moving forward, it was recommended during the 14th CoU meeting to further develop the dialogue with industry players. A gap that currently exists and could be addressed via policy-industry cooperation is the lack of standards in the domain of protection of public spaces.

Furthermore, efforts are required to continue to mainstream the concept of security by design. The European Commission is increasingly integrating this idea into its policies and additional action is necessary to have this approach be implemented in practice.

Communities would benefit from a holistic and inclusive approach towards security by design, as this would allow for sensitivity towards the cultural value of a public space.

Nevertheless, an inclusive approach towards the protection of public spaces requires involvement of all levels of authority; in particular the local ones. Moving forward, the role of the local actor should be kept in mind. In addition, civil society and individual citizens should not be overlooked; via technological applications they could contribute to a safer and secure public environment.

You can stay up to date on developments in the domain of Protection of Public Spaces via the [JRC newsletter](#)

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LETSCROWD
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PREVENT
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City.Risks
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GHOST
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Forthcoming events

- Counter Terror Expo, 19 – 21 May 2020, London, United Kingdom