

EU Protective Security Advisors

European Union initiative to support Member States' efforts in the protection of citizens and critical infrastructure from terrorist attacks

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EU PSA concept

Securing public spaces and critical infrastructures is the primary responsibility of Member States. Like in many other areas of internal security, there is however a role that the European Union could play – facilitating sharing of good practices, encouraging practical exchanges of experience and supporting mutual operational assistance. One of successful examples of such an approach is the EU Protective Security Advisors programme.

While officially announced only in December 2020, with the publication of the EU Counter-Terrorism Agenda¹, the EU PSA programme has its roots in the EU work on protection of public spaces (back then called soft targets) that started in 2012. That year the European Commission

¹ *A Counter-Terrorism Agenda for the EU: Anticipate, Prevent, Protect, Respond*, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0795> (editor's note).

officials were invited to provide expert support for the security measures around the EURO 2012 football championship. This positive experience led to subsequent invitations from other Member States. The European Commission contributed to protection of high-level political events such as NATO summits or open-air events such as Christmas markets or music festivals such as the Untold festival organised in Cluj-Napoca, Romania.

A major step in the EU policy on protection of public spaces was the Action Plan adopted in October 2017². As part of its implementation, an EU vulnerability assessment tool was developed. This very practical instrument facilitated on-site assessments of high risk events, performed jointly by the Commission and Member States experts. The success of this initiative led to creation of a pool of experts from law enforcement, but also security and intelligence services, that led to establishment of the EU PSA programme. It is worth underlining that the European Commission – whilst having a clear idea on the way forward – benefited from the support and expertise of relevant international partners such as the United States that are having their own EU PSA programme. Moreover, several EU-US joint missions and exchanges of best practices took place in the EU and United States.

EU PSA tasks

The aim of the EU PSA missions is to provide support to Member State requesting it. The missions have several objectives:

- improve understanding and awareness of the vulnerabilities in public spaces and critical infrastructures by providing a common methodology for their assessment;
- share good practices and encourage peer-to-peer learning to address identified vulnerabilities;
- provide advice to Member States in the organisation of high-risk events or facilities;
- create an expert community through common trainings and missions, contributing to the development of a common EU protective security culture.

² *Action Plan to support the protection of public spaces*, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52017DC0612> (editor's note).

The EU PSA pool is composed of roughly 100 experts from the European Commission and Member States (in case of Poland, the experts come from police, Internal Security Agency and State Protection Service). They are all professionals in the security of public facilities, but at the same time have different expertise. When a Member States requests support, it must specify what kind of expertise it is looking for. Each EU PSA team will consist of experts holding different qualifications in areas such as unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) operations, explosive and CBRN (chemical-biological-radiological-nuclear) threats detection, special intervention and counter terrorism tactics, crisis management and other expertise areas. Depending on the mission and the target of such support, EU support may be limited to either the event security preparatory phase or both preparatory and support during the actual event. The review will be confidential and conducted in close dialogue and partnership with the experts of the host authority. The exchanges will provide a two-way opportunity to exchange good practices and lessons learnt, improve awareness of vulnerabilities and contribute to the gradual development of a common security culture across the EU.

EU PSA missions scope

Whilst – as explained at the beginning – the EU PSA programme was a result of development of the EU-level policy on protection of public spaces, nowadays it covers also protection of critical infrastructures. The list of recent EU PSA missions includes places of worship and other faith-based institutions, cultural events such as large music festivals, VIP events such as EU summits, but also large infrastructures such as a major hub airport (Warsaw) or a major sea port (Constanza, Romania). In this place it is important to underline that the EU PSA programme does not overlap with the EU aviation and maritime security inspections. These instruments have different scope and objectives. Given the recent focus at the EU level on enhancing the resilience of critical entities, most likely the future will bring more assessments of these types of facilities.

EU PSA mission examples

In the recent years there has been a spike in the attacks against the places of worship. It does not come therefore as a surprise that recently they were among priority locations for EU PSA missions. The EU PSA team visited for instance the cathedrals in Ulm and Münster, Germany, where it looked – among others – at the vehicle ramming threat as well as an active shooter scenario.

An event that particularly benefited from the EU PSA support is the Untold music festival organized in Cluj-Napoca, Romania. Hundreds of thousands of music fans come to enjoy the music and have fun. Providing appropriate level of security in such case is a major challenge. This is the reason why the Romanian authorities requested EU PSA support during three subsequent editions of the festival. With each passing year, the security measures were better and better. At the same time, the EU PSA team provided operational support when it comes to unauthorized drone detection. The operator of the largest Polish airport, i.e. Warsaw Chopin Airport, also asked for help. The EU PSA team assessed – among others – the security of fuel and energy supply.

EU PSA future

With the EU PSA programme gaining more and more recognition among Member States authorities and with unstable geopolitical environment, one can expect that the interest in the EU PSA missions will be growing. Member States already indicate intention to invite the European Commission and Member States experts with a view to conduct assessment of some of their critical infrastructures, especially in the context of the recently adopted directive on the resilience of critical entities³. From the EU PSA point of view, this opportunity comes with certain challenges. Some of the requests concern very niche sectors. It might be therefore difficult to find experts with the relevant expertise. It has to be born in mind that the EU PSA programme is still a young initiative that will be rapidly developing in the coming years, incl. enlarging the scope of its expertise. Whilst this may

³ *Directive (EU) 2022/2557 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 December 2022 on the resilience of critical entities and repealing Council Directive 2008/114/EC (OJ EU L 333/164 of 27 December 2022) – (editor's note).*

be difficult at times, one thing is sure - at the end of the process, the EU citizens and operators of critical infrastructures in the EU will be better protected from the terrorist threat.



Image. EU PSA team's members (from the left: Radosław Olszewski, Wiktor Wojtas, Krzysztof Sowiński, Damian Szlachter) during the assessment of Warsaw Airport; May 2022.

Source: European Commission's Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs' materials.

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