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Anti-terrorist protection of places of worship

Abstract

Terrorist attacks in Europe, which targeted religious sites, forced the security policy of the EU Member States on whose territory they occurred to develop and implement solutions (legal, substantive, technical and physical) proportionate to the nature and type of the facility in question. The purpose of their introduction is to strengthen the level of anti-terrorist protection both for the religious site itself and for those in direct contact with it (clergy and participants in liturgical gatherings). The factors proving the attractiveness of religious sites as targets for terrorist attacks, including the main threats to their security, and the required elements of their anti-terrorist protection system remain the same in many countries. It is also important to note that Polish places of religious worship have many characteristics that place them among the public facilities at risk of possible terrorist incidents. However, one can get the impression that the issues concerning their anti-terrorist protection are not treated systematically on the territory of the Republic of Poland. There is a lot of discussion about the security of public facilities, but Polish researchers and practitioner experts in the field of terrorist security have not focused their attention on them in a comprehensive way. A breakthrough in the development and construction of anti-terrorist security systems for places of worship, both in the European and Polish dimensions, is the year 2021, because the European Commission finances six projects

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anti-terrorist
protection system
for religious
facilities,
terrorist safety
of places of worship

in this area (one under the leadership of the University of Lodz, implemented in the territory of Poland), which aim to systematize the problems of anti-terrorist protection of religious facilities, and in the future to increase the level of their protection against dangers. The intention of the author of this article is to present solutions in this field, which are being prepared by the European Commission, and to obtain an answer to the question, to what extent Polish religious facilities are prepared for dangerous incidents, especially those of a terrorist nature.

The *modus operandi* of the perpetrators of terrorist events in Europe is evolving. There is a noticeable tendency for terrorist organisations to withdraw from the concept of large-scale attacks and to adopt a dispersed formula of activity. Terrorist groups are moving away from complicated and sophisticated methods of activity and are focusing on the activity of individuals (*lone wolf, solo terrorist*) or a small number of people using simple means of action, easily available and not requiring significant logistical preparation¹. Often the perpetrators of terrorist attacks use the same methods and tools as those used by criminal gangs. Despite the diversity of their actions, the main targets of their activity remain the same. They still usually attack innocent and defenceless people and their places of stay, including public facilities, which are the so-called soft targets, with a low level of protection against threats and having a symbolic and defined value for a given society. This methodology of operation results in the emergence of new, hitherto unknown or incidental ways of mobilising attackers and creates a much greater threat to public safety. Terrorist security experts agree that due to the unpredictability of the attackers' behaviour, the public authorities tasked with combating and preventing terrorism are being forced to face a much more difficult and dangerous adversary (a concept known as 'new terrorism')².

¹ T. Aleksandrowicz, *Bieżące zagrożenia, terrorystyczne, cz. 1. – Doświadczenia ostatniego dziesięciolecia* (Eng. Current threats, terrorist, part 1 - Experience of the last decade), „Przegląd Policyjny” 2017, no. 4 (128), p. 38.

² T. Aleksandrowicz, K. Jałoszyński, *Cechy charakterystyczne organizacji terrorystycznych w XXI wieku* (Eng. Characteristics of terrorist organisations in the XXI century),

One of the targets of attacks are places of religious worship, including both religious sites associated with Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and Judaism, and the worshippers who attend them. In Europe, there are many deliberate attacks on these places every year, during which clergy and participants in liturgical gatherings lose their lives and health. These attacks are often classified as terrorist or extremist incidents and are the result of the behaviour of perpetrators acting out of religious hatred.

Due to the cyclical rise in attacks on places of religious worship across Europe, members of the European Union are increasingly considering what their anti-terrorist protection system should look like. In many countries of the Community, especially those with a high level of risk of a terrorist event whose target was, is or may be, among others, places of worship, solutions are being developed for their effective protection. All such systems, which have been systematically developed and improved over the years, are intended to respond to possible incidents of both a terrorist and extremist nature. From the perspective of the European Union, the subject of terrorist security of public buildings, including places of religious worship, is considered to be very important and is therefore included in the EU Security Strategy for 2020-2025 as one of the strategic priorities of the security union³.

Taking into account the above information, the author of the article focused in the publication on the characteristics of the solutions for terrorist security of European places of worship, which are under way by the European Commission. An important element of the article is also an attempt to assess the system of anti-terrorist protection of Polish religious facilities and to answer the question to what extent

in: *Bezpieczeństwo państwa a zagrożenie terroryzmem. Terroryzm na przełomie XX i XXI wieku*, K. Jałoszyński, T. Aleksandrowicz, K. Wiciak (ed.), Szczytno 2016, p. 47.

³ Komisja Europejska, *Komunikat Komisji do Parlamentu Europejskiego, Rady Europejskiej, Rady, Europejskiego komitetu Ekonomiczno-Społecznego i Komitetu Regionów w sprawie strategii UE w zakresie unii bezpieczeństwa* (Eng. *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the EU Strategy for a Security Union*), Bruksela 2020, pp. 11–13, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1596452256370&uri=CELEX:52020DC0605 &cookies=disabled> [accessed: 30 XI 2021].

they are prepared for dangerous incidents, especially those of a terrorist nature.

From the information contained in the bulletins published on the official website of the SOAR - *Protecting Places of Worship in Europe* project funded by the European Commission, it appears that only from July 2 to October 22, 2021 there were many dangerous incidents in Europe targeting places of worship or people associated with them⁴. On the basis of the article's author's own study, carried out on the basis of data found in the content of the aforementioned publications, it was determined that out of 116 incidents, the largest number occurred in France, Germany and the UK (82 in total). The services of the remaining 12 countries, where such incidents also took place (including Poland), recorded several incidents of this type. During the period in question, five crimes were committed on the territory of Poland, which the Polish law enforcement authorities - in most cases - qualified as prohibited acts committed out of religious hatred. A numerical comparison of these incidents with a breakdown by European countries is presented in Figure 1.

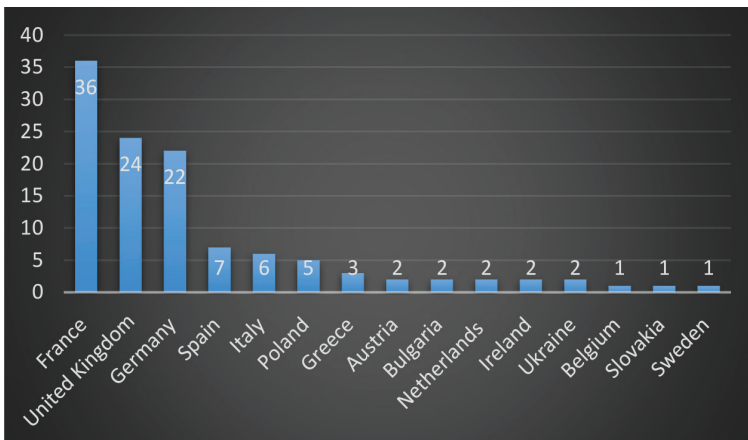


Fig. 1. Number of attacks on places of religious worship in Europe between July 2 and October 22, 2021.

Source: Own elaboration based on information bulletins posted on the official website of the SOAR project, <https://soarproject.eu/resources/> [accessed: 11 December 2021].

⁴ <https://soarproject.eu/newsletter/> [accessed: 11 XII 2021].

In the same way, the author of the article analysed which groups of religious communities were most frequently attacked in Europe. The information obtained shows that in the period presented, the most frequent targets of the perpetrators were places and people associated with the Christian religion. A total of 72 cases of aggression were identified, which represents 62,07 percent of all attacks on European religious sites. Attacks on places and persons associated with other religious communities were respectively: 30 incidents against the Jewish community (representing 25,86 percent of all incidents within Europe), 13 acts of aggression against sites associated with Islam (representing 11,21 percent of all incidents within Europe) and one incident targeting a site associated with Buddhism (representing 0.86 percent of all incidents)⁵. A breakdown by religion is shown in Figure 2.

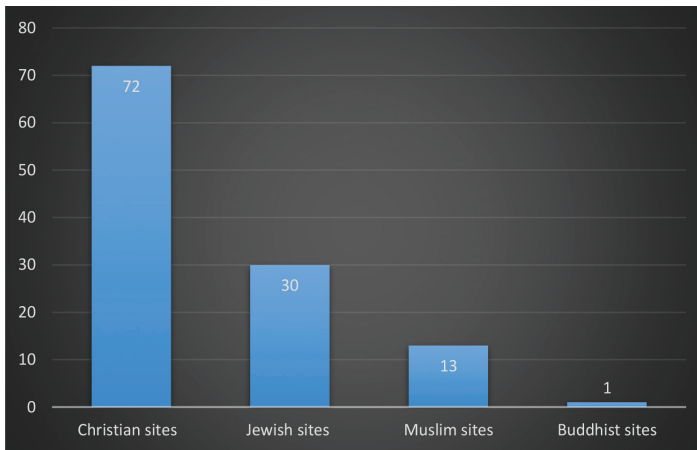


Fig. 2. Number of attacks on persons and places associated with a particular religion that occurred in Europe between July 2 and October 22, 2021.

Source: Own elaboration based on newsletters posted on the official website of the SOAR project, <https://soarproject.eu/resources/> [accessed: 11 December 2021].

⁵ An attack on a Buddhist-related site occurred in September 2021 on British soil, www.swindonadvertiser.co.uk/news/19590833.hundreds-march-town-centre-solidarity-hindu-community-temple-break-ins/ [accessed: 12 XII 2021].

The offences that the detained persons committed against places associated with Christianity were mostly acts of vandalism and consisted, inter alia, of damaging property located in buildings, vandalizing and stealing religious symbols, using a vehicle as a tool of attack (France, Sarthe)⁶, firing a firearm at a church building (Slovakia, Bratislava)⁷, attempting to use an aircraft to attack a facility (France, Paris)⁸. There were two cases of homicide, which the anti-terrorist services assessed as religiously motivated acts of violence. One of them was committed in August 2021 on French territory. A mentally disturbed perpetrator - who had been arrested by police services in the past on suspicion of setting fire to a religious building - carried out the murder of a Catholic clergyman using a dangerous bladed object⁹. The second incident was identified in October 2021 in the UK. It concerned the murder of a Conservative British politician with close links to the Catholic religion¹⁰. The British services classified this crime as a terrorist incident and the perpetrator himself as an Islamic radical.

The author's own study further shows that the countries with the highest number of attacks on places of worship and people associated with the Christian religion were France, the UK, Germany, Spain and Italy. These incidents accounted for 87,5 percent of all incidents in Europe targeting Christian sites. This group also included the territory of Poland, where three acts of aggression took place. A numerical summary in this respect is presented in Figure 3.

⁶ https://actu.fr/pays-de-la-loire/beille_72031/sarthe-un-camion-fonce-dans-l-eglise-son-chauffeur-s-enfuit-le-maire-lance-un-appel-a-temoins_45259304.html [accessed: 11 XII 2021].

⁷ <https://www.kath.net/news/76584> [accessed: 11 XII 2021].

⁸ <https://www.leprogres.fr/faits-divers-justice/2021/10/10/il-projetait-de-percuter-la-cathedrale-notre-dame-en-avion-un-homme-interpelle> [accessed: 11 XII 2021].

⁹ <https://www.europe1.fr/faits-divers/un-petre-assassine-en-vendee-annonce-darmanin-4061489> [accessed: 11 XII 2021].

¹⁰ <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-58935372> [accessed: 11 XII 2021].

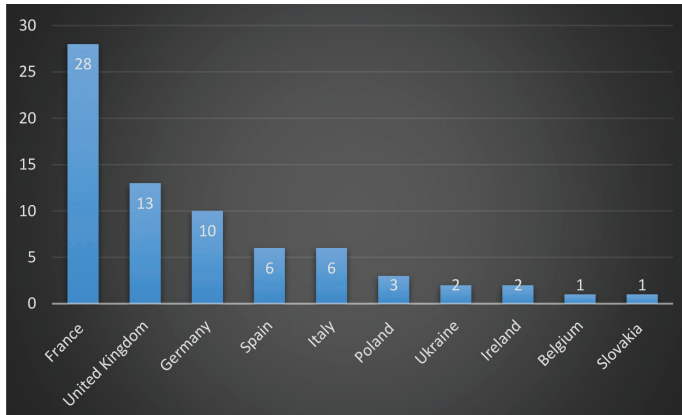


Fig. 3. Number of attacks on Christian sites in Europe between July 2 and October 22, 2021.

Source: Own elaboration based on information bulletins posted on the official website of the SOAR project, <https://soarproject.eu/resources/> [accessed: 11 December 2021].

The offences committed against places associated with Judaism, Islam and Buddhism - as well as against Christian sites - were motivated by extremist and criminal motives of religious hatred. These included acts of vandalism involving the destruction and devastation of property, including arson, placing offensive inscriptions on religious symbols (Great Britain, Essex)¹¹, criminal threats directed for racist reasons and religious affiliation (France, Strasbourg)¹², threats of using dangerous bladed objects (France, Villeurbanne)¹³.

The author's own study of the article shows that the countries with the highest number of attacks on places of worship and people associated with Judaism and Islam were Germany, the United Kingdom and France. The number of such acts accounted for 63,33 percent of incidents in Europe targeting Jewish sites and 84,61 percent targeting Muslim sites. A summary of the figures in this regard is presented in Figures 4 and 5.

¹¹ <https://muslimnews.co.uk/news/islamophobia/france-3-mosques-face-islamo-phobic-attack/> [accessed: 11 XII 2021].

¹² https://actu.fr/grand-est/strasbourg_67482/mosquee-a-strasbourg-l-association-derriere-le-projet-menacee-d-attentats_45450694.html [accessed: 11 XII 2021].

¹³ <https://www.jpost.com/diaspora/antisemitism/teenager-arrested-after-waving-knife-in-front-of-french-jewish-school-684430> [accessed: 11 XII 2021].

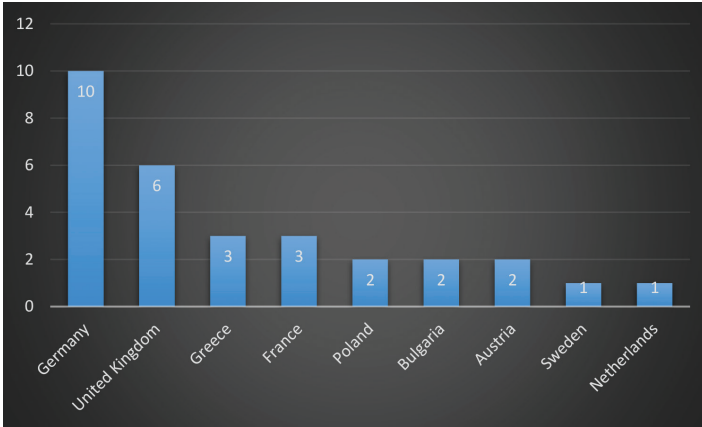


Fig. 4. Number of attacks on Jewish sites in Europe between July 2 and October 22, 2021.

Source: Own elaboration based on information bulletins posted on the official website of the SOAR project, <https://soarproject.eu/resources/> [accessed: 11 December 2021].

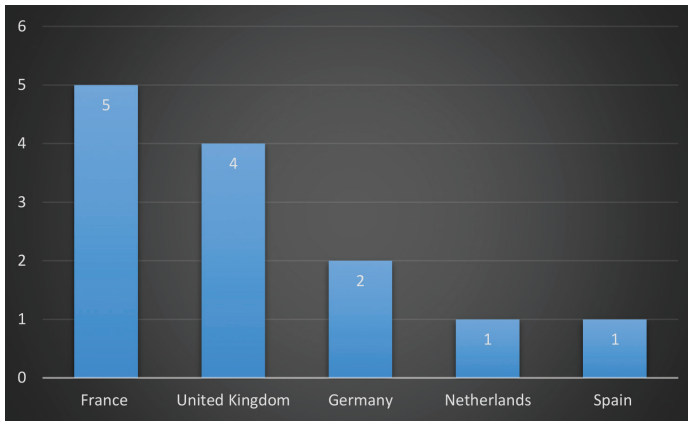


Fig. 5. Number of attacks on Muslim sites in Europe between July 2 and October 22, 2021.

Source: Own elaboration based on news bulletins posted on the official website of the SOAR project, <https://soarproject.eu/resources/> [accessed: 11 December 2021].

Supporting the projects undertaken on the protection of places of worship is the activity of the European Commission’s Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs (DG Home), which implements a number of initiatives to increase the level of security in the area

of terrorist threats to places of public interest, including places of worship. In 2017, the European Commission adopted an action plan to support EU Member States in protecting these sites. Following a completed consultation, a document entitled *Good practices to support the protection of public spaces* was issued in 2019. In the area of securing public facilities, a number of practices of a general nature have been identified as a starting point for building systems to secure them by those responsible for the process in individual entities¹⁴. In addition, in May 2021, representatives of the DG HOME's Protective Security Advisory team, with the participation of representatives of police forces affiliated since 2018 within the EU High Risk Security Network, produced a publication entitled *EU Quick Guide to support the protection of places of worship*. It identifies additional good practices for the protection of places of worship which can be considered as low risk from terrorist events¹⁵.

The authors of the handbook stress that it provides factual support to members of all religious communities and encourage its use in the process of assessing the terrorist threat level of places of worship. In the opinion of DG Home experts, this publication is less applicable when assessing incidents whose nature indicates that they were part of pre-planned actions by the perpetrators of attacks. In this context, it is not widely applicable to places of worship characterised by a high level of vulnerability, resulting, inter alia, from their location (often of a symbolic nature), important religious events taking place on their premises or the presence of VIPs during such events. It is particularly important to emphasise that the *EU Quick Guide to support the protection of places of worship* serves to raise awareness and assess the resilience of sites to a limited number of forms of terrorist incidents, i.e. incidents where the perpetrator(s) uses vehicles, firearms, dangerous bladed objects and explosives (referred

¹⁴ European Commission, Commission Staff Working Document, *Good practices to support the protection of public spaces, Accompanying the document, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council and the Council Eighteenth Progress Report towards an effective and genuine Security Union*, Brussels 2019, pp. 4–5, <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/998aeb09-4be6-11e9-8ed-01aa75ed71a1/language-en> [accessed: 16 XI 2021].

¹⁵ European Commission, DG Home, *EU Quick Guide to support the protection of Places of Worship*, 2021, pp. 4–5, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/whats-new/publications/eu-quick-guide-support-protection-places-worship_en [accessed: 27 XI 2021].

to by the author as the instrumentarium of the perpetrator)¹⁶ as tools of attack. The most important part of the guide are the principles for assessing the level of possible dangers, based on the search for answers to the auxiliary questions included in the content of the document, in areas relevant to the security of places of worship¹⁷.

In June 2020, the European Commission, under the Internal Security Fund - Police, issued a call for proposals to EU members for projects to enhance the security of places of worship. The planned activities within the framework of the project were to include:

- establishing or strengthening cooperation between public entities and religious leaders of a given religion;
- creating channels for the exchange of information between these entities on possible threats of a terrorist and criminal nature (hate crimes)
- developing and implementing public awareness campaigns against terrorism for EU citizens;
- sharing of knowledge, good practices on solutions used by different Member States;
- developing, implementing and delivering concepts, security programmes and training¹⁸.

On this basis, in 2021, the European Commission financially supported six independent projects to improve the terrorist security of religious sites, namely:

- *ProSPeReS - Protection System for large gatherings of People in Religious Sites* - at present the only project for anti-terrorist protection of places of religious worship implemented on the territory of Poland¹⁹;

¹⁶ European Commission, DG Home, *EU Quick Guide to support the protection of Places of Worship*, 2021, p. 5, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/whats-new/publications/eu-quick-guide-support-protection-places-worship_en [accessed: 27 XI 2021].

¹⁷ European Commission, DG Home, *EU Quick Guide to support the protection of Places of Worship*, 2021, pp. 7-22, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/whats-new/publications/eu-quick-guide-support-protection-places-worship_en [accessed: 27 XI 2021].

¹⁸ ISF Police, 2020 Call for proposals: ISFP-2020-AG-PROTECT, https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/other_eu_prog/home/wp/call-fiche_isfp-2020-ag-protect_en.pdf [accessed: 28 XI 2021].

¹⁹ Among the project beneficiaries were the following Polish entities: The Main School of Fire Service, the Warsaw Metropolitan Police Headquarters, the Provincial Police Headquarters in Łódź, the Provincial Police Headquarters in Wrocław, the WSB

- *SASCE - Safer and Stronger Communities in Europe*;
- *SHIELD - Solutions to Enhance Interfaith Protection of Places of Worship from Terrorist Danger*;
- *PROTECTOR - Protecting Places of Worship*;
- *PROSEC UW - Protection and Security for Places of Worship*;
- *SOAR Project - Protecting Places of Worship in Europe*²⁰.

The aim of the above mentioned initiatives is to increase the level of anti-terrorist protection of places of worship by developing their terrorist security system/systems, counteracting and responding to possible terrorist threats, including with the use of CBRN means²¹ (the *ProSPeReS* project). The above assumptions are to be implemented on the basis of cooperation between European scientists, experts and practitioners in the field of security of places of public interest, i.e. representatives of state administration bodies and religious institutions²². The projects assumes the analysis of pilot case studies that occurred in the above-mentioned facilities in European countries, identification of gaps in their protection systems and, on this basis, the development of recommendations to increase terrorist security of these facilities. The results are expected to lead to the development of targeted training, instructional materials and best practice information on terrorist security at places of worship as well as to the implementation of high impact public awareness campaigns.

The project partners stress that the most important element of their activities will also be to increase the protection of places of worship through the implementation of a security concept called *security by design*. This model is in line with the general assumptions

Academy, the Social Observatory Foundation, the Space Research Centre of the Polish Academy of Sciences, the Jewish Community in Warsaw, the Archdiocese of Łódź, Dynamic Safety Corporation Sp. z o.o. and European partners from Finland, Greece, Cyprus, the Netherlands and Slovakia.

²⁰ TOPIC ID: ISFP-2020-AG-PROTECT <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/topic-details/isfp-2020-ag-protect> [accessed: 11 XII 2021].

²¹ Abbreviation denoting hazards involving chemical, biological, radiation and nuclear agents.

²² *Funding & tender opportunities*, <http://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/projects-details/31077817/101034230/ISFP> [accessed: 11 XII 2021].

indicated by the experts of the European Commission, who are of the opinion that the minimisation of the effects of the perpetrators of terrorist events can be achieved already at the stage of designing and construction of a given facility, creating such parts of it or spaces for its functioning that at the time of an attack will ensure the minimum number of damages and will effectively prevent its significant damage²³.

Experts from DG Home and representatives of the US Department of Homeland Security, which is responsible for the security of, among others, places of worship, point to factors which increase the likelihood of a terrorist attack on religious sites²⁴.

As the first element they mention the open access and free participation in religious services of clergy and participants of liturgical gatherings (often with VIP status). This fact makes it possible for a predictable number of participants to gather in the interior or exterior of the facility in connection with religious events and rituals to take place anywhere at a fixed time. On this basis, both the place itself and the people in it become ready and easy targets for an adversary with free and unrestricted access to almost any church, mosque or synagogue²⁵.

Religious sites have religious, historical, cultural or social significance for many faith communities. The symbolic value of a site is another element that increases the likelihood of a terrorist or extremist event occurring on its premises²⁶. For fundamentalist religious

²³ European Commission, Commission Staff Working Document, *Good practices to support the protection of public spaces, Accompanying the document, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council and the Council Eighteenth Progress Report towards an effective and genuine Security Union*, Brussels 2019, pp. 4–5, <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/998aeb09-4be6-11e9-8ed-01aa75ed71a1/language-en> [accessed: 16 XI 2021].

²⁴ U.S. Department of Homeland Security, *Houses of Worship Security Practice Guide*, May 2013, p. 6, https://www2.illinois.gov/ready/plan/documents/dhs_houses_of_worship_security_practices_guide.pdf [accessed: 20 XI 2021].

²⁵ European Commission, *Protection of Places of Worship*, 2020, https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/pps/item-detail.cfm?item_id=696367&utm_source=pps_newsroom&utm_medium=Website&utm_campaign=pps&utm_content=Protection%20of%20Places%20of%20Worship&lang=en [accessed: 27 XI 2021].

²⁶ U.S. Department of Homeland Security, *Houses of Worship Security Practice Guide*, May 2013, p. 6, https://www2.illinois.gov/ready/plan/documents/dhs_houses_of_worship_security_practices_guide.pdf [accessed: 20 XI 2021].

ideologues, attacking a symbol becomes a basis for achieving political goals and, by promoting hatred and fear among religious opponents, an incentive to take control of a selected community, to defeat it and gain power over it²⁷. For perpetrators of hate crime, the factor that defines their behaviour is most often the so-called prejudice motivation against people and their widely understood differences²⁸.

Another factor identified that increases the likelihood of an attack on a religious site is the unrestricted access of both people and vehicles to its peripheral areas. Through the multitude of objects adjacent to religious buildings (urban properties, especially institutions and important public places) and their location (centre, periphery of the city), the number of people who may be there and among them potential aggressors increases²⁹. The freedom to park vehicles without control in any place of this zone, e.g. in car parks, nearby streets, entrances to the site, and many times the lack of physical barriers limiting the movement of cars increases the risk of using a vehicle as a tool of attack (e.g. by detonating explosives hidden in the vehicle, using the vehicle to ram people moving in the traffic routes)³⁰.

The limitations and financial difficulties of places of worship are also factors which increase their attractiveness as objects of attack. The main purpose of their functioning is religious activity for the benefit of individual religious communities and satisfying their spiritual needs. Low income significantly restricts those responsible for their administration from accessing desirable solutions to increase their

²⁷ K. Izak, *Nie tylko islam. Ekstremizm i terroryzm religijny* (Eng. Not only Islam. Extremism and religious terrorism), „Przegląd Bezpieczeństwa Wewnętrznego” 2015, no 12, p. 209.

²⁸ A. Mazurczak, *Przestępstwa motywowane uprzedzeniami. Analiza i zalecenia* (Eng. Crimes motivated by prejudice. Analysis and recommendations), „Biuletyn Rzecznika Praw Obywatelskich” 2017, no. 6, p. 10.

²⁹ European Commission, *Protection of Places of Worship*, 2020, https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/pps/item-detail.cfm?item_id=696367&utm_source=pps_newsroom&utm_medium=Website&utm_campaign=pps&utm_content=Protection%20of%20Places%20of%20Worship&lang=en [accessed: 27 XI 2021].

³⁰ U.S. Department of Homeland Security, *Houses of Worship Security Practice Guide*, May 2013, p. 6, https://www2.illinois.gov/ready/plan/documents/dhs_houses_of_worship_security_practices_guide.pdf [accessed: 20 XI 2021].

security level, including, for example, purchasing physical security equipment or hiring experts to build appropriate security systems³¹.

In the policy of terrorist security of places of worship, the most important element is to achieve and maintain a high level of situational awareness of people associated with the facility and their understanding of what is happening both in its internal environment and around it. This is achieved by developing a culture of safety both among those responsible for the management of the site (the clergy) and among the staff and other participants in liturgical gatherings. Each of them must understand that terrorist threats exist, and that ignoring them significantly reduces the chance of their prompt recognition. An important factor in a crisis situation is for all those involved to take responsibility for their own safety, the safety of those around them (the facility and the people), and in a threatening situation to take appropriate protective and defensive action³². Such actions should be supported by anti-terrorist education carried out by developing educational programmes raising anti-terrorist awareness among the mentioned people. Only by combining theory and practice can people be prepared for possible threats and answer questions on how to identify dangers, how to defend against them and how to behave in a crisis situation³³.

Experts of the European Commission in the manual *EU Quick Guide to support the protection of places of worship* emphasize that at the level of designing the system of anti-terrorist protection of places of worship it is necessary to take into account a number of important elements and on the basis of information on the identified basic threats to carry out a process of risk assessment of their occurrence. It is also important

³¹ Ibid.

³² K. Liedel, P. Piasecka, *Bezpieczeństwo w czasach terroryzmu. Jak przeżyć zamach terrorystyczny* (Eng. Safety in times of terrorism. How to survive a terrorist attack), Warszawa 2018, p. 42.

³³ B. Wiśniewska-Paź, J. Stelmach, *Bezpieczeństwo antyterrorystyczne budynków użyteczności publicznej. Założenia i rekomendacje do prowadzenia działań antyterrorystycznych w wybranych kategoriach obiektów* (Eng. Anti-terrorist security of public utility buildings. Assumptions and recommendations for conducting anti-terrorist actions in selected categories of facilities), in: *Bezpieczeństwo antyterrorystyczne budynków użyteczności publicznej*, vol. 4 - *Założenia i rekomendacje do prowadzenia działań antyterrorystycznych w wybranych kategoriach obiektów*, B. Wiśniewska-Paź, J. Stelmach (ed.), Toruń 2019, p. 8.

to find out what kind of risk of a given threat can be considered acceptable and what kind of measures can be taken in the facility to minimise the likelihood of the threat occurring³⁴.

The process of assessing the risk of a terrorist event occurring in places of worship is part of a multi-component risk management process, which is the most important component of the anti-terrorist security system for both the facility and the people in it. According to NaCTSO experts, a number of important elements should be taken into account when managing risk in a facility, which, among others, in March 2019, the European Commission identified as good practices to strengthen the anti-terrorism protection of public places³⁵. In this respect, the above-mentioned *EU Quick Guide to support the protection of places of worship* is also an important support for those carrying out such an assessment, especially in the context of threats related to the above-mentioned perpetrators' instruments used during attacks³⁶.

The underlying factor of the system is the identification and determination of the level of terrorist risk in the site, which includes an understanding of the intentions and capabilities of the attacker(s) and what they can do and with what attack methodology. UK experts indicate that the following questions are helpful in this area:

- What kind of information can the person responsible for the security of the facility obtain from state institutions, e.g. the Police, about terrorist threats against the facility that may occur locally and nationally?
- Are there elements of the facility's functioning which may attract the attention of perpetrators of terrorist events?

³⁴ European Commission, DG Home, *EU Quick Guide to support the protection of Places of Worship*, 2021, p. 13, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/whats-new/publications/eu-quick-guide-support-protection-places-worship_en [accessed: 27 XI 2021].

³⁵ European Commission, Commission Staff Working Document, *Good practices to support the protection of public spaces, Accompanying the document, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council and the Council Eighteenth Progress Report towards an effective and genuine Security Union*, Brussels 2019, pp. 4–5, <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/998aeb09-4be6-11e9-8ed-01aa75ed71a1/language-en> [accessed: 16 XI 2021].

³⁶ European Commission, DG Home, *EU Quick Guide to support the protection of Places of Worship*, 2021, p. 5, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/whats-new/publications/eu-quick-guide-support-protection-places-worship_en [accessed: 27 XI 2021].

- Is there a connection between the facility and persons or organisations of VIP status, which may be the target of terrorist attacks? Are there security procedures regulating the participation of the aforementioned entities in events taking place within the facility? How often are they reviewed?
- Are there buildings in the immediate vicinity of the facility which, due to the specificity of their functioning, are places of high terrorist risk and may indirectly pose a threat to the facility itself?
- Are there areas of the facility or its staff that attackers could exploit during an attack, e.g. architectural plans of buildings accessible to third parties, technical expertise, unrestricted access to restricted areas of the facility?³⁷

Another element is to identify the entities to be protected, assess their vulnerability and identify the weak points of the facility. In each case, in the context of the security of a place of worship, priority is given to people (clergy, employees, participants in liturgical gatherings), then to material resources (e.g. buildings, their equipment, plans), and finally to information (both electronic and paper data). Identifying weaknesses in the system, both in relation to external and internal threats, provides answers as to what kind of solutions need to be developed to improve the system. One way to improve the system is through close cooperation between facility managers and state counterterrorism units. These bodies should regularly assess the vulnerability of individuals to terrorist threats from inside and outside the site. It is important in this situation to find out why and to what types of threats the protected premises are vulnerable³⁸.

In the anti-terrorist protection system of a place of worship, it is important to identify measures that reduce or mitigate the risk of a terrorist event occurring there. Once identification has made it possible to conclude that the danger to people and the site is real,

³⁷ NaCTSO, National Counter Terrorism Security Office, *Crowded Places Guidance*, 2020, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/crowded-places-guidance/managing-risk-business-continuity> [accessed: 20 XI 2021].

³⁸ European Commission, Commission Staff Working Document, *Good practices to support the protection of public spaces, Accompanying the document, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council and the Council Eighteenth Progress Report towards an effective and genuine Security Union*, Brussels 2019, pp. 4–5, <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/998aeb09-4be6-11e9-8ed-01aa75ed71a1/language-en> [accessed: 16 XI 2021].

the identification and evaluation of the effectiveness of existing security measures should ensue, followed by the implementation of new, additional and proportionate protective solutions adapted to different environments. The aim is to achieve the lowest possible level of any risk³⁹. European Commission experts stress that the security measures selected and tailored must always be accompanied by appropriate technical solutions, developed by security specialists, whether in-house or outsourced⁴⁰. Often there is little point in investing in expensive security measures for the operation of a site, and the most effective solutions are the simplest ones. They become all the more effective when the people connected with the facility are characterised by a high culture of security. On such a basis, once the threat is assessed as real, further elements of the facility's security system can be built⁴¹.

The development, regular review and updating of site security plans is the next link in the system. An effective security plan should be simple, clear and flexible in its content. Its primary purpose should be to deter possible threats resulting from external and internal factors (e.g. from persons employed in the facility) and, when they do occur, to mitigate the potential effects of the perpetrator(s). In such a situation it becomes necessary to create a comprehensive strategy which should combine preventive, protective and preparatory actions, basing all its elements on risk analysis, combined with actions increasing the resistance of the facility to possible threats, especially the most serious ones⁴². In the security procedures it is recommended

³⁹ NaCTSO, National Counter Terrorism Security Office, *Crowded Places Guidance*, 2020, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/crowded-places-guidance/managing-risk-business-continuity> [accessed: 20 XI 2021].

⁴⁰ European Commission, Commission Staff Working Document, *Good practices to support the protection of public spaces, Accompanying the document, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council and the Council Eighteenth Progress Report towards an effective and genuine Security Union*, Brussels 2019, pp. 4–5, <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/998aeb09-4be6-11e9-8ed-01aa75ed71a1/language-en> [accessed: 16 XI 2021].

⁴¹ NaCTSO, National Counter Terrorism Security Office, *Crowded Places Guidance*, 2020, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/crowded-places-guidance/introduction> [accessed: 20 XI 2021].

⁴² NaCTSO, National Counter Terrorism Security Office, *Crowded Places Guidance*, 2020, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/crowded-places-guidance/managing-risk-business-continuity> [accessed: 20 XI 2021].

that security plans be systematically reviewed, among other things to assess their accuracy, feasibility and timeliness, and after the audit, conclusions should be drawn, necessary recommendations recommended and implemented.

According to the British concept of the terrorist security of religious sites, responsibility for the preparation of security plans at places of worship should lie with so-called security leaders. These persons on the premises of a religious site shall, among other things, chair a specially established terrorist threat assessment team⁴³. As a rule, they should be composed of specialists not only formally authorised to perform security tasks, but above all having knowledge and experience in designing a comprehensive security system⁴⁴. The role of the team members is both the physical protection of the object and the collection of information on the type of threats to its security, an attempt to identify them and assess their nature. Functioning within the places of worship, these people also become involved in the process of anti-terrorist education, the programme of which includes, among other things, identification of possible threats to people and the object, indication of how to react and how to defend oneself when danger occurs.

An important area of the team's activity are constant contacts with representatives of state institutions responsible for terrorist security both on a local, regional, national (e.g. Police, other emergency services) and international level. Maintained relations with state institutions are primarily the possibility of immediate transmission through established communication channels of information about an identified threat, use of expert knowledge, sharing information used in the process of risk analysis and assistance in typing and recognizing internal and external threats to a given religious community⁴⁵.

⁴³ U.S. Department of Homeland Security, *Houses of Worship Security Practice Guide*, May 2013, p. 6, https://www2.illinois.gov/ready/plan/documents/dhs_houses_of_worship_security_practices_guide.pdf [accessed: 20 XI 2021].

⁴⁴ J. Stelmach, M. Kożuszek, *Założenia i rekomendacje do wykonywania planów ochrony w obiektach podlegających obowiązkowej ochronie* (Eng. Assumptions and recommendations for the implementation of security plans in facilities subject to mandatory protection), in: *Bezpieczeństwo antyterrorystyczne budynków użyteczności publicznej*, vol. 4 – *Założenia i rekomendacje do prowadzenia działań antyterrorystycznych w wybranych kategoriach obiektów*, B. Wiśniewska-Paź, J. Stelmach (ed.), Toruń 2019, p. 25.

⁴⁵ NaCTSO, National Counter Terrorism Security Office, *Counter Terrorism Protective*

The system of anti-terrorist protection of places of worship also includes their physical protection, which - through the use of proportionate protection measures - is intended, among other things, to restrict free access to places that are restricted zones. Closely related to this is also the use of technical detection means, e.g. for the detection of explosives, firearms, dangerous bladed objects. However, the European Commission specialists make the application of such solutions dependent on the assessment of vulnerability of a given facility to possible threats⁴⁶.

The last element of the system of anti-terrorist protection of religious facilities is constant and cyclic training of personnel. Regular in-service training for facility personnel (clergy, employees, participants of liturgical gatherings) is becoming a standard in order to raise their level of anti-terrorist awareness, make sure they understand their responsibilities and accept the need to implement the terrorist security measures contained in the security plan. Practical exercises are also an important element of the training system. Their implementation is supposed to reveal possible mistakes and gaps in the existing security procedures, to identify doubts or comments to the security plans, to use by persons connected with a given place the acquired theoretical knowledge to further improve solutions serving the security of a given facility. Exercises are also a constant verification that the security plans developed are feasible and meet expectations. Practical activities should involve all stakeholders of the security system, especially facility administrators, its staff, participants of liturgical gatherings, but also emergency services (e.g. fire brigade, police, special forces) and other relevant entities responsible for security and ensure multiple scenarios, according to the principle “plan-do-check-act”⁴⁷.

Security Advice for Places of Worship, ACPO 2009, p. 42, https://www.welhat.gov.uk/media/16407/Crowded-Places-Guidance/pdf/Crowded_Places_Guidance.pdf?m=637242863669130000 [accessed: 20 XI 2021].

⁴⁶ European Commission, Commission Staff Working Document, *Good practices to support the protection of public spaces, Accompanying the document, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council and the Council Eighteenth Progress Report towards an effective and genuine Security Union*, Brussels 2019, pp. 4–5, <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/998aeb09-4be6-11e9-8ed-01aa75ed71a1/language-en> [accessed: 16 XI 2021].

⁴⁷ NaCTSO, National Counter Terrorism Security Office, *Counter Terrorism Protective*

Summarising selected issues of solutions proposed by the European Union to increase the level of protection of places of worship from terrorist threats, two additional, often difficult to reconcile, issues should be noted. On the one hand - as mentioned above - the open nature of religious sites, the free and predictable participation of large numbers of people in religious events and ceremonies, and the frequent lack of sufficient security procedures make these places easy targets for attack. On the other hand, it should not be forgotten that in order to preserve their real role and purpose, it is not possible to make them into a typical fortress providing them with absolute security. What can be achieved is to create a system of protection that minimises the risk of attack and reduces to a certain level the possible adverse effects of the perpetrator(s)⁴⁸. In this situation, it must not be forgotten that not every religious site will find the same proposed solutions applicable. Individual sites differ in many indicators, such as size, location, purpose, more or less developed human safety culture, etc. Therefore, solutions to increase the level of their protection should be developed on an individual basis and correspond to the actual purpose and functioning characteristics of the site⁴⁹.

Considering the problem of anti-terrorist protection of places of worship in the EU, one cannot help but ask whether Polish religious facilities face similar problems, whether they have been or are the target of attacks by perpetrators of terrorist or extremist events, and therefore what the system of protecting them against such events looks like.

Answering the above, it should be stated that no incidents with a strictly terrorist background have been recorded in Poland. To date,

Security Advice for Places of Worship, ACPO 2009, p. 37, https://www.welhat.gov.uk/media/16407/Crowded-Places-Guidance/pdf/Crowded_Places_Guidance.pdf?m=637242863669130000 [accessed: 20 XI 2021].

⁴⁸ NaCTSO, National Counter Terrorism Security Office, *Counter Terrorism Protective Security Advice for Places of Worship*, ACPO 2009, p. 6, https://www.welhat.gov.uk/media/16407/Crowded-Places-Guidance/pdf/Crowded_Places_Guidance.pdf?m=637242863669130000 [accessed: 20 XI 2021].

⁴⁹ European Commission, Commission Staff Working Document, *Good practices to support the protection of public spaces, Accompanying the document, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council and the Council Eighteenth Progress Report towards an effective and genuine Security Union*, Brussels 2019, pp. 4–5, <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/998aeb09-4be6-11e9-8ed-01aa75ed71a1/language-en> [accessed: 16 XI 2021].

all incidents targeting Polish places of religious worship have been qualified by Polish services as criminal, including those motivated by religious hatred. The perpetrators of these crimes (both single and acting jointly and in agreement with others), while attempting or carrying out a physical attack on persons and places associated with a given religious community, used as instruments dangerous bladed objects, air weapons, used physical force (beatings) and criminal threats against persons. The basis of the aggressors' activity were associated mental illnesses, aggression due to religious differences or the influence of narcotics. In one case, an attack by an aggressor ended in the death of the victim and injury to a clergyman providing medical assistance to the victim. In the remaining incidents, the injuries sustained by the victims did not pose a threat to their life and health. Most perpetrators were apprehended by law enforcement authorities within a short period of time after the incident. To date, no cases of attacks on Polish religious facilities with the use of explosives, firearms, chemical or biological substances have been recorded, nor have they been targeted by cyber criminals.

Similarly to religious facilities in the world, also Polish places of worship are characterised by features increasing their attractiveness as targets of a possible terrorist attack. To a large extent, they are identical or even identical to those described by representatives of the British NaCTSO in their publication. In the literature on the subject, Polish security experts supplement this catalogue with additional elements and indicate, in addition to those mentioned above, e.g. the low level of anti-terrorist security of a given place, the possibility of increasing the post-explosive impact in the case of bombings threatening the stability of the structure of buildings, limited possibilities of action by rescue services due to the difficulties arising from the capacity of evacuation routes and compact infrastructure around buildings⁵⁰.

In considering how to secure places of religious worship in Poland, attention should be drawn to another important problem. Despite the

⁵⁰ J. Stelmach, B. Wiśniewska-Paź, *Wprowadzenie - rozważania na temat zagrożenia terroryzmem dla obiektów użyteczności publicznej* (Eng. Introduction - considerations on the terrorist threat to public facilities), in: *Bezpieczeństwo antyterrorystyczne budynków użyteczności publicznej*, vol. 2 - *Metody i narzędzia zamachów vs działania antyterrorystyczne i kontrterrorystyczne*, B. Wiśniewska-Paź, M. Szostak, J. Stelmach (ed.), Toruń 2018, pp. 9–10.

identification of possible risk factors for religious facilities in the context of a terrorist attack, they still fall into the category of public buildings, where protection is not mandatory. On this basis, there is no legal obligation to develop comprehensive documentation on the anti-terrorist protection system in them. The possession of e.g. physical or technical security measures, preparation and implementation of a security plan, conduct of preventive actions, implementation of training and practical exercises is decided solely by the manager (administrator) of the building, and his decision is most often the result of a risk analysis related to the financial capabilities of a given place⁵¹.

Currently, the issues related to the procedures to be followed on the territory of a place of worship during an armed conflict and crisis situation, including terrorist events, are regulated in Chapter 8 of the *Act of 23 July 2003 on the protection and care of historical monuments*⁵². However, its material jurisdiction covers only those objects which, in accordance with the definition, have the status of a historic monument and their preservation in an unchanged state (as a real property, a part thereof or a complex), due to their historical, artistic and scientific value, constitutes a social interest. On this basis, in line with the executive act to the Act, i.e. the *Regulation of the Minister of Culture of 25 August 2004 on the organisation and manner of protection of historical monuments in the event of armed conflict and crisis situations*⁵³, the organisation and manner of protection of these places in the organisational units possessing historical monuments are determined, the state of the resources subject to protection is described, as well as potential threats and measures to prevent them. In the plan for protection of monuments of individual organizational units of state and local administration, the bodies responsible for its creation, based on the foreseeable and real threats, determine the necessary forces and resources, time and costs in case of such an incident. Moreover,

⁵¹ J. Stelmach, *Kategorie obiektów użyteczności publicznej i stopnie ich ochrony w kontekście zagrożenia współczesnym terroryzmem* (Eng. Categories of public buildings and degrees of their protection in the context of the threat of contemporary terrorism), in: *Bezpieczeństwo antyterrorystyczne budynków użyteczności publicznej. Analiza – Diagnoza* – Case study, B. Wiśniewska-Paź, M. Szostak (ed.), J. Stelmach, Toruń 2018, p. 31.

⁵² Consolidated text: Journal of Laws of 2021, item 710.

⁵³ Journal of Laws of 2004, item 212, no. 2153.

they include in the content of the document information on the process of implementation of preparatory works and efficient coordination and management of protection during such an incident⁵⁴.

The number of terrorist attacks on places of public interest, including places of religious worship, is increasing steadily in the European Union. In the last decade alone, many members of the clergy and participants in liturgical celebrations have died as a result of terrorist attacks in Europe. The frequency and nature of the events have meant that building an anti-terrorist protection system for these sites has become a necessity and a standardised element of the security policy of many states. The European Commission's Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs has been involved in the process of creating a level of security for places and people. For many years, its experts - by developing and implementing a number of legislative initiatives, proposing solutions for so-called good practices, financing projects, etc. - have been encouraging EU Member States to include security of places and people. The importance of the issue is also evidenced by the inclusion of the issue in the list of places of worship. The importance of the issue is also demonstrated by the inclusion of the issue of anti-terrorist protection of places of worship in the EU Security Strategy 2020-2025 as one of the priority tasks. The result of the above-mentioned assumptions are projects funded by the European Commission, which, it is hoped, will systematise the issues of securing European places of worship. As mentioned at the beginning of this article, the year 2021 will therefore have a symbolic dimension, because it is in this year that all actions aimed at improving the level of terrorist security of places of worship, including in Poland, were initiated.

Not being indifferent to the difficult experience of the EU countries on whose territory terrorist incidents against places of religious worship occurred, it is necessary to continue the discussion in our country on the issues related to the anti-terrorist protection of Polish religious facilities. It is worth considering the need to regulate in a single legal act the issue of terrorist security of all Polish places of religious worship. Legislative solutions contained in the Act on the protection

⁵⁴ A. Ginter, A. Michalak, *Komentarz do art. 88* (Eng. Commentary to art. 88), in: *Ustawa o ochronie zabytków i opiece nad zabytkami. Komentarz*, A. Ginter, A. Michalak (ed.), Warszawa 2016, LEX OMEGA number 500623.

and care of monuments are a certain solution, but limiting them only to objects that are monuments does not solve the said problem in a comprehensive manner. In this regard, it is worth considering a return to the solutions proposed in 2016, when, during the work on the draft law on anti-terrorist activities, the Ministry of the Interior proposed that the document under consideration should include a provision on the inclusion of places of religious worship in mandatory protection plans. After criticism from security experts, the lawmakers withdrew from the implementation of this assumption. The negative comments stressed the significant financial burden that may arise for administrators of these places, the difficulties in implementing physical and technical protection measures, and above all the lack of substantive grounds for action, resulting from the absence of real terrorist threats on the territory of the Republic of Poland⁵⁵.

Particular attention should also be paid to the implementation by the University of Łódź and invited consortium members of the first project in our country funded by the European Commission aimed at counter-terrorist protection of places of worship. It is to be hoped that the good practices and experience gained in its implementation will serve to improve the level of terrorist security of these facilities. In addition, a good example would be to invite to Poland in 2022 experts from the European Commission (DG Home) who prepare, in the course of their own training (based on the above-mentioned EU manual on support for the protection of places of religious worship), trainers on securing religious facilities. Such trainers could then cascade to train further national specialists in this field. In the context of the above conclusions, it also seems important to obtain an answer to the question of whether and, possibly, which of the proposed or already existing solutions in the system of anti-terrorist protection of places of worship in Europe can be implemented, improved, modified or adapted on the territory of the Republic of Poland. The foreseeability of threats, the proper selection of measures to counteract them, the minimization of the risk of their occurrence and the consequences of a possible terrorist attack, introduced in time, may save human life and health and protect the object from possible damage. People directly associated

⁵⁵ www.pch24.pl/plan-ochrony-dla-kazdego--mswia-stawia-na-profilaktyke-antyterrorystyczna,42810,i.html [accessed: 14 XII 2021].

with places of worship have the right to feel comfortable and safe there, and it is the duty of those responsible for the security of religious facilities, both at the national and local level, to provide these people and places with the expected comfort and security.

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