



Press release – July 2021

Launch of the EU Project S.O.A.R. - Strengthening the security and resilience of at-risk religious sites and communities

The consortium partners are excited to announce the start of the '*Strengthening the security and resilience of at-risk religious sites and communities*' (S.O.A.R.) project. The S.O.A.R. project will contribute to advancing the protection and safeguarding of places for worship, with a focus on communities of worship within the European Union (EU).

S.O.A.R. is funded and supported by the European Commission and will be delivered by [Enhancing Faith Institutions](#) (EFI), [Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers](#), and the [Architects' Council of Europe](#) (ACE). The project partnerships will develop extensive networks and be inclusive of representatives from all majority and minority faiths practicing within the EU.

The main purpose of the project is to increase the awareness of, and capacity to respond to physical and human security threats to places of worship. S.O.A.R. will utilise a wide range of communication channels and will provide our audiences with a unique knowledge base. This will include training, guidance, and resources, with the opportunity for virtual engagement and the evolution of virtual networks and communities of practice. Training will be delivered across the full spectrum of the project at EU, national and regional and local settings, in seven pilot EU member states: France, Germany, Belgium, Hungary, Austria, the Netherlands and Denmark.

The insights of those with lived experiences of the threat of or of actual terrorist attacks and hate crimes will be engaged to enhance regional level policy-dialogue with regional, EU and global organisations. These include the European Commission, the United Nations Alliance of Civilisations and EU member states, to further advance the protection of religious sites and develop a 'security by design' (SBD) ethos.

The **ACE** will be responsible to provide enhanced policy-dialogue within the EU institutions and EU member states on security by design. The concept of '**security by design**' (SBD) incorporates security features into the design and fabric of the building. Experts in the fields of SBD such as public authority planners, architects, designers, engineers as well as faith leaders will be providing support and training in the seven pilot countries. National, regional and local training in these countries will be provided and include a focus on increasing collaboration and cooperation between security offices and leaders of places of worship with their wider communities and public authorities.

One of the final results will be architectural and design best practice examples that the ACE will identify through a EU wide competition. These will be used to develop design guidelines improving security of religious sites and their associated public spaces for all congregants and visitors.

To learn more, visit the S.O.A.R. website: <https://soarproject.eu/>



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