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**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN  
PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL  
COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

**Action Plan to support the protection of public spaces**

## I. INTRODUCTION

Recent terrorist attacks have shown a recurrent targeting of public spaces, exploiting the intrinsic vulnerabilities of these so-called "soft targets" that result from their open nature and public character. This concerned pedestrian precincts, tourist sites, transport hubs, shopping malls, places of worship, outdoor markets, concert halls and city squares, as seen in attacks in, for example, Barcelona, Berlin, Brussels, London, Manchester, Nice and Stockholm. Besides more complex "high intensity" attacks combining explosives and firearms, Europe has also been hit by a growing number of "low tech" attacks against public spaces carried out with everyday items such as a vehicle for ramming or a knife for stabbing. The targets are often chosen with the intent to causing mass casualties. Threat assessments by Europol and the EU Intelligence and Situation Centre (INTCEN) confirm this focus in target selection, which is also openly incited in terrorist publications on the internet<sup>1</sup>.

Protecting public spaces poses particular **challenges for Member States**. This is due to the broad variety of public places that have been or could be targeted, their different characteristics ranging from fully open spaces to areas with some form of protection, the variety of actors involved in the protection of such sites, the risk of mass casualties and, importantly, the imperative to strike a balance between improving security and preserving the open nature of public spaces, ensuring that citizens can continue their daily lives.

Member States are primarily responsible for the protection of public spaces, but **the EU can and should do more to support** these efforts. As announced in the letter of intent<sup>2</sup> to the European Parliament and the Council Presidency and the accompanying Roadmap for a More United, Stronger and More Democratic Union, this Action Plan sets out measures to provide guidance and support to Member States at national, regional and local level in protecting public spaces. It is part of a wider package of anti-terrorism measures to be undertaken over the next sixteen months.<sup>3</sup> While there can never be 'zero risk', these operational measures will support Member States in detecting threats, reducing the vulnerability of public spaces, mitigating the consequences of a terrorist attack and improving cooperation.

The support the EU can provide to the protection of public spaces is twofold. First, it can **foster the exchange of best practice** across borders through **targeted funding** (chapter II) as well as **networks of practitioners and guidance material** (chapter III). Second, the EU can **involve a wide range of stakeholders** both from the local level and the private sector in this work (chapter IV). Using a joined-up, network approach, this Action Plan establishes a number of fora for a more systematic and structured exchange of information and sharing of best practice to protect public spaces. Where relevant, the work on protecting public spaces will build on actions and lessons learned in areas such as the critical infrastructure protection or the preparedness against chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear security risks<sup>4</sup>, ensuing synergies between these related areas.

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<sup>1</sup> Europol, *Changes in Modus Operandi of IS revisited* (2.12.2016): <https://www.europol.europa.eu/newsroom/news/islamic-state-changing-terror-tactics-to-maintain-threat-in-europe> and *Terrorism Situation and Trend report 2017* (15.6.2017): <https://www.europol.europa.eu/tesat/2017/index.html>.

<sup>2</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/letter-of-intent-2017\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/letter-of-intent-2017_en.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> See the Eleventh Progress Report towards an effective and genuine Security Union (COM(2017) 608 final of 18.10.2017).

<sup>4</sup> See the Action Plan to enhance preparedness against chemical, biological radiological and nuclear security risks (COM (2017) 610 final of 18.10.2017).

## II. EU FUNDING FOR THE PROTECTION OF PUBLIC SPACES

EU funding provides another way to support Member States in the protection of public spaces, drawing on expertise and best practice in other Member States and enhancing cooperation across borders. This can include, for example, measures to promote and support the development of innovative infrastructure to secure public spaces without changing their open character. To that end, the Commission is stepping up the availability of EU funding, both in the short- and medium-term.

To address immediate, short-term needs, together with this Action Plan, the Commission is launching today a call for project proposals through the Internal Security Fund (ISF) Police for a total amount of **EUR 18.5 million**. This funding will support transnational projects improving the protection of public spaces.

This EU funding can also support the operational cooperation on the ground. To improve the **cooperation between first responders** in the aftermath of terrorist attacks, the EU will make funding available within this call for cooperation projects to enhance the coordination between law enforcement, civil protection and medical services in the acute phase after an attack.

This short-term funding will be complemented in 2018 with funding under **Urban Innovative Actions** (UIA) as part of the European Regional Development Fund. Ensuring the physical resistance of buildings, the physical protection of crowded places and promoting security by design can be eligible actions for funding. This could include measures to increase security and promote public safety through the design of public space, lighting and public awareness campaigns as part of urban regeneration measures. To explore the interest and potential ideas of cities to test innovative solutions for security challenges in public spaces, the Commission has launched on 15 September 2017 a request for expressions of interest into the Urban Innovative Actions. This will help the Commission shape the upcoming calls for proposals in this area. Building on that, in October 2018, the Commission will open a call with a total budget of **up to EUR 100 million** under Urban Innovative Actions where security will be a key topic.

It is important to **increase the awareness** of managing authorities, local authorities and beneficiaries responsible for managing these funds to the vulnerability of public spaces, as well as enhancing knowledge and the spread of good practices in promoting security by design. The Commission invites Member States, cities and regions to better integrate the protection of public spaces in European Regional Development Fund and Cohesion Fund infrastructure investments.

**Urban planning and design** can contribute to the protection of public spaces. The Pact of Amsterdam agreed upon by EU Ministers responsible for Urban Matters in 2016 established the Urban Agenda for the EU, an integrated and coordinated approach to deal with the urban dimension of EU and national policies and legislation<sup>5</sup>. It currently has 12 priorities. In October 2017, the Commission will propose the theme of security in public spaces as a new partnership with Member States, focussing on better knowledge, better regulation and better

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<sup>5</sup> Urban Agenda for the EU - Pact of Amsterdam: [http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/policy/themes/urban-development/portal/](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/themes/urban-development/portal/).

financing. The Commission calls on Member States and local authorities to support this initiative.

As the threat to public spaces is evolving, we need a better understanding of trends, risks and possible mitigating measures. This requires a greater use of related **research** opportunities. The EU has so far funded 48 security research projects related to the protection of public spaces under the Seventh Framework Programme and Horizon 2020 for a total amount of EUR 195 million<sup>6</sup>. Many of these projects are now delivering results that need to be disseminated and, where appropriate, followed by investments to translate them into practical actions. To support the take-up of research results related to the protection of public spaces, the Commission will establish an exchange between the Practitioners' Forum and the European Network of Law Enforcement Technology Services (ENLETS) as well as with the practitioners' network under Horizon 2020.

Further research is required to improve the capacity to detect explosives, firearms and other weapons or chemical, biological radiological and nuclear (CBRN) materials being brought into public spaces. Research should also examine the effectiveness of various mitigation measures and identify strategies to reduce vulnerability and enhance the resilience of various potential targets. Testing plays a particular role in this respect. Efforts will be made to tailor research projects under Horizon 2020 to address these needs.

Objective	Action/Deliverable	Deadline
Support Member States' actions to protect public spaces with short-term funding.	<p><b>EUR 18.5 million</b> available under the <b>Internal Security Fund (ISF)</b>.</p> <p>This will include funding for cooperation projects to enhance the coordination between law enforcement, civil protection and medical services in the acute phase after an attack.</p>	Call for proposals launched October 2017.
Provide more structural funding for the protection of public spaces.	Provide funding under <b>Urban Innovative Actions (UIA)</b> as part of the European Regional Development Fund.	Call for proposals by October 2018.

<sup>6</sup> Some project examples are: SECUR-ED (Secured Urban Transportation) – a demonstration project of almost 40M€ which brought together major transport operators, industry and academia to develop a consistent and interoperable package of technologies and processes validated through demonstrations to improve mass transportation security; DESURBS (Designing safer urban spaces) a 3.2M€ 2-year project which resulted in new methodologies, databases and software tools such as a decision support system portal to help urban planners, designers and engineers to recognise and rectify security weaknesses in urban design; and SURVEIRON (Advance surveillance system for the protection of urban soft targets and urban critical infrastructure) is a 2.5M€ SME project, which provides an innovative solution for the protection of these spaces and that provides those in charge of public and private security with an intelligent surveillance and decision making service in critical situations. A full list of FP7 and H2020 security research projects is available on: [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/industry-for-security/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/industry-for-security/index_en.htm).

### III. NETWORKS OF PRACTITIONERS AND EU GUIDANCE TO PROTECT PUBLIC SPACES

Member States have different approaches to and experience in the protection of public spaces. The EU can support them in addressing the growing challenges in the protection of public spaces by providing **fora for the exchange related expertise and best practice**. This should take place at all relevant levels – the policy level, the law enforcement practitioners' level and the more operational level of specialised law enforcement units dealing with the protection of public spaces. As announced in the Ninth Progress Report towards an effective and genuine Security Union<sup>7</sup>, and as also pointed to by the Comprehensive Assessment of EU Security Policy, this exchange builds on a network approach to allow for a more structured sharing of best practice to draw lessons from past attacks, develop guidance and share innovative solutions to enhance the protection of public spaces.

At the policy level, the Commission has recently set up an **EU Policy Group on Soft Target Protection** to step up the cooperation and coordination between Member States. Bringing together national policy-makers, the Group will collect, exchange and disseminate best practices and advise the Commission on further actions on the protection of public spaces. The Group will steer the work in two work-streams: the Practitioners' Forum and the Operators' Forum (see chapter IV for the latter).

The **Practitioners' Forum** brings together law enforcement practitioners of the Member States and law enforcement networks such as AIRPOL<sup>8</sup>, ATLAS<sup>9</sup>, ENLETS<sup>10</sup> and RAILPOL<sup>11</sup> to exchange expert knowledge in regard to the protection of public spaces. This will be complemented by a newly established **High Risk Security Network** which will bring together representatives of specialised law enforcement units responsible for the protection of high risk public spaces. By providing a platform for common training and joint exercises, the network seeks to support Member States in improving their preparedness against attacks and enhancing their capacity to react in case of an attack.

As protecting public spaces is a global challenge, is important to **exchange related best practices in multilateral fora and with partner countries outside the EU**. The Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) has addressed the protection of public spaces and developed a good practices manuals to share lessons learned. Stepped up international cooperation is needed to take this work further, notably with key partners such as the United States. This should include expanding on established EU-US cooperation areas such as explosives detection.

EU cooperation on the protection of public spaces can also add value through the **development of common guidance**, testing of equipment, encouraging harmonisation of standards and exchanging good practices. Building on established best practice in Member States, **EU guidance material** can address a wide set of issues related to the protection of public spaces, ranging from the physical protection of building and places, targeted guidance for specific events (sports and cultural events) and places (landside areas at airports) to

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<sup>7</sup> COM(2017) 407 final (26.7.2017).

<sup>8</sup> The EU-funded AIRPOL network is a coordinating body of law enforcement units at the European airports.

<sup>9</sup> The EU-funded ATLAS network brings together Member States' special intervention units.

<sup>10</sup> European Network of Law Enforcement Technology Services (see also chapter V).

<sup>11</sup> The EU-funded European network of railway police forces addresses security in the field of railway transport in the context of increasing internationalisation of rail transport in Europe.

support for vulnerability assessments and enhanced detection and response capacity. EU guidance material can also help Member States in **raising public awareness**. Greater public awareness will help ensure that suspicious behaviour is swiftly reported. Some Member States have developed effective awareness-raising materials, such as videos, leaflets and posters. These best practices should be shared with other Member States.

In addition, there are technical solutions that can help to make public spaces more secure while preserving their open and public nature. "**Security by design**" should become an essential principle from a very early stage in their development. For example, design concepts at the entrance of buildings can help to prevent terrorist intrusions (e.g. access control zones to mitigate the risk) and ensure protection of buildings' perimeter from invasion of vehicles. Practical research, testing and guidance need to be continued and further developed, to ensure an appropriate balance between maintaining the open nature of public areas and ensuring effective protection. Protective measures, such as barriers or detection equipment, should be as discreet as possible to minimise their impact on society and avoid creating secondary vulnerabilities.

The **transport sector** has for many years been both the target of terrorist acts, and a means to conduct attacks (e.g. hijacked planes or truck-ramming). The Commission is working on a best practice security guidance toolkit for the commercial **road transport** sector. This will focus on improving truck security by mitigating the risk of unauthorised intrusion, including hijacking or theft, of a truck for use in a terrorist ramming attack. The toolkit will be available before the end of 2017 and will provide guidance for national road transport sectors. New technological solutions need to be explored, such as collision avoidance systems, automatic emergency breaking or possibilities for remote stopping of cars by law enforcement.

The EU can provide very practical support to enhance Member States' capacities to enhance the protection of public spaces. With support by the Commission, an **EU soft target site assessment tool** has been developed and is being tested for the protection of public spaces, covering the vulnerability evaluation of all types of public spaces. The Commission stands ready to support Member States with voluntary on-site assessments. An electronic application will be developed to facilitate such vulnerability assessments.

As terrorist organisations are continuously trying to innovate on their techniques and modi operandi, the EU needs to be equally **innovative in its response, harness technology** and pool expertise across the Union to detect and mitigate emerging threats. This concerns, for example, possible threats posed by unmanned aircraft vehicles (UAV) that could be used by terrorists. On-going work on EU rules to ensure the safety and security of civil operations of unmanned aircraft systems (UASs) will address this threat, including measures to facilitate the detection of hostile unmanned aircraft vehicles.

Objective	Action/Deliverable	Deadline
Enhance cooperation and coordination among Member States at policy level.	Establish an <b>EU Policy Group on Soft Target Protection</b> and a <b>Practitioners' Forum</b> with Member States' law enforcement practitioners and law enforcement networks (constitutive meetings in September 2017).	Next meetings: first quarter 2018.
Enhance the	Establish a <b>High Risk Security Network</b> as	Constitutive meeting

cooperation between specialised police units.	a law enforcement practitioners' network on the protection of high risk public spaces, with the objective to provide common training and conduct joint exercises and share of best practices.	in November 2017. Cooperation activities to start in the first quarter 2018.
Enhance the physical protection of buildings.	Provide guidance on enhancing the physical resistance of buildings.	Fourth quarter 2018.
Enhance the protection of crowded places, sports and cultural events.	Provide guidance material on the protection of crowded places, including sports and cultural events, based on tests with selected Member States.  Develop an electronic application to facilitate the vulnerability assessment of all types of public spaces.	Second-third quarter 2018.
Enhance landside security at airports.	Provide guidance material for the protection of landside areas at airports with a focus on passenger flows.	Third quarter 2018.
Step up the use of explosive detection dogs.	Provide guidance material on the use of explosives detection dogs in the protection of public spaces.	First quarter 2018.

#### IV. INVOLVING LOCAL ACTORS AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR

A variety of actors can play a role in the protection of public spaces. EU can foster **cooperation with a wide range of stakeholders** which is considered crucial to enhance the protection of public spaces.

Public spaces such as shopping malls or concert halls are often owned or operated by private entities. This makes it necessary to involve them in the work on enhancing the protection of public spaces. The Commission will set up an **Operators' Forum** to engage with these private operators and other relevant stakeholders from the private sector such as car rental companies etc. This will facilitate a common awareness of current security challenges and encourage public-private security partnerships to improve protection.

**Local and regional authorities** are also important stakeholders in the protection of public spaces. The Commission will reinforce the involvement of these stakeholders and initiate a dialogue with both regional and local authorities, such as mayors of major cities, to share information and best practice in protecting public spaces. As a follow up to the Nice Declaration<sup>12</sup> of 29 September 2017, early next year the Commission will organise, together

<sup>12</sup> The Declaration of Nice was adopted at a conference of the mayors of the Euro-Mediterranean region in Nice on 29 September 2017, organised at the initiative of the Mayor of Nice, and with the participation of

with the Committee of the Regions, a high-level meeting with the mayors who signed the Nice Declaration and other interested representatives from local and regional levels to continue the exchange of best practice on the protection of public spaces.

Objective	Action/Deliverable	Deadline
Enhance public-private cooperation on the protection of public spaces.	Set up the <b>Operators' Forum</b> with relevant private stakeholders, represented through their European associations, to gather available guidance, develop recommendations and share best practices. The group will be divided into different thematic areas of operation and will serve as a channel to communicate between public authorities and operators of different public spaces.	Constitutive meeting in fourth quarter 2017.
Foster cooperation with regional and local authorities on the protection of public spaces.	Establish a dialogue with regional and local authorities, including mayors of European cities, to explore ways of community efforts to enhance the protection of public spaces, with the aim to exchange best practice, involve scientific knowledge and the know-how of research organisations and the private sector, and facilitate funding opportunities.	A first dedicated meeting with mayors of cities and other regional and local authorities in the first quarter 2018.

## V. CONCLUSIONS

In the face of evolving threats, Europe needs to come together and join forces to develop innovative, sustainable and effective solutions to enhance the protection of public spaces. While there can never be 'zero risk', the operational measures, coordinating actions and guidance set out in this Action Plan can help Member States address significant vulnerabilities exposed by recent terrorist attacks and make a real difference in protecting public spaces.

The measures set out in this Communication seek to pave the way for an effective EU cooperation in the protection of public spaces. The Commission encourages Member States to take advantage of the various possibilities set out in this Action Plan, including the available EU funding. It invites the European Parliament and the Council to endorse this Action Plan and actively engage in its implementation, in close cooperation with all relevant stakeholders. The Commission will review progress on this Action Plan before the end of 2018.

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the Commission, to exchange best practice among cities, local and regional levels on the prevention of radicalisation and the protection of public spaces.