

The VIRTUOUS proposal promoted by Zanasi & Partners and coordinated by Pompiers de l'Urgence Internationale has been accepted by the European Commission (EC) and will be funded under the Internal Security Fund (ISFP) between 2025 and 2028.

VIRTUOUS – Vulnerability, Risk Assessment, Tools and Training Exercise for the Active Protection of Religious Building aims to revolutionize strategies for the protection of places of worship in Europe by adopting a multifaceted approach that goes beyond traditional methods. Particularly, the project aims to increase the understanding of terrorist threat, use innovative technologies such as Building Information Modelling (BIM) to identify vulnerabilities and improving awareness and preparedness through recommendations and training exercises. The research carried out by the project will focus on the places of worship of the three main religion present in the EU (Christianity, Judaism and Islam) and dedicate special sessions to disseminate communication material also to less represented communities.

VIRTUOUS approach will rely on multiple activities aiming to:

- Increase the **understanding of the phenomenon** of terrorist attacks against places of worship across Europe, identifying trends and recurrent paths;
- **Identify the vulnerabilities** of such places through the implementation of innovative technologies;
- **Improve the awareness and preparedness** of stakeholders to tackle this type of threat by means of recommendations, training, and closer cooperation among stakeholders.

The methodology adopted in the project will rely on different types of activities:

- **Desk research** to gain understanding of the types of terrorist attacks against Christian, Jewish and Islamic places of worship in Europe, allowing the identification of specific trends and correlations in terrorist attacks and their relation with international political and historical events;
- **Risk and vulnerability assessment** to analyse the impact of different types of attacks against buildings, considering structural differences, most common modalities of actions, pinpointing vulnerabilities exploited by terrorist and assessing the response of each religious to such attacks. BIM will be used to create a digital twin;
- **Scenario building and attack simulations** of terrorist attacks to places of worship, including synagogues, churches and mosques, aiming to replicate realistic terrorist threat scenario tailored to the unique characteristics and vulnerabilities of the respective place of worship;
- **Engagement activities** aiming to raise awareness, increase the understanding of phenomenon and pursuing the empowerment of religious communities and other stakeholders in countering and preventing the risk of terrorist attacks. These activities will include: policy labs, workshops and webinars, simulations and training programs;
- **Security awareness campaign** tailored for the specific type of target audience to ensure the most effective impact. The campaign will be organised as follow: security awareness campaign design, workshop and webinar series, implementation, knowledge sharing and capacity building, and evaluation and feedback.

VIRTUOUS Consortium consist of 20 partners from 10 countries. The consortium has gathered interdisciplinary experts from different actors, including SMEs, research centres, religious organisations (Christian, Jewish and Muslims) and LEAs. Such composition will be crucial to reach the project's objectives.

