



REPORT ON SECURITY AND AWARENESS MEASURES IN THE EASTERN HUB

for project
COMMUNITY AWARENESS RESILIENCE EDUCATION
[C.A.R.E.] FOR EUROPE

Project number & acronym
101100567 - EUCARE

shortened version

September 2023



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Scope and Purpose.....	1
Disclaimer	1
Executive Summary.....	2
Summary: Security Posture Ratings.....	2
Summary: Security Threat Landscape	3
Summary: Security Incident Readiness.....	5
Background	7
Community	7
Political and Ethnic Factors	8
Assessment: Security Threat Landscape.....	11
Assessment: Security Incident Readiness	13



Scope and Purpose

The purpose of this document is to summarize the results from the recent EUCARE survey to help interested parties (1) better understand the regional and country-specific security risks posed to the Jewish community and its institutions, (2) find opportunities for collaboration, and (3) identify relevant solutions and tailor materials to address the country-specific security needs.

Disclaimer

This document is prepared for project EUCARE, co-funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Commission. Neither the European Union nor the European Commission can be held responsible for them.

The observations made and the views expressed by the survey analysts are dependent on the quality and completeness of the input data as well as on the cooperation and transparency of the key stakeholders. Although some research may have been conducted to validate and/or complete select areas of the analysis, most of the latter is dependent on the expertise of the individual country security heads.



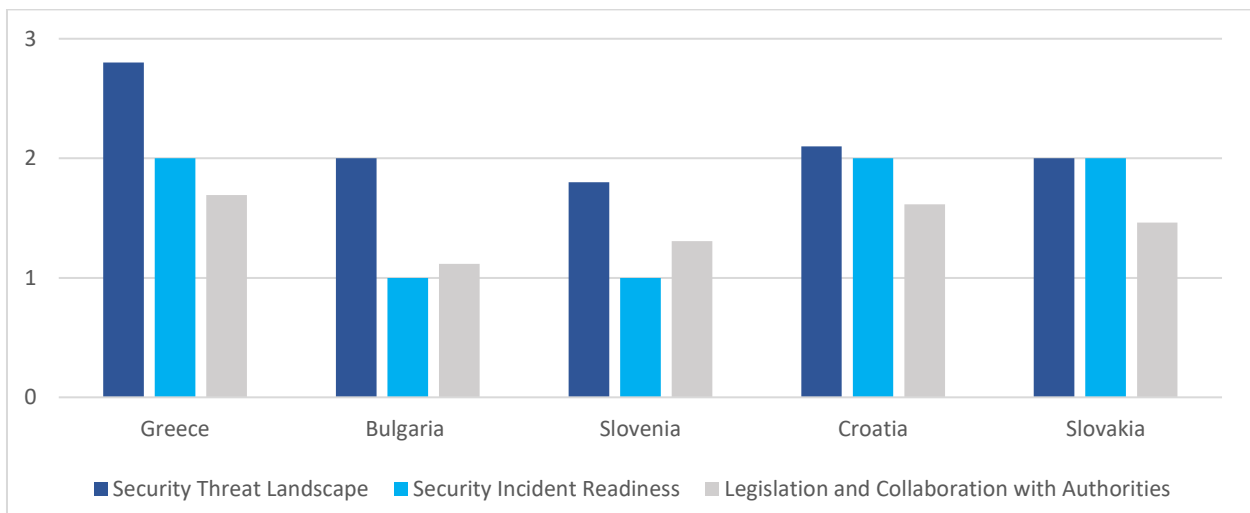
Executive Summary

Summary: Security Posture Ratings

The overall security posture of the Jewish community in the Eastern Hub is rated as “Improvement Needed” with an average score of 1.7 across three main focus areas – Security Threat Landscape, Security Incident Readiness, Legislation and Collaboration with Authorities. While Greece is in the lead position, Croatia and Slovakia are slightly above the average, with Bulgaria and Slovenia leaning towards the “Major Improvement Needed” mark.

Hub Security Posture
IMPROVEMENT NEEDED

Country	Average score across main focus areas	Overall Rating
Bulgaria	1.4	Major Improvement Needed
Croatia	1.9	Improvement Needed
Greece	2.2	Improvement Needed
Slovakia	1.8	Improvement Needed
Slovenia	1.4	Major Improvement Needed



Summary: Security Threat Landscape

The Eastern Hub countries – Bulgaria, Greece, Croatia, Slovakia and Slovenia – are currently the home of more than 12,000 Jews. Most members, facilities, prayer sites, educational and other institutions, are concentrated in the capital cities. While Bulgaria has the largest community to safeguard, Greece, Slovakia and Croatia not only have more fragmented and geographically-dispersed Jew populations, but also more assets to worry about.

All countries across the region assess four of the five main security threats (Antisemitism, Vandalism, Cybersecurity and Extremism) facing their communities as "Medium" or "High" risk. The Cybersecurity-related threats are not understood well enough across the region, which is understandable, given the countries' historical focus on physical security. The risk of Terrorism is toned down a notch, with responses varying between "Low" and "Medium" rating.

Security threat	Number
Antisemitism	100% of the countries assess the risk as "Medium" to "High"
Vandalism	100% of the countries assess the risk as "Medium" to "High"
Terrorism	100% of the countries assess the risk as "Low" to "Medium"
Cybersecurity	100% of the countries assess the risk as "Medium" to "High"
Extremism	100% of the countries assess the risk as "Medium" to "High"

Although a clear methodology and guidelines have not been supplied to help the survey responders make the afore-mentioned risk assessments, the scores have been influenced by a number of factors, including social, geo-political and ethnic ones, as well as information from both internal and external sources.

¹ Security Threat Landscape: No risk (0), Low risk (1), Medium risk (2), High risk (3)
 Security Incident Readiness: No readiness (0), Low-level of readiness (1), Medium-level of readiness (2), High-level of readiness (3)
 Legislation and Collaboration with Authorities: None (0), Insufficient (1), Fair (2), Good (3), Excellent (4)

From a geo-political and ethnic perspective, the situation in Bulgaria and Greece seems to bear a greater charge than in the other three countries for several reasons. First off, both Bulgaria and Greece continue to observe at least one prominent radical organization with regular anti-Semitic initiatives. Second, while Bulgaria has witnessed three neo-Nazi, ultra-nationalist or extremist parties with parliament representation at different stages in its modern history, Greece has not only recently voted for three far-right² political formations to enter its national assembly, but has had a strong anarchist political movement for decades. Third, the two countries have a concentration of radical ethnic communities in proximity to Jewish religious and other sites. In both Sofia and Athens, there is at least one instance of a Jewish house of worship next to that of another religion.

The situation in Slovakia and Croatia seems to be more favorable overall. Although Slovakia has pointed out three radical organizations to keep an eye on, they either refrain from making public anti-Semitic statements or do not organize neo-Nazi events regularly. As for Croatia, the country's upcoming enrollment in Schengen and the threats posed by immigrants, however, are an area of growing concern.

With respect to acts of intolerance, several displays of anti-Semitic behavior are more prevalent than others in the Eastern Hub countries, including vandalism against Jewish memorials, cemeteries or houses of worship, graffiti in public places, hate speeches in online and traditional media. While Bulgaria and Slovenia have observed anti-Semitic rhetoric in statements by public figures in the last three years, Croatia has pointed out the revision of history as common vehicles to circulate anti-Semitic propaganda.

Acts of terrorism are rare across the region. Roughly ten years ago, a bus bomb³ killed six Israeli tourists at a Bulgarian seaside airport. Earlier this year, the Greek authorities, in

² 2023-06 (GR): Al Jazeera, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/6/30/very-worrying-three-far-right-parties-enter-greek-parliament>

³ 2012-07 (BG): Reuters, <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-bulgaria-explosion-idUKBRE86H0Y820120718>



collaboration with Israel's intelligence service Mossad, prevented an attack⁴ against a Jewish target in Athens⁵, including a religious service and a kosher restaurant, which serves as a reminder that, despite it being somewhat dormant, the threat is still lurking out there.

It is every Eastern Hub country's perception that there is a stable 'High' or a rising trend of anti-Semitic activity in the past 3-5 years. Although neither country has presented actual Year-on-Year figures to support their claims, whether due to the absence of a formal way of tracking security incidents, due to the lack of resources to capture such data regularly, due to the sensitive nature of the information or other reasons, various external sources (listed at the end of this report) do provide a level of validity.

Summary: Security Incident Readiness

The Eastern Hub countries believe that their communities are either "Moderately prepared" or "Somewhat prepared" to face security incidents.

Two countries have adopted a platform of some sort to track security incidents, but it does not seem to be very effective. Defining a list of common incident types for each of the five threat categories, deploying an incident management system to capture and correlate incidents with local, regional and global geo-political events, and being able to regularly report on the evolving threat landscape, is fundamental to managing the country-specific security posture.

⁴ 2023-03 (GR): *Times of Israel*, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/two-arrested-in-alleged-iranian-plot-to-attack-israelis-jews-in-athens>

⁵ 2023-03 (GR): *Balkan Insight*, <https://balkaninsight.com/2023/03/29/israel-helps-greece-foil-planned-terrorist-attack-on-jewish-centre>



Recommendations

- Conduct a more thorough threat landscape assessment for each country.
- Conduct a risk assessment for each community center and other key facilities to better understand what security infrastructure needs installing, changing / upgrading.
- Define common security incidents for each major security threat (Antisemitism, Vandalism, Terrorism, Cybersecurity and Extremism), and risk assess those based on a simple framework, leveraging likelihood and impact criteria.
- Track security incidents in a common Incident Management System monthly, and report on those quarterly and annually.
- Roll out a threat intelligence program, leveraging a common threat intelligence platform for data collection, processing, analysis and sharing.
- Track security training participation and assess effectiveness bi-annually.
- Define strategic priorities / improvement areas for the upcoming year.
- Re-run the survey in 12-18 months, fine-tuning the questions, optimizing the rating scales, and providing additional guidance around each rating score.



Background

Community

This section provides a general overview of the country-specific communities. Information from questions 1-7 and 36-38 is summarized here, covering member statistics, key events celebrated, and other. The data may have been modified from the original responses, based on follow-up discussions and independent research, to provide a more granular picture as well as to establish a stronger baseline for comparison. See Appendix D for a list of what some of the numbers below for each country are comprised of.

Questions 1-7 (combined): How many Jews, communities, synagogues, schools and institutions do you have in your country, and where is the highest concentration?

Country statistics	Bulgaria	Croatia	Greece	Slovakia	Slovenia
Jews (country view)	5000	1400	3500	2000	100-150
Jews (core-enlarged ⁶)	2000-6000	1700-3100	4100-6300	2600-4600	100-300
Jews (law of return ⁷)	8000	3800	7500	6000	400
Communities ⁸	1+1	1+9	1+9	1+11	1+3
Community centers	9	3	4	4	2
Synagogues ⁹	2	5	12	5	1
Schools	2	1	2	2	
Institutions	19	12	15	12	1

There are well over 12,000 Jews in the five countries that comprise the Eastern Hub. Most members and respectively community centers, synagogues, schools and other institutions are concentrated in the big cities.

⁶ The statistics come from three sources – WJC, EJC and the Institute for Jewish Policy Research, the latter describing the size of the Jewish population against four main categories – “Core” population, population with Jewish parents, “Enlarged” population, and “Law of Return” population. The data in this table row excludes the “Law of Return” numbers.

⁷ The data in this table row comes from the Institute for Jewish Policy Research, and focuses on the “Law of Return” numbers.

⁸ Indicates federation + local communities (for countries other than Bulgaria)

⁹ Active houses of worship



In terms of membership, Bulgaria stands out with a 5000-strong, but as it seems more consolidated community. Greece, Slovakia and Croatia are with more communities, observing a greater fragmentation of their Jewish populations. With respect to the overall number of community centers, synagogues, schools and other institutions, Bulgaria takes the lead place, followed by Greece.

Political and Ethnic Factors

This section highlights the political and ethnic factors that have to be taken into consideration when assessing the country-specific threats. Information from questions 39-42 is summarized here, covering radical political parties, organizations, and other ethnic communities in proximity.

Question 39: Are there radical political parties in the country?

There is one radical political party with parliament representation in each of the three countries – Greece (“Spartiates”), Bulgaria (“Vazrazhdane”) and Slovakia (“Ludova Strana Nase Slovensko”). Bulgaria’s “VMRO” and “Ataka” have historically been quite active, but are no longer major players. The Bulgarian National Union (BNU), although not parliament-represented, should be monitored due to its alleged ties with other ultra-nationalist groups¹⁰as well as with the annual “Lukov March” procession. Slovakia’s “Republika” is gaining momentum. In Croatia, amongst a long list of 300 registered parties, “Hrvatski Suvernisti” and “Domovinski Pokret” stand out. Although they are not perceived as extremist, ultra-nationalist or neo-Nazi, they do follow far-right ideologies, and as such should be kept on the radar. Slovenia has not mentioned a radical party in its response. The country, however, believes that some members from the “Slovenska Demokratska Stranka (SDS)” follow such an ideology

¹⁰ 2020-02: Intelligence Fusion, <https://www.intelligencefusion.co.uk/insights/resources/intelligence-reports/day-of-honour-the-far-right-kicks-off-2020-in-central-and-eastern-europe>



Category	Bulgaria	Croatia	Greece	Slovakia	Slovenia
Political party ¹¹	Vazrazhdane	Hrvatski Suverinisti; Domovinski Pokret	Spartiates	Ludova Strana Nase Slovensko (LSNS)	
Political party	Ataka; VMRO; BNU			Republika	

Table outlines main radical groups and political formations to monitor.

Question 40 (reworded): Are there radical organizations with anti-Semitic activity, and where are they located?

According to Croatia and Slovenia, either radical organizations do not make public anti-Semitic statements or the latter are primarily done by select political figures with connections to such groups. Despite that, Slovenia has pointed out the “Yellow Jackets” as a threat to watch out for. The “Anarchist Movement” stands out in the Greek cities of Athens and Thessaloniki, “Blood and Honour”, “Combat 18” and “Fortress Europe” – in Bulgaria, and “VZDOR” – in Slovakia.

Category	Bulgaria	Croatia	Greece	Slovakia	Slovenia
Radical group	Blood and Honour, Combat 18, Fortress Europe		Anarchist Movement	VZDOR	Yellow Jackets

Question 41 (reworded): Is there a concentration of radical ethnic communities in proximity to Jewish religious and other sites?

While Slovakia, Croatia and Slovenia do not have such a concentration, Greece has pointed out the city of Thessaloniki. According to Bulgaria, there is street in close proximity to the Sofia Synagogue that is inhabited with lots of Muslims.

Question 42 (reworded): Are the sites of other religions located in close proximity to the Jewish ones?

¹¹ Political parties currently represented in parliament

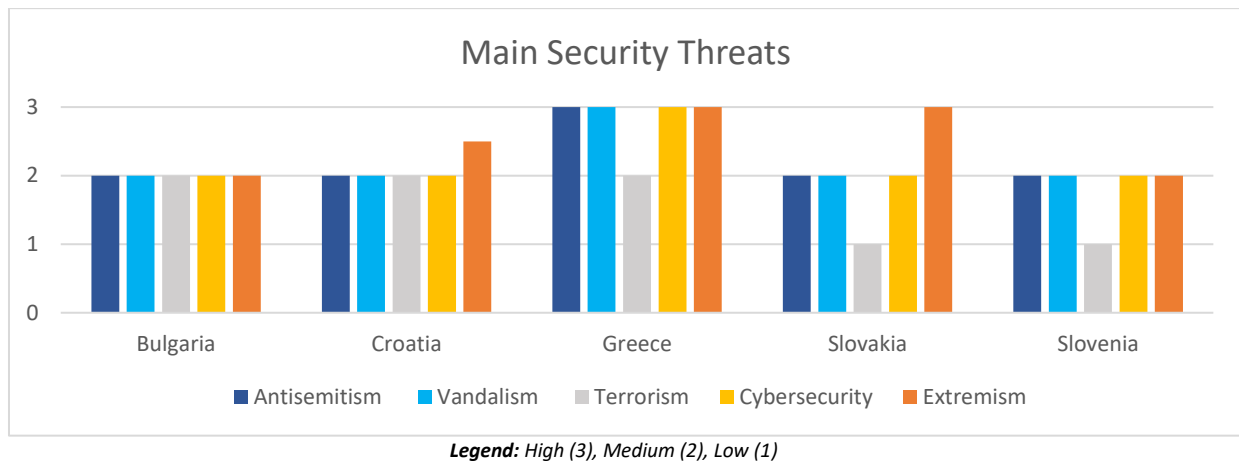
The responses to this question vary significantly. While Slovenia believes there are none, Bulgaria is not aware. According to Greece, one could see such sites only in the capital city. Croatia, on the other side, has mentioned that every major city observes sites of other religions in close proximity to the Jewish ones.



Assessment: Security Threat Landscape

This section provides an overview of the country-specific threat landscape, summarizing information from questions 22-28 and 31.

Questions 22-26: What are the major security threats faced by your community?



“Extremism” seems to be the most prevalent threat across the region, with all countries giving it either a “High” or a “Medium” rating. In addition, three of five countries (Greece, Slovakia and Croatia) have given it a score above “Medium”. The threats of “Antisemitism”, “Vandalism” and “Cybersecurity” come next. Greece seems highly concerned about four of the five main threats, namely “Antisemitism”, “Vandalism”, “Cybersecurity” and “Extremism”.

None of the countries have provided statistical data about the number of security incidents observed in the previous year, categorized per main security threat and incident type. As the publicly available data is also scarce, this makes it difficult to validate some of the responses.

Questions 27 (reworded): What is your evaluation of the antisemitism trends in the last 3-5 years?

It is every Eastern Hub country’s perception that there is a stable ‘High’ or a rising trend of anti-Semitic activity in the past 3-5 years. None of the countries have provided statistical data to validate their claims.

Questions 28 (reworded): Where/how does anti-Semitic activity materialize?

Although opinions vary somewhat between countries, several displays of anti-Semitic behavior are more prevalent than others, including graffiti in public places as well as information in online (e.g. social networks) and traditional media (e.g. TV and newspapers). While Bulgaria has observed anti-Semitic rhetoric in statements by public figures, Croatia has pointed out the education system and the revision of history as common vehicles to circulate anti-Semitic propaganda.

Questions 31 (reworded): Do local radical groups organize events on a regular basis?

Except Slovakia, all countries observe local radical groups to organize anti-Semitic events regularly.

In Bulgaria, one of those major displays of intolerance is the annual “Lukov March”. The procession has been organized by the far-right neo-Nazi movement, known as the Bulgarian National Union, since 2003 in memory of Bulgarian fascist general Hristo Lukov who was assassinated in 1943.

In Croatia, such events are also being run annually by small parliamentary right-wing factions such as The Split Party and groups of fighters from the 1991-1995 wars.



Assessment: Security Incident Readiness

This section provides an overview of the country-specific readiness to face various security threats and incidents

Questions 29 and 30 (combined, reworded): Are security members aware and concerned about the security threats, and if “Yes” to both, what are their major concerns?

All countries have responded that their members are worried about security threats. Bulgaria believes that its community is partially concerned. Croatia’s response revolves around anti-Semitism. Greece and Slovenia have pointed out harassment as well as physical attacks against individuals and facilities. In general, it is difficult to distinguish Jews from non-Jews across the region, mainly due to local advisories not to wear kippahs, “Star of David” jewelry or other distinguishable items in public, which reduces the risk of some security threats to materialize.

Questions 34 and 35 (combined): What platform do you use to track and report on security incidents?

Currently, only Greece is relying to some extent on the Octopus (octopus-app.com) security incident and distress management system. Platform-connected tablets have been installed in different facilities, allowing individuals to send alarms, at the push of a button, to those with the mobile app installed on their devices. Croatia has used the Octopus solution in the past, but has now reverted to instant messaging apps for information sharing. Slovakia has attempted to onboard more people with the Octopus app, but has not found it as effective, and has also reverted to another communication channel – email. Slovakia does, however, appreciate the Octopus weekly summary report.

