

FAITH GUARDIAN

STRENGTHENING RELIGIOUS SAFETY THROUGH PRACTICAL EXCHANGE

Isolation is a security risk, yet many religious institutions still manage threats in total solitude. Faith Guardian transforms this fragmented landscape into a unified multi-faith network.

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This Field Note examines the development and role of the “**Faith Guardian**”, a new **digital hub** created within the EU-funded PARTESS-COM project to support the security of religious communities in Europe through structured incident reporting and knowledge exchange. For several years, these communities have navigated a security threat that is as persistent as it is multifaceted, sharpened by a volatile convergence of online and offline hostility. Geopolitical volatility often acts as a tripwire, triggering immediate and localised spikes in harassment. Although high-profile extremist violence dominates the headlines, the daily reality for many religious sites is a drumbeat of “soft” security challenges. Routine vandalism and theft do more than damage property; they erode community confidence.

These difficulties are deepened by a structural crisis of under-reporting. Many incidents are handled internally, with damage repaired quietly to avoid stigma or the glare of unwanted attention. Such invisible criminality acts as a risk multiplier. It blinds law enforcement to broader patterns of targeting and leaves faith institutions cut off from the wider community safety net. By providing a shared language for describing incidents and access to validated safety resources, the new app Faith Guardian seeks to transform isolated vulnerability into collective resilience.

At a glance

Faith Guardian provides three integrated services to support the preventive protection of places of worship and religious communities: a **secure incident reporting tool** that turns individual experiences into actionable data and, where necessary, connects users to law enforcement; a **moderated and secure forum** for peer-to-peer exchange; and a **repository of evaluated security resources**. Together, these services help shift faith-based institutions from isolated vulnerability towards collective preparedness.



LESSONS FROM THE FIELD

“When incidents go unreported, patterns of targeting become invisible to security planners”

The hidden cost of silence

Field observations and workshops in Milan and Berlin revealed that many religious leaders absorb the impact of vandalism or aggression without seeking help. This normalisation of harassment creates a significant data gap. When incidents go unreported, patterns of targeting become invisible to security planners.

Empirical analysis presented at a project event in Milan underscores the point. Between 2020 and 2025, a media-based study of security incidents in Italy identified 455 non-ideological events. More than half (53%) involved theft of money or belongings; 18% concerned vandalism. Because these figures exclude incidents that never reached law enforcement, they represent a conservative baseline. The security challenges faced by religious communities are often ordinary rather than exceptional. Yet their cumulative effect on community cohesion is substantial.

Soft security beats hard barriers

Stakeholders consistently prefer practical, low-cost measures over expensive technical infrastructure. Financial constraints make advanced fortification unfeasible for many faith institutions – and often undesirable. Feedback from multi-faith training sessions shows that effective security typically stems from improved routines rather than visible barriers.

Faith Guardian addresses this through its "Exchange" feature, which hosts a repository of "Security by Design" resources for example – next to info posters, guide-books, or instructional videos. These prioritise measures such as natural surveillance, clear signage, and trained access roles. By focusing on situational prevention – such as checking locks regularly, removing money from donation boxes weekly – institutions reduce criminal opportunities without compromising the open, sacred character of their buildings.

Networking as a force multiplier

Project activities in Dublin and Vienna demonstrated that cross-faith collaboration accelerates trust-building and problem-solving. Trainings brought together representatives from Muslim, Jewish, Christian, Sikh, Hindu, Buddhist, and migrant-led communities, who shared lessons from managing similar risks. Participants noted that isolation is itself a risk factor, while structured networking provides a "force multiplier" effect.

Faith Guardian's multilingual forum institutionalises this dialogue. By offering a shared language to describe incidents and proven countermeasures, the tool lowers the threshold for effective response. When diverse groups align on local risks and gaps, they are better positioned to advocate for support from local authorities. This moves away from fragmented, denominational approaches toward a unified whole-of-society model.



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WHAT THIS MEANS FOR PRACTICE



For community leaders, using Faith Guardian means taking ownership of their security. Rather than waiting for a crisis, they can use validated resources to prepare for different threat scenarios and take proactive measures. Crucially, the platform addresses the "value gap" in reporting. Reporting through the tool ensures concerns are formally documented and, where incidents are criminal, provides users with local contact points to facilitate formal police reports.

The platform does not act as a law enforcement authority itself. Instead, it serves as an entry point that lowers the barrier to formal cooperation. By providing victims and witnesses with country-specific information sheets, including police liaison contacts and summaries of legal rights, as well as periodic threat assessments, the platform ensures reporting leads to action rather than merely populating a database. Active participation in this digital network supports an institution's transition toward informed, proactive guardianship.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Reporting with a purpose:** The platform bridges the gap to formal justice, providing users with tools and information to link with local authorities when criminal activity occurs.
- **Low-cost, high-impact tools:** Access to vetted "soft security" resources and low-cost "hard security" solutions allows institutions to improve resilience without high-budget fortification.
- **Strength in multilingual exchange:** A shared interface across many languages ensures that all congregations regardless of their background can navigate the system.
- **Building trust through verification:** To maintain privacy and data quality, the platform relies on manual review by experts before submissions are added to the database.
- **Preparedness through collaboration:** Networking across faiths and with local authorities creates a coordinated response far more effective than isolated efforts.



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Access Faith Guardian and join the network

The transition from observation to proactive guardianship necessitates active participation. Religious leaders, religious school administrators and community stakeholders are invited to utilise the the platform's multilingual hub at app.faithguardian.eu or to scan the QR code on the right for immediate access. By participating in this collaborative network, stakeholders do more than safeguard an individual building; they contribute to a more coherent, continent-wide understanding of security challenges and reinforce the collective resilience of a unified multi-faith infrastructure.

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