

JOURNAL

PROJECT

BeSecure-FeelSecure - Holistic Urban Security Governance Framework for Monitoring, Assessing and Forecasting the Efficiency, Sustainability and Resilience of Piraeus

📍 Piraeus, Greece

TOPIC

Urban security

EDIT 07 APRIL 2021

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Be Secure Feel Secure Journal 1: get an update about Piraeus' project for safe cities

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JOURNAL 01 - BSFS Year 1 BSFS project has completed its first year of implementation, while a global pandemic has changed how we approach urban projects. This first year has been especially important to establish structures in terms of organization, data, and participation at different levels. What has been done? What have been the obstacles? How has BSFS navigated these new scenarios?

Executive summary

This is the first journal of the Be Secure Feel Secure (BSFS) project since its start on 2020, led by the Municipality of Piraeus. The BSFS project is part of the UIA initiatives aiming to improve security in European cities.

Piraeus is a historical city, located in the Attica Region near Athens - only few kilometers to the south-west of the center of Athens. It is the largest & busiest port in Greece, and it is among the biggest European ports and the main hub connecting Europe, Asia and Africa. It is also among the most densely populated cities in Europe (15,065 citizens/km²). It is a boisterous zone, and like in many large cities, security is an important issue for its inhabitants. According to a recent poll to the inhabitants of Piraeus, security is among the top 3 problems of the city.

The urban threat landscape in Piraeus is mainly comprised by small scale crime (i.e. pickpockets, thieves), night crime activities, drug and cigarettes smuggling and immigrants' trafficking. These events are hardly reported to the authorities due to the lack of transparency, cross-sectoral cooperation, and exploitation of cyber-physical flaws. The built environment is also in need of improvements, and thus has a negative impact on how the city is perceived. BSFS project aims to strengthen urban security and address the perception of security in the city by providing strategies & tools to link the main urban security stakeholders & facilitate their collaboration in physical- and-cyber space.

With this in mind, BSFS has defined the **2nd and 5th municipal departments** within Piraeus as its areas of implementation.



2nd (left) and 5th (right) municipal districts.

These targeted areas are characterized by its commercial activity, but also for:

1. Low social cohesion
2. High population density
3. Sense of degradation
4. Fear of crime
5. Environmental degradation & urban design.
6. Weak collaboration among the critical information systems of the urban authority, the police and other key stakeholders is associated to the almost non-existent interoperability, entailing information losses and hampering timely reaction of the first responders.

This first year, BSFS the project has started to tackle the issue of reliable information on criminal incidence by taking the first steps for the creation of the CURiM platform - a digital tool to assess cyberthreats, and to manage and analyze data of criminal incidence involving citizen communication and official sources -such as police statistics. On the other hand, a survey was carried out by the Panteion University aimed to both households and commerce owners of the targeted districts to better understand their perceptions of security, the trust in local authorities, and their potential involvement on community-based crime policy.

In terms of cross-sectoral cooperation, this first year BSFS established the Local Council for Crime Prevention (LCCP), where municipality representatives, police officers, and scientific experts participate, communicate, and decide on strategies to tackle crime.

Throughout the process, social actions have been carried out, such as the communication with local associations and other organisms that work close to the citizens, such as commerce owners, schools, universities, and the general public. Finally, the starting-off points for addressing the issue of the image of the built environment have been set. This will encompass spatial interventions applying CPTED (Crime Prevention through Environmental Design) methodology -such as image management and target hardening. These actions will join the social actions to enhance community cohesion at a neighborhood level and improve the perception of security.

In the following sections we will explore each of the 7 implementation challenges **Leadership, Public Procurement, Organizational Arrangements, Participative Approach, Monitoring & Evaluation, Communication with Beneficiaries, and Upscaling.**

Considering this project involves both actions concerning digital tools and activities with inhabitants of the districts of Piraeus, the COVID-19 restrictions have impacted the project's development in several ways that will be explained for each challenge.

Partnership:

- Municipality of Piraeus
- Singular Logic SA (SLG)
- Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences – Department of Social Science – Criminology Lab
- University of Piraeus Research Center (UPRC) – Department of informatics
- European Forum for Urban Security (EFUS)
- SPACE Hellas (SPACE)
- Ministry of Citizen Protection - Police (MCP)

Challenge 1: Leadership

Meaning: the effectiveness of the work structure, keeping leaders involved, chain of levels, impact of changes of leadership (if any).

This project's partnership is led **Municipality of Piraeus**. The partnership involves stakeholders from local and European stakeholders with different areas of specialization: IT development, law enforcement, scientific research, and communication. This variety of specialization has been an asset for an integrated approach. Most of the partners have senior project management experience with European project, which eases the production of European-level deliverables and the communication, since there is a common understanding as to what this type of project entails. Each **Partner Organization** has a Project Representative, and each Representative is responsible for the delivery of one or more Work Packages. Partners are committed with the fulfillment of their corresponding activities and are constantly in contact to stay up to date with the others' activities.

An important tool for consulting and agreeing is the project management **Handbook**, a 30-page document that concisely explains the Partners' engagements, responsibilities, and processes for conflict solution. In the near future, there is the possibility of doing minor changes of Handbook deliverables responsibility, particularly on the Scientific Coordination team's deliverables.

While the project initially considered mailing lists, cloud file-sharing platforms, and video-calls as part of their communication among partners, the COVID-19 has made these tools indispensable. Communication in particular with European partners and others in different areas of the city has been done mostly through video calls.

According to the project's managers, the project has the political support of the municipality. Politicians are enthusiastic about the project, and fully willing to facilitate its implementation.

Challenge 2: Public procurement

Meaning: engaging service providers, issues of hyper-specification, data on procurement processes, ensuring local benefits in commissioning and procurement processes (inclusion, employment, environment).

In BSFS, almost a third of the project's budget is covered by the Municipality of Piraeus, followed by SingularLogic. **37%** of the project's allocation of EUR 5 million has been dedicated to the implementation phase between January and December 2020, only slightly less than the 39% of the budget that will be dedicated to the upcoming period between January and December 2021. Staff costs and equipment make up for over 70% of the project's expenses for the entire duration of the project. For the moment, the Municipality of Piraeus have required to hire professionals to become part of the technical staff.

These processes of doing a public call and managing the recruitment processes are carried out by the municipality's HR department. These procedures are relatively straightforward, following the current specifications established by Greek law. One of the requirements is the experience of having worked with a EU-funded project. This is a requirement that reduces the pool of potential candidates, resulting in 10 or 15 applicants for the position.

The University of Piraeus, apart from professors, has hired other team members without much difficulty. The new members were brought up to date on the project's progress, particularly for the data analysis -the data collection part of the survey was carried out by a subcontractor. Likewise, the Police department has hired personnel and is in the process of procuring police vehicles.

Due to COVID-19, the departments have been understaffed due to sick leaves. In consequence, there have been some delays on implementation with minor impact.

The one-stop-shop **Victimization Support Unit** was established, with a few changes from the original plan. Originally, the Unit was supposed to be hosted on a space belonging to Social Services -a department that has been working managing the COVID-19 situation. Following this process would have delayed the establishment of the Unit, the solution proposed by HR was to establish it on the Operations center, which is independent from other areas. This Unit will provide victims of crime and other forms of violence aid in terms of bureaucratic guidance, medical aid, among other services.

Regarding the digital side of the project, after analyzing users' requirements, methodology, and a set of sample use cases, the **CURiM** architecture and its functionalities were defined. With this information, the technical partners have begun the process of developing the first components of the system. The app is expected to be up and running on **August 2021**.

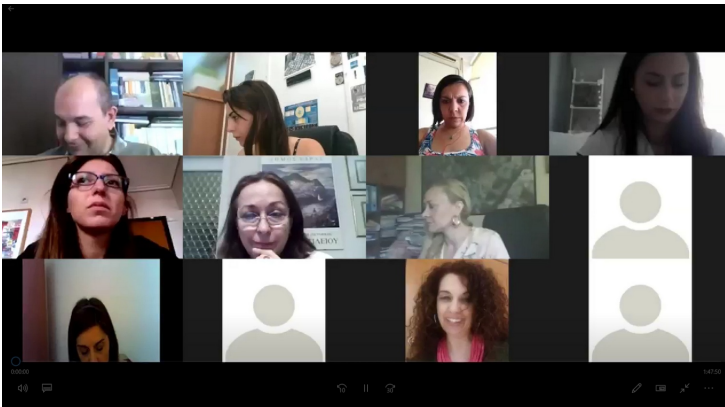
Challenge 3: Organizational arrangements

Meaning: cross-department working, effective coordination mechanisms, sharing risks and rewards across

departments, role of senior management in integrating groups.

Security is often tackled differently by different stakeholders or specialists separately, for example, either by focusing strictly on data or through reaction once crimes are committed. **Cross-department working** is one of the most important features of the BSFS initiative. As such, one of the most important milestones was the establishment of the **Local Council of Crime Prevention** within the Municipality in **March-April 2020**, under the guidance of the Laboratory of Urban Criminology of Panteion University. This structure allows for local stakeholders to exchange and come up with a joint strategy that tackles insecurity through various channels. The council met for the first time on June 2020, where the stakeholders discussed:

- The participation of LCCP within the project's framework and beyond.
- Activities of neighborhood police.
- The understaffed central Police Station of Piraeus.
- The need to improve relationships between citizens and police.
- Communication through social media.
- Ideas for approaching minors and informing them of laws.



First LCCP meeting

Other topics discussed was the concern over delinquent behaviors in playgrounds and abandoned buildings, homelessness, and improvised roma camps. Since the beginning the modus operandi of the LCCP has been documented. It is a small consortium, so work and communication are very straightforward. It has also been helpful that public servants have roles to play within the LCCP -for example, the deputy mayor is also president of LCCP.

On the one hand, senior management is fully engaged with making this collaboration work, and there is support from the mayor of Piraeus and the secretary's office. On the other hand, one of the challenges has been the process of drafting documents for decision-making, which is a process that can go from down to top and vice versa, and occasionally finding the right interlocutor for a specific action is not clear -and at times, such a position does not exist. These complications in the flow of documents and information compromise respecting deadlines. Talking directly and in person to heads of departments has helped to solve this issue, as there is a good understanding between them and the project managers. However, due to COVID-19, it can be difficult to meet heads of departments in person.

The nature of the project requires departments to work together -for example, the department of municipal police, the architecture and landscape department, education, and HR. To establish a basis of understanding between this multiplicity of actors, training sessions have been held, organized by the Panteion University, to present the BSFS project, its goals, and familiarize these public servants with the project's activities. The lack of in-person communication due to COVID-19 restrictions has been an additional complication, and the project has relied on Zoom and Microsoft Teams for most of the work with partners and the LCCP. Fortunately, this situation has been managed.

Challenge 4: Participative approach

Meaning: involving organizations and individuals, keep partners and stakeholders involved, solving conflicts, limits of shared responsibilities.

The participative approach was identified early in the project as one of the challenges that required special attention. We can conceptualize participation on two fronts in the case of BSFS: **participation from authorities** and other organizations for management and implementation, and **citizen participation** in community-based crime prevention strategies.

As previously stated, LCCP provides an efficient way for authorities to work together in joining **scientific and operational aspects of crime prevention**.

It is worth mentioning that Piraeus is one of three Greek municipalities that comprises local committees. These “subdivisions” have elected representatives who participate in decision-making with the municipalities, attending to the specific needs of their territories.

The project has held sessions with local stakeholders at different stages. The Municipality of Piraeus and University of Panteion has organized and carried out online meetings to inform about the project’s goals and to define main security governance requirements, respectively. There have also been **training sessions** with public servants organized by Panteion University. All throughout the project until now, there has been at least one session or meeting per month involving stakeholders such as:

- Municipality of Piraeus
- Minors Protection Association of Piraeus “The Good Shepherd”
- Police
- SOS Children’s Villages
- Club for UNESCO of Piraeus & Islands
- Hellenic Coast Guard – Piraeus department
- Holy Metropolis of Piraeus
- Commercial Association of Piraeus
- Directorate of Secondary Education of Piraeus
- Directorate of Life-Long Learning
- 2nd and 5th municipal committees

These meetings are meant to ensure the active involvement of the stakeholders and take their perspectives into account.

Representatives of local committees have shown special interest and are among the most active stakeholders participating. And since they are part of other communities, they have helped with making information reach other areas.

On the other hand, we have the participation of citizens. **Citizen participation and engagement are paramount for effective strategies of security**. The level of engagement with citizens can vary depending on the nature of the project, from being recipients of updates to actively contributing in the design and implementation of strategies.

The baseline research through surveys has provided a first step towards the inclusion of the citizens’ voices: results paint a picture of how citizens perceive security in the 2nd and 5th districts, the trust they have with authorities, and how willing they are to participate in community-based policing. In the case of the CURiM application, citizens are expected to get involved by communicating about incidents in their corresponding territories. How to motivate citizens to participate in this kind of reporting is a point of attention to be observed in the following stages. Panteion University, EFUS, and the Municipality of Piraeus have begun work to design student awareness actions on bullying and cyberthreats.

The **COVID-19** restrictions regarding gatherings have impacted fieldwork: events or engagement activities have required modifications or postponements. This is a point of attention for the future stages: ensuring that citizens are actively involved.

Challenge 5: Monitoring & Evaluation

Meaning: indicators to capture achievements, enabling learning and improving, isolate and discount achieved results from external factors, measure the real added value.

The experimental nature of this UIA project means that the process needs to be closely monitored and evaluated to understand what worked, what did not, and what could be improved in another phase (see Upscaling).

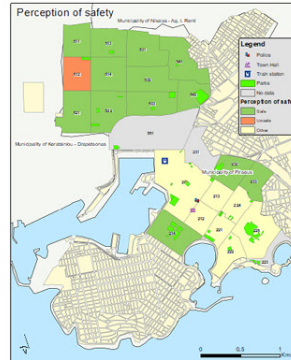
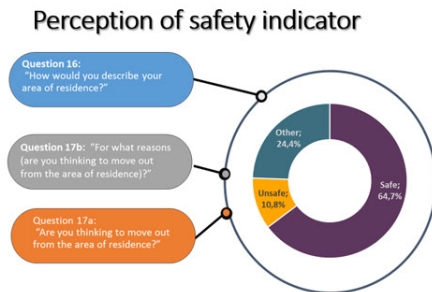
The role of the University of Panteion has been key for this part. A first action towards monitoring is the baseline research and survey results. On June 2020, the University of Panteion deployed a survey aimed at residents and commerce owners of the intervention areas in order to measure the actual fear of crime of the citizens. This consisted of 33-question forms to 500 households and 14-question forms for 100 shop owners. The indicators of the survey are associated with perception of security, fear of crime, trust in authorities, and the participants’ involvement with community-based crime policies. Results provide with a baseline of the current state of the situation, a state that will be compared after the project is concluded: a follow-up survey which will be conducted

in 2022.

Another area to monitor is the Victimization Support Unit for a period of 12 months after its opening. The idea is to monitor the citizens' satisfaction with the services provided by this Unit.

BSFS project is preparing to carry out interventions in the build environment in the 2nd and 5th districts. To evaluate the degree of impact the project will have, there will be a comparison made between the police reports in the zones before, during, and after implementation.

Furthermore, there are internal evaluation procedures to valorize the BSFS best practices that will allow to evaluate the key aspects and potentially replicate the experiment in other contexts. The University of Panteion, SingularLogic, University of Piraeus Research Center are the partners responsible for these actions.



Challenge 6: Communication with beneficiaries

Meaning: communication at local level about progresses, benefits, and problems.

Communication is considered an important activity all across the board, from project management to local stakeholders. Like the case of Challenge 4 – Participative Approach, communication with beneficiaries can be presented in two parts: with policy-makers and other larger bodies of stakeholders, and with the citizens of Piraeus that reside in the 2nd and 5th municipal districts. Beneficiaries are those authorities who will make use of the digital tools for data analysis and the citizens who will benefit directly from actions towards security.

For the first part, an event called “**Open Information Days**” took place. This event gathered municipal bodies, urban security authorities, academics, researchers, cybersecurity stakeholders and companies, and policy makers. Representatives of each of the partners presented details of the BSFS project.

The stakeholders mentioned in Challenge 4 of this document have a varying degree of involvement, as well as different scopes, topics of interest, prior engagements, and availability. Thus, the degree of **information** they are willing to receive varies: some wish to be informed frequently of the activities of LCCP and wish to be active participants, while others are more distant and consider this as one more of several EU projects they are engaged with. Managing communication means balancing the need to keep stakeholders informed of project developments and avoiding overwhelming them with information -and risk losing interest. Information has been relied through formal meetings, the local council, and telephone calls.

COVID-19 restrictions have had an important effect on the processes of outreach both with policy-makers and authorities and with citizens. Most of the communication has relied on videoconferences and virtual events.

Outreach with students was one of the activities that was meant to take place in person through sports events. This may limit (or in any case, transform) the degree of participation of citizens in the upcoming activities of the project.

Due to the important presence of commerce in one of the municipal districts, reaching out to commercial associations has been an important activity. The BSFS project was presented to members of this association by a representative of the University of Panteion. Likewise, a representative of the Commercial Association of Piraeus presented information of victimization of traders and the need for environmental improvements in the area.

A **newsletter** has been created and its first edition launched on November 2020, followed by the second one on April 2021. [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [LinkedIn](#) accounts of the project have frequent updates of activities and milestones for any interested party to see, among them, the citizens of Piraeus. [YouTube](#) has also been used to share videos presenting results and recapping events. In terms of activities on the field, the Municipality of Piraeus and BSFS participated in a symbolic act on the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. The action consisted in lighting the Stone Clock in Pasalimani. This event invited society and victims to seek support and gave visibility to the BSFS initiative.



2nd BSFS newsletter in Greek

Challenge 7: Upscaling

Meaning: next steps, conditions and resources needed in next iteration, role of partners in upscaling process, potential new challenges in upscaling, when should it start.

Although the project is at an early stage, there have been a few observations done regarding how the methodology could be implemented in other territories, either around Piraeus or in other European cities. One of the key aspects that has been reflected upon is the **differences between contexts**. Although cities may share a similar problem regarding urban security, contextual differences -ranging from climate to political scene- can make the difference when applying the same methodology and failing to have a positive impact.

The degree of **support and involvement from the municipality** has been an important asset. With the mayor, secretaries, and other municipal authorities on board, the BSFS project can focus on the concrete actions rather than on the persuasion of public actors. However, one difficulty regarding the structure of the municipality and other authorities is that finding the right interlocutor for the right activity can be complicated. For example, in the case of an activity that involves both landscape interventions and activity from the police, it is not clear who would be the adequate person to take the lead. This requires to devise another dynamic to have both departments -that on other occasions may not require to work together- actively involved.

Among the lessons learned in this aspect, is the practicality of the team's size. The consortium of the project is relatively small, which makes communication and exchange of knowledge easy.

Regarding partners, the EFUS is considered as one of the most important stakeholders when it comes to upscaling. Their **network of other European cities and experts** in urban security with experience in various environments and topics helps with understanding other experiences, not to mention that through this network the activities carried out by BSFS gain visibility.

BSFS is one of three projects on urban security launched simultaneously by Urban Innovative Actions: **To-Nite in Turin (Italy)** and **SURE in Tampere (Finland)**. The BSFS project has kept contact with these other two teams to exchange the knowledge gained throughout each project's lifecycles. The main target of this indicator is to create an "UIA Urban Security Cluster" involving Piraeus, Turin, and Tampere.

Conclusion

The BSFS project is an innovative action that proposes new working schemes and new perspectives on how to tackle urban insecurity at a city level. The project is ambitious, addressing topics ranging from criminality to cyberbullying.

To achieve this, BSFS proposes three main fronts of action: a digital platform, a body of cooperation, and socio-spatial actions. These three fronts of action interact and work together to better understand the problems of security facing the population. Throughout this first year, the focus has been on the development of the digital architecture, the facilitation of municipal inter-department cooperation, and a basis of the state of the art of perception of security in the city.

The utility of a Local Council for Crime Prevention cannot be overstated. Authorities and departments of the metropolis that would usually tackle insecurity on their individual fronts are provided with the framework to work together and have scientific experts -locally and at a European level- share knowledge on best practices. Heads of departments have been actively involved. However, there is still the need to establish a common language and understanding. For this reason, training provided by experts has been an important asset. Next, surveys have provided a starting-off point to understand what the current perception of insecurity is. And finally, the CURiM app is a tool that will allow decision-makers at the city level to observe criminal incidents, gather data, and translate it into actions in the benefit of the community. It remains to be seen how it will be received and used by the citizens. Nevertheless, this provides with an interesting opportunity in creating a tool flexible enough to adapt to the needs of authorities and inhabitants of Piraeus.

Undoubtedly the COVID-19 pandemic has had an impact on the way the project is carried out. Some of its effects have been minimal, such as shifting monthly meetings from in-person to online environments. Nevertheless, an important consideration must be given to the fact that strategies to improve everyday security benefit greatly from active participation by citizens. And while digital tools are more accessible and popular -in no small measure to the new panorama created by a health crisis-, restricting involvement to virtual settings may limit the degree of participation and eventually the degree of acceptance and efficacy of security strategies -particularly for the socio-spatial interventions to come.

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