



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
OVERSEAS SECURITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

# **TERRORISM CONCERNS FOR ACADEMIA IN WESTERN EUROPE**

**MAY 2015**



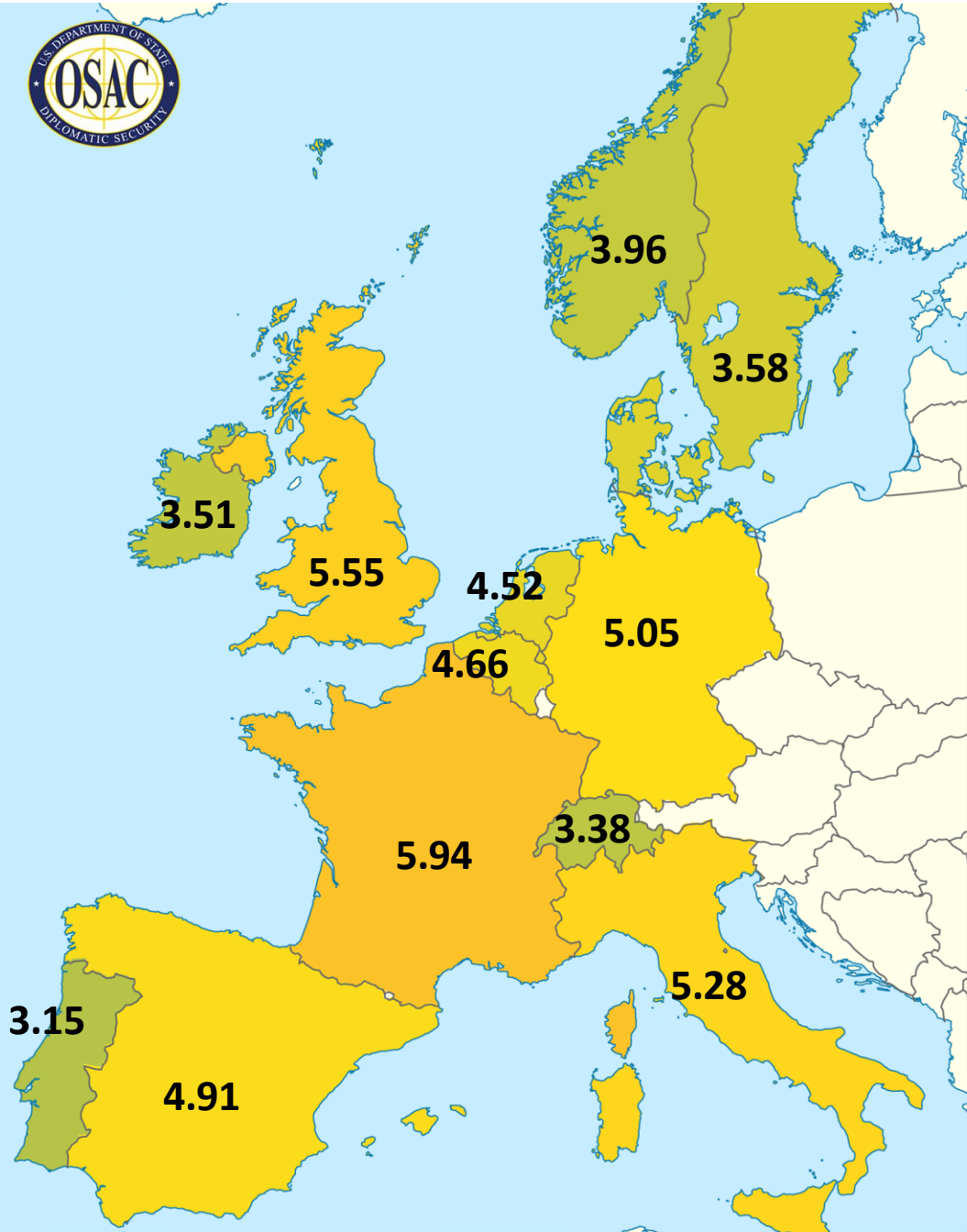
# WESTERN EUROPE

## Level of concern regarding threat of terrorism

Terrorist attacks occurred in Paris in January and in Copenhagen in February. Attempted attacks have been foiled throughout Western Europe since the beginning of 2015, including in Belgium, Germany, Spain, and France. Additionally, the governments of a number of Western European countries have raised their threat-alert levels and boosted public security measures to address the terrorism threat. However, not all countries in the region have been impacted equally.

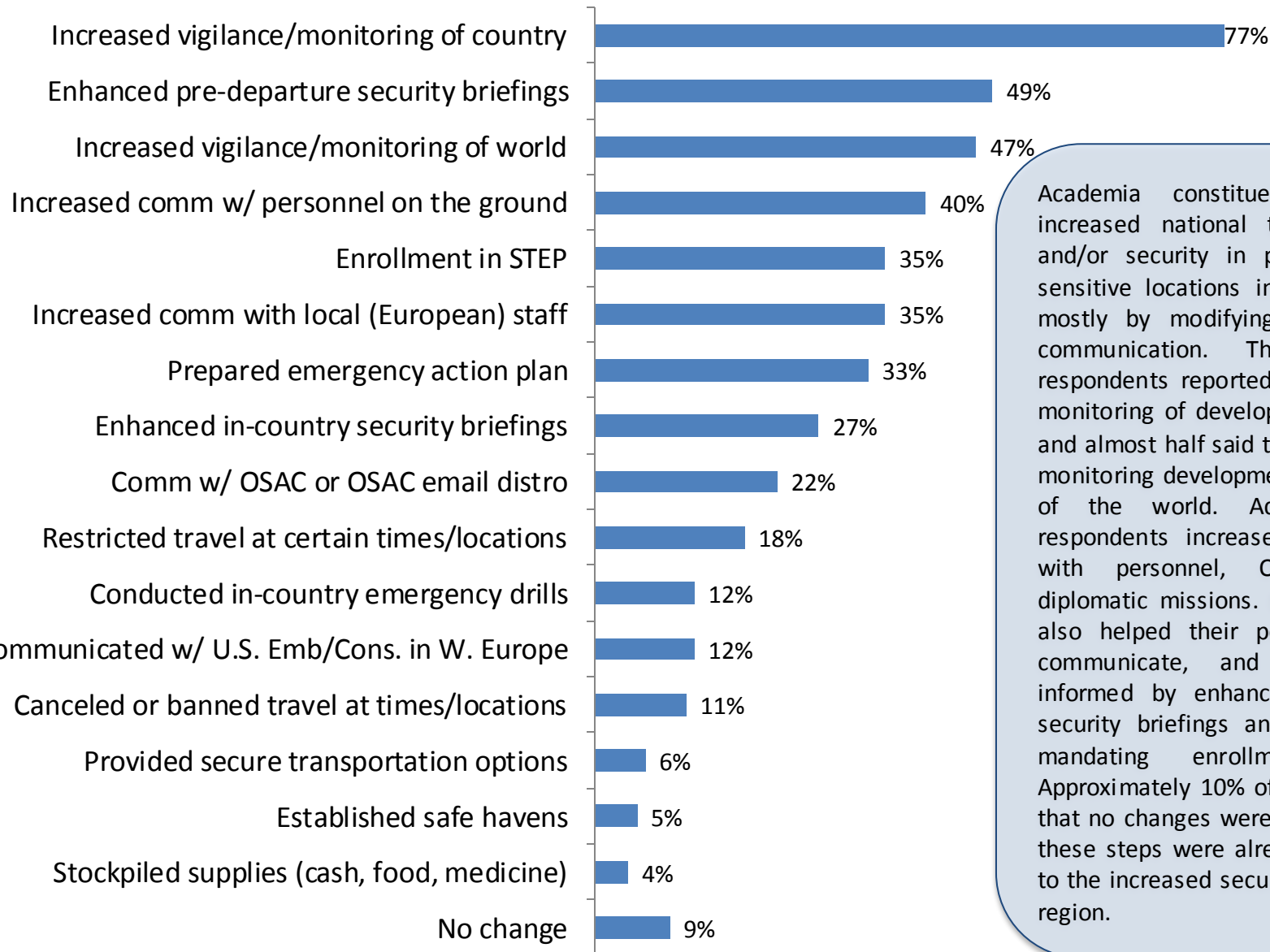
Likewise, levels of concern among academia constituents regarding the terrorism threat varied from country to country, but not significantly. Survey respondents expressed the most concern for France, UK, Italy, and Germany – all countries that have recently either experienced terrorist incidents or have significantly stepped up their counterterrorism operations. Respondents expressed the least concern for Portugal, Switzerland, Ireland, and Sweden, which have experienced fewer incidents and therefore have not changed their public security posture significantly.

The overall results suggest that academia constituents view terrorism as a general threat to the whole region rather than a threat specific to a single country.





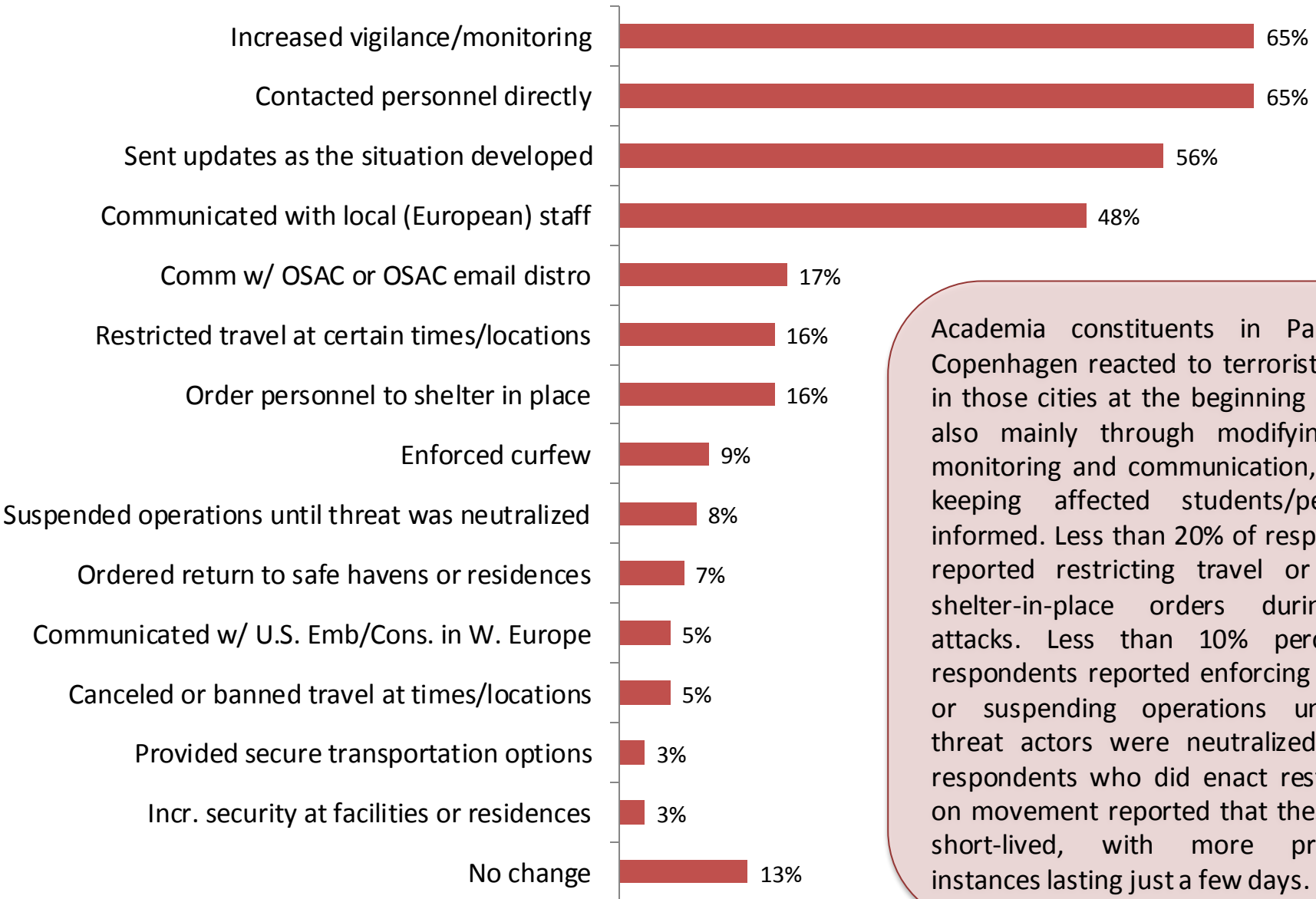
# ELEVATION OF THREAT LEVEL (RESPONSE)



Academia constituents reacted to increased national threat-alert levels and/or security in public places and sensitive locations in Western Europe mostly by modifying monitoring and communication. The majority of respondents reported having increased monitoring of developments in-country, and almost half said that they increased monitoring developments in other parts of the world. Additionally, many respondents increased communication with personnel, OSAC, and U.S. diplomatic missions. Many respondents also helped their personnel monitor, communicate, and become better informed by enhancing pre-departure security briefings and encouraging or mandating enrollment in STEP. Approximately 10% of respondents said that no changes were made as many of these steps were already in place prior to the increased security posture in the region.



# TERRORIST ATTACK (RESPONSE)



Academia constituents in Paris and Copenhagen reacted to terrorist attacks in those cities at the beginning of 2015 also mainly through modifying their monitoring and communication, and by keeping affected students/personnel informed. Less than 20% of respondents reported restricting travel or issuing shelter-in-place orders during the attacks. Less than 10% percent of respondents reported enforcing curfews or suspending operations until the threat actors were neutralized. Those respondents who did enact restrictions on movement reported that these were short-lived, with more prolonged instances lasting just a few days.



# MEANS OF COMMUNICATION

Internal  
Notification  
System: **34%**



Phone: **52%**



Email: **87%**



SMS: **41%**



In addition to using email, SMS, phone, and internal notification systems, respondents also reported using social media, including Facebook, Twitter, and Skype, to issue notifications and communicate during/after a terrorist attack. The majority of respondents said that a pre-designated coordinator either in-country or in the U.S. is responsible to check in with personnel and students in an affected country during/after an attack. Many respondents also mandate students/personnel to check in with a pre-designated coordinator. Approximately 14% of respondents reported not having a clear mandate for communication following an attack. The majority of respondents said that the initial communication must take place as soon as possible following an attack—within the first 6 hours for most.



# PRE-DEPARTURE BRIEFING

## Information on the terrorism threat

Over 60% percent of respondents said that they provide information on the terrorism threat in Western Europe during a pre-departure briefing. Of those who do, approximately half provide the information via printed or electronic material and the rest via an in-person briefing or during emergency training. Some respondents said that they provide a pre-departure briefing but do not focus significantly on the terrorism threat in order to allocate limited time/resources to more prevalent threats like petty crime, rape/sexual assault, and alcohol-related incidents.

The majority of respondents (more than 87%) indicated that they obtained terrorism information for pre-departure briefs from the State Department, including Travel Alerts and Travel Warnings. Most (approximately 70%) reported using OSAC Crime & Safety Reports and OSAC research and analysis products. Over half also reported using media information and in-house analysis, including information obtained from personnel located in-country and other in-country contacts and partnerships. About 30% of respondents reported using academic networks, including OSAC's Academia Working Group, and approximately 20% consulted with U.S. diplomatic mission personnel in-country. For the most part, it appears that respondents are not relying on a single source of information but are using a combination of the aforementioned sources to obtain terrorism information for pre-departure briefs.

Provide printed/  
electronic materials: **43%**



Provide in-person  
briefing: **35%**



Emergency training: **14%**



No briefing provided: **38%**







The New York Times

Control Risks



During and immediately following a terrorist attack, respondents indicated that they used a combination of a variety of sources to track real-time developments on the ground. Almost every respondent (94%) indicated that they use traditional media outlets. More than half also use social media outlets (67%), OSAC analysis (66%), local personnel (60%), and security vendors (58%). Some also reported using OSAC's Academia Working Group, U.S. Embassy resources, and local police contacts for updates.



The majority of respondents indicated that an additional terrorist attack in a location where they operate is one of the main tripwires that would cause them to change their security posture up to the suspension or cancelation of a program. Many specified that in order for an attack or a threat of an attack to lead to significant changes in their posture (up to cancelation of a program), the threat or attack would have to target their operations or the operations of other U.S. interests in-country. Department of State messaging is also an important tripwire for many respondents (approximately 79%). Department of State Travel Warnings influence the respondents' security posture. Some indicate that if a Travel Warning is issued before a program begins, it may be canceled; if the Travel Warning is issued when the program is already underway, other factors will help determine how to proceed. Though most respondents named a combination of tripwires that would lead them to reevaluate their security posture, the majority of these would not result in the suspension or cancelation of a program.

# TRIPWIRES

## Additional terrorist attacks

- 80%

## DOS messaging (Travel Alerts/Warnings)

- 79%

## U.S. Embassy messaging

- 67%

## Safety concerns stated by students/personnel

- 62%

## Changes to insurance coverage policy

- 52%

## Escalation of national security warning system

- 47%

## Additional threats made by threat actors

- 30%

## Additional changes to security posture in public

- 19%





# PRIMARY SECURITY CONCERN

residential&hotel security  
rape&sexual assault  
political violence terrorism  
petty crime  
protests&demonstrations  
transportation security  
violent crime

While the terrorism threat in Western Europe is widely publicized, academia constituents indicated that terrorism is not their primary challenge in the region; the #1 security challenge cited by survey participants was petty crime. Terrorism, rape/sexual assault, and protests/demonstrations were all ranked closely after petty crime. Approximately 20% of participants also cited political violence, violent crime, transportation security, and residential/hotel security as significant security challenges for operations in Western Europe. Though terrorism was ranked as one of the top security challenges, the threat remains a low-probability / high-impact occurrence. However, academia constituents deal with the other security challenges on a regular basis.

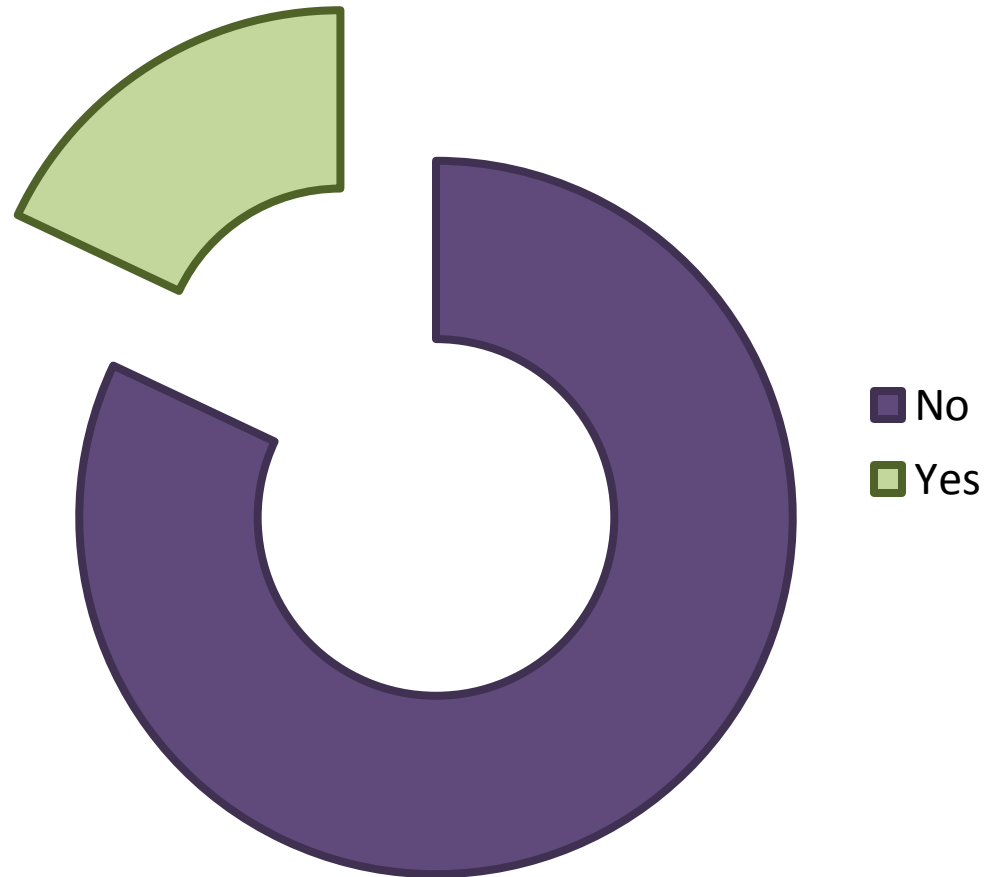


# EFFECT ON ENROLLMENT

Decrease in enrollment due to terrorism threat

The majority of respondents (over 82%) indicated that recent terrorist attacks and terrorism-related developments in Western Europe have not led to a decrease in interest, enrollment, or participation in upcoming programs in the region.

Approximately 18% of respondents indicated that they have noticed decreased enrollment for some programs in Western Europe in light of recent incidents, though many said that enrollment was mostly affected for short-term programs scheduled to begin immediately after attacks occurred in-country.





# FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Please direct any questions regarding this report or the general security situation in Europe to OSAC's [Regional Analyst for Europe and Eurasia](#).