



# DENMARK

**NATO member**



since 1949

**Defence share in GDP**

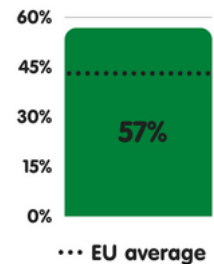
2017



**Uninvolved in PESCO**



**Trust in EU**



### What does the country fear?

The Danish political establishment is most concerned about terrorist attacks and cyber attacks, followed by uncontrolled migration, the potential disintegration of the European Union, and the deterioration of the rules-based international order. These fears are partly linked to the EU refugee crisis, which led to several thousand refugees entering Denmark in late 2015.

### Who does the country fear?

Unlike other EU countries, Denmark fears that Russia will increasingly militarise the Arctic, and that China's assertiveness will become a threat to national security. According to its latest annual intelligence report, Denmark sees jihadists as the most threatening actors it faces. The country has become more alert to this threat since joining the coalition fighting against the Islamic State group, and since learning that more than 100 Danes have fought alongside extremist groups in Iraq and Syria (many of them have returned home). Denmark has experienced two jihadist operations in recent years: the 2015 Copenhagen shootings and the 2016 Kundby bomb plot. Denmark also views Russia as a major threat (although Danish parties on the extreme right and extreme left are less concerned about this than their mainstream counterparts). Danes expect that, during the next decade, Russia may become Denmark's highest priority threat, partly because of its activities in the Arctic.

### Essential security partners

With the United Kingdom having been Denmark's most important European partner on security and defence, Brexit constitutes a major challenge for Copenhagen. There is a widespread concern among Danes that, as the only other country with an opt-out from the military aspects of the Common Security and Defence Policy, Denmark could lose influence within the EU after Brexit – and that strained EU-UK relations could have negative consequences for Danish security more broadly. Denmark's other essential European security partners include France, Sweden, and Germany, as demonstrated by their involvement in joint training exercises and cooperation on international operations. Denmark and the United States have long maintained a close alliance. However, Copenhagen is concerned about Washington's commitment to the rules-based international order under President Donald Trump – a worry that recently prompted it to increase military spending.

### The EU as a security actor

The transatlantic relationship continues to provide Denmark's most important security framework. However, Copenhagen has started to recognise the need for Europe to take more responsibility for its own security, particularly given the growing assertiveness of Russia, the terrorist threat, a rise in uncontrolled migration, and the unpredictability of the US administration. Nonetheless, Denmark is in the odd position of being unable to participate in PESCO due to its EU defence opt-out. The initiative's recent launch has sparked a debate about the consequences of the Danish defence opt-out. The Danes are discussing the possibility of a referendum on repealing the measure, which could enable Denmark to participate in EU security and defence integration (there is only a slim prospect that such a referendum will take place and allow for the repeal of the opt-out).