



FINLAND

Not NATO member



Defence share in GDP

2017

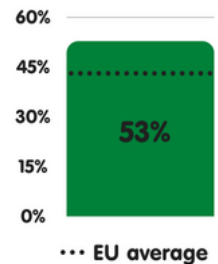


PESCO projects

Participant



Trust in EU



What does the country fear?

Finland perceives the most significant threats to its security as being inter-state war, cyber attacks, and external meddling in domestic politics. It is one of eight EU countries that consider there to be a significant risk of an inter-state war (the others are Greece, Cyprus, Romania, Poland, Lithuania, France, and the United Kingdom). According to the Finnish government, following Russia’s operations in Crimea and eastern Ukraine, “the early-warning period for military crises has shortened and the threshold for using military force has become lower”, leading to a situation where “the use or threat of military force against Finland cannot be excluded”. However, Finland perceives the main threat to its security as being a mixture of military and non-military “hybrid influencing” activities, which include cyber and information operations.

Who does the country fear?

Finland key foreign, security, and defence policy assessments portray Russia as the most threatening actor it faces. One of seven EU countries to take this view (the others are Lithuania, Estonia, Poland, the UK, Germany, and Romania), Finland viewed Moscow as a threat long before the Russian occupation of Crimea and the outbreak of conflict in eastern Ukraine created instability in Europe’s security environment. Indeed, in 2008, Helsinki was deeply concerned about the Russia-Georgia war and perceived Russia’s apparent attempt to acquire the status of a great power once more. Finland sees neither China nor the United States as threats, and it maintains amicable relations with Turkey.

Essential security partners

Finland views Sweden as an essential security partner (due to their bilateral defence cooperation and joint territorial defence exercises), as it does Germany and the UK (having established framework agreements with both countries). Helsinki also views the Dutch as close partners on EU security and defence policy. Nonetheless, it perceives Washington as its most important security partner; the advent of the Trump administration has not significantly changed this. Although Finland signed a new statement of intent on defence cooperation with the US and Sweden in May 2018, Finnish politics remains divided over whether to apply for NATO membership (a split that dates back to the 1990s). Parts of the Finnish political leadership openly support the move, but most Finns oppose it.

The EU as a security actor

Regarding the EU as a form of security community, Finland strongly supports the development of EU security and defence policy, as well as European defence cooperation. Finland views the NATO presence in Europe and the US commitment to the alliance as essential to its security. Having long supported the EU’s security and defence policy, Helsinki is likely to continue to do so regardless of shifts in US politics. The Finnish government has been very supportive of PESCO, even though it has few expectations of the initiative – a stance reflected in its modest level of participation in the first round of PESCO projects.