



CROATIA

NATO member



since 2009

Defence share in GDP

2017

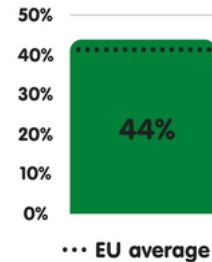


PESCO projects

Participant



Trust in EU



What does the country fear?

Uncontrolled migration is among Croatia's most significant national security concerns. Croatians are particularly worried that the Balkans migration route will reopen in summer 2018, and that a Croatia-to-Italy human trafficking route will open – challenges that Croatian police lack the resources to tackle effectively. Croatia's other major national security concerns include state collapse or civil war in the EU's neighbourhood (a fear stemming from Croatia's proximity to the Mediterranean) and disruptions in the energy supply. Croatia is one of four EU members to see such disruptions as a threat (the others are Slovakia, Hungary, and Poland).

Who does the country fear?

Croatia considers international criminal organisations to be the most significant threat to its security. This has much to do with the country's location in the Balkans, through which many smuggling routes run. For example, most heroin smuggled into Europe moves through the region. Croatia is exposed to the weakness of institutions in neighbouring non-EU countries, which are unable to counteract complex forms of organised crime. Despite Croatia's NATO membership and a strong bipartisan consensus on most national security issues among the country's leaders, a growing number of Croatians support the pro-Russian, anti-EU Human Wall, which has a fair chance of becoming Croatia's third most influential political party.

Essential security partners

Croatia has few close security partners in Europe beyond its NATO allies. With several changes of government over the past few years, the country has primarily focused on internal affairs at the expense of foreign policy. Nonetheless, President Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic and Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic – the two main architects of the country's foreign and security policy in the period – have created substantively different visions of the country's security priorities. Believing that his country should move as close as possible to the EU's core, Plenkovic considers Germany to be Croatia's main security partner. Meanwhile, Grabar-Kitarovic has cultivated strong relations with Poland and other Visegrád countries – as evidenced by a joint Adriatic-Baltic-Black Sea initiative that, beyond its infrastructural and economic elements, could be designed to weaken German influence in central and eastern Europe.

The EU as a security actor

Croatia usually adopts a pragmatic approach to security issues on the international stage, working to please both its EU and NATO partners. In this spirit, parliamentary speaker Gordan Jandrokovic issued in April 2018 a statement on PESCO in which he stressed that "cooperation must be conducted based on principles of inclusiveness, solidarity, and complementarity with NATO, without the duplication of activities and with respect to [member states'] decision-making autonomy". From Croatia's perspective, the EU and the United States have a particularly important role to play in the stability of the Western Balkans, given that Russia appears to be working to restore its sphere of influence there.