



LITHUANIA

NATO member



since 2004

Defence share in GDP

2018



PESCO projects

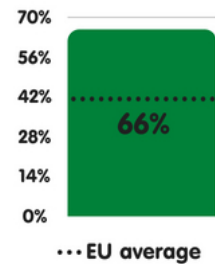
Leader



Participant



Trust in EU



What does the country fear?

Lithuania perceives external meddling in its domestic politics as the most significant threat to its security. Only one other EU country, Estonia, attaches as much importance to the issue. Vilnius also sees cyber attacks, along with the potential outbreak of an inter-state war involving the country or its allies, as major security threats. In 2008, Lithuania was concerned about disruptions in the energy supply, mostly due to its reliance on gas and oil from Russia's Gazprom. However, new investments, as well as a recent agreement with the United States on gas imports via the Klaipeda terminal, have made this threat less acute.

Who does the country fear?

Lithuania views Russia as the most threatening actor it faces. According to Lithuanian intelligence agencies' 2018 threat assessment, this is primarily because of Moscow's "aggressive and confrontational policy" and its efforts to establish "zones of influence". Lithuanian political parties differ on how best to deal with Russia: the ruling Peasants' and Greens' Union calls for economic cooperation with Moscow – an idea that President Dalia Grybauskaitė, Foreign Minister Linas Linkevičius, and the main opposition party oppose. The Lithuanian security community also sees Belarus as a threat due to its increasing dependence on Russia.

Essential security partners

Lithuania considers Germany to be its essential security partner in Europe, due to its economic strength and its leadership of the NATO Enhanced Forward Presence battalion stationed in Lithuania. Lithuania's other key European partners include Poland (its largest EU neighbour and a country that shares its concerns about Russia and the situation in the eastern neighbourhood); the United Kingdom (a key NATO ally); and Sweden (an active participant in the Eastern Partnership and part of the Nordic grouping Lithuania is gravitating towards). The US, Lithuania's most important non-European security partner, makes rotational force deployments to Poland and the Baltic states as part of Operation Atlantic Resolve. Washington has also supported the modernisation of the Lithuanian armed forces since 1995.

The EU as a security actor

Like their counterparts in other Baltic states, political elites in Lithuania see the EU mostly as a transatlantic geopolitical project that has NATO as its backbone. The country's security establishment has used US President Donald Trump's criticism of insufficient NATO defence spend to push for an increase in Lithuania's military budget – from 1.75 percent of GDP in 2017 to 2.01 percent of GDP in 2018. Lithuania supports closer EU cooperation on security and defence, and it is leading a PESCO project on cyber rapid response. It also participates in the military mobility project – which, according to the country's minister of defence, is in the interests of both NATO and the EU.