



# THE NETHERLANDS

**NATO member**



since 1949

**Defence share in GDP**

2017



1.2%

**PESCO projects**

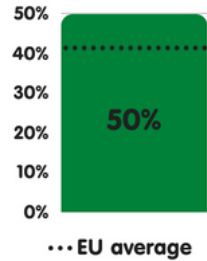
Leader



Participant



**Trust in EU**



... EU average

### *What does the country fear?*

Dutch political parties generally agree on what are the most significant threats to their country, although they differ on how to respond to them. These threats are cyber attacks and state collapse or civil war in the European Union's neighbourhood, which the Netherlands expects to pose a similar level of risk over the next decade. In 2008, the Dutch were primarily concerned about economic instability and terrorism. Now, they feel vulnerable in the face of cyber attacks, external meddling in domestic politics, and missile strikes, but resilient against other military attacks on its territory, economic instability, and disruptions in the energy supply.

### *Who does the country fear?*

Seeing Moscow as a significant threat, the Dutch are most concerned about its capacity to conduct cyber attacks and information warfare, meddle in Dutch politics, and exploit EU member states' economic ties with Russia. The Netherlands believes that Europeans are highly vulnerable to such threats. It also perceives China as somehow a threat, particularly in relation to cyber security. Following the signing of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on Iran's nuclear programme, the Dutch came to view Iran as no longer a threat.

### *Essential security partners*

The Netherlands perceives the United States and NATO as vital to Dutch security. There is a particularly strong cross-party consensus in the Netherlands on the need to repair the damage that years of defence budget cuts have done to the armed forces – damage reflected in several accidents in the forces and their limited availability for military operations. The country's key security partners within the EU are Germany, France, Belgium, and the United Kingdom. The Netherlands has concerns about the implications of Brexit, but has a long tradition of bilateral military cooperation with the UK. The Dutch feel that allowing the UK to participate in PESCO as a third country would mitigate the negative security implications of Brexit.

### *The EU as a security actor*

The Netherlands participates in PESCO with the aim of enhancing member states' military capabilities and capacity to carry out EU operations. Perceiving NATO as key to its territorial defence, the Netherlands regards PESCO as providing an opportunity to strengthen EU and broader European security and defence policy, while improving cooperation within the alliance.