🇨🇾 CYPRUS

Not NATO member

Defence share in GDP
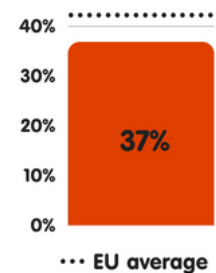
2017

1.9%

PESCO projects

Participant

Trust in EU

40%
30%
20%   37%
10%
0%

··· EU average

What does the country fear?

Cyprus's main security concern is the potential outbreak of an inter-state war involving it or its allies – a worry stemming from the fact that Turkey has occupied the northern part of the island since 1974. Lacking a political settlement or peace agreement on the occupation, many Cypriots fear that Ankara will engage in further direct military action against their country, perhaps employing hybrid warfare techniques.

Who does the country fear?

Cyprus is one of three EU countries that view Turkey as a significant or top-priority threat to national security (the others are Greece and Bulgaria). Yet Cypriots believe that they can agree on a comprehensive settlement with the Turks, which would enable the sides to build a constructive relationship and thereby change threat perceptions on the island. Cyprus also regards jihadists as a significant threat to their security, given their country's proximity of the Middle East and north Africa. Like Rome, Lisbon, Athens, and Budapest, Cyprus does not see Moscow as a threat. Cyprus tries to maintain balanced relations with the United States, Russia, China, and Iran.

Essential security partners

Cyprus views Greece and France as being among its essential security partners in Europe. Cyprus and Greece have very similar security concerns, such as the perceived threat from Ankara, and stability in the Middle East and north Africa. The countries often coordinate their foreign policy initiatives. Cyprus maintains good relations with the United Kingdom, which pledged to secure the territorial integrity of the island under the treaties signed in 1959. Cyprus also considers the US to be a strategic ally, even if the American contribution to the island's security is restricted to technical military and intelligence cooperation. Having implemented an arms embargo on Cyprus in 1992, the US remains unable to supply materiel to any military forces in Cyprus other than UN units.

The EU as a security actor

As a non-NATO member, Cyprus strongly favours the establishment of a Europe-wide security and defence policy. The country believes that greater integration of European armed forces would improve its security. As a consequence, Cyprus has a positive attitude towards PESCO, participating in a large number of projects for a country its size. Cypriot leaders believe that, in the long run, the EU will maintain a good level of security cooperation with the US only if it increasingly becomes a credible and autonomous foreign policy and security player, both in its neighbourhood and globally. Cyprus is especially supportive of greater EU involvement in the MENA region. In cooperation with Greece, it has set up two trilateral dialogues (with Israel and Egypt separately) to address crises in the region.