



AUSTRIA

Not NATO member



Defence share in GDP

2017

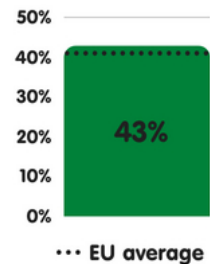


PESCO projects

Participant



Trust in EU



Sources: SIPRI; European Council; Eurobarometer

What does the country fear?

Due to its position on the Western Balkans migration route to Germany, Austria has experienced some of the highest levels of migrant arrivals per capita in the European Union since 2015, when the refugee crisis began. As a result, Austria's top perceived threats are uncontrolled migration, the risk of state collapse in the EU's neighbourhood, and the disintegration of the EU. During its July-December 2018 EU presidency, the country will focus on migration above all else. Although Austria's threat perceptions have changed significantly since 2008, there is a widespread expectation that they will change little in the next decade – albeit with cyber attacks and threats to the rules-based international order taking on a greater perceived importance.

Who does the country fear?

Austria sees international criminal organisations and jihadists as the most threatening actors it faces. The country perceives a moderate threat from Turkey and North Korea, and expects the threat from China, Iran, and Russia to grow over the next decade. Austria's neutrality is an important part of its national identity, but it feels rather vulnerable to traditional threats – particularly military attacks on its territory. It believes that it is more resilient to threats such as cyber and financial destabilisation.

Essential security partners

Austria perceives Germany as its key security partner, partly due to the close coordination between the countries on cross-border crime and terrorism. Austria is a member of the Central European Defence Cooperation – which includes Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia, and, as an observer, Poland – and works within this mini-lateral format on joint training exercises, pooling and sharing of military capabilities, and cooperation on handling migration. As a neutral, non-NATO country, Austria has a more distant relationship with the United States than most of its EU partners. However, in recent years, there has been a rise in intelligence exchanges between the countries due to their participation in the coalition fighting against the Islamic State group.

The EU as a security actor

Members of Austria's political establishment largely agree that the EU should become a more credible actor in foreign, security, and defence policy, and that the country should actively shape debate on this issue. As a non-NATO country, Austria sees the EU as a vital forum for dealing with security and defence issues. Vienna is generally supportive of PESCO, seeing the project as a first step towards enhancing defence cooperation with its European partners.