

2026

Investing in security in Europe

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Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION.....	2
2. DATA	2
3. ANALYSIS.....	3
4. MACHINE LEARNING	4

1. INTRODUCTION

The combined impact of the war in Ukraine and the disruptive influence of Trump's approach to international affairs has compelled European countries to revitalize **their investments in security**. Intelligence services have also become part of this renewed focus.

Although gathering data on intelligence service spending is neither precise nor straightforward, **some information is available from open sources**. While it would be naïve to believe their budgets are fully public (for example, reserved expenses or intelligence services may receive funds from various sources that are difficult to trace), the open budgets are a serious indication of the importance their respective governments place on them. We must consider that each country follows similar rules when deciding what to make public regarding the budget for their intelligence services. Therefore, public spending on intelligence services makes them comparable.

2. DATA

Open sources provide credible data for several countries: **United Kingdom, France, Italy, Poland, Spain, Netherlands, and Germany**.

The services involved are as follows:

UNITED KINGDOM	FRANCE	ITALY	POLAND	SPAIN	THE NETHERLANDS	GERMANY
MI5	DGSI	AISI	ABW	CNI	AIVD	BfV
SIS	DSGE	AISE	AW			BND
GCHQ						

Military intelligence services are not included. Spain and The Netherlands have comprehensive services, meaning they oversee internal, external, and signals intelligence for their respective governments.

The factors considered are **population, GDP, the budget allocated to intelligence services, and the staff of the country's intelligence services**.

Since there is not much data, machine learning algorithms are not recommended. The chosen approach has been to create new features based on the collected data, such as:

- ✚ **Number of intelligence service members per population** : this represents the number of citizens served by each member of their country's intelligence services. For example, in the United Kingdom, there is one intelligence service member for every 3,982 citizens, while in Spain, there is one for every 12,864 citizens.
- ✚ **Intelligence services budget per capita**: how many dollars each citizen pays toward intelligence services. French taxpayers contribute \$44 per citizen to the intelligence services, while each Polish citizen spends \$21.

- ✚ **Money available to each member of the intelligence services:** this represents the money allocated to each member of the intelligence services. It is a measure of the activity that each member can carry out.
- ✚ **Percentage of GDP** represented by the budget allocated to intelligence services (the ratio has been multiplied by 1,000 to make it more manageable)

Agency	Country	Members/population	Budget/population (USD)	Budget/member (USD)	%GDP(x 1.000)
CNI	Spain	12,864.86	7.14	91,891.89	0.226
DGSE + DGSi	France	6,200	43.98	272,727.273	1
BND+ BfV	Germany	7,339.13	17.18	126,086.957	0.345
ABW+ AW	Poland	6,333.33	21.05	133,333.333	1.066
AISI + AISE	Italy	8,428.57	27.11	228,571.429	0.720
AIVD	The Netherlands	11,866.66	19.66	233,333.333	0.318
MI5 + SIS (MI6) + GCHQ	United Kingdom	3,982.35	51.69	205,882.353	1.093

3. ANALYSIS

According to the data, **the United Kingdom views intelligence services as a key asset for the government's efforts**. It spends the highest proportion of its GDP on them, and each citizen contributes more than \$51 per year to intelligence service activities. Furthermore, **Keir Starmer has announced a 7% increase in the intelligence services budget**. This means the services will expand their personnel, operations, and outcomes.

On the other side of the table, Spain (CNI) allocates the lowest proportion of GDP, and each citizen spends only \$7 on intelligence efforts. Members of the service have the least amount of money available to them per year.

Poland stands out. It assigns almost the same proportion of GDP to intelligence services as the United Kingdom. This means that, at the state level, intelligence services are considered as important as they are in the United Kingdom. Other indicators are more modest than those of the United Kingdom due to the difference in GDP between these countries. But the effort made by Polish society is as remarkable as that of the United Kingdom.

Germany, which has the largest GDP among the countries involved, lacks investment and commitment to intelligence. For historical reasons, defence and security have been neglected for decades and now (as Merz has already

indicated) **Germany will have to make an incredible effort to upgrade its security capabilities.** The American troops deployed in Germany number 35,000 men and are likely to be reduced by the Trump administration.

If we consider the comprehensive services (AIVD and CNI), both are quite similar in all features except one. Each member of the AIVD has \$230,000 at their disposal per year, while the Spanish counterpart can only spend/use \$92,000 per year. This means that **the Spanish official is worse paid and/or can launch fewer operations** than their Dutch counterpart.

In any case, it is unlikely that countries like Spain or Italy will increase their intelligence spending to the same extent as the United Kingdom (7%). **This will only widen the gap in the performance of their intelligence services .**

All these data reveal that **defence and security cultures vary significantly** from country to country, which makes **harmonizing defence policies within NATO and the EU very difficult .**

4. MACHINE LEARNING

Although it has been explained that the use **of machine learning algorithms should not be applied** in this case due to the small dataset, we couldn't skip giving it a try. As expected, the **error** is not negligible (linear regression proved to be the algorithm with the best performance after normalization and PCA), reaching **14%**.

In Spain's case, it predicts that Spain will allocate a budget between \$567,924,301 and \$658,588,021. (The 2024 budget for CNI was \$360,000,000 USD.) This should be read as follows: if CNI wants to have the possibility of operating in the same way as the combined services of the United Kingdom, **CNI's budget should be increased by 57%** (the minimum increase) and **an additional 7%** to keep up with the budget allocation announced by Starmer for next year.