

The Significance of Scouting in Contemporary Society: A Defence Perspective from the Baltic States

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Abstract: *The article presents the results of the research into the participation of scouts and scouting associations present in three countries. Three Baltic states (BS) – Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia – have been chosen as the subject of the research. The goal of this paper was to answer the questions of how the scouts perceive their role in the national defensive education system, and what the older scouts want to teach the youth. Based on this, we have attempted an appraisal of whether – and to what degree – scouting organizations contribute to increasing the level of defensive education in a given community. The paper has avoided strictly system-wide solutions, as the latter form a mere backdrop for the results of the research. In order to achieve the goal of the current research, the following research questions were formulated: Does participation in a scouting association represent a form of defensive education? Are the skills obtained from one's membership in them helping increase the mentioned indicators?*

Keywords: *Defence, scouts, Baltic states, NGOs, youth.*

Introduction

Defensive education consists of preparing the citizens for various threats (to an individual, to the community, or to the entire nation). Each country is carrying out such education in its own, varying ways, in order to prepare its citizens for different threats. It is largely the security community that defines what the general populace will be educated in, through the entirety of the defensive education system. In the modern age of threat proliferation, the defensive education forms one of the key pillars of the national security system.

This publication presents the results of the research into the participation of scouts and scouting associations present in three distinct countries. Three BS – Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia – have been chosen as the subject of the research.

We have chosen to focus on scouting associations, as they're not quite the typical paramilitary organizations with a clear goal of supporting the defence system. Nevertheless, they have an impact on educating the youth by instilling in them the proper attitudes. The very concept of scouting arose as a means of preparing the youth

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for the role of soldiers (Baden-Powell, 2014). There are numerous historical examples of scouting that have proved crucial in this regard (Staśkiewicz, 2022). We wished to verify whether the role of scouting in modern times can still be considered a part of society's defensive preparations and whether the scouts consider themselves a part of the defence system.

Scouting associations are non-governmental organizations (NGOs). A broad definition of an NGO describes it as a non-profit organization that is not included in, nor subservient to the public administration.

It bears mentioning that non-governmental organizations constitute an essential part of democratic societies and their importance has long been recognized by such researchers as Robert Putnam (2000) and Francis Fukuyama (1996). In our research, we have attempted to ascertain if scouting creates the social capital described by the aforementioned researchers – and if so, in what situations can it be useful – is it applicable in wartime, or only in crisis situations, such as floods or the influx of Ukrainian refugees? Or perhaps this social capital is valuable only to those within the organization itself? In the context of the development of the European Civil Protection Pool (ECPP), the skills acquired through membership in scouting associations may prove useful to protect the populace within the scope of the actions taken under the EU civil protection mechanism. So, this raises the following question: Could the scouting associations become a part of the ECPP?

The aim of the current research was to answer these two questions: How do the scouts perceive their role in the national defensive education system? And what do the older scouts want to teach the youth? Based on this, we have attempted an appraisal of whether – and to what extent – scouting organizations contribute to increasing the level of defensive education in a given community. The paper has avoided strictly system-wide solutions, as the authors consider them a mere backdrop for the results of the research. In order to achieve the goal of the current research, the following research questions were formulated: Does participation in a scouting association represent a form of defensive education? Are the skills obtained from one's membership in them helping increase the mentioned indicators?

Methods. The primary method utilized in the research was expert interviews carried out by correspondence (structured interviews). Essential criteria for the selection of informants were their experience and position in the scouting organization. The interviews with the representatives of the Estonian and Latvian Scout organizations were conducted in English, while the interviews with the representatives of the Lithuanian Scout organization were conducted in Lithuanian (by the researcher Jaroslav Dvorak). A total of seven individual interviews with representatives of the scout organizations in the BS have been conducted. The details of the respondents are provided below, in *Table 1*.

Table 1. Information about qualitative interview informants

Code and time	Informant
Estonia	
Interview with ES1, 2022.11.09	Chief Scout
Interview with ES2, 2022.11.12	District Scout
Latvia	
Interview with LA1, 2023.01.20	Chairman of the Board
Lithuania	
Interview with LI1, 2022.11.11	Leader of organization
Interview with LI2, 2022.11.14	Chairman of the Board
Interview with LI3, 2022.11.14	Chief Scout
Interview with LI4, 2022.11.30	Member of the Board, former Chairman of the Board

Source: authors' representation.

Moreover, we have utilized the participatory observation method, by taking part in an outdoor game organised by Tartu scouts in November 2022. On that occasion, we both verified what the scouts are actually learning. We also talked with senior scouts to explore the motivations behind their participation in the organization, their goals and expectations.

We have not collected any personal data of the underage participants in the outdoor game organised by the scouts (research method: participatory observation). No photos were taken of the participating children. We have observed how they use maps and a compass and how they fulfil their tasks. Only the adult organizers of the event were interviewed. The researcher Urszula Staškiewicz also took part in the outdoor game, to better acquaint herself with the difficulty and specificity of the tasks.

Improving civilian-military cooperation for better EU security and defence policy

Since the current research concerned the cooperation between scout organisations and state defence systems, it necessitated also an inquiry into issues of civil-military relations. It is a highly interdisciplinary area of research, touching on the work of political scientists, military sociologists, and historians (Stouffer, 1949). As noted by Samuel Huntington, “the civil-military relations in any society should be studied as a system composed of independent elements” (Huntington, 1981). Huntington (1981) states that *civil-military cooperation* can take different forms under different political cultures, and due to a different understanding of military security.

In the EU, more attention is being paid to the civilian dimension of conflict prevention and crisis prevention. This is determined by the constant challenges posed by a changing world, for which the EU is looking for answers. To cope with these challenges, the EU is improving the common security and defence policy and it becomes

a crisis management actor. To date, it seems that at the EU level, capacities have been developed and lessons learnt in various civilian missions (EULEX in Kosovo, EUAM in Ukraine) (Dijkstra, 2018; Pirozzi, Musi, 2019). We know that surveillance capabilities, strategic advice, enforcement of the rule of law, and fighting against organised crime, and so forth, have improved.

Naturally, this evolved into the implementation of much wider activities, which emerged in 2018 under the name Civilian Compact. Civilian Compact became a non-military platform of the European Common Security and Defence Policy (Pietz, 2018; Pirozzi, Musi, 2019). Nevertheless, this was not the first attempt to establish civilian-military synergy at the EU level. Back in 2010, Civilian headline goals described the meaning of such a synergy: it means that civilian and military forces are used to overcome the bureaucratic inefficiency of the EU's institutional structure (Shepherd, 2021).

Another important step was taken in 2018 when the Council of the European Union approved the Civilian Capability Development Plan, which became an illustrative example of *results-oriented management*. The plan provided for certain measures to help develop civilian capabilities. Such capacities must meet not only national, but also European needs (Council of the European Union, 2018). A quick, proactive, preventive and significantly more responsible response to crises, guaranteeing human rights and gender equality, is believed to be of great importance (Council of the European Union, 2018).

The EU is known for its institutional experiments, and this has also affected the field of civil-military relations. The Crisis Management and Planning Directorate was created to improve coordination (Shepherd, 2021). This was probably influenced by the fact that civilian EU missions became dependent on the personnel provided by a relatively small group of Member States: Denmark, Germany, Ireland and others. The personnel from these countries participated in 2/3 of the missions (Smit, 2019). In addition, the participation of the EU member states in these missions is obviously related to the foreign policy priorities of each member state. For example, Lithuania and Latvia actively participated in the European Union Advisory Mission (EUAM) in Ukraine, and in the European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) in Georgia (Smit, 2019).

In sum, the civilian-military cooperation is a mix of interdependent processes: military means are increasingly requested to assist civil authorities; at the same time the civil support given to military operations is important for logistics, communications, medical support, and public affairs.

Institutional and Policy Arrangement of Defence in the Baltic States

General Context

The BS have a similar history of relationships with the Russian Federation, on the one hand, and of integration with the Western states, on the other hand. These countries also share a similar geopolitical location as noted by Motin (2020), this geographical location entails a somewhat uncertain position. Together, these states form a large area of NATO with notable military and social potential, but at the same time, this area is surrounded by regions either directly belonging to the Russian Federation

or otherwise dominated by it (e.g., Kaliningrad, Belarus and the Eastern Baltic). There are no natural barriers that would protect them from an advance of the Russian army (the region is generally flat) (Motin, 2020; Naumescu, 2020; Sadowski, Maj, 2022). The year 2008 saw a great increase in anxieties over Russia's revisionist policy towards the Baltic region, following the Russian-Georgian war. However, it was the annexation of Crimea and the war in Eastern Ukraine that led to a notable deterioration of the sense of safety (Friede, 2022). Nowadays, the Russian Federation is seen as the largest threat to the region (Poast, Chinchilla, 2023).

Military means are the primary concern among the BS; moreover, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia are also trying to discourage the Russian pressure exerted on their political systems, economy, culture, social life and national identity. It should also be noted that the defence industry in the BS is developed only to meet the needs of national military forces and to contribute to the cooperation with the Western military ammunition producers (Pernica *et al.*, 2023).

The shared goals and threats have impelled the BS to launch defensive-oriented military cooperation soon after regaining independence. The projects that bear mentioning include BALBAT, BALTNET, BALTDEFCOL, and BALTRON (Alsuskas, 2000).

However, not only the international projects increase the security of these small countries. The specificity of the modern threats – including hybrid threats, which encompass cyberspace and disinformation dangers, has exacerbated the need for a defensive preparation of the society. In the case of the BS, such preparations are also carried out under the widely-understood defensive education.

National Priorities of Defence in Estonia

A characteristic trait of Estonia is the great attention it pays to cybersecurity and psychological defence. Ever since the 2007 distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks, which are considered as consequences of a dispute with the Russian Federation over a monument to the Soviet soldiers, Estonia has been attempting to properly educate its citizens in the area of countering and responding to threats caused by modern technologies, as well as in the area of combating disinformation (Veebel, Ploom, 2019).

The 2007 attack, sometimes described as the Estonian incident, has been a turning point not only for the Estonian defence policy, but also for NATO policy – it has greatly hastened work on NATO's cyber defence strategy, later named the Tallinn Manual.

The *National Security Concept of Estonia 2010* (Riigikogu, 2010) has already been mentioned. And the *National Defence Strategy, Estonia 2011* (Estonian Ministry of Defence, 2011) has highlighted that psychological defence is, incredibly, important for national security: „Psychological defence, emanating from constitutional values, serves to enforce Estonia's security. Psychological defence is the development, preservation and protection of common values, associated with social cohesion and a sense of security” (Riigikogu, 2010).

It has also been noted that an integrated society is a strong society, despite cultural differences („The aim of integration is to shape a culturally versatile Estonian

society based on a strong identity and shared values. [...] Integration policy will be supported by the activities of civil society organizations, local governments and state authorities in pursuit of a favourable environment” (Riigikogu, 2010).

The subsequent strategic document (the *National Security Concept 2017*) emphasised that Estonia is not only expanding its military means and resources of both public and private sectors, but it also engages the entire society in national defence (Riigikogu, 2017). The international events (especially the hybrid war taking place in Ukraine) have led to the creation of a new strategic document: the *National Defence Development Plan 2017–2026* (Estonian MOD, 2017).

The document states that (among other things) retaining a high level of preparation requires an increasing cohesion of the Estonian society and widespread development of skills necessary to survive information warfare.

Latvia’s Comprehensive Approach to National Security

In terms of security policy, Latvia implements the concept of common defence, which encompasses civilian support for the armed forces, securing the smooth functioning of the society and of the economy and the continuity of governance in crisis situations, coordination of public institutions on both local and central levels, an emergency reserve system, cooperation with the private sector and NGOs, civil defence and the psychological resilience of the society (Veebel, 2018; Szymański, 2020; Śliwa *et al.*, 2021).

The importance of the society in the national security system has been stressed in several of Latvia’s strategic documents – such as the *National Defence Concept 2016 – 2020* (Saeima, 2016), in which the Latvian government has announced its intent to engage the society in the defence (Raś, 2017; Almante, 2020; Poast, Chinchilla, 2023).

Another important document outlining Latvia’s defence policy is the *National Defence Concept 2020-2024* (Saeima, 2020). The document stresses the need to promote a culture of vigilance, pro-defence education (school education for students aged 15-17 and optional civil defence summer camps), maintaining a youth section of the territorial defence forces, media education (resilience to disinformation and cyberspace threats), individual citizen preparation (self-sufficiency in crisis situations over a span of 72 hours), and cybersecurity. The ongoing pandemic has also impacted on the shape of the strategy – the document has highlighted the importance of supply and emergency stockpile security.

The National Defence Concept 2020-2024 contains an entire subchapter concerning youth education (Saeima, 2020). It forms a part of a larger chapter on the foundational assumptions of a comprehensive/common national defence (Bērziņš, 2022). According to the document, youth education and upbringing are of key importance to shape the future of the Latvian society – as the quality of education per se will determine the citizens’ resilience to external threats and challenges related to the growth of modern technologies, including those related to cybersecurity (Saeima, 2020).

Key Themes and Priorities of Lithuania's National Defence

Lithuania strives to prepare its citizens as well as possible in the spheres of security and defence, within the means of its budget. For several years, the budget allocation for these purposes has been increasing to reach NATO's 2 per cent GDP target (Dvorak, Pernica, 2021; Raik, Šešelgytė, 2022) and some of the defence education tasks were entrusted to paramilitary organizations in hopes of optimizing the system's efficiency. According to the Facts and Trends 2017 report, over 200 events (events, meetings, workshops) have been organised throughout the year 2016 for NGO members, public authorities' employees, schoolchildren and students, as well as business representatives (Ministry of National Defence, 2017). The Ministry of Defence (MOD) itself co-financed almost 40 NGO initiatives concerning patriotic education and national defence (Ministry of National Defence, 2017).

The general military service was mandated by the 1992 Constitution, Currently, ever since 2015, there is a mandatory 9-month military service for men aged 19-26. Each year, approx. 3,500-4,000 conscripts are trained. However, the country is considering increasing their number and extending the mandatory service to women. According to a MOD feasibility evaluation study (2021), expanded conscription would take place in 2028, if the government allocates an average of 0.21 of GDP each year.

Lithuania feels the need to increase defence education levels among its population. However, the army is not the sole opportunity for citizens to increase their defensive skills. Pro-defence education also takes place in the numerous organizations operating in the country, in close cooperation with the MOD.

Some of the best-known pro-defence organizations in Lithuania include the Voluntary State Defence Service (Krašto Apsaugos Savanorių Pajėgos – KASP) and the Lithuanian Sharpshooter Association (Šaulių sąjunga).

Scouting and National Defence in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania: A Comparative Analysis

Scouting associations in the three analysed countries differ in structure, and number of members and have a distinctive approach to cooperation with the MOD. However, they share a common trait: the creation of social capital, understood as a network of social links, where members share common goals – the development of skills, the augmentation of their body of knowledge and the care for the common good (supporting those in need, reacting to crisis situations, a pro-ecological approach, striving for peace and safety).

Table 2 summarizes statistical data concerning the societies of each country included in the research.

Table 2. Main characteristics of analysed countries

State	Estonia	Latvia	Lithuania
Population/ number of residents	1,331 mln	1,883 mln	2,8 mln
Number of scouting members	1500	800	Approx. 4200
The largest pro-defence organizations in the country and the number of their members	Estonian Defence League: • Kaitseliit EDL: 14919 • Women def. Org.: 2681 • Young Eagles: 3671 • Home Daughters: 4050 • Total: 25321	Zemessardze: 8000 Jaunsardzes (Young guards): • The total number of young guards: 7638 • Young guard's assistants: 32	KASP: 4500
Approach to cooperation with the military	They do not feel that they are a part of the defence system and they don't want to be seen as a paramilitary organization. They think of themselves as pacifists and don't consider their work to fall under the purview of defence preparations.	They make attempts to work with the military. They want to be a part of the defence system, but feel sidelined by the MOD.	They have a positive attitude towards working with the military, but aren't actively seeking it.

Source: Data compiled by the authors.

Estonia

According to the national defence concept outlined in the above documents, an attack on the Republic of Estonia must be repelled by the entire society, as only a combined reaction of all the structures of the defence system can bring the desired results. Societal action should be supplementary to the activities of state government and administration, as well as to the activities of legal entities carrying out tasks in the sphere of national security. Therefore, the activities of the state focus on educating and training its citizens, in order to foster appropriate skills and attitudes, and further increase the cohesion of the society.

Cohesion issues are particularly important in Estonian society. Indeed, it should be noted that according to data from the latest census (Statistics Estonia, 2021), 84.9% (1,130,559) of Estonia's population was born in Estonia. The rest came from 175 different countries. The 2011 census counted 152 countries of birth, with 110161 people from Russia (8.3% of the Estonian population). Russian is a widely spoken language in Estonia. According to the census (Statistics Estonia, 2021), about 16% of the Estonian population said they did not speak Estonian.

According to the obtained data, scouts operate in Estonia primarily on the basis of the *Youth Work Act* (Riigikogu, 2020) and the *Non-profit Associations Act* and remain under the oversight of the Ministry of Education. They are also supported financially by the ministry. Other sources of funding include local authorities, support units and, to a limited degree, the MOD (which is primarily supporting another civil society organization – the Estonian Defence League).

Estonian scouts don't consider themselves a part of the defence system. They are strongly highlighting the differences between themselves and the paramilitary groups supported by the MOD - Katseliit (for adults), *Young Eagles* (Noorkotkad – for boys only) and their sister *Home Daughters association* (Kodutütred – exclusively for girls). They do not envision any defensive tasks that could be assigned to them to support the country's defence system. According to a respondent:

Yes. For example, hiking/camping prepares us to cope with a lack of electricity or heat. It also prepares boys for military service (my scouting knowledge proved useful for me in that regard). Again, the idea is that a scout can make do in every situation, he does not need help, but instead can and will help others. This idea would apply (Interview with ES2).

A respondent from the management of the scouting association mentioned that the scouting events are organised:

<...> to grow fully functional citizens, focus on personal growth and developing practical skills. To help young people achieve their full potential and turn them into useful citizens, able to conduct themselves in both ordinary and crisis situations <...> (Interview with ES1).

The respondent of the qualitative research explained this goal by providing evidence:

<...> providing a safe environment, support and tasks to discover, try out, achieve, etc. (Interview with ES1).

The respondents of the qualitative research pointed out the following:

Outdoor activities such as hiking, camping, etc. are core parts of scouting and will not disappear. Special bushcraft and survival skills are optional though (there is a number of options every participant can choose from based on their interests, in addition to the core program). Our youth program was renewed 7 years ago to match the current problems and needs of Estonian society. The mentioned issues of disinformation and internet security have been included in the core program back then. It will soon be time to review the program again and I am sure there will be some influences from the Ukraine-Russia war (Interview with ES2).

During participatory observation, we noted that the scouts are very proficient

in the use of map and compass, are unafraid of moving through a thick forest, know how to handle the situation when getting lost or meeting wild animals. Sometimes, this concerns even very young people, such as twelve-year-olds.

It also bears mentioning another trait obtained by the scouts. According to a report carried out in 2020 by the Institute of Social Studies at the University of Tartu,

“youth organizations led by adult supervisors and able to offer young people long-term extracurricular leisure time programs (whose goals are educational in the broadest sense) have all of the preconditions for creating positive change in the young persons’ development. Participation in the activities of such youth organizations is especially important for youths who are growing up in families with limited financial means or in poverty, or troubled homes” (Scouts in Estonia, 2020).

In summary, Estonia places great emphasis on defensive education, as an appropriately high proficiency of Estonians increases the country’s overall security. This is due to the national defence model adopted by the country, described by Young (2018) as a hybrid form of territorial defence, modelled after Sweden’s and utilizing all of a country’s strengths to counteract threats to its security.

The Estonian scouts, though they do not consider themselves a part of the defence system and even highlight their stance as a pacifist organization (focused on contact with nature and staying away from politics), do teach young people skills necessary not only in times of threat to one’s life or health, but also in times of war (power outages; food gathering; teamwork; reacting to car accidents, getting lost in a forest, or meeting wild animals such as boars and wolves; hiding in forests; outdoor survival both in summer and winter).

Latvia

Latvia plans to expand the school defence education system by increasing the number of obligatory lessons. Beginning in the academic year 2024/25, national defence training will become mandatory in all Latvian middle schools, for both male and female students. This means that each year, approx. 30,000 young Latvians (aged 15-17) will be taught skills necessary for national defence, acting in a crisis situation, thinking critically and adhering to the principles of civic patriotism.

Aside from extending the school education, Latvia also plans to extend the availability of summertime paramilitary camps, to help the youth retain the knowledge and skills obtained in school, and develop physically. These camps would help promote service in the National Guard (*Zemessardzē*), which is essential for increasing the country’s level of defensive preparation and, therefore, also its security.

The National Defence Concept 2020-2024 highlights the value of non-governmental organizations in the defence system. The Concept also points out that the NGOs are of particular importance to the defensive education system – during peacetime, their primary role is to develop practical skills and inform society on ways of acting in crisis situations (Saeima, 2020).

One of the best-known pro-defence organizations in Latvia is *Jaunsardzes (Youth Guard)*. This organization is focused on educating schoolchildren in the areas of

national defence, patriotism, civil consciousness, physical fitness and discipline, while also popularizing military service among the youth (Ciganovs, 2019; Urych, Matysiak, 2022).

However, the question we investigated was the following: Can Latvian scouts contribute to increasing the level of defensive education of the Latvian society at large? Scouting in Latvia was created at the turn of the 80s and 90s. As of writing, Latvian scouts number approx. 800 members, with a roughly equal gender split. They operate in four age groups – 7-11, 12-14, 14-19 and 19+ – with the youngest group single-handedly accounting for approx. a half of all scouts.

The goal of this organization is to stimulate the development of young people and turn them into good citizens. The members are taught skills, such as proper reactions to life-threatening situations (calling for help, providing first aid), outdoor survival in a forest in varying weather conditions, or teamwork. The scouts are also developing physically, thanks to various sporting events – a distinguishing trait of Latvian scouts is their strong focus on outdoor activities. These include regular winter camps during which they steel their bodies, while learning to deal with blizzard and frost.

Scouting is also fostering patriotic attitudes – the care for the good of the Motherland, the willingness to fight to defend it, and the respect for the military. To this end, the scouts cooperate with the armed forces. However, this cooperation isn't particularly formalized. In practice, it is mostly limited to the military lending equipment (for the winter scouting camps) and helping organize *a special paramilitary camp in the summer* (that has been held annually for the past five years). Actual soldiers, including participants in foreign missions (e.g., Iraq), have been invited to this camp.

Despite a certain cooperation with the scouts, the MOD is far more focused on working with the Youth Guard, who enjoys a much greater material support. The scouts feel somewhat sidelined by the ministry – being aware of their skills and believing they could prove useful during a threat to the state, they are seeking out further opportunities to work with the MOD. However, in their opinion, the Ministry refuses to treat their input as important and is even perhaps downplaying their role. When asked whether they consider themselves a part of Latvia's defence system, the respondent strongly argued that:

We do feel like that, but the MOD, the defence system... they're not feeling the same way. We are primarily working with kids, teaching them various skills that could prove useful in a crisis situation, like floods or storms. We try to get more involved, in training and such – not in terms of military training perhaps, but more of a total defence situation, where you have to involve the society as well (Interview with LA1).

So, we're feeling that more than the other side, but they're aware that scouts exist. We try to tell them that we might prove useful at some point, but they're not treating it very seriously. But I think that since the concept of total defence is still being drafted, perhaps this idea simply has not fully taken hold just yet (Interview with LA1).

Practical examples of Latvian scout activities supporting the state in crisis situations include their activities during the war in Ukraine and participation in consultations led by the MOD concerning evacuation kits for civilians. The respondent has noted:

We took part in the same UNICEF project as the Lithuanian scouts. <...> Under this project we primarily took care of refugee kids, organised various activities for them, to ease their situation a little, help take their minds off the war with various interesting activities (Interview with LA1).

According to the respondent: *A few years ago, before COVID, the MOD produced a brochure on the preparation of 72 emergency kits for civilians. They prepared this procedure and the bags and tested them on the scouts. They have been present at the camps at least twice, people from the Ministry, testing this system and observing (Interview with LA1).*

The scouts are also working with the Youth Guard (*Jaunsardzes*), in hopes of extending their role in the state defence system, but this cooperation also tends to be informal and limited to co-organizing paramilitary camps for children and teens. It fosters patriotic attitudes and offers opportunities for older scouts to gain their first leadership experiences in various sports-military games.

In summary, scouts in Latvia aren't particularly numerous and consist primarily of children. However, one should bear in mind that this is the exact stage of human development of the attitudes, skills and behavioural patterns expected from citizens. Latvian scouts want to be a part of the defence system. They do not seek separation from the MOD or defensive preparations, as was the case for Estonia. It is the scouts themselves who make attempts to work with the military, wish to meet its representatives, organize camps inviting soldiers and cooperate with paramilitary organizations. Despite feeling sidelined by the MOD and not treated with the appropriate respect, they nevertheless still strive to support their motherland and its activities in times of crisis.

Lithuania

The scouts have existed in Lithuania since 1918, when the existence of such units was first recorded. Currently, there are some leading scouting associations in Lithuania.

Scouting associations in Lithuania are unique in that they are among the few organizations of this type in Europe that still have the opportunity to do so-called wild scouting – setting camp or building a fire in a fully natural forest environment. Wild scouting is the opportunity to go out into the forest, pitch a tent, make a campfire - or perhaps not even pitch a tent, but simply immerse yourself in that environment.

During the existing qualitative study, four main scouting organizations operating in Lithuania were analysed. Scout organizations are briefly described in *Table 3*.

Table 3. Main characteristics of scouting organizations in Lithuania

Scouting organization	Description
Sea Scouts	Sea Scouts were established in Lithuania a century ago. This scouting organization was reconstituted around 1993 in the city of Vilnius. Then many different processes took place, leading to the formation of several other organizations.
Scouts of Žemaitija	Žemaitija (EN: Samogitia) scouts' organization has been officially established in 1991 in Mazeikiai. There were some enterprising people in this country who decided it would be faster for the scouts to develop independently. It's a relatively small organization, with 200 members in total. It is primarily made up of children, especially younger ones.
Lithuanian Scouting (Lietuvos skautija)	Lithuanian Scouting was legally established in the 1990s. But that tradition and model have been present since the interwar period. Nowadays, the organization has over three thousand members.
Lithuania Scouts Union	The national scouting organization was founded in 1918. After Lithuania regained its independence in 1990, the Union was reestablished as a legal organization within the country. It continues to play an important role in the development of youth, with programs focused on leadership, community service, and environmental stewardship.

Source: Prepared by the authors.

During the qualitative research, when asked about what the youth in their scouting organization want to learn, the respondent replied that the goal of the scouting association is to help bring up good citizens, who aim to better themselves and their homeland. According to the respondent:

When it comes to our mission, we are talking about the fact that we have raised a generation of civically useful people. We are educating young people to be useful, good citizens. They are useful to their relatives, useful to the homeland and useful spiritually. This is what we say - to God. <...>

The education provided ranges from outdoor survival, taking care of nature, and tasks useful for the motherland and society, all the way to history and cultural heritage. The spectrum is very wide. Also - medical first aid, which is very interesting for children. They also have a specialty program. Scouts can become specialists in various specialties. They can also become cyclists, actors, firemen or learn another profession (Interview with LI2).

Patriotism is an incredibly important trait that the adult scouts want to foster among the youth. However, the goal of Lithuanian Scouting is not to create future soldiers. While the management observes its strong ties to the military (both historically and in light of the fact the same Lithuanian word “žvalgas” is used in the

context of military reconnaissance), the scouts are quick to highlight that they aren't currently integrated with the defence system.

During the qualitative research, it was learned that, similar to its Estonian counterparts, the Lithuanian Scouting does not consider that it prepares the youth for defence. According to the respondent: *Basically, we do not prepare young people for the army, the church and the like. No specific institution. Our goal is to help young persons find their way as best as possible and develop both physically and as citizens* (Interview with LI1). The respondents of the qualitative research provided evidence about the role of the Lithuanian scout organizations in the country's defence system (see Table 4).

**Table 4. Interview Data: The Importance of Scouting
in the National Defence System**

Topic	Interview Response
Feeling of being part of the defence system	<p>No. We have never been a part of the defence system. Now, nowadays we say that a scout is not a military scout. And that a scout is a bearer of peace. I agree with this and it is my personal belief that when any military action begins, scouts should be providing humanitarian aid. Perhaps medical aid, as we put a lot of emphasis on the scouts being able to administer first aid. I am even talking about the children, so that they are ready to help. I very much imagine they would be willing to do so, but find themselves helpless in military actions. (Interview with LT2).</p> <p>“We might see ourselves as useful to society in some types of conflict, I think. I just think we need to find our place, because we have great strength in that we are an organised group, and a large group at that. Well, we are well-organised and this would certainly allow us to contribute to some tasks” (Interview with LT3).</p>
Cooperation with the defence system	<p>It's hard to say because we're not working on it yet. Essentially, there needs to be a directive first and then we could be able to act (Interview with LT3).</p> <p>It seems to me that currently, the scouts in Lithuania have no place in that defence system. Maybe there's potential for that in the future, as it's still an organization with a really wide network and the ability to transmit information and mobilize, as it did with coronavirus or migrant cases in all those places. Scouts can do that really well, because we mobilize wherever needed. And as it is a voluntary organization, this can go on for a period of time when there is a great need (Interview with LT1).</p>

Source: Prepared by the authors.

In the qualitative study, the respondents admit that scouts in Lithuania are not part of the defence system and are basically focused on the development of vital skills by young people, which may be important when military actions begin. The respondents feel that the role of scout organizations is fundamental in organizing humanitarian aid. However, this mode of thought has been changing since the attack of the Russian

Federation on Ukraine. The scouts are increasingly becoming aware that their strong potential, if channelled correctly, could support the national defence system.

Well, we have internally raised the question of how we could be useful. <...> There are really no secrets here, we have members in our organization who are professional officers and share their experience and knowledge. We are close to the military, but not fully integrated into that system. This closeness comes from the fact that some of our activities or goals are similar. We have started raising the question of Ukraine, about how could we help it in its current predicament, and how could we help our own country. Maybe it's because we don't make changes to our programs, nor rush to prepare for military training. <...> (Interview with LI2).

Other scout organizations have gathered information on where volunteers were needed and then passed this information through their websites. They have also sought ways to help and organised the promised help within their means, as well as published varied information encouraging people to volunteer and help Ukrainians. They are therefore aware of their capacity to provide support to the state – but do not feel that the state wants to receive such assistance.

Aside from the awareness of their potential and the willingness to support the homeland, the scouts are also attempting to rationally appraise their usefulness for the defence system, taking into account their faults and weaknesses. This indicates that they could become a serious partner, by realistically evaluating their own capabilities.

“The scouts are proving useful in providing help, by the distribution of food and other necessities. Yet I cannot fully see a role for the scouts in a regular war. The scouts are ultimately civilians and war should be left for the soldiers. Aside from that, I believe that to even be able to talk about the role of scouts in the defence system we would first need to research and appraise our strengths and weaknesses in a standardized, methodical manner.” (Interview with LI2).

It seems that the biggest obstacle in the scouts' cooperation with the defence system is not their lack of self-awareness, but rather the reluctance of the government to cooperate with them and utilize their potential. The scouts are confident that their cooperation with the ministry could be closer, and that they could train young people for defensive operations, if they were to be tasked with it. However, as duties are not properly defined, the scouts are presently learning general skills, not necessarily oriented toward defensive education. Currently, only first aid education is perceived as an activity that may increase the level of defence education in the civil society. The respondents of the qualitative study shared their views on the role of scouts in the defence system (see *Table 5*).

Table 5. Interview Data: The Role of Scouts in the Defence System

Topic	Interview Response
Role of scouts in defence	<p><i>Preparation. It would be useful to know what we, as scouts, should do when the war starts. I imagine it would be cooperation with the MOD and the Lithuanian army, that would provide some guidelines for what we could do (Interview with LT2).</i></p> <p><i>The fact is, we could be doing it. The question is probably always what is the need and what specifically should we be preparing for. Because when a goal is set clearly, it can be fulfilled. It's just that if we come up with the idea that we need to prepare, then we need to define it properly. (Interview with LT1).</i></p> <p><i>Perhaps if the authorities provided us with a tool that would indicate what kind of help is needed from us in a given situation. I think that scout volunteers, if informed, would definitely come and contribute to defence or civil action organised by civil institutions. However, currently, we have neither such a tool, nor information on what exactly is expected of us (Interview with LT4).</i></p>

Source: Prepared by the authors.

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the scouts have felt that they possess a great potential that should be fostered. In 2020, one Scouting organization began talks with the MOD concerning possible support for defence preparations and education. Thus, it has been cooperating semi-regularly with Lithuania's MOD for approximately two years:

We have a cooperation support agreement. Of course, this isn't a close cooperation, it's more a way of strengthening the organization. <...> I have participated in a discussion about how the scouts could contribute to the general defence of the country. This discussion took place a year and a half ago, touching on the support for a camp we plan to organize next summer at the military training ground. It would mean more support for scouting from the MOD. We invite soldiers to the camps through official channels <...>. (Interview with LI4).

However, despite the fact that they feel responsible for their country and are willing to provide help to the society (during peacetime, crisis or war) and despite ongoing cooperation with the MOD, the members of Scouting organizations consider that their potential isn't fully utilized, as their shared work with the Ministry isn't really focused on eventual support for the defence system.

The skills obtained by the scouts during the activities were first applied on a large scale during the coronavirus pandemic, when the scouts created a social support network – they had to organize quickly, cooperate with each other, work with organizations across the globe, and seek ways to provide said help. The immigration crisis of 2022 saw further development of the methods and techniques and an opportunity to use them on an even greater scale.

Discussion

To answer the research questions, the authors of this paper assert that scouting in the BS could constitute a part of the national defensive preparation systems. However, this requires support from the MOD and political willingness to provide such support. The members of the scouting associations are creating social capital with high potential. They could substantially contribute to increasing the defensive preparation level of a given society, if properly guided and utilized.

One should bear in mind that the defence system forms a very complex network of connections, directly impacting state security to a high degree. Therefore, some are opposed to scouting being or becoming a part of the state security system. They do not wish to see it involved in defensive preparations.

In the public discourse we can find varied stances on this issue. Generally speaking, we can define them as belonging to three key groups:

1. The researchers who believe that scouting is and should be intertwined with the army and the state's defence system (including the defence preparations), as proven by numerous historical examples where scouts proved useful support for the military and other uniformed services (Sławomir Mazur - He conducted extensive research on the activities of Polish scouts and the impact of these activities on the level of defence preparedness among members of the scout organization. He noted a high correlation (Mazur, 1990)).

2. The researchers who believe that, despite its military-related origins, scouting is a pacifist organization, focused on educating the youth in the spirit of peacefulness and friendship, by fostering self-improvement, pro-social, pro-health and pro-ecological attitudes. It's an organization that should not retain links to the government, neither political nor military (Hewer, 2012).

3. The researchers who see the potential of the scouts, but also the dangers related to various non-governmental organizations, including scouting: (Arnon Degani – pointed out the way in which the skills taught by scouting associations introduced in Palestine by the British were utilized to grow the national movement. He perceives scouts as a locus of nationalism, an organization that divides instead of bringing people together (Degani, 2014))

The validity of including scouting associations in the defensive education system and/or the EU civil protection mechanism

For an organization to be included in the European Civil Protection Pool (ECPP) / rescEU, and therefore be registered in the CECIS (Common Emergency Communication and Information System) electronic database, it needs to pass certification tests. This process consists of several phases: Phase 1: "Commitment & Application", Phase 2: "Certification" Phase 3: "Registration" (Guidelines, 2019).

According to data from the European Commission, Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC)/ DG ECHO (A3), the European Civil Protection Pool offered 118 response capacities in 2022. These are categorised into 29 modules of varying purpose.

The minimum quality requirements for civil protection modules and TAST (Technical Assistance and Support Teams) are defined in Annex II of the Commission Implementing Decision 2014/762/EU.

For an NGO to be successfully certified, it needs to have both human resources (members in good physical shape, with knowledge and experience) and material resources (tools necessary for highly qualified activities that may ensure populace protection).

While conducting the research on the scouting associations, the authors have reached the conclusion that the scouts can only provide local support to highly qualified ECPP entities. However, membership in a scouting association can be a good start to increasing one's qualifications and chances to become eligible for more specialized training in the future. It prepares one for the prospect of joining an ECPP organization. It also bears pointing out that the scouts learn to work in a team, build mutual trust and a sense of unity, learn to lead others in a crisis situation and to respect the hierarchy (obeying the orders of their superiors). According to the results of a research published in 2018, factors such as *loyalty* and *hierarchical structure* are strongly correlated to the effectiveness of a given organisation in a crisis situation – “the more loyalty, trust, and professionalism can be found in an organisation, the more effective it is considered to be by the respondents” (Parker, 2019).

A similar case concerns the support offered to a state's defensive capabilities. Given the modern threats, scouts in the BS can provide additional support to the national defence systems. But that type of support is somewhat negligible, at present, given the extent of military threats. Having said that, the scouts' role within national defence systems could be increased and further institutionalised. They could be organising trainings for the civilian populace, addressing issues such as evacuation procedures, winter outdoor survival, seeking water, or first aid. Such training courses do not require specialised equipment or large financial contributions, and yet they are highly useful.

Conclusions

For many years now, scientists from across the entire world have been noticing the importance of NGOs in fulfilling social needs, especially in the sphere of providing security. Non-governmental organisations help people overcome addictions, offer them education and protection from domestic violence (Asbury *et al.*, 2021), and some increase the level of defensive preparations (Staskiewicz, 2021).

Benefits for the defensive system arising from factors such as social capital (created within non-governmental organizations) are indisputable. Moreover, the need for military and civil cooperation is no longer being questioned. The deliberations presented in this paper concerned the issue of whether the scouts could also be a valuable support for the national defence system and the EU Civil Protection Mechanism. We were particularly interested in the perspective of the members of the aforementioned scouting associations.

Of course, there exist a number of fully paramilitary organisations, ready to support the armed forces in times of war or crisis, and the point is not to turn the scouts

into yet another organisation of this kind. However, one should bear in mind that a war is an extreme situation, requiring the use of all available means and resources. Therefore, one should not exclude various possible solutions and turn away organisations willing to work with the MOD in this regard. Especially at a time of particularly high likelihood of war.

Assistance from the scouts might prove necessary in case of quick evacuation of civilian population or rescuing people stuck in buildings (assistance which entails providing food, informing the appropriate services for those in need). However, their support is of importance on the local scale. Therefore, it is unlikely that they would ever come to the attention of the centralized EU Civil Protection Mechanism or of NATO. Regardless of this aspect, on the condition that they receive funding and an institutionalised and substantive support, the scouts could become an important part of the national resources activated in crisis situations.

To sum up, the members of scouting associations are learning various skills that might prove useful in different crisis situations. The scouts feel connected to their country, consider themselves patriots and strive to be the best citizens they can be. However, as they themselves have pointed out, they cannot precisely indicate the stage at which such skills are acquired or even how many members their organisation is comprised of. Instead, they are focusing on self-growth, with each team being left with considerable freedom to shape its own plan of action. However, all of them are subject to general, hierarchically mandated guidelines.

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