



## Lithuania Quits China's 17+1

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### Why in News

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Recently, **Lithuania** quit **China's 17+1** cooperation forum with **central and eastern Europe**, by calling it “**divisive**”, now it is **16+1**.

**Lithuania (Baltic Country)** urged other **EU (European Union)** members to pursue “**a much more effective 27+1 approach and communication with China.**”

### Key Points

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- **About 17+1:**

- **Formation:**

The **17+1 (China and Central and Eastern Europe Countries) initiative** is a **China-led format** founded in **2012** in **Budapest** with an aim to expand cooperation between Beijing and the **CEE (Central and Eastern Europe)** member countries, with investments and trade for the development of the CEE region.

- **Member Countries:**

The initiative includes **twelve EU** member states and **five Balkan states** — Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Slovenia.

- **Aim and Objectives:**

- The framework focuses on infrastructure projects such as bridges, motorways, railway lines and modernisation of ports in the member states.
- The platform is largely seen as an extension of China's flagship **Belt and Road initiative (BRI)**.

**India has consistently opposed BRI** as a key part of it passes through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK).

- **Background of Declining Relations:**

- **China's Narrative towards 17+1 Initiative:**

- China's narrative towards the 17+1 initiative is about improving its relations with the European countries that are less developed as compared to the Western European states.
    - Trade relations between China and the CEE countries remained modest, leading to an increasing trade deficit since its inception.

- **Growing Distance:**

- Czech Republic President's decision to skip the ninth summit of the 17+1 initiative citing lack of actual investments, had showcased the differences between Beijing and Prague.
    - Some CEE countries refused to attend the BRI event in 2020.

- **The Huawei Equation:**

- Some CEE countries signed a declaration with the US to ban **China's 5G network** expansion.

## **Baltic Countries**



- Baltic states, the **northeastern region of Europe**, includes the countries of **Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania**, on the eastern shores of the **Baltic Sea**.
- The Baltic states are bounded on the west and north by the **Baltic Sea**, which gives the region its name, on the east by Russia, on the southeast by Belarus, and on the southwest by Poland and an exclave of Russia.
- The Baltic region is **not rich in natural resources**. Though **Estonia** is an important producer of **oil shale**, a large share of mineral and energy **resources is imported**.

- **India and Baltic countries** have historical connection and common linguistic roots. The cutting edge technology and innovation ecosystems of the Baltic countries complement India's huge market and appetite for these technologies.

## Balkan Countries



- The geographic term is used for ten sovereign states: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, and Slovenia.
- The region takes its name from the **Balkan Mountain**, and **Balkan Countries** are found in **Southern Europe**.
- It is a unique territory **inhabited by South Slavs** who form the majority of the population in Balkan Region.
- Region has a very diverse **ethno-linguistic scenario**. The Bulgarians, Macedonians, and Slovenes speak their own Slavic languages, while the Slavs of Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro all speak dialects of **Serbo-Croatian**.

Source: TH