

## **A Stronger Nordic-Baltic Region for a Stronger Europe**

The Nordic-Baltic region is economically significant, highly open and strategically important. Together, the NB8 economies are equivalent to around one tenth of EU economy, while the regions's digital capabilities, innovative companies and strategic location make it particularly well placed to contribute Europe's competitiveness, resilience and long-term security. In an increasingly uncertain geopolitical and economic environment, our region must demonstrate how open markets, strong businesses and deeper regional cooperation can reinforce preparedness, innovation and sustainable growth.

The business community across the NB8 countries stands ready to contribute. To succeed, governments and industry must work together to remove barriers, strengthen framework conditions, and accelerate practical cross-border cooperation.

### **1. Preparedness and Resilience Require a Strong Business Environment**

#### **What is the issue?**

Europe faces increasingly interconnected threats – from cyberattacks, sabotage and geopolitical instability to disruptions in energy systems, supply chains and critical infrastructure. At the same time, preparedness policies are too often approached through narrow sectoral perspectives.

Societal resilience cannot be built by military means alone. Businesses own and operate much of the infrastructure, technology, logistics and services that societies depend on in times of crisis. The defense sector itself relies on a broad industrial ecosystem spanning mining, steel, chemicals, transport, energy, pharmaceuticals, food systems and digital infrastructure.

Europe's preparedness therefore depends on competitive companies operating in a strong Single Market with access to capital, affordable energy, skilled labour and innovation capacity. A resilient industrial and business base also strengthens Europe's long-term deterrence capacity by reducing strategic dependencies and ensuring continuity under crisis conditions.

#### **What is the solution?**

The Nordic-Baltic region should champion a holistic approach to preparedness that fully integrates the broader business community into resilience planning and crisis preparedness efforts. This requires efforts both on national level and in international cooperation. National preparedness lays a solid foundation to develop international cooperation.

#### **We call on Prime Ministers to:**

- Strengthen structured public-private cooperation on preparedness, contingency planning, and security of supply.

- Prioritise measures that improve Europe’s overall business climate, including a stronger Single Market, reduced regulatory burdens and secure access to affordable energy.
- Promote closer Nordic-Baltic coordination on critical infrastructure, cybersecurity, and resilience of cross-border supply chains.
- Explore opportunities for closer cooperation at European level, including through joint projects that strengthen preparedness, resilience and industrial capacity
- Understand preparedness as the ability of businesses and societies to continue operating effectively during crises. Economic strength and competitiveness are fundamental preconditions for long-term security and resilience.

## **2. Stronger Capital Markets to Unlock Investment and Innovation**

### **What is the issue?**

Europe needs significantly higher levels of private investment to strengthen competitiveness, innovation, resilience and the green and digital transitions. Strong, well-functioning capital markets are essential for financing innovation, preparedness, infrastructure and industrial development. Capital flows where framework conditions are attractive and predictable, yet many European capital markets remain underdeveloped and must become deeper.

Barriers to cross-border investment persist, while pension savings and private capital are not sufficiently channelled into productive investments and growth companies. Without stronger capital markets, Europe risks falling behind globally in innovation, technology and productivity growth.

### **What is the solution?**

The Nordic-Baltic countries should take the lead in advancing deeper capital markets, reducing cross-border frictions, mobilising pensions and private savings and improving access to growth capital across the region and the EU.

### **We call on Prime Ministers to:**

- Promote closer Nordic-Baltic cooperation that can serve as a model for broader initiatives to strengthen European capital markets.
- Support that the EU take an active role in facilitating productive exchange between the Member States and encouraging national reforms that strengthen savings and investment markets, including private savings pension and taxation frameworks that encourage long-term investment.
- Reduce unnecessary barriers to cross-border investment and scaling across the Nordic-Baltic region.

## **3. Accelerating Nordic-Baltic Digital and Infrastructure Integration**

### **What is the issue?**

Despite being global leaders in digitalisation, the Nordic-Baltic countries still face significant cross-border barriers. Businesses encounter fragmented data frameworks,

differing regulatory requirements and incompatible administrative systems when operating across the region.

Companies often need to duplicate compliance procedures and provide paper-based or notarised documentation despite existing digital capabilities. At the same time, strategic cross-border infrastructure projects in for example transport and digital connectivity are progressing too slowly.

### **What is the solution?**

The region should scale existing successful cross-border digital solutions and accelerate implementation of strategic infrastructure cooperation.

### **We call on Prime Ministers to:**

- Expand cross-border digital data exchange systems across all NB8 countries, including interoperability between business registers and public databases.
- Commit to greater mutual recognition of digital identities, licences and compliance procedures across the region.
- Accelerate delivery of strategic cross-border infrastructure projects in transport, and digital connectivity, including the protection and resilience of critical subsea cable infrastructure in the Baltic Sea.
- The Nordic-Baltic region already has successful examples to build on, including cross-border digital services and registry interoperability. Scaling proven solutions across the region would reduce administrative burdens, improve productivity, and strengthen regional competitiveness.

### **Concluding NB8 message**

The Nordic-Baltic region can become Europe's leading example of how competitiveness, preparedness and regional integration reinforce one another. By strengthening cooperation between governments and businesses, removing cross-border barriers and improving framework conditions for investment and innovation, our region can contribute to a more resilient, competitive and secure Europe. We encourage Prime Ministers to review progress on these priorities at the next NB8 meeting, in close dialogue with the region's business organisations.

