

**Nordic Connector**



**KVARKENRÅDET  
MERENKURKUN  
NEUVOSTO**

# A strategic east–west connection shaping Northern Europe

**Mathias Lindström, Director**  
Kvarken Council EGTC



# The Kvarken Council EGTC

European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation

## Main members of the Kvarken Council (with voting rights)

Region Västerbotten  
Umeå Municipality  
Örnsköldsvik Municipality  
The Regional Council of Ostrobothnia  
The Regional Council of South Ostrobothnia  
The Regional Council of Central Ostrobothnia  
City of Vaasa  
City of Kokkola  
City of Seinäjoki  
City of Jakobstad  
City of Kurikka  
Korsholm Municipality  
Storuman Municipality  
Lycksele Municipality  
Skellefteå Municipality  
Region Västernorrland

## Other municipal members

Vindeln Municipality  
City of Nykarleby  
City of Närpes  
Nordmaling Municipality  
Vännäs Municipality  
Larsmo Municipality  
Kronoby Municipality  
Sundsvall Municipality  
City of Kauhava  
Lappajärvi Municipality  
Robbersfors Municipality  
Pedersöre Municipality

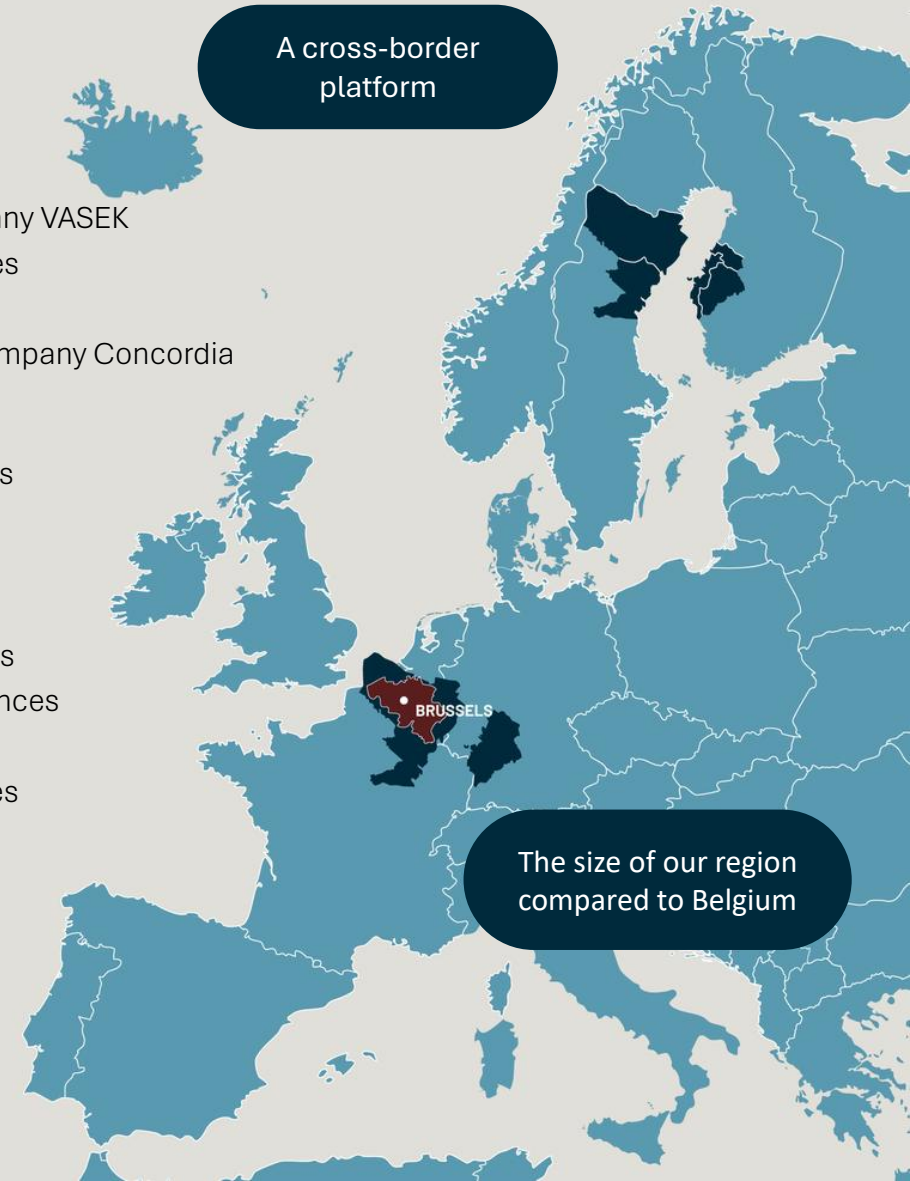
## Organisational members

Vaasa Region Development Company VASEK  
Vaasa University of Applied Sciences  
University of Vaasa  
Jakobstad Region Development Company Concordia  
Into Seinäjoki  
Kristinestads näringslivscentral/  
Kristiinankaupungin elinkeinokeskus  
Hanken School of Economics  
Umeå University  
Mid Sweden University  
Novia University of Applied Sciences  
Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences  
Åbo Akademi  
Federation of Swedish Municipalities  
in Ostrobothnia for Education and  
Culture (SÖFUK)  
County Administrative Board of  
Västerbotten  
Metsähallitus  
Centria

A total of 44 members

A cross-border  
platform

The size of our region  
compared to Belgium



# Current context

## What if the Baltic Sea routes were blocked?

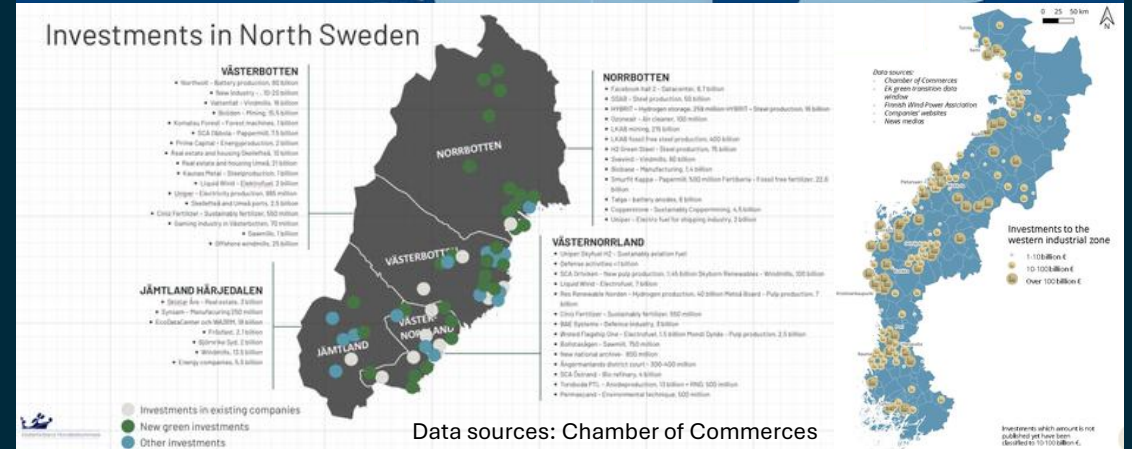
- 90% of Finnish and Swedish trade goes by sea
- Shared border with Russia: 1,340 km
- Limited east-west capacity
- Disruptions expose critical vulnerabilities



# Why this matters now?

## A transforming Northern Europe

- Increasing pressure on European supply chains
  - Rapid industrial and energy transformation
  - Investments exceeding €200 billion by 2035
  - The region provides critical raw materials for all of Europe
- Food, energy and industrial supply chains depend on reliable transport
- Finland and Sweden are now NATO members



Data sources: Chamber of Commerces



# What Nordic Connector enables

## Industry and growth

- Strengthens competitiveness and supports major investments

## Logistics and efficiency

- Shorter routes and fewer transshipments
- Lower costs for industry

## Sustainability

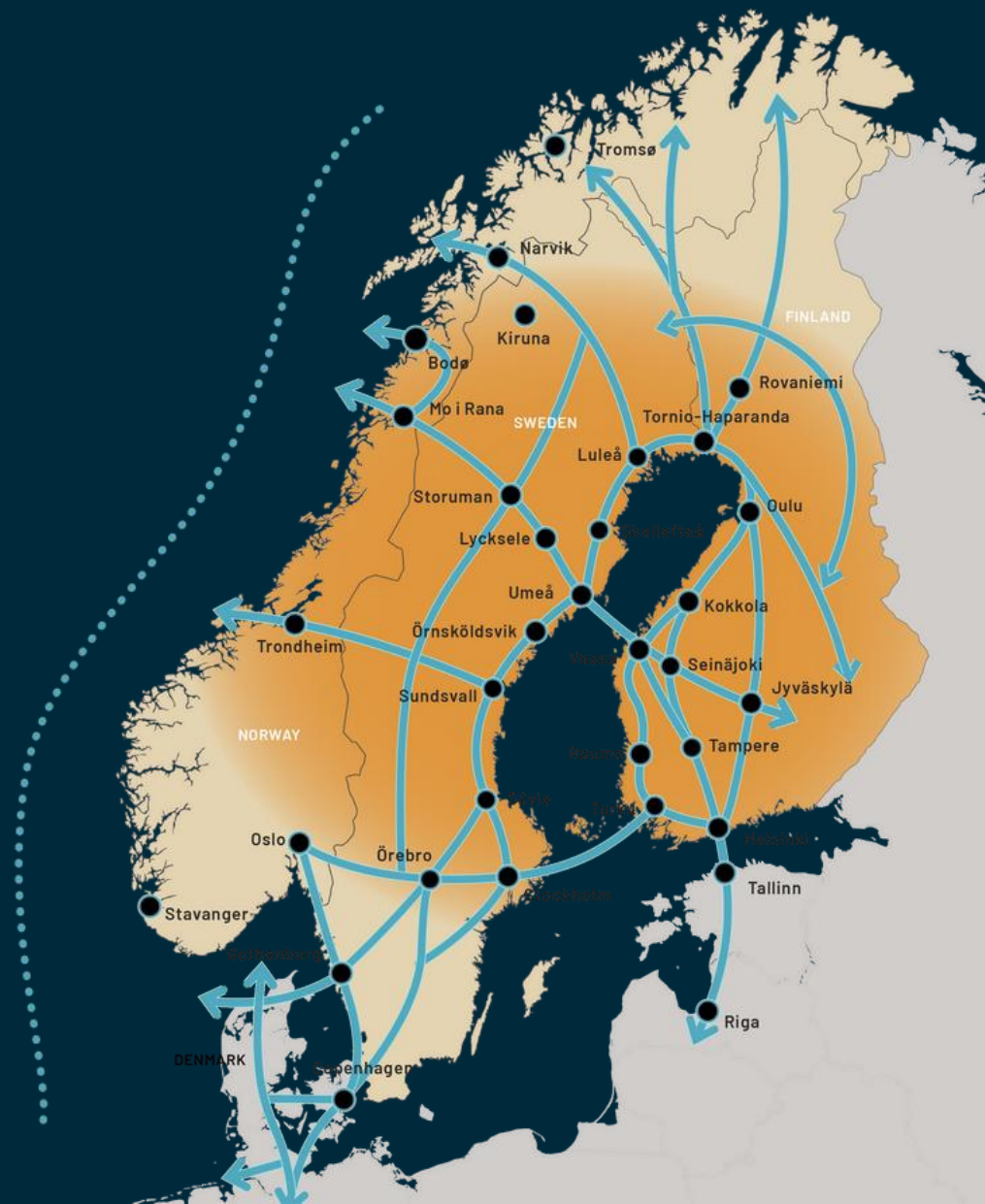
- Lower CO<sub>2</sub> emissions

## People and society

- Increased labour mobility
- Stronger links in education, research and healthcare

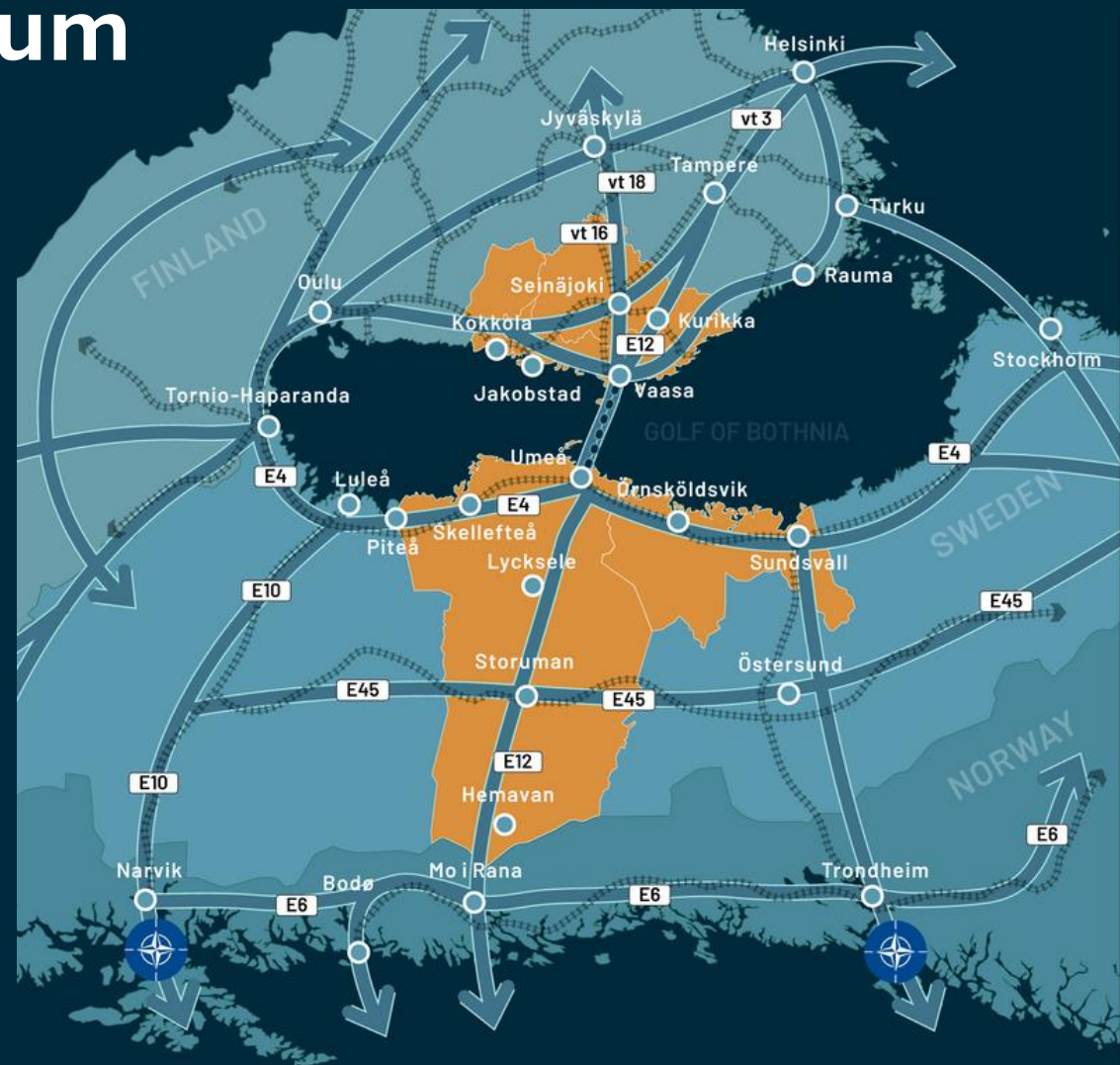
## System resilience

- Improved energy security
- Stronger, two-way east–west transport system
- Improved access to Atlantic ports and Arctic shipping routes



# Progress and political momentum

- Included in the Finnish Government Programme
- Included in Finland's national transport plan (Liikenne 12, 2021–2032)
- Feasibility confirmed by the Finnish Transport Infrastructure Agency
- Highlighted by the Finnish Defence Committee and approved by the Finnish Parliament
- Nordic Council (2025): recommendation to work on east–west connections
- Presented in the Swedish Parliament
- Growing interest at Nordic and European levels



# Technical and financial perspective

## A fixed link across the Kvarken

- Combination of road sections, causeways, bridges and tunnels
- Estimated cost range: €5–29 billion

## Feasibility confirmed – financing under analysis

- Financing models under analysis, including cross-border approaches, wider societal benefits and security and military mobility (FLINC project)
- Over 60 years of studies and investigations
- One of Finland's most thoroughly investigated cross-border infrastructure projects

**Interreg**

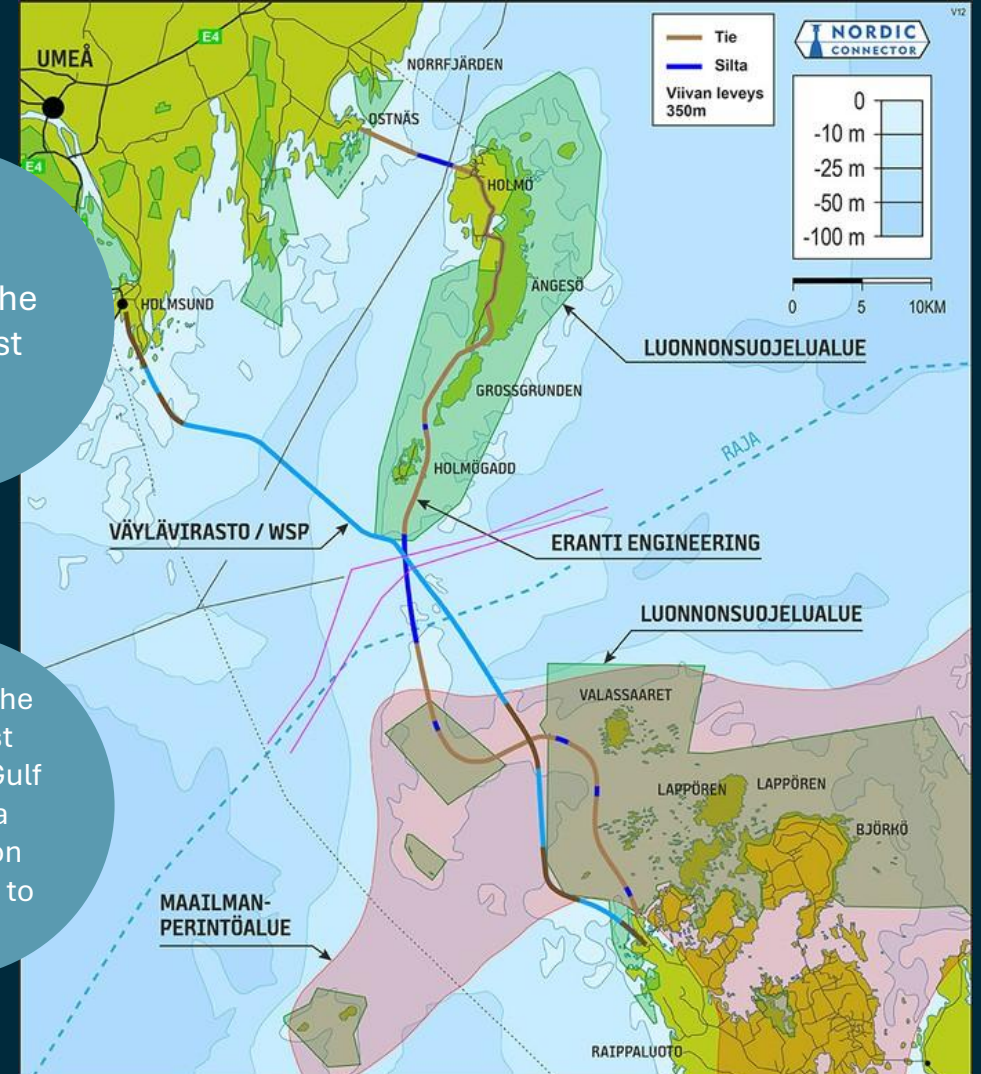


Co-funded by  
the European Union

**Aurora**

25 km  
between the  
outermost  
islands

Kvarken is the  
shallowest  
part of the Gulf  
of Bothnia  
(20–25 m on  
average, up to  
~100 m)



Source: Esa Eranti and Antti Tavitie, [www.erantiengineering.fi](http://www.erantiengineering.fi)

# FLINC – Analysis of financing and societal benefits

## Financing large-scale cross-border infrastructure - Case Nordic Connector

- Develops methodologies for financing large-scale cross-border infrastructure
- Analyses wider societal impacts beyond traditional cost–benefit frameworks
- Conducts in-depth analysis of military mobility
  - Objective: support future political decision-making

**Interreg**



Co-funded by  
the European Union

**Aurora**

Funding: Interreg Aurora (EU), Lapland Regional Council, Finnish Transport Infrastructure Agency, City of Vaasa, Umeå Municipality

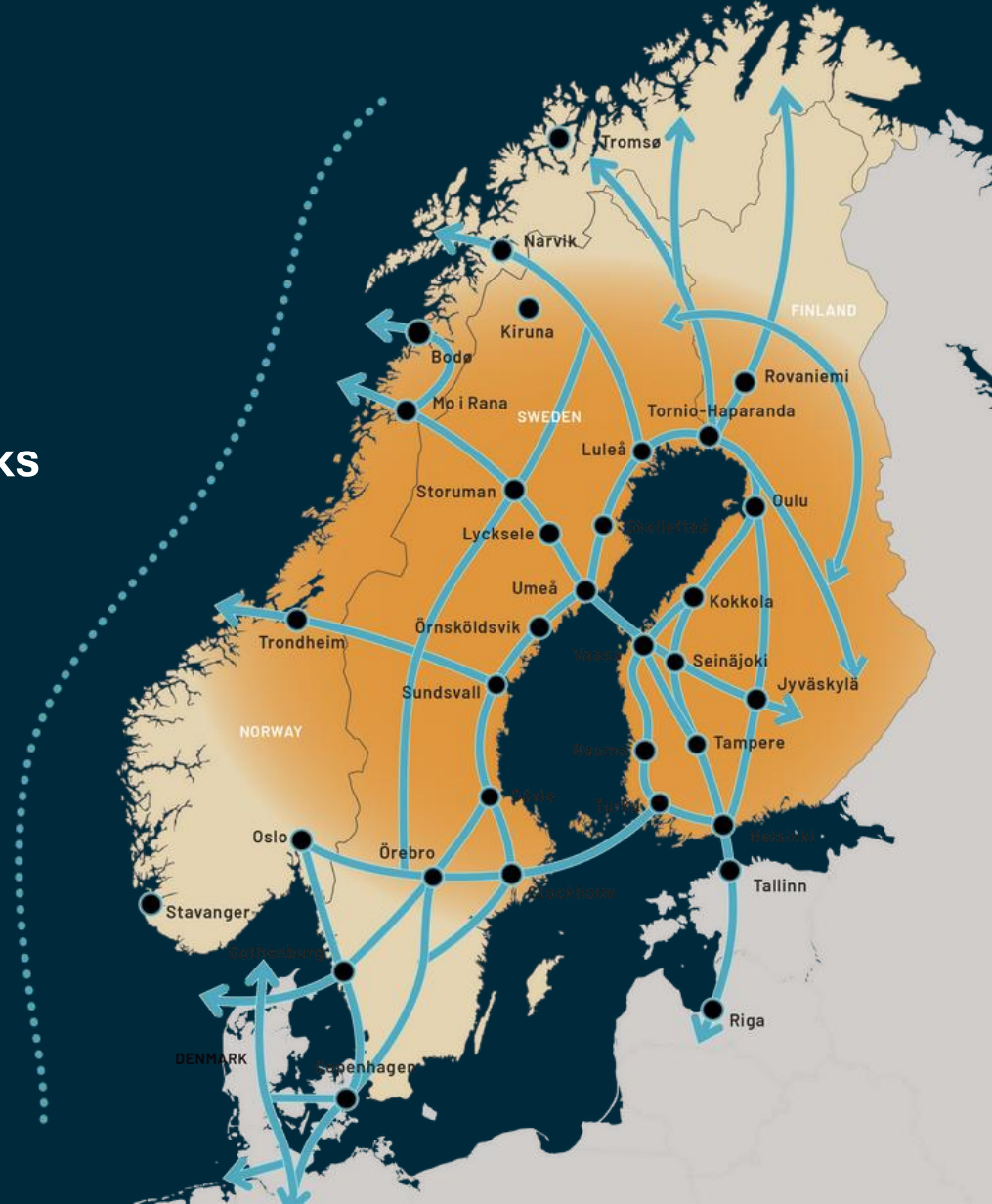
*The reference group includes representatives from, among others, the Finnish Transport Infrastructure Agency, Traficom, and the Swedish Transport Administration.*

Lead partner: Kvarken Council EGTC



# Key messages

- Not only a regional project
- A strategic investment for Finland, Sweden and Europe
- Strengthens resilience and security of supply
- Supports military mobility
- **Strengthens Nordic and European transport networks through new east–west connections**
- Enhances competitiveness
- Technically feasible
- Initial estimates suggest the project could fully or partly pay for itself
- Wider benefits analyses confirm a sound investment despite high costs
- Clear strategic value for military mobility, preparedness and food security



**Nordic Connector**



**KVARKENRÅDET  
MERENKURKUN  
NEUVOSTO**

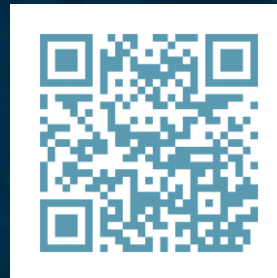
**Thank you!**

**Follow our results**

[kvarken.org](http://kvarken.org)

[facebook.com/kvarkenradet](https://facebook.com/kvarkenradet)

[linkedin.com/company/kvarkencouncil](https://linkedin.com/company/kvarkencouncil)



**Interreg**

**Aurora**



Co-funded by  
the European Union