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Nordic Compass as a Model for Europe

Implementing Draghi from Below

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From 4 to 5 November 2026, the Nordic Compass industry alliance will present its first initiatives at its summit in Gothenburg. The capital markets package is expected to take the lead. While the US midterm elections are likely to dominate media attention, the Gothenburg summit could be more significant for Europe's ability to finance its own companies. The alliance reverses the usual direction of EU policy: Rather than consulting firms to identify which rules are holding them back, firms will name the barriers, commit their own resources, and request that governments only act where legislation is impeding progress. Still, the success of this approach will depend on governments removing the post-trade barriers that firms cannot remove themselves.

- Nordic Compass is a new, industry-led type of differentiated integration, distinct from the governmental core of the E6 and the Treaty mechanism of enhanced cooperation.
- The alliance should grow by adding work streams in areas where Nordic capabilities can reduce European dependencies. Examples include critical-mineral processing. At the same time, practical ways must be found to ensure that growth in the number of participating companies does not slow the initiative down.
- As the leader of the E6, but with no Nordic partners, Germany should use the alliance as an intermediary for capital markets and raw materials. German firms with operations in the Nordics should consider joining.

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1 Introduction

From 4 to 5 November 2026, over 25 Nordic companies and organisations will unveil their inaugural collaborative projects at the Nordic Compass Summit in Gothenburg. The alliance, also known as the "Nordic Round Table for Industry", was established on 12 May 2026. Jyrki Katainen, former Finnish Prime Minister and Commission Vice-President for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness (2014–2019), chairs the alliance. Members include Wallenberg Investments, EQT, Nordea, SEB, Nasdaq Nordic, Ericsson, Nokia, Saab and the Novo Nordisk Foundation. The alliance's stated mission is to "secure the implementation of Nordic initiatives that reinforce the region's competitiveness".[1]

The initiative's name is an explicit reference to the Commission's Competitiveness Compass and the 2024 Draghi report. In September 2024, Draghi diagnosed in his frequently cited report a widening competitiveness gap, estimating that closing it would require an additional annual investment of €750–800 billion (4.4–4.7% of EU GDP), concentrated in energy and transport infrastructure, digital technologies, defence, and innovation.[2] Since then, the Union has incorporated this assessment into its work programme, first through the Competitiveness Compass in January 2025,[3] and then through the Savings and Investments Union (SIU) strategy on 19 March 2025, which combined the capital markets and banking union files into a single agenda.[4] However, implementation is lagging behind: as of summer 2016, only 15.7% of the report's recommendations had been fully implemented.[5]

This cepAdhoc argues that the Nordic Compass is notable not just for the key strategic areas it addresses but also for reversing the usual direction of the EU's competitiveness agenda. In Brussels, the Commission diagnoses, consults, legislates, and then simplifies. In Gothenburg, firms will identify the concrete barriers they face, commit to changing what they can themselves, and only ask governments for support where private action reaches its limits. Katainen framed the motivation at the initiative's launch as follows: "[W]hile European-level processes will take time, the Nordics are able to move faster and demonstrate effective implementation".[6]

Can industry-led regional pilots deliver reforms more quickly than the EU-27 and subsequently contribute to the Union's agenda? The capital markets track of the Nordic Compass might be a good test case to answer this question, as press reports suggest that members of the initiative are examining the consolidation of the Swedish, Danish, Norwegian and Finnish stock exchanges, as well as the harmonisation of national rules. This brief does not assess the defence, energy or deep tech tracks in detail, but aims to explain what is new about the Nordic Compass model (Section 2). Then, it sets out what to expect from the finance pillar (Section 3), places the initiative in the longer debate on differentiated integration (Section 4), and draws policy implications, with a focus on Germany (Section 5).

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1 Nordic Innovation, 'Nordic Compass – The Nordic Round Table for Industry', 2026, https://nordicinnovation.org/programs/nordic-compass-nordic-round-table-industry.

2 Mario Draghi, *The Future of European Competitiveness: A Competitiveness Strategy for Europe*, Report (European Commission, 2024), 63, https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/97e481fd-2dc3-412d-be4c-f152a8232961_en.

3 European Commission, 'A Competitiveness Compass for the EU', January 2025, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52025DC0030.

4 European Commission, 'Savings and Investments Union: A Strategy to Foster Citizens' Wealth and Economic Competitiveness in the EU', March 2025, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52025DC0124.

5 See: https://thinkepic.eu/publication/the-draghi-observatory-implementation-index-update-january-2026/.

6 See: https://www.nordiccompass.org/post/major-industry-leaders-launch-new-nordic-alliance-to-implement-joint-initiatives-in-four-critical-ar.

2 Implementation from below: what is new about Nordic Compass

Nordic Compass is a private association, not an intergovernmental body. Its direction is set by a board of senior Nordic business leaders, while the consultancy Dalberg and the Enterprise Think Tank run its day-to-day operations. The Nordic Advisory Board comprises national representatives and the Secretary-General of the Nordic Council of Ministers. The Council's agency, Nordic Innovation, supports the work through two of its programmes. Each year, the alliance will aim to identify four to six concrete initiatives and secure the endorsement of business and political decision-makers, providing a framework for implementation. The alliance describes itself as a "clearinghouse",[7] helping to reduce duplication and capitalise on national strengths.

To understand the distinctive contribution of the Nordic Compass initiative, it helps to contextualise the EU's current competitiveness strategy. In January 2025, the Commission's Competitiveness Compass translated the Draghi report into a work programme built on three pillars: innovation, decarbonisation, and reduced dependencies. Simplification was a horizontal priority, with targets to cut reporting obligations by 25% for all firms and by 35% for SMEs.[8] In order to identify the rules that constrain firms, the Commission introduced new tools, including implementation dialogues with each Commissioner, reality checks with practitioners, and stress tests of the existing body of EU law (the acquis).[9] The process starts with the legislator and ends with the firm. Before simplifying, however, the Commission must consult to identify which specific norm prevents which company from investing or scaling up.

Nordic Compass reverses this traditional policy sequence by asking what changes companies can make themselves, such as pooling capital, sharing market infrastructures, or coordinating procurement. Governments are only asked to act where private coordination meets a legal or fiscal barrier. This addresses the information problem that every top-down simplification initiative faces. As Hayek argued about economic planning in general,[10] the knowledge of which rule binds sits dispersed among firms, not in ministries. A request from firms that have already committed their own resources carries more weight than a response to a consultation that asks someone else to act.

Note that the model is not entirely without precedent in the history of European integration. In 1983, Pehr Gyllenhammar of Volvo and Wisse Dekker of Philips founded the European Round Table of Industrialists (ERT).[11] The ERT's reports and coalition-building fed into the Delors Commission's internal-market programme of the late 1980s.[12] However, the ERT mainly asked Brussels to legislate. In contrast, Nordic Compass promises to implement change and bring governments along where needed.

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7 Nordic Innovation, 'Nordic Compass – The Nordic Round Table for Industry'.

8 European Commission, 'A Simpler and Faster Europe: Communication on Implementation and Simplification', February 2025, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52025DC0047.

9 IEU Monitoring, 'EU Commissioner Dombrovskis Explains Simplification Plans at EP Legal Committee', February 2025, https://ieu-monitoring.com/editorial/eu-commissioner-dombrovskis-explains-simplification-plans-at-ep-legal-committee/543196.

10 Friedrich A. Hayek, 'The Use of Knowledge in Society', *American Economic Review* 35, no. 4 (1945): 519–30. For the application to EU matters, see: Vincent Carret, *Jacques Rueff, Friedrich Hayek, and the Emergence of Economic Order: The Case of the European Coal and Steel Community* (HAL, 2022), https://EconPapers.repec.org/RePEc:hal:wpaper:halshs-03824688.

11 Historical Archives of the European Union, 'European Round Table of Industrialists (ERT)', n.d., accessed 30 October 2026, https://archives.eui.eu/en/fonds/543141.

12 See: Giulia Vassallo, 'Dekker, Wisse', 2009, https://www.dizie.eu/dizionario/dekker-wisse/; Maria Green Cowles, 'Setting the Agenda for a New Europe: The ERT and EC 1992', *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 33, no. 4 (1995): 501–26, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5965.1995.tb00548.x.

A second feature is the distinctly Nordic culture that allows for the emergence of this initiative in the first place. In the region's political economy, competitiveness is not an end in itself, but rather a prerequisite for financing an extensive welfare state. High levels of trust between firms, unions, and governments mean that companies can take on public tasks without being immediately suspected of corruption. While this is not an official doctrine of the alliance, it might help to explain why the model emerged in the Nordics.

From an ordoliberal perspective, this initiative's structure also poses certain risks, which must be acknowledged. Above all, an agenda set by major incumbents may favour solutions that protect their current positions. So far, governments have not published any funding or legal commitments. Without transparent selection criteria and a clear distinction between private action and public decision-making, implementation from below could become lobbying with better branding. Needless to say, incumbent interests are not unique to the Nordics, so this issue must be kept in mind, especially if the alliance is to expand to other sectors or countries in the future (on enlargement, see below).

3 The finance pillar as test case

The starting point for the capital markets track of the Nordic Compass agenda seems favourable. Nordic pension funds and sovereign investors reportedly manage close to USD 4 trillion and take in more than USD 175 billion a year.[13] Thanks to well-developed second and third pillar funded pension systems, the assets under management are remarkably high. Consider, for instance, Denmark and Sweden, where the pension assets under management far exceed their respective gross domestic products (Denmark 192% and Sweden 128%). In comparison, countries such as Germany (12%) and France (14%) lag far behind in this regard. Together with the Netherlands, Denmark and Sweden account for nearly two-thirds of the EU's total pension assets (62%), although these three countries are not among the most populous in the EU.[14] What is more, Sweden is already a real frontrunner on the capital markets. At the end of 2025, there were 744 public traded companies in Germany compared to more than 900 in Sweden.[15] In total, 508 companies went public in Sweden between 2016 and 2023. France, Italy and Germany could not reach that figure (only 450 in total). Also, in venture capital financing, Sweden is far in the lead. Between 2016 and 2023, venture capital investment in Sweden amounted to €427 per capita, compared with €359 in France, €226 in Germany, and €94 in Italy**.**[16] It is thus not without reason that the German federal government is looking to the Swedish pension system for inspiration, particularly with regard to the introduction of a mandatory funded pension component under the statutory pension insurance system (*Kapitalrente*).[17]

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[13] Quirino Mealha, 'Nordics Weigh Merging Their Stock Exchanges into One Regional Market', August 2026, https://www.euronews.com/business/2026/08/27/nordics-weigh-merging-their-stock-exchanges-into-one-regional-market.

[14] Eckhardt, P. (2026), Funded Pension Provision with PEPP – The potentials and pitfalls of EU reforms to strengthen private pension provision, cepStudy No. 14, 15 October 2026, https://www.cep.eu/eu-topics/details/funded-pension-provision-with-pepp.html.

[15] Sabin, T. (2026), Aus Sparern werden Investoren – Schwedens Börsenkultur ist der deutschen um Längen voraus, Focus, 7 September 2026, https://www.focus.de/finanzen/194-der-wirtschaftsleistung-schweden-zeigt-was-eine-boersenkultur-bringt-und-wie-weit-deutschland-abgeschlagen-ist_6d519a74-3eb1-4e9b-81b4-8fd93ab6d7f4.html.

[16] Deutsches Aktieninstitut (DAI) (2025), Kinderdepots im internationalen Vergleich - Was können wir für die Frühstart-Rente vom Ausland lernen?, 29 September 2025, https://www.dai.de/fileadmin/user_upload/DAI_25026_Studie_Fruehstart-Rente_250925_v2_ES.pdf.

[17] In this regard, Germany wants to mimic the second component of the Swedish public pension system, i.e. the mandatory funded "premiepension". See: Federal Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs (2026), Empfehlungen der Alterssicherungskommission, https://www.bmas.de/DE/Soziales/Rente-und-Altersvorsorge/Rentenreform-2025/Rentenkommission-2026/rentenkommission-2026.html.

Yet, despite this favourable starting point, capital remains split across national markets. In this context, Christian Clausen, former Nordea chief executive and Nordic chairman of BlackRock, chairs a capital markets track that aims to improve this situation. Participants include Nasdaq Nordic, EQT and SEB, and on 22 October 2026, Euroclear Nordics joined the track.[18] Euroclear Nordics operates the central securities depositories (CSDs, i.e. the institutions that hold and settle securities) of Sweden and Finland. Meanwhile, prominent Nordic growth companies such as Spotify, Klarna and Oatly have listed in the United States.

According to press reports,[19] the finance pillar package unveiled at Gothenburg will likely include the following three elements:

- the consolidation of the Swedish, Danish, Norwegian and Finnish exchanges into one regional venue;
- the harmonisation of national capital market rules;
- and a Nordic growth and scale-up fund[20].

If it happens, the exchange merger will certainly attract the headlines, but other elements might be more relevant in the long term. Nasdaq already operates the Stockholm, Helsinki and Copenhagen exchanges. This position was built through the mergers that formed OMX between 2003 and 2005, and Nasdaq's subsequent acquisition of OMX in 2008.[21] Accordingly, consolidation would mainly involve adding the Oslo exchange, which Euronext has owned since 2019. At that time, Euronext prevailed over Nasdaq in a bidding contest that was then approved by the Norwegian finance ministry.[22] A single Nordic brand could raise the visibility of smaller issuers. However, there are more crucial barriers that prevent Nordic capital from being more international, namely: four currencies (SEK, DKK, NOK and EUR); separate central securities depositories (CSDs), with Euroclear in Sweden and Finland and Euronext Securities in Denmark and Norway; national tax and withholding tax procedures; and investment rules for pension funds and retail savings accounts. Ultimately, it is these post-trade and investor-side frictions that determine whether a Swedish pension fund will buy a Finnish small cap.

This also points to certain limits of the Nordic Compass model: While firms can merge platforms and pool funds, they cannot harmonise tax law, pension regulation or savings-account eligibility. The Commission's staff working document accompanying its Recommendation of 30 September 2025 cites Sweden's investment savings account (*investeringssparkonto*), among others, as a model for EU-wide savings and investment accounts.[23] A Nordic agreement to make such accounts mutually accessible,

[18] Securities Finance Times, 'Euroclear Nordics Joins Capital Markets Track of the Nordic Compass', October 2026, https://www.securitiesfinancetimes.com/securitieslendingnews/industryarticle.php?article_id=229091.

[19] Mealha, 'Nordics Weigh Merging Their Stock Exchanges into One Regional Market'.

[20] For the fund and scaling up, see: Nordea, 'Why the Nordics Need a Stronger Capital Market', September 2026, https://www.nordea.com/en/news/why-the-nordics-need-a-stronger-capital-market.

[21] The NASDAQ OMX Group, 'NASDAQ Completes OMX Transaction to Become The NASDAQ OMX Group, Inc.', February 2008, https://mondovisione.com/news/nasdaq-completes-omx-transaction-to-become-the-nasdaq-omx-group-inc-2011124.

[22] Euronext, 'Euronext Receives Clearance from the Norwegian Ministry of Finance to Acquire up to 100% of Oslo Børs VPS', May 2019, https://euronext.com/en/news/euronext-receives-clearance-norwegian-ministry-finance-acquire-oslo-bors-vps.

[23] European Commission, 'Commission Staff Working Document Accompanying the Commission Recommendation on Increasing the Availability of Savings and Investment Accounts', SWD/2025/6800 final, September 2025, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52025SC6800; European Commission, 'Commission Recommendation of 30 September 2025 on Increasing the Availability of Savings and Investment Accounts', September 2025, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reco/2025/2029/oj/eng.

enabling Danish or Finnish savers to hold Swedish-style accounts with cross-Nordic investments, would constitute a tangible governmental contribution.

The EU framework is also moving forward: the Commission proposed on 4 December 2025 a Market Integration and Supervision Package (MISP) as part of its Savings and Investments Union agenda.[24] On 9 October 2026, the Council agreed that direct supervision of the most significant cross-border trading venues and central securities depositories (CSDs) would move to the European Securities and Markets Authority (ESMA), albeit with narrower criteria than those proposed by the Commission.[25] A pan-European market operator framework with a single licence and voluntary ESMA supervision would also be created. Much is to be said in favour of this initiative, as EU stock market capitalisation equalled 73% of GDP in 2024, compared to around 270% in the United States.[26]

If designed well, a consolidated Nordic exchange group could become one of the first users of the pan-European operator licence and demonstrate the effectiveness of the MISP in practice. However, if designed as a separate regional regime, it would duplicate EU rules and complicate Norway's position, since EU financial legislation only reaches Norway after it is incorporated into the EEA Agreement.

Interestingly, the consolidation of Nordic exchanges could also serve as an early test case for the Commission's forthcoming revised Merger Guidelines. The Commission published its draft on 30 April 2026, intending to adopt the final text by the end of this year.[27] Clearly, the focus of the final new guidelines will remain on competition. Yet, other factors will gain in importance as compared to today. For instance, the Commission intends to prioritise targets such as strengthening the long-term (global) competitiveness of European companies. It also intends to provide more support for the global expansion capabilities of EU companies and their leadership in global competition, as well as giving more weight to potential efficiency gains resulting from mergers and supporting the resilience of the EU economy, particularly in sectors considered strategic and in the face of geopolitical threats.[28]

For exchanges, this shift matters. The Commission prohibited both the *Deutsche Börse/NYSE Euronext* merger in 2012 and the *Deutsche Börse/London Stock Exchange* merger in 2017, primarily due to concerns about market concentration in derivatives trading and clearing.[29] The draft guideline's new "theory of benefit", which allows merging parties to show how efficiencies offset competitive harm, could change this balance in future cases. In this context, a Nordic venue that broadens access for issuers and investors without foreclosing post-trade services might demonstrate how the new approach works in practice. However, it would not, by itself, mobilise the roughly USD 4 trillion managed by Nordic pension funds and sovereign investors. Whether or not this capital crosses borders depends on the investor-side and post-trade barriers discussed above.

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[24] See: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_25_2893.

[25] Irish Presidency of the Council of the European Union, 'Results of the Meeting of Finance Ministers, 9 October 2026', October 2026, https://irish-presidency.consilium.europa.eu/en/news/results-of-the-meeting-of-finance-ministers-9-october-2026/. See also: EU Perspectives, 'EU's Push for Financial Competitiveness Hits Limits over Market Supervision', October 2026, https://euperspectives.eu/2026/10/eus-push-for-financial-competitiveness-hits-limits-over-market-supervision/.

[26] See: https://www.thetradenews.com/eu-unveils-ambitious-plan-to-unify-europes-financial-markets/.

[27] See: https://competition-policy.ec.europa.eu/mergers/review-merger-guidelines_en. Note, the new guidelines are expected to be adopted by the end of the year.

[28] Eckhardt, P. and Kotowski, A. (2026), Revision of the EU Merger Guidelines – Is there a need to dismantle the hurdles to (globally) competitive financial markets infrastructure?, cepStudy, 10 February 2026, https://www.cep.eu/eu-topics/details/revision-of-the-eu-merger-guidelines.html.

[29] Commission decisions M.6166 (1 February 2012, https://competition-cases.ec.europa.eu/cases/M.6166) and M.7995 (29 March 2017, https://competition-cases.ec.europa.eu/cases/M.7995).

4 A new mode of differentiated integration?

The idea that some European states should progress faster than others, which can be termed "differentiated integration", is not a new one. In September 1994, Wolfgang Schäuble and Karl Lamers proposed the concept of a "core Europe" (*Kerneuropa*), centred on Germany, France, and the Benelux countries. The Treaty of Amsterdam (1997) first introduced "closer cooperation" into the Treaties; since the Treaty of Lisbon, Article 20 TEU allows at least nine Member States to establish enhanced cooperation, but only as a last resort.[30] A prominent example of such enhanced cooperation has been the wish by several Member States – eleven at the beginning – to introduce a financial transaction tax (FTT) in 2013. The establishment among all Member States has failed before due to the inability to reach unanimity.[31] The debate returned in January 2026, when Chancellor Merz and Finance Minister Klingbeil announced the formation of the "E6" group comprising Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Poland and the Netherlands. The group's agenda includes a capital markets union, the international role of the euro, securing access to raw materials and defence investment. In February, Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen endorsed a two-speed approach, and Commission President von der Leyen identified enhanced cooperation as a potential solution for the Savings and Investments Union.[32] Note that no Nordic state belongs to the E6.

Nordic Compass introduces another type of differentiation, in addition to the core group of governments and the treaty mechanism. This type is functional rather than territorial and industry-led rather than intergovernmental (see Table 1). It also crosses the line between EU and EEA members. The Nordic region is a plausible testing ground for this type of cooperation: The Nordic economies have remained close to the global productivity frontier, combining strong institutions, high labour-market participation, social cohesion and relatively ambitious climate policies, but they are now facing significant challenges as geopolitics disrupts traditional supply chains.[33] Therefore, reforms that work there could be relevant more widely.

Tab. 1: Comparison of Nordic Compass with other initiatives

	Kerneuropa (1994)	E6 (2026)	Nordic Compass (2026)
Initiator	CDU/CSU parliamentary group	Six governments	Companies and foundations
Legal basis	Proposal for deeper political union	Informal; Art. 20 TEU as option	Private association
Membership	Founding states	Largest EU economies	Firms active across the Nordics, incl. Norway and Iceland
Source of speed	Political will of a core	Bypassing unanimity	Small groups solving concrete problems
Main limit	Exclusion of others	Cohesion of the EU-27	No power to legislate

Source: cep research.

Compared with other approaches to a two-speed Europe, the advantage of the Nordic Compass model lies in its size. Speed is achieved through small, high-trust groups of senior executives discussing

[30] Robert Böttner, 'The Instrument of Enhanced Cooperation: Pitfalls and Possibilities for Differentiated Integration', *European Papers - A Journal on Law and Integration* 2022 7 (February 2023), https://doi.org/10.15166/2499-8249/605.

[31] In the end, the introduction of the tax also failed under enhanced cooperation. See:https://www.cep.eu/eu-topics/details/enhanced-cooperation-in-the-area-of-financial-transaction-tax-directive.html.

[32] Euronews, 'EU-Wirtschaft: Macron Erhöht Den Druck', February 2026, https://de.euronews.com/2026/02/13/eu-wirtschaft-macron-klingbeil.

[33] See: Copenhagen Economics, *Analysis of Competitiveness in a Nordic Perspective*, TemaNord 2026:538 (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2026), https://www.norden.org/en/publication/analysis-competitiveness-nordic-perspective.

concrete barriers rather than general principles, without the need for unanimity or the nine-state threshold. However, its limitations are equally clear: any output requiring a change in tax, pension or supervisory law must still be approved by national parliaments or the EU legislator.

These structural features have consequences for how the alliance should grow. Adding members would certainly slow it down. **However, adding work streams where Nordic capabilities address a European dependency would increase its relevance without diluting it**. Critical minerals are an obvious candidate: In October 2026, it was reported that the alliance was considering such an extension.[34] A study commissioned by Nordic Innovation found that Nordic bedrock could cover a significant share of almost all the metals and minerals needed for Europe's transition.[35] The EU's Critical Raw Materials Act sets out concrete benchmarks for 2030: at least 40% of the EU's annual consumption should come from domestic processing, and no more than 65% of any strategic raw material should come from a single third country.[36]

What does this mean for other EU member states such as Germany? Germany is pursuing speed from the top through the E6, while Nordic Compass is demonstrating a complementary approach from below. In principle, companies active in more than one Nordic market can take part.[37] For German firms with Nordic operations, particularly those in the automotive, chemicals, and engineering sectors, a minerals processing work stream would offer direct access. For the Federal Government, the alliance is a natural interlocutor on two E6 priorities (capital markets and raw materials) in a region that the E6 does not cover.

5 Conclusion and policy recommendations

Private market initiatives that remove barriers deserve support. However, it is important to distinguish this from private initiatives that secure special treatment for their members. Industry-led implementation is legitimate if it remains open to newcomers and contributes to general rules. In this spirit, we formulate the following policy recommendations:

1. **Nordic Compass should publish a delivery plan for each initiative presented in Gothenburg**. Each plan should distinguish between what partners commit to doing themselves and what they request of governments and set a deadline. The board should publish its selection and membership criteria, including openness to firms active in more than one Nordic market, irrespective of their headquarters location.
2. **Nordic finance ministers should agree on mutual access to investment savings accounts and aligned investment rules for pension funds**. Firms cannot remove these barriers on their own.

[34] Mining Weekly, 'Nordic Business Alliance Weighs Expanding into Critical Minerals', October 2026, https://www.miningweekly.com/article/nordic-business-alliance-weighs-expanding-into-critical-minerals-2026-10-02.

[35] Geological Survey of Finland (GTK), 'Report: The Nordic Countries Have Good Potential for Sustainable Production of Critical Metals and Minerals as Europe Moves to Green Energy', September 2021, https://gtk.fi/en/current/report-the-nordic-countries-have-good-potential-for-sustainable-production-of-critical-metals-and-minerals-as-europe-moves-to-green-energy.

[36] European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 'Regulation (EU) 2024/1252 of 11 April 2024 Establishing a Framework for Ensuring a Secure and Sustainable Supply of Critical Raw Materials (Critical Raw Materials Act)', 2024, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1252/oj.

[37] Authors' background discussions with local stakeholders.

As Norway will take over the presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers in 2027,[38] it is well placed to put this on the ministerial agenda.

3. **The capital markets track should design any consolidated Nordic venue to be an early user of the EU's planned pan-European market operator licence and prioritise post-trade integration**. Linking the Nordic CSDs and simplifying withholding tax procedures would be more beneficial for cross-border investment than a common brand. Norway should seek the early incorporation of the relevant MISP provisions into the EEA Agreement.
4. **The Commission should treat regional industry pilots such as Nordic Compass as formal inputs for its simplification strategy**. In particular, the barriers identified by Nordic Compass should be fed directly into the Commission's reality checks and stress tests of existing EU law. At the same time, the Commission should assess any exchange consolidation under the revised Merger Guidelines. This should involve weighing the benefits of scale against the risks of foreclosure in post-trade services. The Commission should also apply State-aid rules to any publicly backed scale-up fund.
5. **The Federal Government should initiate an E6–Nordic dialogue on capital markets and raw materials, while German firms operating in the Nordics should apply for participation in the relevant working groups**. The Federal Ministries of Finance and Economic Affairs could begin by holding a joint meeting with Nordic Compass to discuss critical mineral processing. German industry associations should ascertain whether the same bottom-up approach could be used to identify specific implementation obstacles within Germany.

Two years on from the Draghi report, Europe is not short of diagnoses. What it lacks is a reliable way of turning them into changes that firms can notice. Nordic Compass offers one solution: allow companies to identify the barriers, allocate their own resources first, and engage governments only where legislation is an obstacle. This approach is based on Nordic values and the idea that competitiveness is the economic foundation of the welfare state.

While Washington counts the votes from the midterm elections, Gothenburg is testing whether Europe can invest its own savings in its own firms. Over time, the answer to this question could have a greater impact on Europe's ability to act than the outcome of any single election abroad. If the alliance's members succeed in compiling a specific list of post-trade and investor-side barriers, along with private commitments and time-bound requests to governments, the Nordic Compass could serve as a broader model, for instance for implementing the Savings and Investments Union. The debate on a Europe of different speeds has so far taken place among governments, as illustrated by the E6. However, the Nordic Compass suggests that speed can also come from below. Europe's competitiveness agenda would benefit from utilising both approaches.

[38] Åsmund Aukrust, 'Address to the Storting on Nordic Cooperation by the Minister for Nordic Cooperation', October 2026, https://www.regjeringen.no/en/whats-new/address-to-the-storting-on-nordic-cooperation-by-the-minister-for-nordic-cooperation-asmund-aukrust/id3179168/.

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