From research excellence to Nordic scale

Draft joint statement by Nordic organisations representing highly educated professionals

The Nordic countries have world-class research environments, strong higher education institutions and highly educated populations. Yet too much knowledge never reaches its full potential as innovative solutions, successful companies and globally competitive industries. As organisations representing highly educated professionals, we call for stronger pathways that translate excellent research into real-world applications, societal value and international growth.

Protect and invest in excellent research

Excellent basic and applied research is the foundation for innovation, new industries and societal progress. Nordic governments and European institutions must ensure long-term and predictable investment in research, research infrastructures and attractive research environments, while safeguarding academic freedom.

Research and innovation policies should be closely aligned while preserving the distinct purpose of research funding. Curiosity-driven research must continue to be assessed primarily on scientific excellence. When promising results emerge, researchers should have access to the expertise, infrastructure and financing needed to develop them further.

Make entrepreneurship a viable career path

Academic career systems should recognise relevant experience gained through innovation, commercialisation, entrepreneurship and cooperation with companies and the public sector. Experience outside academia should be regarded as an asset and not create unnecessary barriers to pursue a professional research career. Innovation should be understood broadly, including the contributions of design, the creative industries and other knowledge-intensive professions to economic, cultural and societal value.

Nordic governments and institutions should remove obstacles that make movement between research and entrepreneurship unnecessarily difficult. Researchers should also have access to professional support in areas such as intellectual property, company formation, financing, compliance and regulation. Doctoral education should provide opportunities to develop innovation and entrepreneurial skills where relevant.

Close the gap from research to scale

Research-based companies face particular challenges between scientific discovery and commercial viability. Promising technologies and solutions often require further

development, validation and demonstration at a stage when revenues are limited, and private investors consider the risk too high.

Nordic governments and innovation actors should reduce gaps between research funding, proof of concept, demonstration, company formation and scaling. Public instruments should provide targeted funding where private capital is not yet available and mobilise private investment by sharing risk as companies mature. Established companies must also take greater responsibility for sustained investment in research, development and innovation.

Public procurement should provide appropriate opportunities for testing and adopting research-based solutions, while respecting competition and procurement rules.

Strengthen the Nordic innovation environment

While the Nordic countries are individually small, together they can provide stronger research networks, specialist expertise, infrastructures and larger markets for testing and early adoption.

Nordic governments and innovation actors should strengthen and systematise cooperation on research-based innovation and scaling. They should facilitate cross-border access to relevant research infrastructures, testing facilities and expertise, improve mobility and identify areas where coordinated initiatives provide clear Nordic added value.

National systems do not need to be identical. The objective should be to make them easier to combine and navigate for researchers and companies.

Ensure continuity in European funding

The next EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (FP10) must maintain strong support for excellent, curiosity-driven research. At the same time, FP10 and the European Competitiveness Fund should provide workable pathways from promising research results to practical application and international scale.

The roles of FP10, the European Competitiveness Fund, the European Research Council and the European Innovation Council should be clear from the perspective of researchers and companies. European instruments should complement national and Nordic measures and reduce gaps between research, commercialisation and company growth.

Our shared priorities

We call on Nordic governments, higher education institutions, research organisations, companies, investors and relevant European institutions to:

1. maintain long-term investment in excellent research, research infrastructures and attractive research careers, while safeguarding academic freedom

2. recognise relevant experience from innovation and entrepreneurship and reduce unnecessary barriers to mobility between academia and other sectors
3. close the funding and capability gaps from research to scale by mobilising more private investment and providing targeted public funding where risks are high
4. improve cross-border access to Nordic research infrastructures, expertise, testing facilities and early markets
5. strengthen Nordic coordination and ensure workable links between national and European research and innovation instruments

A stronger Nordic environment for research-based innovation will increase the economic and societal value of investment in research and education. It will provide wider career opportunities and enable more knowledge-based solutions and companies to develop and grow in the Nordic countries and Europe.