

NSPA Position Paper on the EU Military Mobility Package

The Northern Sparsely Populated Areas network, NSPA, represents the interests of the four northernmost regions of Sweden (Norrbotten, Västerbotten, Jämtland Härjedalen and Västernorrland), the seven eastern and northernmost regions of Finland (Central Ostrobothnia, Kainuu, Lapland, North Karelia, Northern Ostrobothnia, Pohjois-Savo and South Savo), as well as the three northernmost regions of Norway (Nordland, Troms, Finnmark).

The changed geostrategic position of Northern Europe highlights the significance of the NSPA area in the European Union's security architecture. The region serves as a strategic gateway between the Arctic, the Baltic Sea, and the wider European continent. In the current geopolitical climate, a resilient, dual-use transport infrastructure in the NSPA is both desirable and indispensable for ensuring both military mobility and civilian preparedness.

Reliable east–west connections — from the Finnish border to the Norwegian coast — are both a regional concern as well as a matter of European and transatlantic security. [The OECD Territorial Review of the NSPA \(2025\)](#) confirms that east–west infrastructure remains underdeveloped and requires targeted investment to achieve the necessary interoperability and redundancy for both military and civilian purposes.

At the same time, as well as being a home of the Sami, the NSPA is home to key resources for Europe's green and digital transitions - renewable energy, green industry, critical raw materials and strategic industrial capacity. The sparse population and challenging geography make it inherently fragile. Therefore, civil and military mobility are two sides of the same coin. Strengthening infrastructure (including electricity grids) supports both the development of NATO's capability to project military power in the NSPA area and economic and social growth as well as climate objectives.

Challenges

- Underdeveloped east–west links and low redundancy in critical infrastructure
- Single-track railways, limited opportunities for trains to pass each other, different track gauges, limited load capacity and outdated bridges
- Sparse population and harsh climate conditions increasing vulnerability
- Fragmented cross-border procedures and limited civil–military coordination
- Insufficient involvement of regional authorities in EU planning and implementation

Recommendations

The NSPA supports the EU's ambition to enhance military mobility as a cornerstone of European resilience. To achieve this, the forthcoming package should:

1. **Include all levels of the TEN-T network**, including the Comprehensive and Extended network, ensuring investments also reach peripheral and Arctic areas.
2. **Maintain a strong, coordinated European funding framework**, and ensure cross-border priorities remain central.

3. **Strengthen connectivity with neighbouring third countries**, such as Norway, to align with NATO's expanded territory.
4. **Establish a dedicated CEF budget line** for projects from border to border involving neighbouring third countries like Norway.
5. **Enable investments** in transport infrastructure in the NSPA regions through the **ERDF** and the **National and Regional Partnership Plans (NRPP)**.
6. **Ensure tailored support for multimodal transport solutions**, including rail, shipping, inland waterway transport, and air transport, to overcome the region's geographic challenges.
7. **Guarantee that infrastructure investments in the Arctic combine climate resilience, environmental protection, and strategic preparedness.** The effects of climate change are more visible in the Arctic than anywhere else, altering operational conditions for both civil and military mobility.
8. **Embed regional authorities in planning and implementation**, to ensure bottom-up legitimacy and alignment with regional development strategies and regional transport plans.
9. **Ensure close civil-military cooperation** in planning and promoting dual-use applications.
10. **Recognise Platform North and similar initiatives** as key instruments for aligning regional and EU-level efforts and ensure they are eligible for support under the package.
11. **Encourage initiatives to strengthen interoperability between national systems**, such as digital logistics system

Strengthening dual-use infrastructure and cross-border cooperation in the NSPA region will enhance Europe's total defence capability, support regional development, and reinforce the EU's strategic autonomy.

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