



STRING

2026-2030 STRATEGY

Connected. Competitive. Resilient.

Building a strong, competitive and sustainable megaregion from Oslo-Hamburg for people, businesses and prosperity.



Oslo



AKERSHUS
FYLKESKOMMUNE



Østfold
fylkeskommune



VÄSTRA
GÖTALANDSREGIONEN



City of
Gothenburg



Region
Halland



REGION
SKÅNE



HELINGSBORG



City of
Malmö



CITY OF
COPENHAGEN



Region
Hovedstaden

REGION
SJÆLLAND



Region
Syddanmark



Schleswig-Holstein
Der echte Norden



Kiel.
Sailing.City.



Hamburg

Foreword

STRING is a political cooperation built to remove cross-border bottlenecks, strengthen connectivity and unlock the full potential of our multinational cross-border geography as one of Europe's most connected, competitive, green and sustainable megaregions. The STRING geography is already characterised by strong democratic institutions and high levels of societal trust, providing a strong foundation for cross-border cooperation that benefits the region as a whole. In a time of geopolitical uncertainty, the regulatory landscape is being transformed to drive security and sovereignty, but also European competitiveness and industrial resilience - all measures deeply dependent on strong infrastructure, international alignment and innovation.

This is STRING's opportunity. With a long-term focus on infrastructure investments and sustainable industrial transformation, STRING builds the very resilience and territorial cohesion as a prerequisite for green industry growth, and thus in its very purpose supports Europe's net zero ambitions, as well as its resilience.

By continuing to connect and align our regions, cities and sustainable industries politically, economically and geographically, while reducing bottlenecks, enhancing infrastructure, and driving sustainable industry expansion, STRING will realise its full potential as a platform for regulatory collaboration and sustainable industry development. This will enable dynamic cross-border mobility for citizens, supply, talent and industry across a resilient and green megaregion.

1. Political context

In a time of geopolitical fragmentation, war in Europe, and security of supply taking a permanent seat on the international agenda, STRING's political context has transformed significantly since its last strategy iteration, from a green transition and connectivity mission to an urgent call for resilience, strategic autonomy, and competitiveness.

As the 2024 Draghi Report¹ outlined, many of Europe's barriers to growth are rooted in cross-border challenges - infrastructural as well as trade related. Addressing them is necessary to make infrastructure resilient and dynamic, to unlock investments and scale innovation, and to ensure robust security of supply.

Consequential international agreements and policy acts therefore add new layers to STRING's previous regulatory backdrop - and provide new opportunities within STRING's vision for its green, connected, and competitive megaregion. These count both the NATO pledge for an increase of national contributions to 5% of which 1,5% will be dedicated to infrastructure enhancements, and the Industrial Accelerator Act, IAA, proposed in March 2026, as a driver of competitiveness and industrial resilience.

Megaregional competitiveness through cross-border connectivity

As an implementer of sustainable infrastructure, STRING has taken a significant role in societal implementation of innovation. As a proven pioneer of the green transition and to realise the promising potential for the Hamburg-Oslo corridor², STRING must now widen its scope to deliver on demands for resilience and supply, and work for both dynamic infrastructure, resilient industries, and connection of its innovation ecosystems.

In its 2026 report on the development of the corridor from Hamburg to Oslo, the Kiel Institute highlighted the need for stronger integration of innovation ecosystems and labour markets across the STRING geography if the megaregion is to realise its full potential.³ We will also align STRING's work with the strategic priorities of our members in Northern Germany and provide cross-border perspectives and support on green energy, transport infrastructure, and digitalisation.

With the EU policies and funding programmes tied to its new geopolitical context as levers, STRING can connect markets, talents, innovation ecosystems and infrastructure across the Hamburg–Oslo corridor, thus enhancing its trade and industry integration across borders. Standing on its expertise and work to strengthen infrastructure and connectivity, STRING can thereby expand its effect, enabling a megaregional framework for competitiveness at scale, and ideal conditions for companies to grow, invest and operate across borders.

¹ [The future of European competitiveness](#), Mario Draghi, 2024.

² OECD, 2021, Nordic Council of Ministers [2030 vision](#)

³ [Development Perspectives of STRING](#), Kiel Institute, 2026.

2. Strategic Pillars

STRING positions a connected and integrated geography as part of a solution to Europe's competitiveness challenges. Strong infrastructure and connectivity are essential tools to provide integrated markets, innovation, investment and labour mobility across borders.

To deliver on this role, STRING's strategy rests on two mutually reinforcing pillars: **Infrastructure & Connectivity** and **Enhancing Competitiveness**. Infrastructure and connectivity provide the foundation for competitiveness, while stronger competitiveness, investment and innovation create demand and strengthen the case for further infrastructure development.

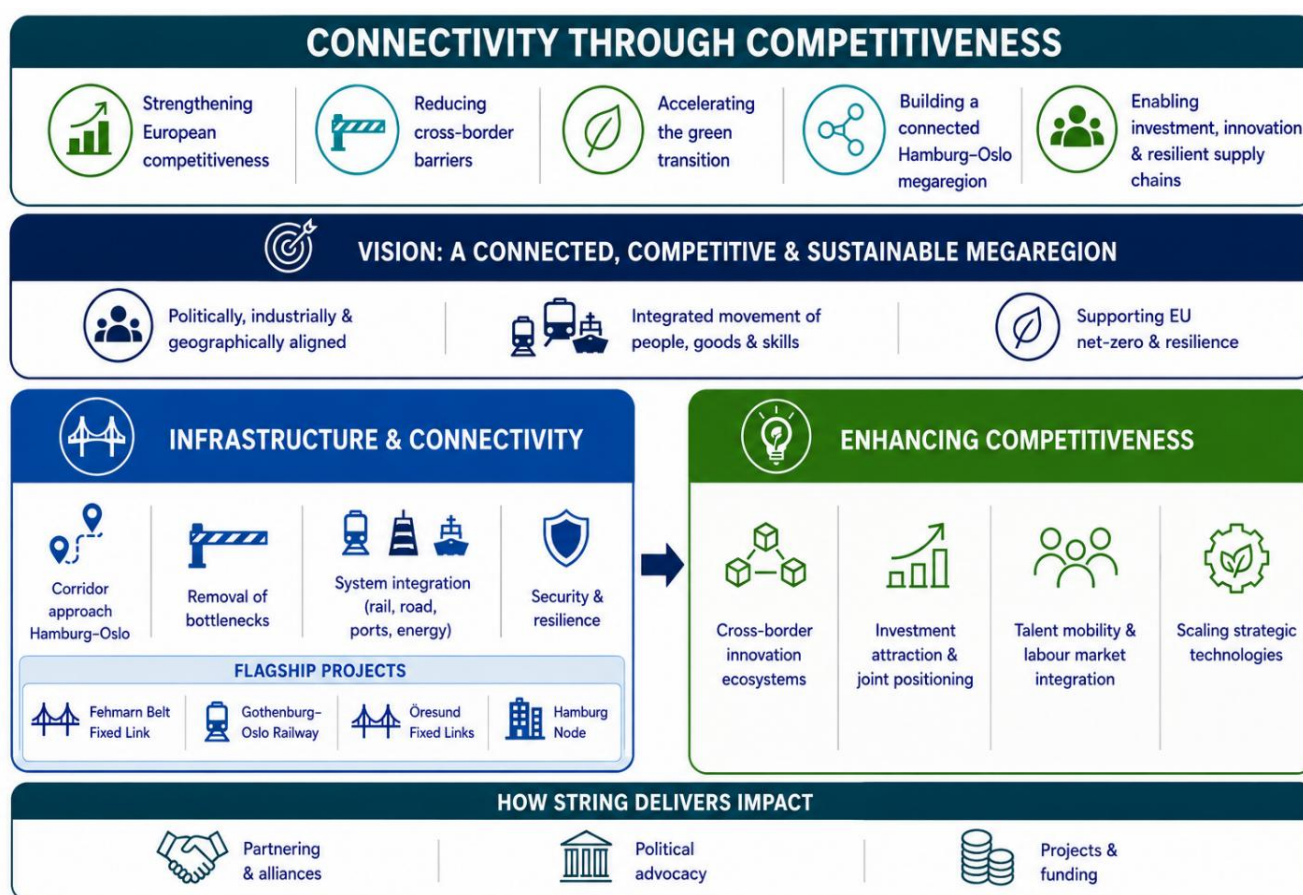


Figure 1: Strategic overview of STRING's 2030 strategy - from vision to impact.

2.1 : Infrastructure & Connectivity

Infrastructure forms the backbone of STRING's cooperation and enables more cross-border integration and cohesion. But infrastructure is not a goal in itself; it is an instrument for integration, competitiveness, sustainable growth and resilience.

STRING prioritises dual-use infrastructure along the Hamburg–Oslo corridor, ensuring transport supports both economic growth and military mobility. By enhancing load capacity, clearance and redundancy across rail and ports,

we strengthen Northern Europe's security and preparedness, while promoting a system perspective where rail, road, ports, charging infrastructure, alternative fuels and energy connections reinforce each other. Across this system, STRING will support a stronger shift from road to rail for both passenger and freight transport, reducing emissions, easing congestion and strengthening the resilience of the corridor.

STRING focuses on strengthening the functionality of the entire megaregional corridor, recognising that the performance of the system depends on the strength of each link. This requires a corridor-wide perspective that identifies and addresses bottlenecks affecting connectivity and capacity across the Hamburg-Oslo corridor. STRING will therefore maintain an overview of infrastructure bottlenecks across the megaregion and support efforts to progressively address them.

Removal of infrastructure bottlenecks:

Bottlenecks hinder the creation of an open, accessible and investor-friendly geography with free movement of people and goods in the ScanMed TEN-T corridor between Hamburg and Oslo, making transport connectivity central to STRING's strategic work. By removing bottlenecks, STRING can help create the conditions for companies to invest, recruit, trade and scale across borders.

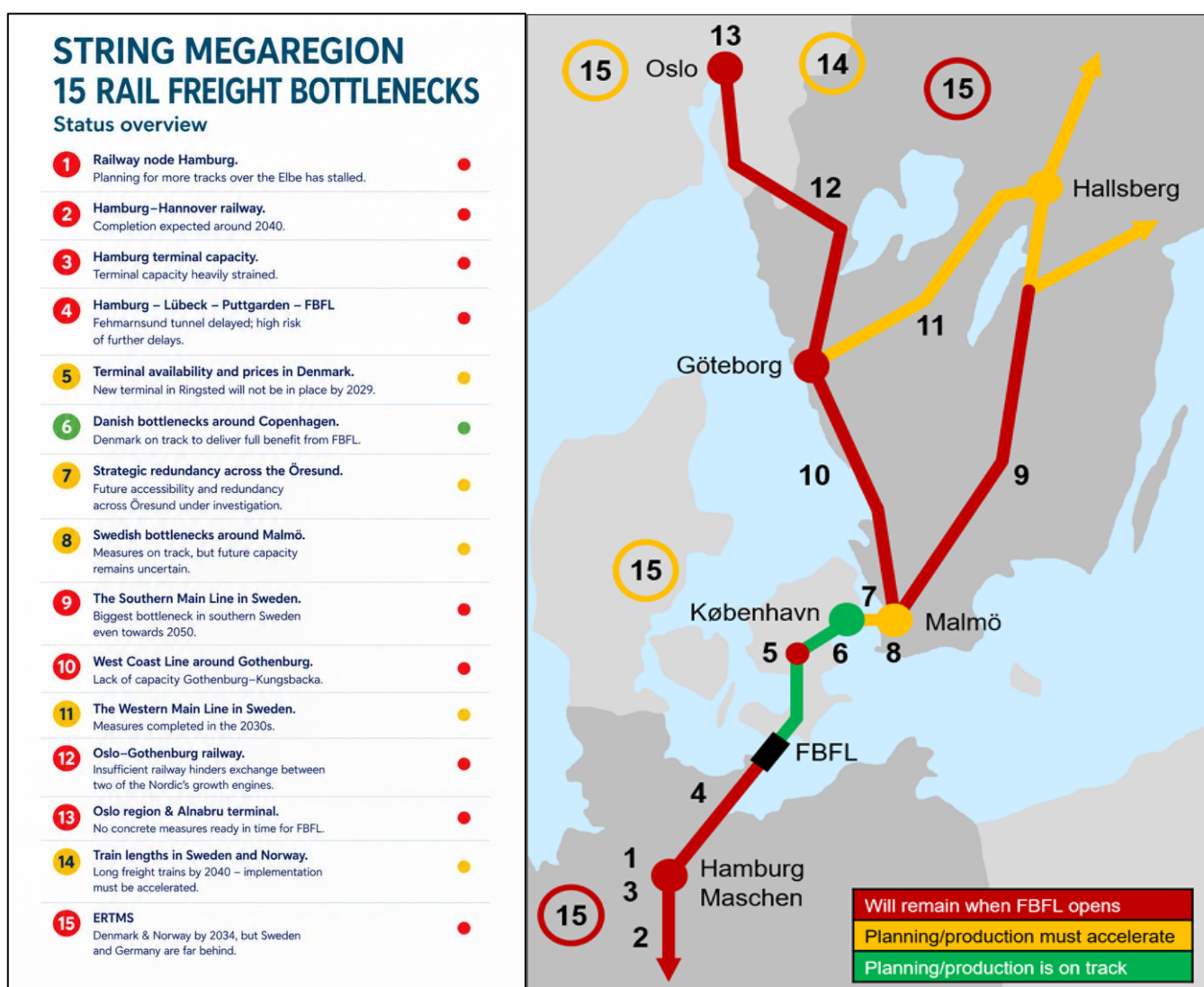


Figure 2. Rai freight bottlenecks along the Hamburg-Oslo corridor: Sweco (2025), Fehmarn Belt Fixed Link – Status 2025, Figure 2.

The SWECO report identifies key rail freight bottlenecks along the Hamburg–Oslo corridor, as illustrated in Figure 2. Building on this analysis, STRING will monitor progress annually and support its members in maintaining political pressure on relevant national and European actors. At the same time, STRING’s broader infrastructure agenda addresses bottlenecks affecting both freight and passenger transport. The aim is to ensure that remaining bottlenecks are progressively addressed and that the corridor’s full potential is realised.

In this context, STRING will continue to highlight the need to strengthen capacity on the Maria–Helsingborg section of the West Coast Line, a significant bottleneck for passenger rail and an important part of enabling faster and more reliable passenger connectivity towards Gothenburg and Oslo.

Alongside addressing specific bottlenecks, STRING will work to strengthen the overall performance and sustainability of the corridor by:

- Supporting a low-emission transport infrastructure
- Advancing high-speed train services
- Assuring inclusive mobility
- Receiving maximum EU funding for regional investments

Flagship infrastructure initiatives:

Alongside its corridor-wide efforts to identify and address infrastructure bottlenecks, STRING has identified four flagship infrastructure initiatives of particular strategic importance to the development and integration of the megaregion:

- Fehmarn Belt Fixed Link & Hinterland Connections
- Hamburg Node
- Fixed links across the Öresund Belt
- Gothenburg-Oslo dual-track railway

All four initiatives form part of STRING’s shared strategic portfolio. The intensity of STRING’s political attention and engagement may vary over time depending on project maturity, political momentum and emerging windows of opportunity, while all four remain shared long-term priorities.

2.2 Enhancing Competitiveness

STRING’s competitiveness agenda builds directly on its core strengths in infrastructure and connectivity. Better connectivity enables integrated labour markets, stronger value chains, innovation and investment, while closer cooperation with businesses, investors and innovation ecosystems strengthens the economic and political case for the infrastructure needed across the corridor.

The Green Investment & Innovation Hub

Industry growth and innovation are central to strengthening the competitiveness and sustainable growth of the region between Hamburg and Oslo. The cross-border geography is home to globally competitive sustainable industries, leading universities, and strong innovation ecosystems. STRING will position the megaregion as a green

cross-border innovation hub. That means creating a shared platform for value creation that links innovation ecosystems, a shared cross-border talent pool, and STRING's sustainable industries.

Competitiveness in the megaregion depends on the cohesion between ecosystems across borders to test, commercialise, and scale solutions of strategic importance across the megaregion. STRING will facilitate this by linking universities, industry, innovation hubs, and public stakeholders across borders, thus strengthening collaboration, accelerating knowledge sharing, and achieving market edge - without duplicating efforts in various hubs. As an institutional facilitator, STRING will use its broad political backing to enable efficient collaboration.

STRING will continue its Investment Promotion Agency collaboration to ensure streamlined knowledge sharing on regional strongholds, technology trends, and barriers to growth, and strengthen the recognition of the megaregion as an attractive investment area through joint positioning and trade missions to international hubs and conferences.

Labour Market Integration & Talent Mobility

To further ignite competitiveness across the megaregion, STRING will enhance collaboration between labour market actors, educational institutions and industry to ensure stronger integration of labour markets across its borders. Coordination across the three borders will support the free movement of citizens and talent by simplifying administrative procedures and reducing technical barriers across the Hamburg–Oslo corridor. Better physical connectivity, combined with fewer administrative barriers, will strengthen access to jobs, skills and talent across the megaregion.

In synergy with its investment promotion efforts, STRING will position the region as an attractive destination for international talent, particularly in areas critical to sustainability and competitiveness such as green technologies, digitalisation and advanced manufacturing. This will strengthen access to skills, increase innovation capacity and support long-term economic growth, developing leadership by example within the European Union.

4. STRING's methods: Delivering impact

Delivering impact is a shared responsibility between STRING's members and the Secretariat. Both should proactively identify political opportunities, build relevant alliances, commit to deliver concrete work and support one another in advancing agreed priorities across the corridor.

Political Advocacy

STRING provides a unified megaregional voice to influence national and European decision-making. By aligning political positions across its members, STRING shapes policy, secures funding and prioritises cross-border investments. A strong presence in Brussels and engagement with EU institutions, national governments and regional stakeholders ensure that megaregional priorities are reflected in frameworks such as TEN-T. The revised TEN-T Regulation provides a key European framework for advancing STRING's strategic infrastructure

priorities, while the Connecting Europe Facility constitutes an important funding instrument for their implementation.

Strategic communication and targeted events are key tools in this advocacy. Through clear and consistent messaging, targeted outreach, high-level conferences, political meetings, political festivals and thematic workshops, STRING brings together decision-makers across sectors and borders, strengthens visibility and alliances, and creates political momentum around shared priorities.

Partnerships

Strengthening ties with the private sector:

STRING will deepen cooperation with Investment Promotion Agencies. STRING will explore a more structured dialogue with key business leaders to better deliver on our advocacy work, particularly on the bottleneck and competitiveness agenda, e.g. in the form of a CEO Forum for infrastructure dependent companies.

Strengthening ties with neighbouring corridors:

STRING will maintain a strong relationship with transport axes in our vicinity such as the Jutland Corridor and the Oslo-Stockholm 2.55. A high concentration of traffic along the corridor increases vulnerability, underscoring the importance of strengthening alternative connections, including across the Danish–German land border.

Strengthening ties with universities and research communities:

STRING will engage universities and research institutions as strategic partners in project development, evidence-building and the testing of solutions linked to infrastructure, green transition, labour mobility and industrial transformation.

Strengthening ties with other European megaregions:

STRING will form strategic alliances with other European megaregions to strengthen its influence on EU policy and funding priorities. We position cross-border corridors as central to European integration, competitiveness, and decarbonization.

Through these partnerships, STRING will work to ensure that megaregional needs are reflected in EU programmes and the Multiannual Financial Framework. We will strengthen our positioning in Brussels and our European visibility by convening an annual State of the European Megaregions.

Projects

Project fundraising and execution remain key pathways for STRING to translate strategy into action. STRING will continue to initiate, support and facilitate the participation in funded cross-border projects, leveraging programmes such as CEF, Interreg and other EU and national funding schemes to support infrastructure development, attract investments, and scale innovation and solutions across borders.

STRING plays a coordinating role by connecting partners, while members and the Secretariat share responsibility for identifying opportunities, connecting relevant partners and advancing initiatives. Projects are prioritised based on their cross-border relevance and their ability to deliver system-level impact across the megaregion.

ANNEX 1:

Ambitions for STRING's four flagship infrastructure initiatives 2026-2030:

The Fehmarn Belt Fixed Link:

The Fehmarn Belt Fixed Link represents the most transformative infrastructure investment in the megaregion. Connectivity will be dramatically improved in the STRING region and the ScanMed TEN-T corridor. Improved mobility and shorter travel times will enhance the labour market, and business life integration. The Fehmarn Belt Fixed Link is expected to open shortly after 2030. STRING will work to ensure that its full benefits are realised through the timely development of efficient hinterland connections.

Hamburg Node:

Hamburg is a hub for the ScanMed TEN-T corridor, linking Northern and Central Europe and serving freight and passenger traffic. The port of Hamburg is Europe's largest railway port and third-largest container port, highlighting intermodal transport. Addressing these constraints is essential for efficient freight movement from Jutland to Central Europe and for Hamburg to remain an integrated node in the STRING megaregion.

Fixed Links across Öresund:

Fixed links across the Öresund have proven their value. The Öresund Bridge between Malmö and Copenhagen has enabled strong cross-border integration. With the completion of the Fehmarn Belt Fixed Link, traffic flows across the corridor are expected to increase, placing greater demands on the connecting land-based transport infrastructure on both sides of the Öresund.

An Öresund metro between Malmö and Copenhagen would increase capacity for high-frequency, sustainable urban transport across the strait. It would deepen labour market integration, reduce travel times, and support the growth of the cross-border metropolitan region. STRING will support the realization of the metro as a long-term solution to capacity constraints.

A tunnel between Helsingør and Helsingborg would create an additional resilient crossing in the northern Öresund. It would strengthen regional cohesion, improve redundancy in the transport system, reduce travel times, lead to a larger labour market and support the growth in the cross-border region. STRING will work to advance planning and political support to realize this connection.

Gothenburg- Oslo Railway:

Upgrading the existing railway between Gothenburg and Oslo to double track, with long-term potential for high-speed rail, is required for faster transport for goods and people.

STRING will work to avoid this stretch becoming a bottleneck in the TEN-T ScanMed corridor following the completion of the Fehmarn Belt Fixed Link. A stronger rail connection between Gothenburg and Oslo will enhance rail competitiveness and support the exchange of competences across the border. It is also a continued priority to shift freight from road to rail between Sweden and Norway, as road congestion is already a problem and is at risk of increasing further. Similarly, STRING will work towards upgrading the Maria-Helsingborg railway to double track and, in the long term, ensure capacity for high-speed rail services within the corridor.