



STATE OF THE NORDIC REGION 2026

Report launch
25 March
13:00-14:30 CET



Agenda

Welcome & introduction

Miia Itänen, Senior Communications Advisor

What is *State of the Nordic Region*?

Thomas Niedomysl, Research Director & Maria Bobrinskaya, Head of GIS

Demography

Nora Sánchez Gassen, Senior Research Fellow

Labour market

Anna Lundgren, Senior Research Fellow

Economy

Carlos Tapia, Senior Research Fellow

Final reflections & concluding remarks





What is State of the Nordic Region?

Thomas Niedomysl
Research Director, Nordregio

Maria Bobrinskaya
Head of GIS, Nordregio

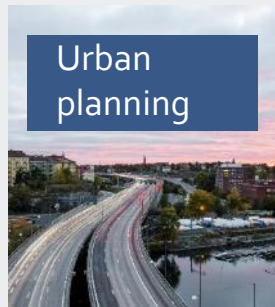
STATE OF
THE NORDIC REGION

2026

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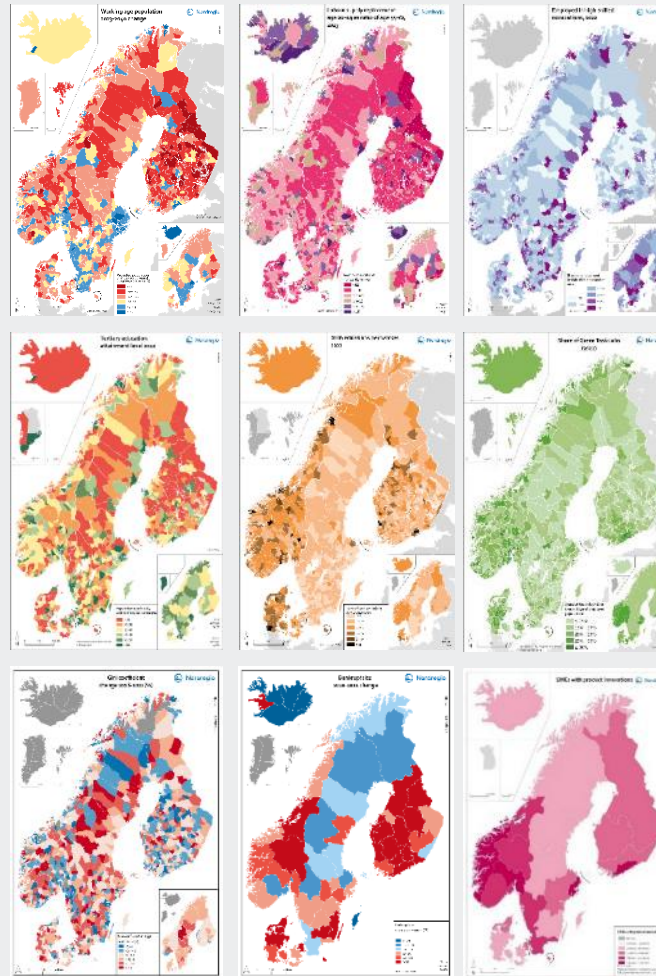


Applied research



nordregio.org/research/

Maps and data visualisations



Hub for Nordic statistics

Nordic Statistics Database

- ECONOMY
- BUSINESS
- CULTURE
- DEMOGRAPHY
- ECONOMY
- EDUCATION
- ELECTIONS
- ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY
- GEOGRAPHY AND CLIMATE
- HEALTH
- INTEGRATION AND MIGRATION
- INTERNATIONAL TRADE
- LABOUR MARKET
- NORDIC GENDER QUALITY INDICATORS
- NORDIC INDICATORS VISION 2030
- PRICES AND CONSUMPTION
- PUBLIC FINANCE
- SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
- SOCIAL INTEGRATION AND INCOME

nordicstatistics.org



DEMOGRAPHY

- Population change in the Nordic Region
- The Nordic population in 2045: Larger, older and more urban
- Nordic population diversity by country of birth

LABOUR MARKET

- The Nordic labour market from a labour force perspective
- Labour market dynamics from a sectoral perspective
- Exploring labour market vulnerability and resilience

ECONOMY

- Regional economic resilience amid uncertainty
- Economic perspectives on critical infrastructure in the Nordic Region
- The role of innovation in the Nordic green rush



DEMOGRAPHY

Nora Sánchez Gassen
Senior Research Fellow, Nordregio

Low fertility, ageing populations, migration-driven growth and rising diversity are reshaping the Nordic Region, influencing labour markets, welfare systems and rural-urban dynamics

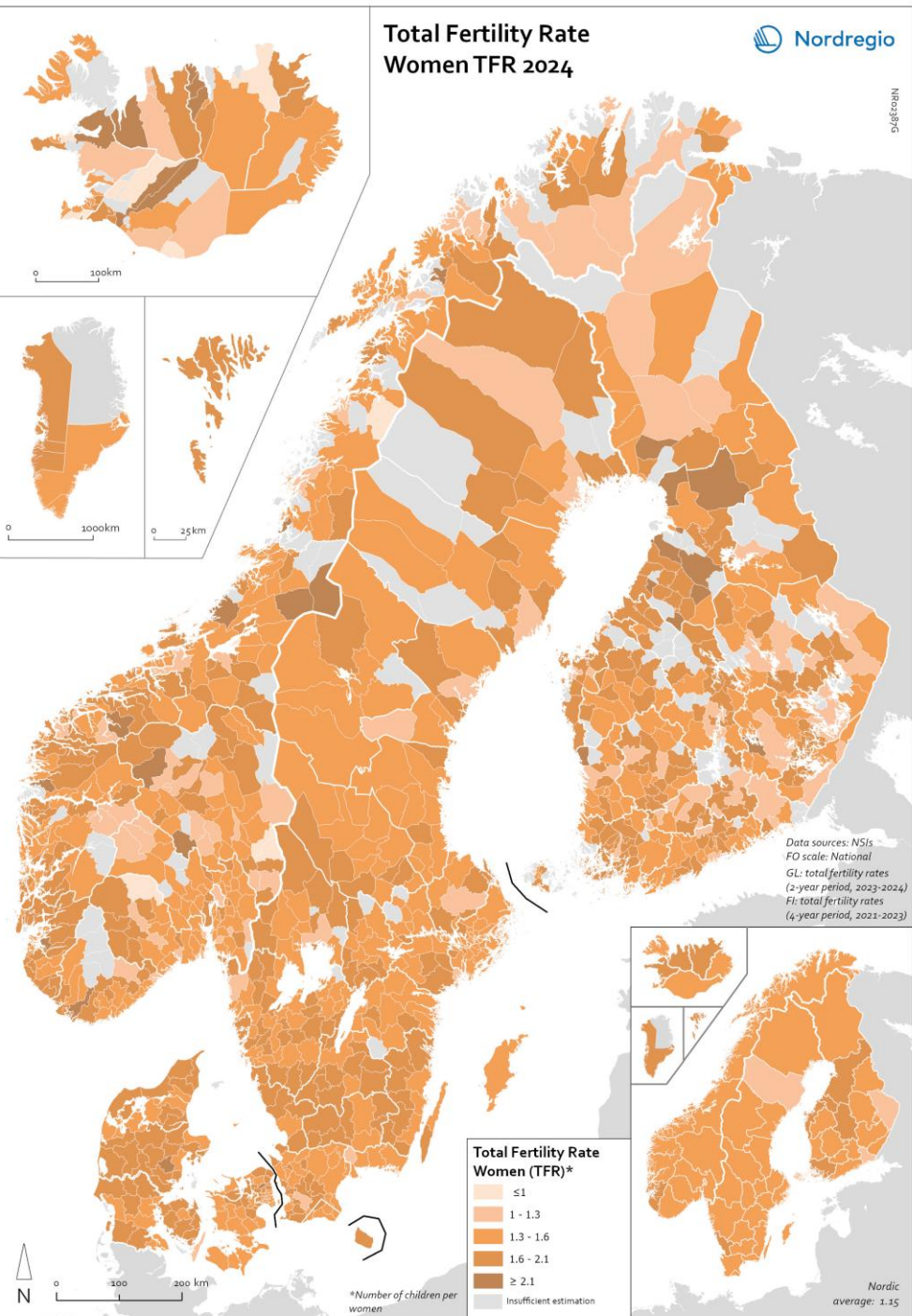
Total Fertility Rate Women TFR 2024

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Digiterra

Shared Nordic challenges: Low fertility

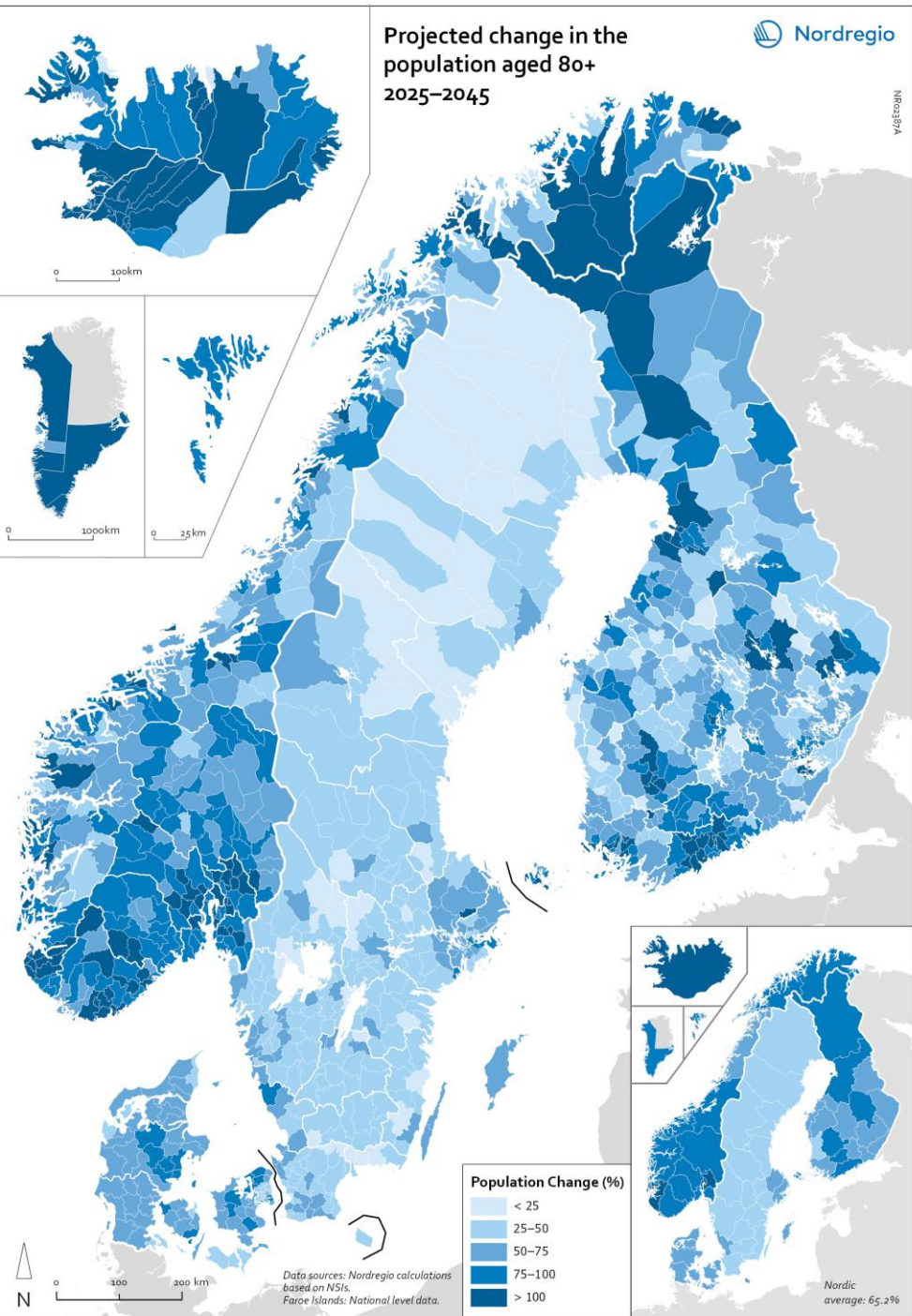
- Fertility has declined in all Nordic countries and autonomous regions
- Fertility levels below replacement in almost all Nordic municipalities
- Consequences of low fertility are better understood than the causes



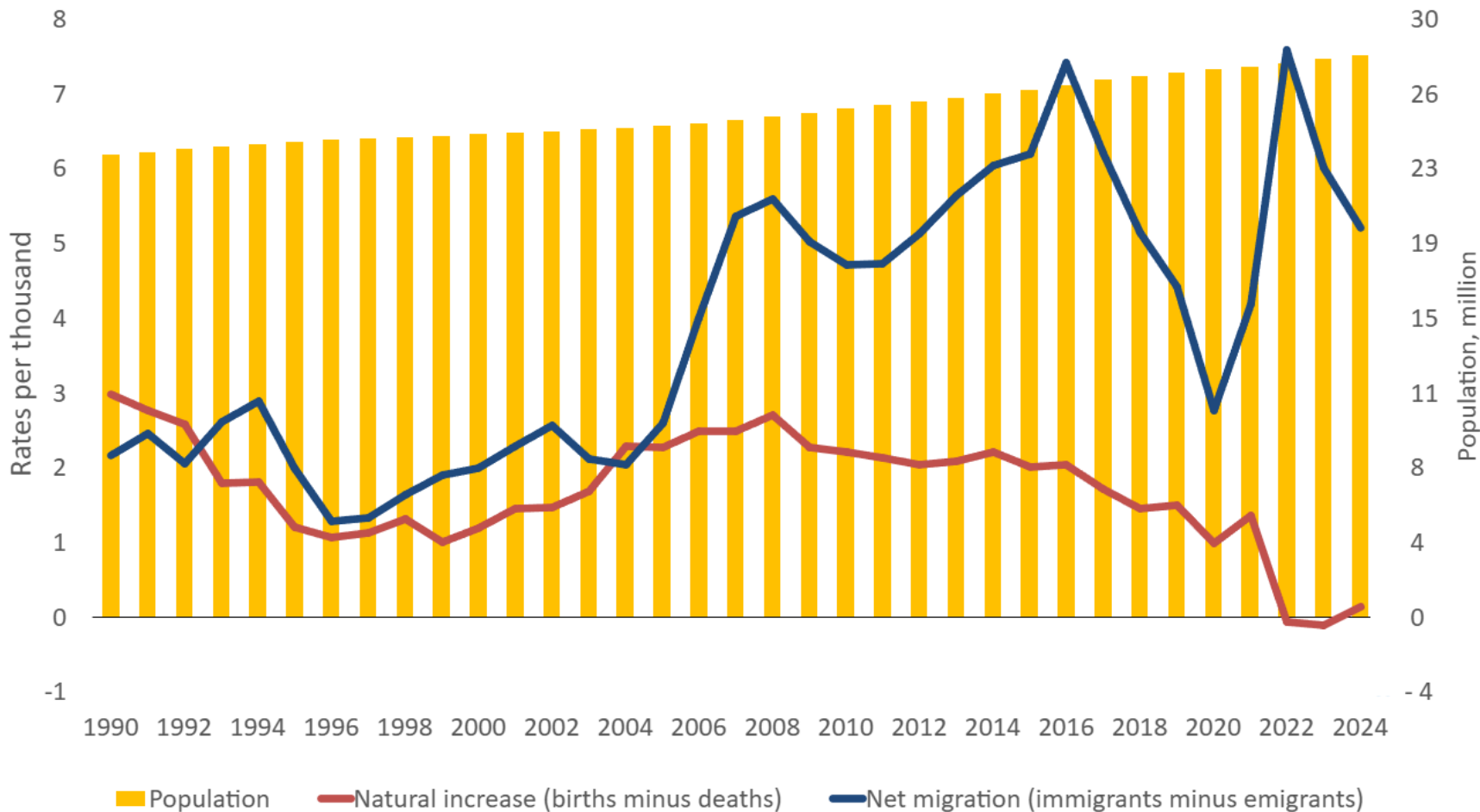
Projected change in the
population aged 80+
2025–2045

Shared Nordic challenges: Population ageing

- Population aged 80+ is expected to increase in almost every single Nordic municipality
- High increases in many areas around cities
- Care needs are likely going to increase
- Risk for competition, but also opportunities for Nordic collaboration



Ongoing population growth



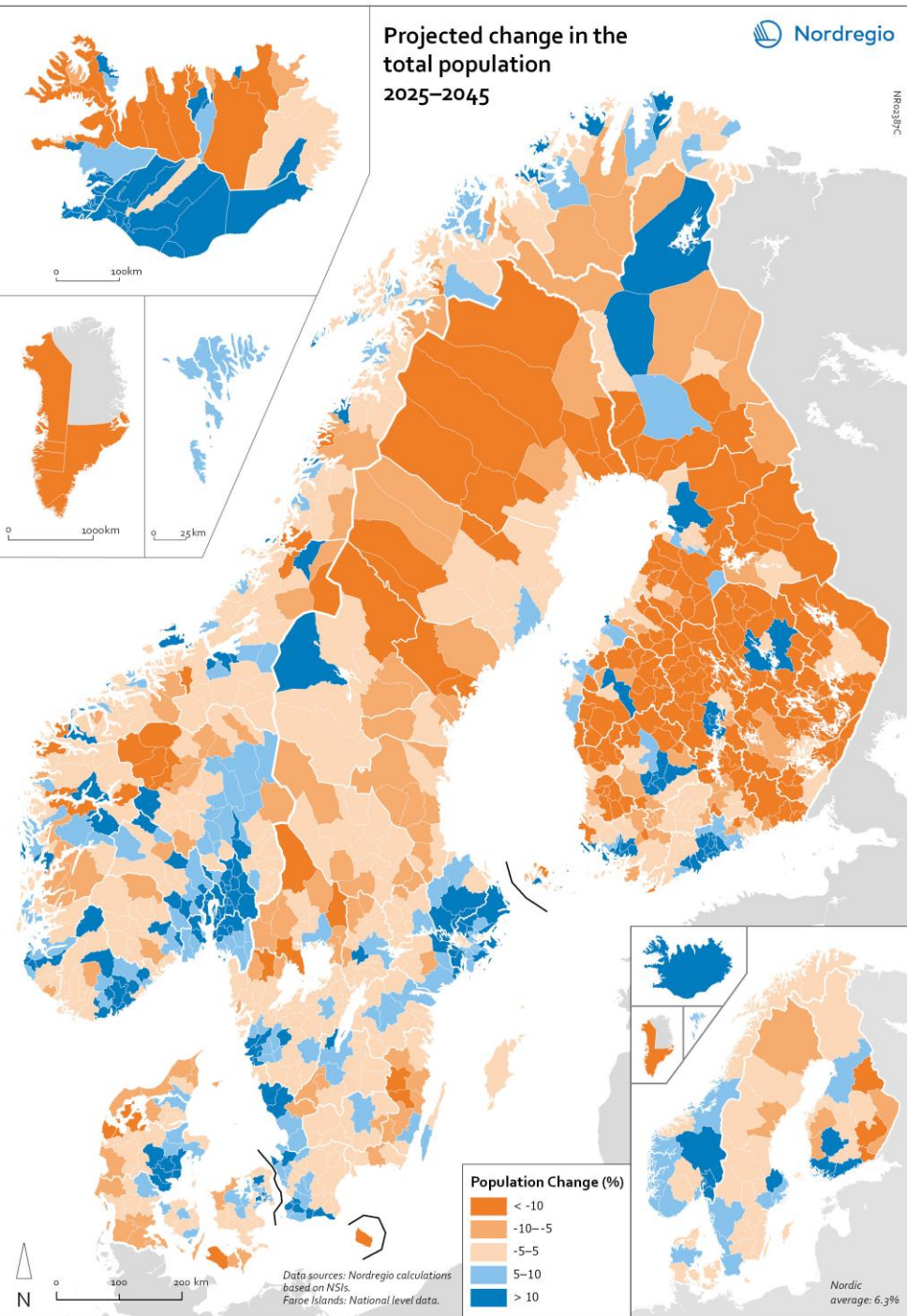
- Nordic population has grown from 23 million (1990) to 28 million (2024)
- During the last years, mostly driven by migration.
- Going forward, further population growth is expected at Nordic level, again driven by migration.

Projected change in the
total population
2025–2045

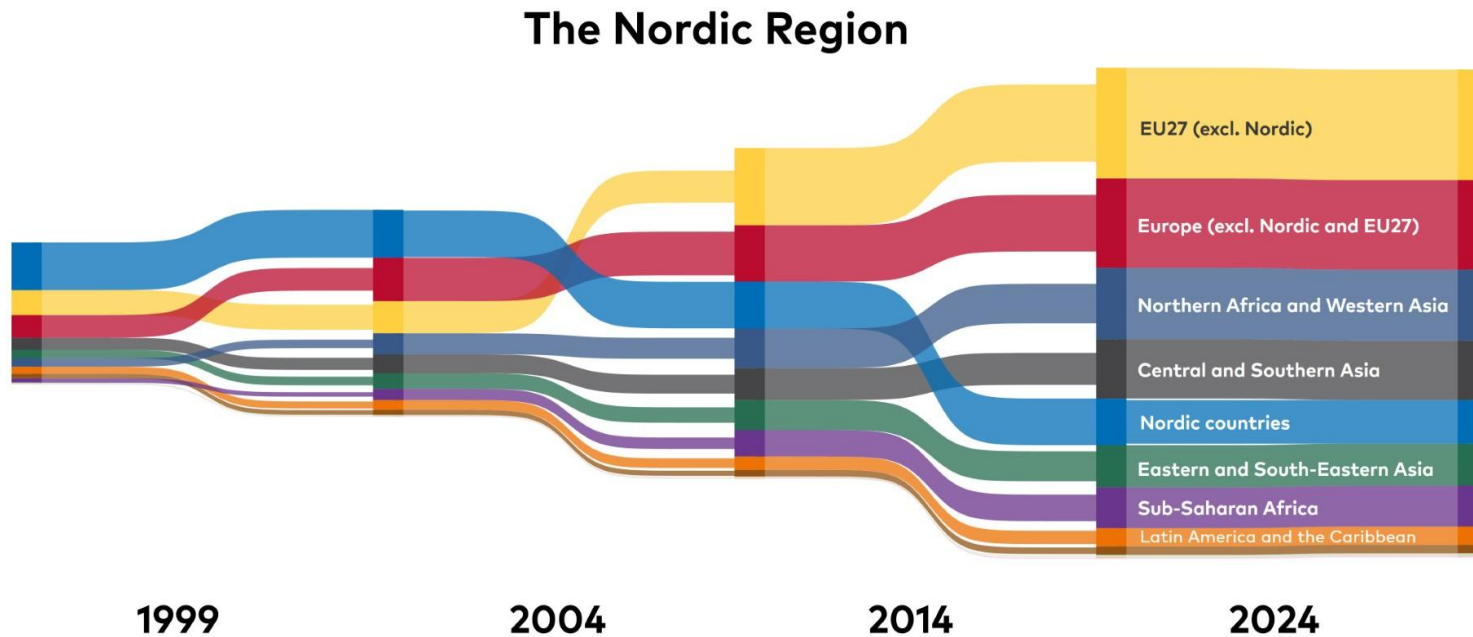
But: Strong variation within the Nordic Region

Until 2045:

- Expected population growth in Iceland (+38%), decline in Greenland (-15%)
- Population decline ongoing in many rural areas, continued growth in many urban centers



The Nordics are becoming more diverse



- Number and share of foreign-born residents have increased across all Nordic countries
- Europeans are the biggest migrant groups in the Nordics
- Nordic migrants used to be a dominant group but not any longer
- Increasing diversification beyond Europe

“Demography is destiny” – or is it?

- Fertility rates remain below replacement
- The 80+ population is set to rise sharply, increasing care needs
- Population growth is mainly migration-driven
- Urban expansion, rural decline – but also strong variance across the Nordic Region
- Shared Nordic trends offer opportunities for Nordic collaboration



LABOUR MARKET

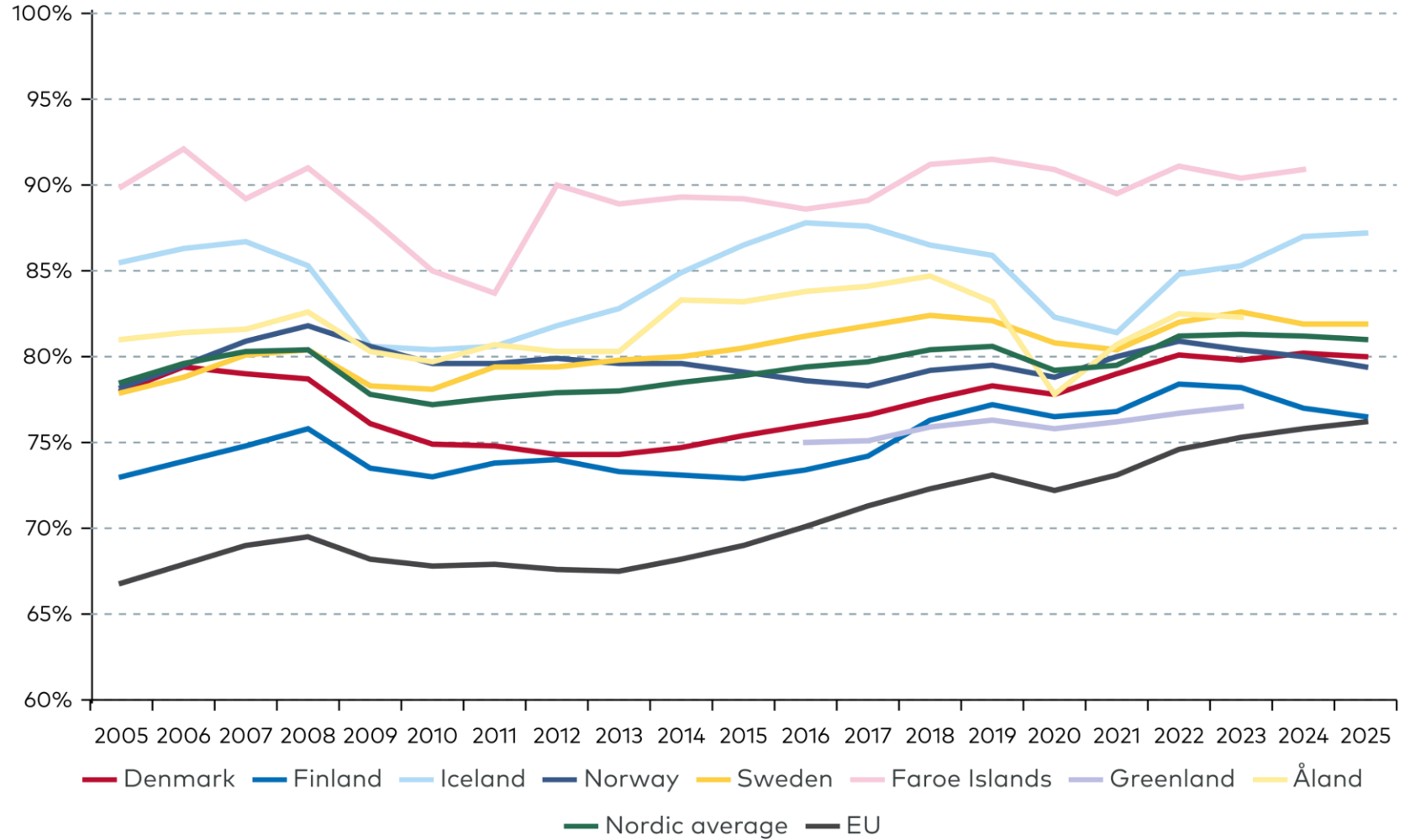
Anna Lundgren
Senior Research Fellow, Nordregio

High employment, high productivity and a diverse labour market are key elements to sustain the Nordic welfare economies and support regional development across the Nordic territory.

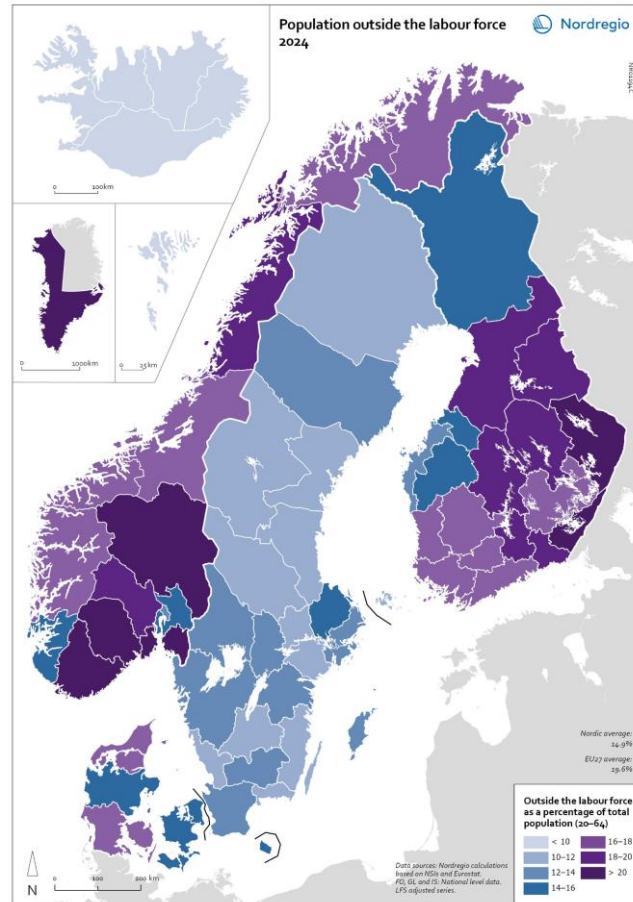
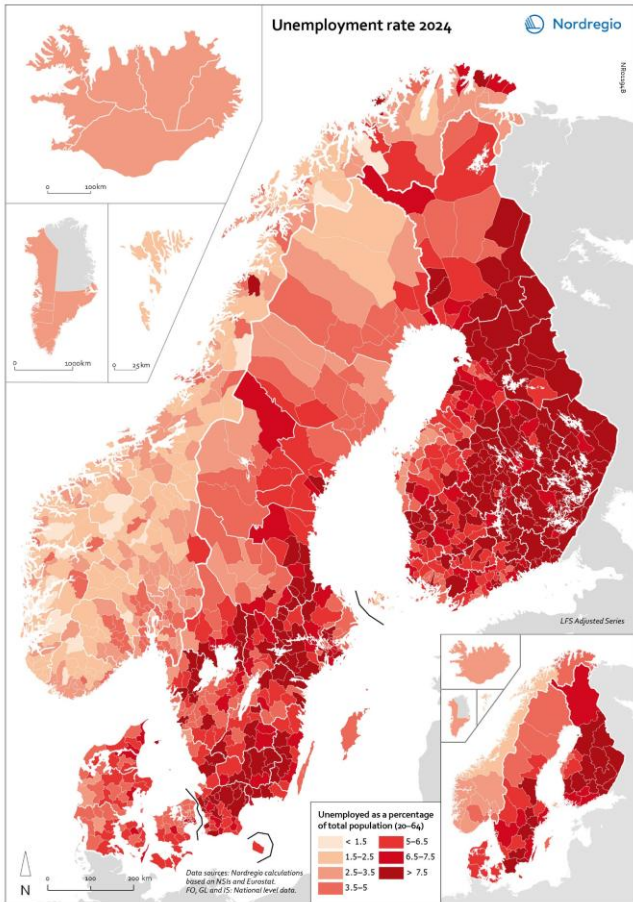
Overall high employment across the Nordic Region.

People work until older ages.

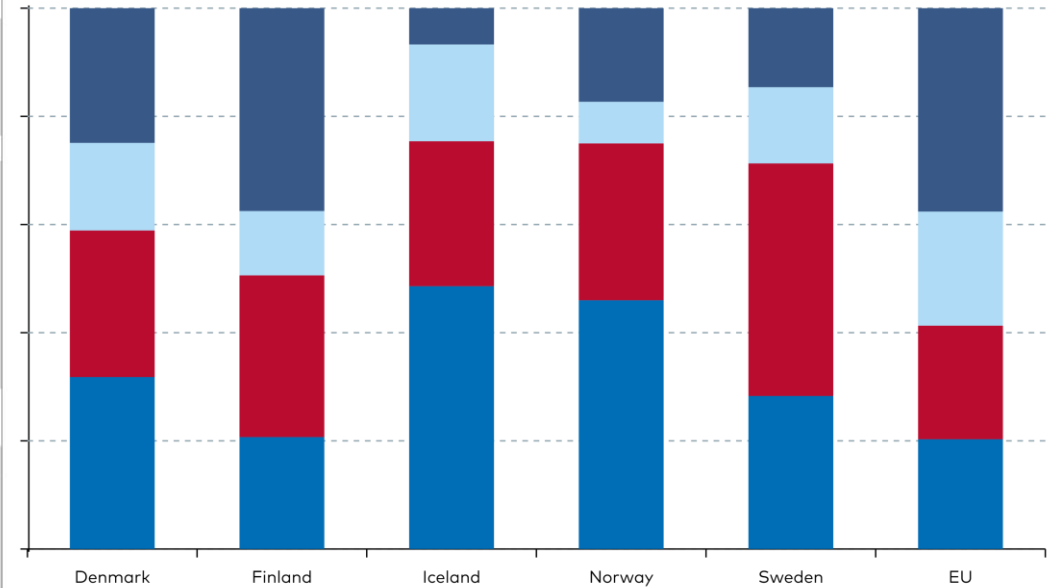
Employment rate in the Nordic countries (2005-2025, Q2)



National policies influence mismatches on the labour market



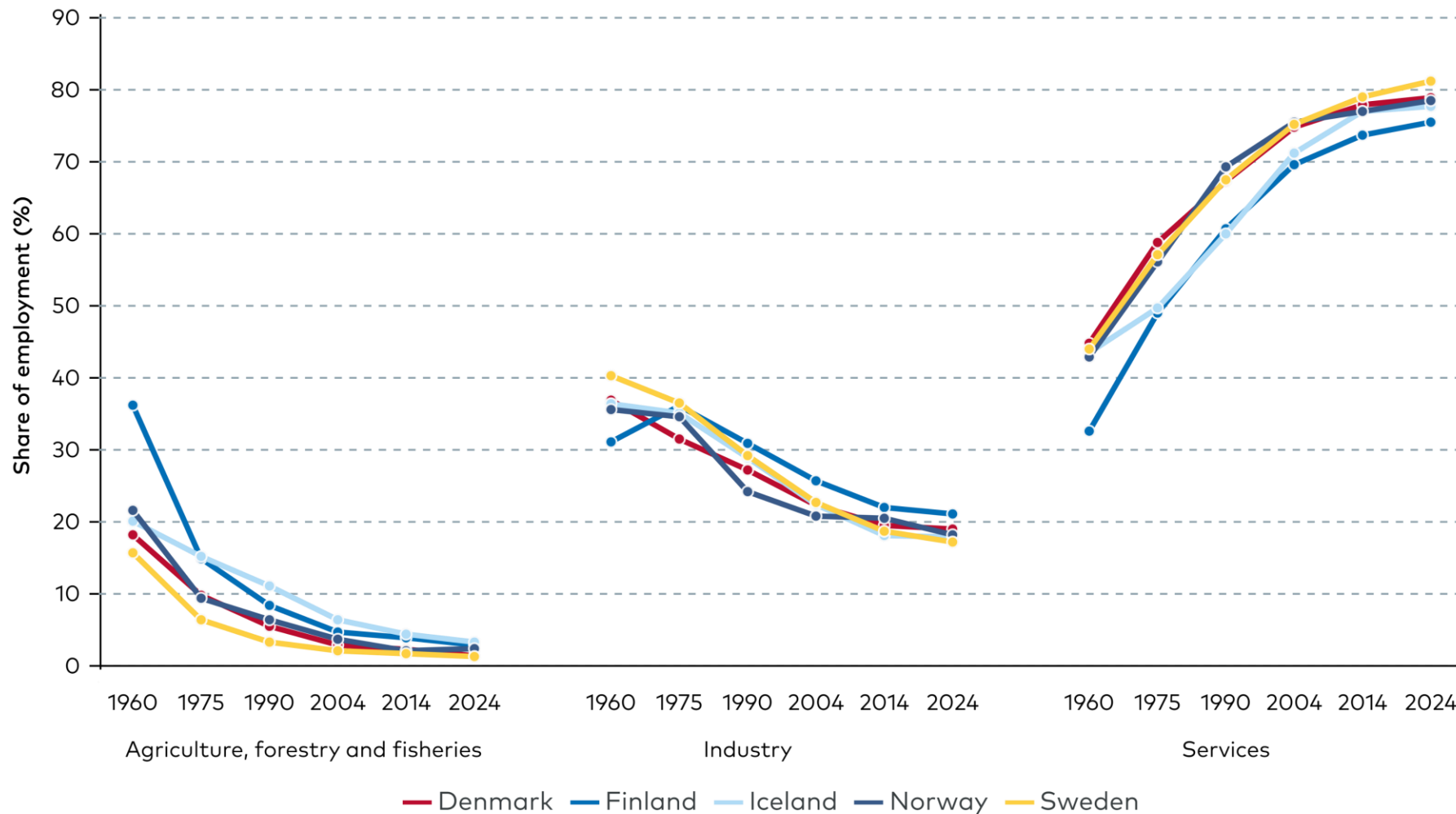
Population aged 15-64 outside the labour market (2023)



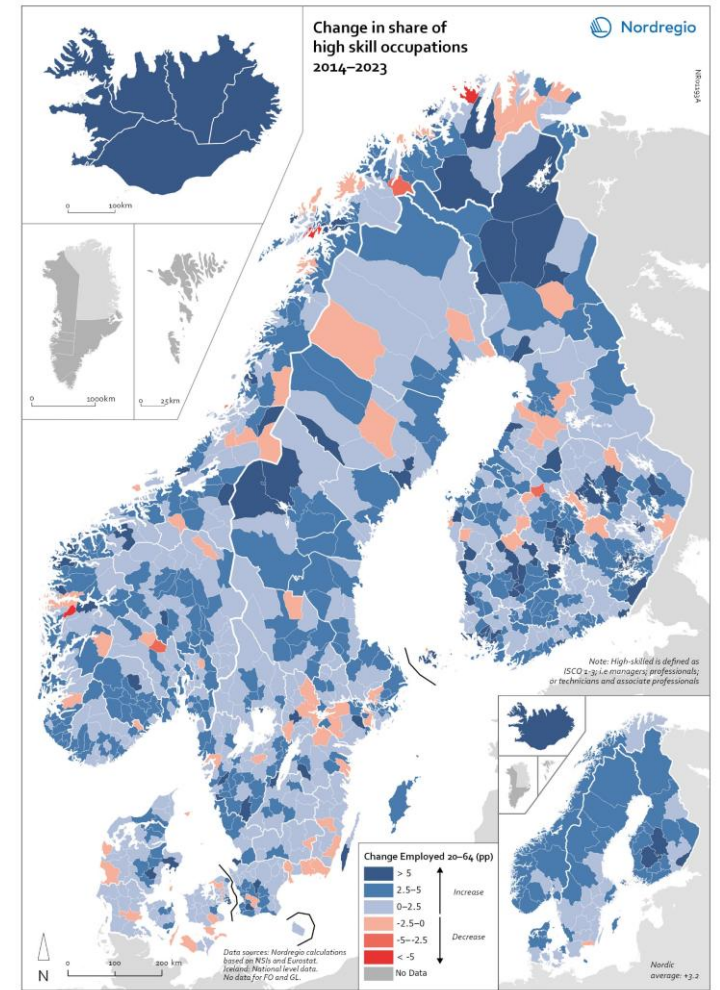
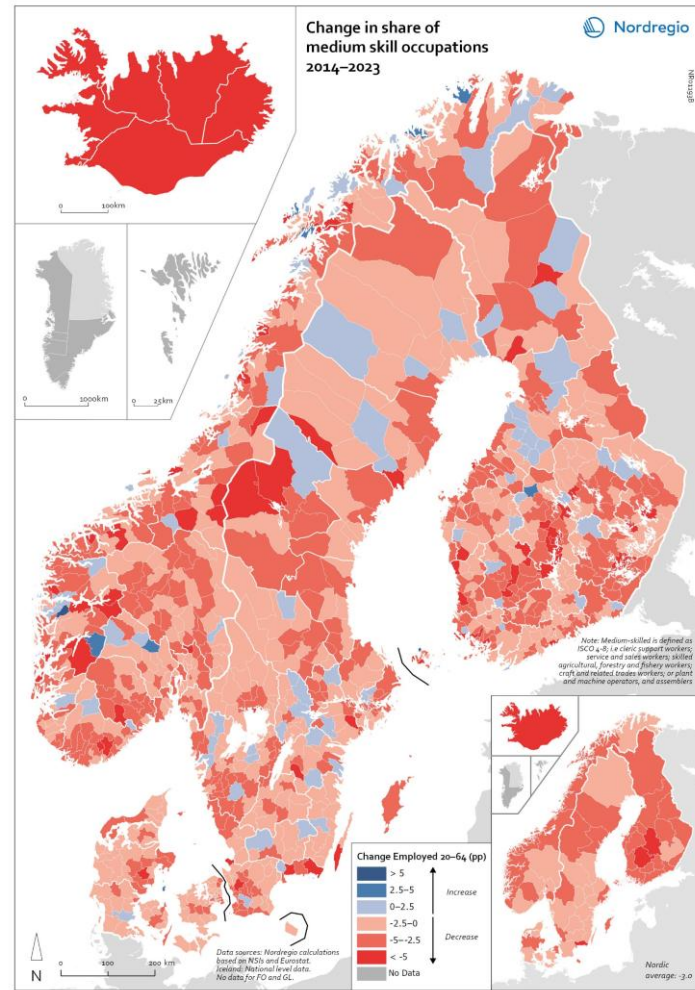
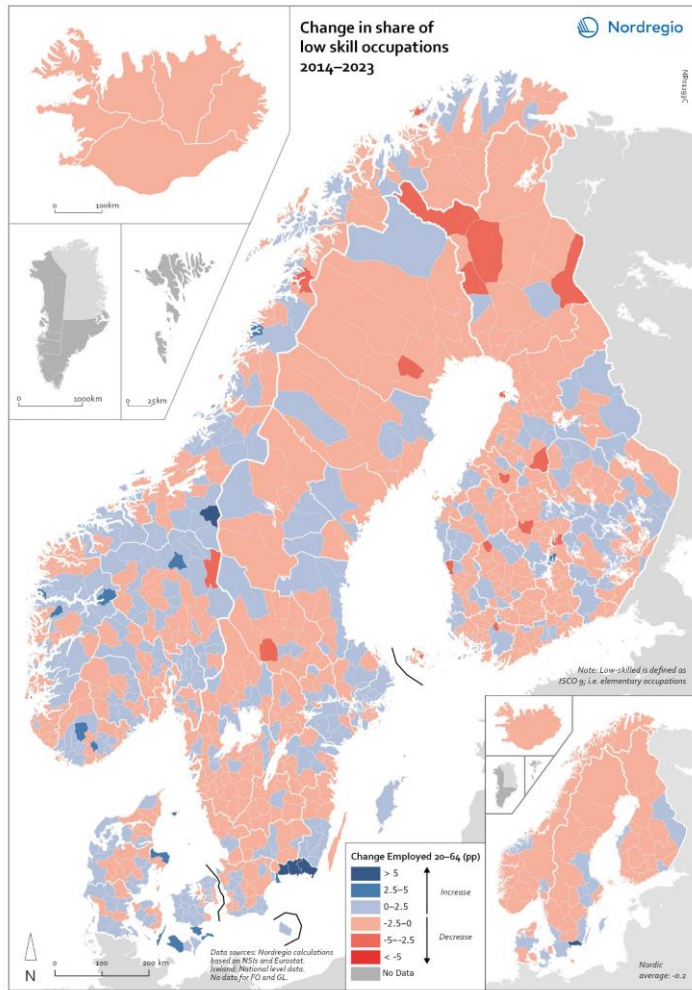
■ Own illness or disability
 ■ Education or training
■ Family/caring responsibilities
 ■ Other

Services continue to grow, but at a slower pace

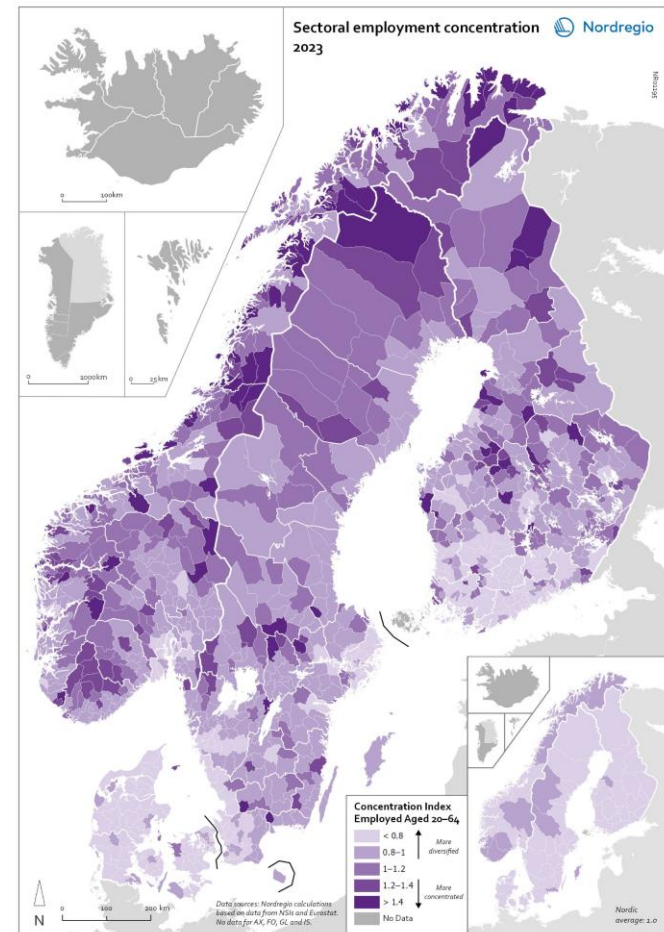
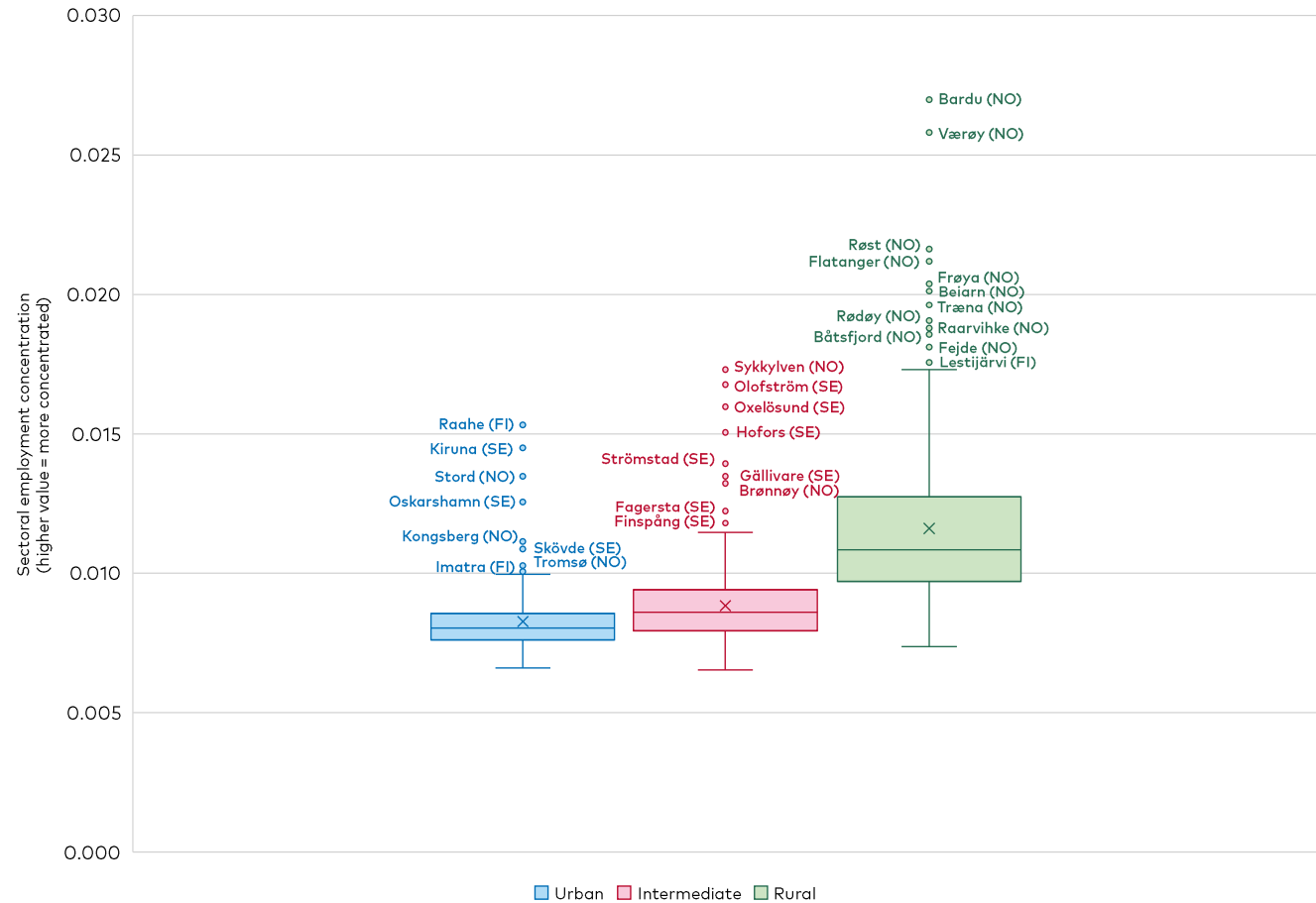
Change of employment in three main groups of industry sectors (1960-2024)



High skill occupations are increasing



Being part of a larger labour market area can compensate for local economic vulnerability



Looking forward

- Working in higher ages
- More green jobs and more tech jobs
- Security and defence sector, a potential increase of more diverse jobs?

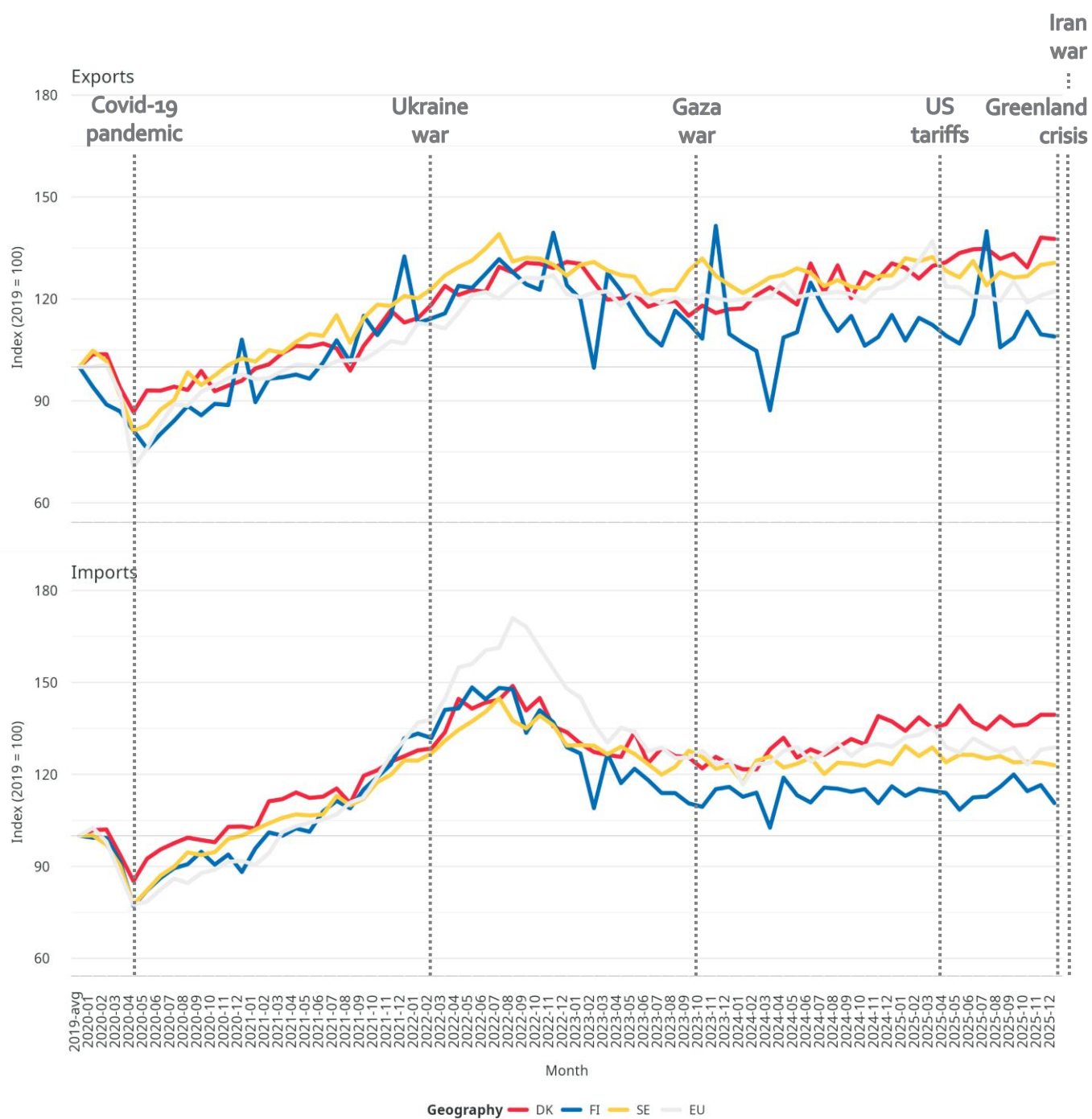


ECONOMY

Carlos Tapia

Senior Research Fellow, Nordregio

Nordic economies combine **resilience, industrial strength, and innovation capacity** to respond to global pressures and support sustainable growth across urban and rural regions.



Resilient Nordic economies

- Turbulent economic times caused by external factors
- Small open Nordic economies are vulnerable to geopolitical tensions
- Moderate impacts on economic output and trade
- Direct exposure to US tariffs can be high for specific sectors and regions
- Uncertainties remain in 2026

Change in gross regional product per capita by NUTS3 region
2019-2024

Nordregio

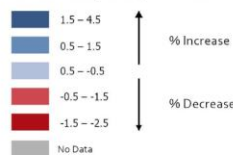
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Regional winners and losers

- Aggregated economic growth has been modest during post-pandemic years
- Preliminary data show **uneven evolution of RGDP per-capita** between and within countries
- **Large urban agglomerations lost momentum** in post-pandemic period
- Many **rural and intermediate areas with strong industrial basis demonstrated economic resilience**

Data sources: Nordregio calculations based on ARDECO and Eurostat (administrative boundaries). FO: national level data from NSI in 2010 constant prices. The ARDECO figures are based on modelled estimates and may differ from official statistics upon release.

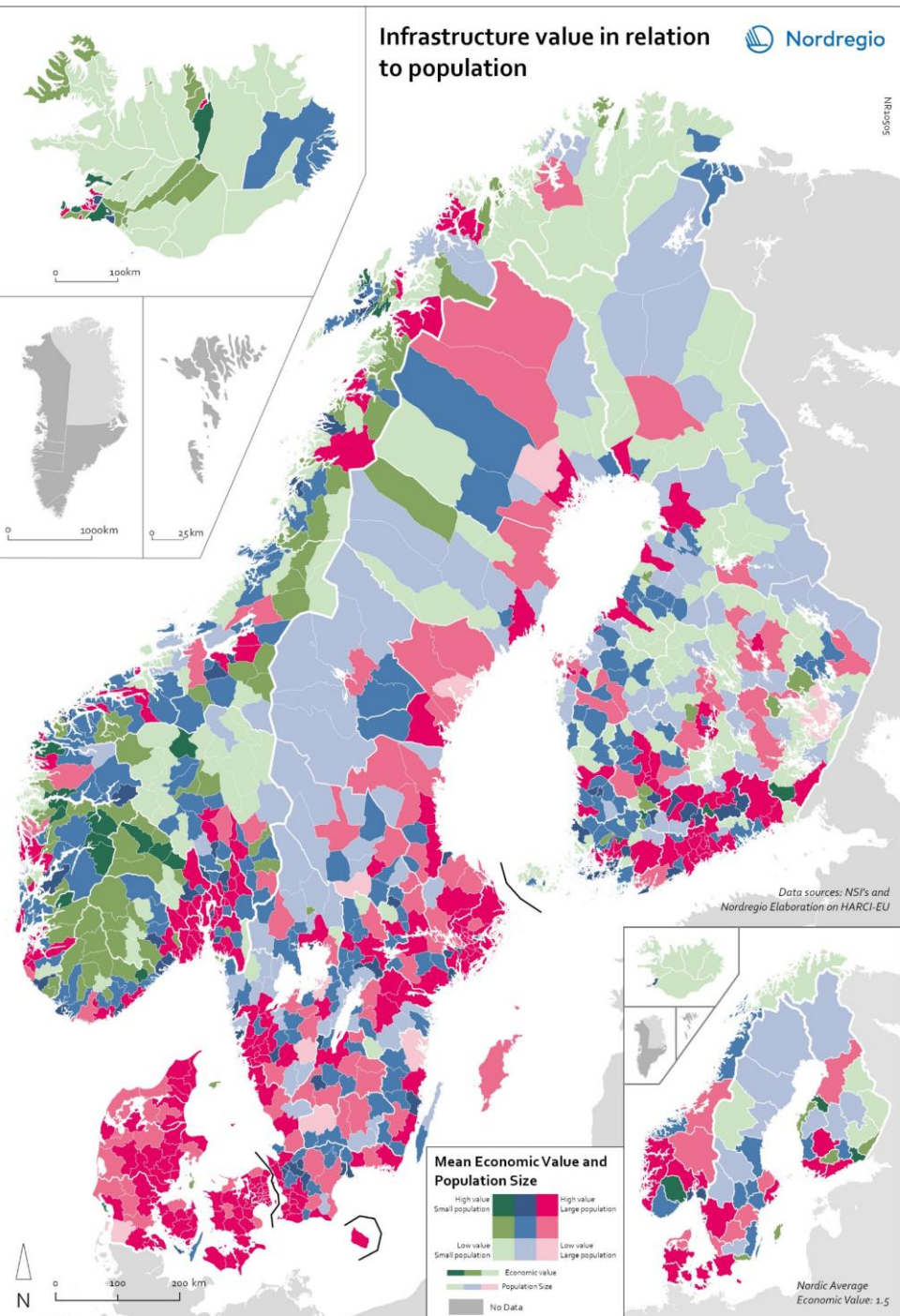
Annualized change in GRP per capita at constant prices, euro 2020

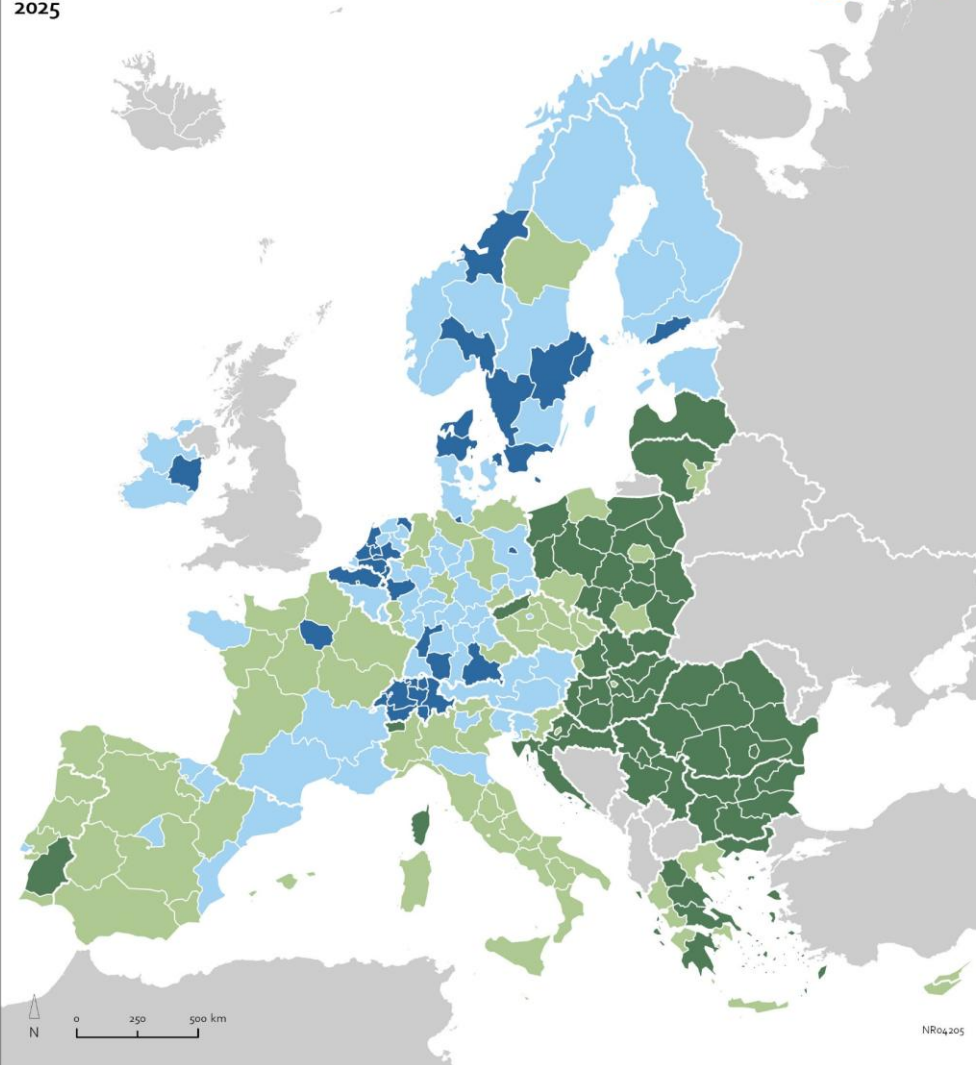


Nordic Average: 0.01%

Economic resilience and critical infrastructure

- **Critical infrastructure** are physical assets that enable our societies to operate
- Major financial losses could occur if **critical infrastructure** is damaged or disrupted
- **The economic relevance of critical infrastructure** is determined by the value of physical assets and the services provided
- **Critical infrastructure is not evenly distributed** across the Nordic Region





Regional Innovation Scoreboard Index Performance Group



Nordic innovation leadership

- The Nordic Region leads Europe's innovation landscape
- Innovation capacity is **widely distributed** across regions, including non-urban areas
- Capitalising on **innovation capacity** remains a key challenge
- Moving from innovation to implementation requires **more than technological breakthroughs**

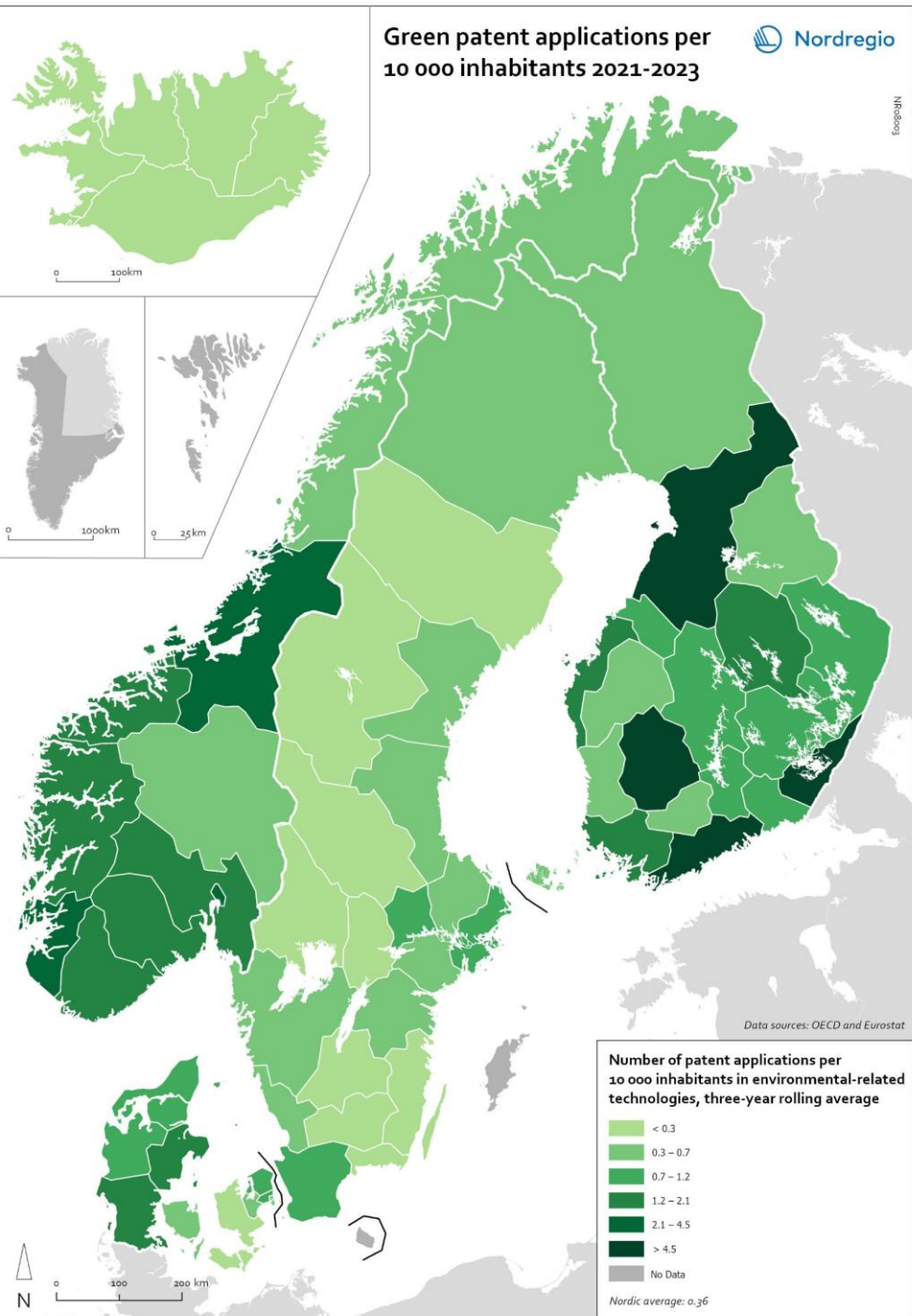
Green patent applications per
10 000 inhabitants 2021-2023



BoopghN

Green patenting and innovation

- The Nordic countries are **front-runners on innovations that support the green transition**
- **Green patenting** activity is an expression of Nordic innovation leadership in the green transition
- In addition to urban hubs, green inventive capacity is tied to **specialised, resource-based regions**



Nordic economies remain resilient (but will it last?)

- Growth has been moderate and uneven (large urban hubs lost some momentum, rural and intermediate regions show resilience)
- Geopolitics, trade shocks and external pressures continue to pose challenges
- Critical infrastructure (energy, transport, and connectivity) are unevenly distributed (high-impact if disrupted)
- Nordic countries are strong (green) innovators, but implementation gaps remain



FINAL REFLECTIONS



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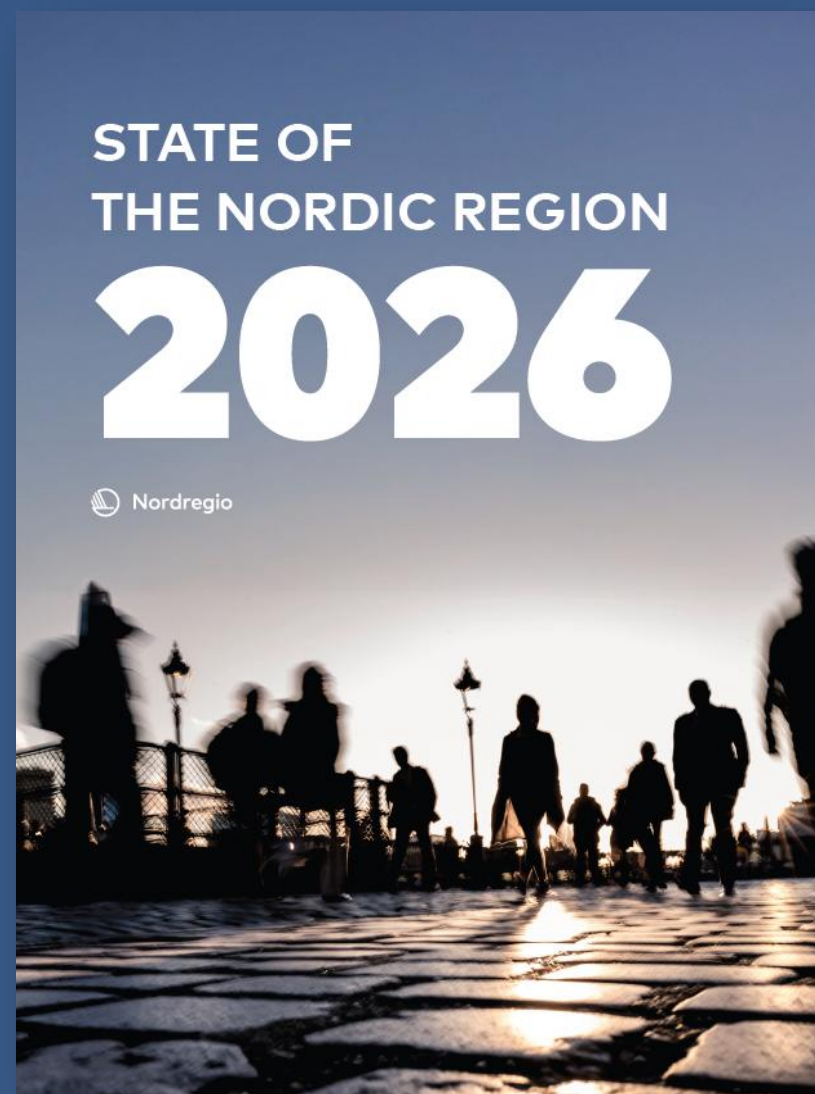
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