

## **Investing in lifelong learning JOINT ANE/NORDTEK STATEMENT**

The Association of Nordic Engineers, ANE<sup>1</sup>, which represents more than 500.000 STEM professionals in the Nordic region, and the Network of 28 Technical Universities in the Nordic and Baltic countries, NORDTEK<sup>2</sup>, **urge the Nordic ministers to prioritise lifelong learning opportunities for STEM professionals in the Nordic Region.**

Investing in education to upskill the existing supply of engineers and STEM professionals is crucial to further the transition towards a sustainable future. The number of engineers already employed in ‘green jobs’ far outweighs the output of new students and there is compelling evidence showing a disconnect between the supply and demand of sustainability skills. As the demand for sustainable solutions grows rapidly and digitalization accelerates further, there is an urgent need to equip the current and future workforce with the necessary skills to facilitate the twin transition effectively. While some occupations may require specific technical skills, all professions need to adapt and evolve. To achieve this, we **must adopt a Nordic approach in identifying and addressing the skills needed for the twin transition towards a sustainable and digitally transformed society.**

To do this, **it is necessary to evaluate current funding and governance models for continuing education**, and further develop these models to systematically encourage and incentivize higher education institutions (HEIs) to engage in lifelong learning provision. Also, legislative barriers, acting as disincentives or showstoppers for more agile and resource-efficient development of flexible lifelong learning offerings, should be removed through a Nordic Joint Action.

Moreover, **HEIs must receive clear political incentives and reprioritised funding mechanisms enabling them to offer more varied, niche short courses and study modules on key technologies for sustainability and digitalization, explicitly developed for flexible upskilling and reskilling**, and adapted to a more flexible and sustainable Nordic working life.

In particular, we ask Ministers to put an obligation on HEIs to **adapt their higher education system offerings to meet the twin transition, by:**

- Strengthening their provision of flexible lifelong learning offerings at large,
- Opening, to all qualified learners, courses previously only accessible for full-time degree students,
- Encouraging the development of digitally delivered micro-credentials.

---

<sup>1</sup> [The Association of Nordic Engineers is the regional cooperation for trade unions representing STEM professionals in the Nordic Region](#)

<sup>2</sup> [NORDTEK is a network of the Rectors and Deans of Technical Universities in the Nordic and Baltic countries.](#)

Likewise, there is a need **to allocate long-term funding for the development and maintenance of a Nordic-wide portal for flexible lifelong learning offerings, including micro-credentials.**

This would be sustainable and efficient and give a competitive advantage in terms of fostering the exchange of the best courses in the Nordic countries and expanding the market by spreading these courses to other countries. A one-stop platform that includes both information and the possibility of applying for a course could facilitate access to information for both individuals and employers. Such a joint platform might over time also stimulate more coordinated collaboration.

Finally, it is of utmost importance **to increase knowledge sharing and collaboration on lifelong learning within the Nordic region.**

For the Nordic region to remain and become increasingly competitive within technology for a sustainable society, there is a need for more substantial knowledge sharing and collaboration across borders, organisations, and sectors. It is essential to avoid a silo mentality to capitalise on the vast potential for exporting skills and know-how from the region.

Thus, Ministers must efficiently facilitate regional collaboration, ensure alignment of national legislation and governance across countries, and develop a joint Nordic perspective towards a more holistic 'phenomenon-based' type of governance of lifelong learning.

Date: 07.09.2023

On behalf of ANE



Trond Markussen, President

On behalf of Nordtek



Maarja Kruusmaa, President



Inese Podgaiska, Secretary General



Peter Göransson, Secretary General