

Welcome to



NORDIC TRADE UNION CONGRESS 2026

– NFS 5TH CONGRESS

TRADE UNIONS AS THE FIRST LINE OF DEFENCE

**TOGETHER WE
ARE STRONG**

22–23 SEPTEMBER 2026 | PAASITORNI, HELSINKI

NFS

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The Council of Nordic Trade Unions, NFS; is an organisation for cooperation between national trade union confederations in the Nordic Region. NFS consists of 15 affiliated organisations which are blue and white collar confederations, and professional and academic organisations in the Nordic countries. NFS represents more than 8.5 million organised workers throughout the Nordic Region.

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Introduction

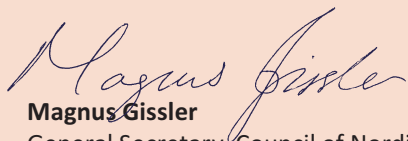
On 22–23 September, the Nordic trade union movement will gather in Helsinki for the fifth Nordic trade union congress. Over two days, we will meet under the theme

“Together We Are Strong: The Trade Union as the First Line of Defence”

The security landscape has changed fundamentally. War in our region, increasing geopolitical tensions, and new threats to our societies have made issues of security, preparedness, and resilience more important than ever. For the trade union movement, this is both about safeguarding workers and helping to ensure that our societies continue to function even when faced with major challenges and disruptions.

The Congress will take us from the geopolitical and security situation in the Nordic region and the Arctic, through the role of working life in Nordic preparedness, to the practical question: What do we do when a crisis strikes?

Through speeches, conversations, discussions, and collaborative work, we will learn from one another and explore how Nordic trade union cooperation can contribute to a safe and resilient Nordic region. A warm welcome!



Magnus Gissler

General Secretary, Council of Nordic Trade Unions (NFS)

Programme

TUESDAY 22 SEPTEMBER

11.30 Registration

12.00  Lunch

13.00 Congress opening

Magnus Gissler, General Secretary, NFS

Lóa Lava Brynjúlfsdóttir, Congress Host

NFS President **Morten Skov Christiansen** and the host country's trade union representatives, **Jarkko Eloranta** and **Else-Mai Kirvesniemi**, will open the Congress together with the participants.

13.45 Opening perspective

How can we stand strong together in a time of growing uncertainty? Karen Ellemann will share her perspective on democratic development, preparedness, and the role of the Nordic region in a changing world. What threats and challenges does the Nordic region face, and how can we strengthen Nordic cooperation to address them together?

Karen Ellemann

Secretary General, Nordic Council of Ministers

Thematic Session 1: The Geopolitical and Security Situation in the Nordic Region and the Arctic

The security landscape in the Nordic region has changed fundamentally in recent years. Russia's invasion of Ukraine, a more uncertain international environment, and increasing great-power competition in the Arctic are affecting our societies and labour markets. How does this development impact the trade union movement, what risks do we need to prepare for, and how can we contribute to security and stability in our region?

14.10 The Nordic Region in a New Geopolitical Context

Where do the Nordic countries stand today? What developments affect us, and where do we ourselves have the opportunity to exert influence? An overview of the geopolitical situation and a look ahead. Following the keynote address, the discussion will continue at the tables and through questions from participants.

Ann Linde

Former Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Nordic Cooperation

14.45 Coffee break

15.15 When Democracy Is Challenged from Within

Polarisation and anti-democratic forces are challenging democracy and political cooperation, including in the Nordic region. How are our shared institutions and Nordic cooperation affected as divisions deepen? Eva Lindh will share her perspective on democratic resilience and how we can address threats that emerge from within.

Eva Lindh

Chair, Committee for Welfare in the Nordic Region, Nordic Council and member of the Swedish parliament

15.25 Security in the Nordic Region and the Arctic

What are the foundations of security and resilience in the Nordic region? In an interactive discussion, different Nordic perspectives on security, geography, and cooperation will come together.

In a panel discussion, leaders from the Nordic trade union movement will participate alongside **Karen Ellemann**, Secretary General of the Nordic Council of Ministers. The discussion will be followed by an ideas workshop in which participants will explore what the trade union movement can influence and identify the issues on which we need to cooperate in the future.

16.10 The European and Global Perspective

How does the changing geopolitical landscape affect the trade union movement in Europe and around the world? Esther Lynch and Cathy Feingold will provide European, American, and global perspectives on the challenges facing workers and trade unions. What does this development mean for international trade union cooperation, and how can we stand stronger together in an increasingly uncertain world?

Esther Lynch

General Secretary, European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC)

Cathy Feingold

International Director, American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO)

Afterwards, Ann Linde, Esther Lynch, and Cathy Feingold will come together for a discussion on the geopolitical situation and its implications for the Nordic region and the trade union movement.

17.05 Closing Reflections on the Day

A concluding perspective on the day will be provided by Antti Lindtman, Leader of the Social Democratic Party of Finland.

Antti Lindtman

Party leader, the Social Democratic Party of Finland

19.00 Mingle and dinner

Restaurant Meripaviljonki.

Scan or click on the
QR link to go to the
restaurant's website.



WEDNESDAY 23 SEPTEMBER

Thematic Session 2: When Preparedness Becomes Part of Everyday Life

The Role of Working Life in a Resilient Nordic Region

The pandemic, the energy crisis, and the deteriorating security situation have demonstrated just how vulnerable our societies can be. As a result, issues such as supply security, preparedness, and critical societal functions have gained renewed importance. How are the Nordic countries addressing these challenges today? What can we learn from one another's experiences, and what role should the trade union movement play?

09.00 Kick-off and reflection

We will build on the perspectives and insights from the first day of the Congress and turn our attention to preparedness and resilience in working life.

09.10 From the Arctic to the Workplace: How Do We Build a Resilient Nordic Region?

What does it take for our societies to remain strong in a changing world? We will focus on the Arctic, societal resilience, and security of supply, while exploring the role that working life plays in building a resilient Nordic region.

Joel Linnainmäki

Researcher, Finnish Institute of International Affairs (FIIA)

09.30 Inspiration Session

What Are We Doing in the Nordic Countries?

How are the Nordic countries already working with preparedness and security of supply? Trade union representatives from across the Nordic region will share concrete examples of how the trade union movement and the social partners are working on preparedness and cooperation with other societal actors.

These experiences will serve as the starting point for participants' own pathway discussions: How can working life strengthen preparedness and resilience for a safer and more resilient Nordic region?

10.30 Coffee break

11.00 A robust Europe

Emergency Preparedness, Resilience, and a Changing World of Work

Preparedness is not only a national or Nordic issue. What role do the social partners play at the European level? How can we ensure both endurance and flexibility during crises while safeguarding workers' rights and maintaining good working conditions?

Claes-Mikael Ståhl

Deputy General Secretary, European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC)

Ilkka Oksala

*Director, Work and Social Affairs Department,
Confederation of Finnish Industries (EK)*

The discussion will continue with questions and dialogue with participants, followed by a panel in which trade union leaders from across the Nordic region will share their perspectives on preparedness, cooperation, and the role of working life in building resilience.

12.00 Lunch

Thematic Session 3: When Crisis Strikes – What Do We Do?

When society faces crises, both institutions and cooperation are put to the test. The trade union movement plays a vital role in protecting workers, maintaining essential societal functions, and contributing to solutions in challenging situations. How can we strengthen our preparedness, what priorities do we need to make, and what is required of us when Nordic cooperation is put to the test?

13.05 The Role of the Trade Union Movement When Crisis Strikes

What can the trade union movement do in practical terms when a crisis occurs? A Danish and Nordic perspective on responsibility, cooperation, and preparedness.

Morten Skov Christiansen

President, NFS and the Danish Trade Union Confederation (FH)

13.15 Nordic Experiences

What have we already learned from previous crises? In a panel discussion, we will explore concrete examples from the Nordic countries of how trade unions have worked with preparedness and security of supply.

These experiences will be followed by roundtable discussions on solutions and priorities. Participants will discuss what needs to be in place before the next crisis occurs, what the trade union movement should prioritize, and which issues we need to advance together.

14.20 Coffee break

14.40 When Nordic Cooperation Is Put to the Test – What Is Required of Us?

What does it take for Nordic cooperation to function effectively when our countries are faced with major challenges and disruptions? Johan Strang will place the Congress discussions in a broader perspective and look ahead to the opportunities for deeper Nordic cooperation.

Johan Strang

Professor, University of Helsinki

15.10 The Nordic Region and the Baltics in an Uncertain Time:

“No Security Without Social Security.”

How can we strengthen our societies and our cooperation in a time of increasing geopolitical uncertainty? Inga Ruginienė will provide a Baltic perspective on security, the role of the trade union movement, and the importance of close cooperation between the Nordic and Baltic countries. Drawing on her experience from Lithuania, she will look ahead to how we can work together to build stronger and more resilient societies.

Inga Ruginienė

Minister of Social Security and Labour and

former Prime Minister of Lithuania, also

former president of the Lithuanian trade union confederation (LPSK)

15.30 A Nordic Outlook – Setting the Course Together

The presidents of NFS member organisations will gather on stage for the Congress’s closing reflection. What are the key takeaways from our days in Helsinki? Which issues do we need to continue working on, and how can we together strengthen the influence of the Nordic trade union voice?

15.50 Closing remarks

16.00 Mingle

Gift card

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Workers' Rights Are Human Rights

THANK YOU FOR
YOUR SUPPORT!

TACK FÖR ERT STÖD!

The Council of Nordic Trade Unions

Nordens Fackliga Samorganisation



Tack för ditt bidrag!

*Som tack för ditt deltagande
har NRS skänkt ett
bidrag till SASKs
viktiga utvecklingsarbete
för demokrati och fackliga
rättigheter.*



NRS:s KONGRESS I FACKET SOM FÖRSTA FÖRSVÄRSLINJE
TILLSAMMANS ÄR VI STARKA
22-23 SEPTEMBER 2026 | PAASITORNIN, HELSINGFORS



As a token of appreciation to the speakers and guests for their valuable contributions to our congress, we are making a donation to the SASK 40th Anniversary Fundraiser in support of their important work promoting democracy and Trade Union rights.

Speakers



Morten Skov Christiansen is President of the Danish Trade Union Confederation (FH) and President of NFS. He has a long background in the Danish trade union movement and previously served as Vice-President of both FH and LO Denmark. A trained electronics mechanic, he began his trade union involvement with the Danish Metalworkers' Union.



Jarkko Eloranta has been President of the Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions (SAK) since 2016. He has a long background in the Finnish trade union movement and previously served as President of the Trade Union for the Public and Welfare Sectors (JHL). He is also a Vice-President of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC).



Else-Mai Kirvesniemi has been President of the Finnish trade union confederation STTK since 2025. A lawyer by training, she has extensive experience in the Finnish trade union movement. She previously served as Executive Director and Director of Advocacy at the trade union Tehy and has held several senior and legal positions within Trade Union Pro.



Karen Ellemann has been Secretary General of the Nordic Council of Ministers since 2023. She has a long political career as a member of the Danish Parliament and has held several ministerial positions, with responsibilities including Nordic cooperation, the environment, social affairs and gender equality.



Ann Linde is Sweden's former Minister for Foreign Affairs and has extensive experience in international politics. She has also served as Minister for EU Affairs, Trade and Nordic Cooperation, and as Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). She previously worked as International Secretary of the Swedish Social Democratic Party. In October, she will publish a book about her years as Sweden's Minister for Foreign Affairs.



Eva Lindh has been a Member of the Swedish Parliament for the Social Democratic Party since 2018 and is Chair of the Nordic Council's Committee for Welfare in the Nordic Region. She is also a member of the Swedish Parliament's Committee on Finance and previously served as a municipal commissioner in Linköping. She has been active in the Nordic Council since 2018.



Esther Lynch is General Secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and has extensive trade union experience at Irish, European and international level. She previously served as ETUC Deputy General Secretary and Confederal Secretary, with responsibilities including social dialogue, collective bargaining, wage policy and trade union rights. She has also worked for the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU).



Cathy Feingold is International Director of the AFL-CIO and Deputy President of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC). She has more than 25 years of experience in international trade union work, focusing on issues including trade, global economic policy, and workers' and women's rights.



Antti Lindtman is Chair of the Social Democratic Party of Finland and has been a Member of the Finnish Parliament since 2011. He previously chaired the Social Democratic Parliamentary Group and has a background in the Finnish trade union movement, having worked for SAK.



Joel Linnainmäki is a Research Fellow at the Finnish Institute of International Affairs (FIIA), focusing on Finland and security in Northern Europe. His research covers NATO, Nordic defence cooperation, and the impact of geoeconomic risks on security and security of supply. He previously served as Special Adviser to Finnish Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto.



Ilkka Oksala is Director of the Work and Social Affairs Department at the Confederation of Finnish Industries (EK). He has been closely involved in discussions on preparedness in Finland and brings an employer perspective to preparedness in general, its implications for social affairs, and the role of the social partners.



Claes-Mikael Ståhl is Deputy General Secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), with responsibilities including social dialogue, trade and standardisation. He has a long background in the Swedish and European trade union movement and previously worked as a legal adviser at the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO), specialising in collective bargaining, labour law and EU law.



Johan Strang is Professor of Nordic Studies at the University of Helsinki. His research and teaching focus on the political history of the Nordic countries, with particular emphasis on Nordic cooperation and Nordic democracy.



Inga Ruginienė is Lithuania's Minister of Social Security and Labour and former Prime Minister. She has a long background in the trade union movement and has served as President of the Lithuanian Trade Union Confederation (LPSK) and Vice-President of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC).



Magnus Gissler is General Secretary of NFS. He has worked in the trade union movement for many years and prior to his position at NFS he worked in the white-collar and academic labour movements. In this role, he works to strengthen Nordic trade union cooperation and NFS's joint work at Nordic and international level.

Congress Host



Lóa Lava Brynjúlfsdóttir is the Congress Host and a lecturer with extensive experience in the Nordic and European trade union movement. She is a former General Secretary of NFS and International Director at the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO) and has also held positions within the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC). Today, she works in areas including leadership and organisational development. During the Congress, she will guide participants through the two days and the discussions between speakers and participants.



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