

## **JOINT STATEMENT OF THE 31<sup>st</sup> BALTIC COUNCIL**

### **The Baltic Council declares the following:**

On 14 November 2025 in Riga, the Baltic Assembly and the Baltic Council of Ministers convened for the 31<sup>st</sup> Baltic Council to address topical issues of cooperation among Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in various fields of shared interests, including our continued support to Ukraine, regional security and resilience, as well as connectivity and energy security.

### **Support to Ukraine against Russia's war of aggression**

The Baltic States reaffirm their unwavering support for Ukraine's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders in the face of Russia's continued illegal war of aggression. The Baltic States will never recognize the occupation of Ukraine's territory, in the spirit of the Sumner Welles declaration which never recognized the occupation of the Baltic States.

We reiterate our support for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine in full compliance with the international law, including the United Nations Charter. We call on Russia to agree to an immediate and unconditional cease-fire, which must come before any meaningful peace talks. We welcome all international diplomatic efforts towards achieving peace, especially those led by the United States. The Baltic States will continue to contribute to all these peace efforts. We stand ready to provide Ukraine with substantial, long-term security guarantees, both military and non-military, including through the Coalition of the Willing.

We fully support Ukraine's right to choose its own security arrangements and decide its own future, free from outside interference. Ukraine's future is in NATO as agreed in the Washington Summit Declaration by NATO Heads of State and Government. Ukraine's accession to the European Union is the strongest non-military security guarantee both for Ukraine and the European Union. The Baltic States reaffirm their full and unequivocal commitment to the European Union membership perspective for Ukraine as a full-fledged member of the EU not later than by 2030. We call for accelerating the accession process by unblocking negotiations and opening the first and subsequent clusters as soon as possible, already this year. We highlight that separating Ukraine from other candidates would mean the collapse of the EU credibility and serious blow to the enlargement process. We welcome the significant progress Ukraine has achieved, as confirmed by the European Commission's Enlargement Report published on 4 November, and remain committed to intensifying support for Ukraine's reform efforts towards its soonest possible EU accession.

As members of the International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children, we will continue to address the illegal deportation and forcible transfer of Ukrainian children by Russia and facilitate their safe return in accordance with international law and relevant UN resolutions.

Support to Ukraine is inseparable from continuous pressure on Russia. Russia must be deprived of its economic and military resources that enable its war of aggression. Otherwise, it will continue its war against Ukraine and undoubtedly expand the war on a larger scale. Russia's revisionist ambitions are clear, as evidenced by its leaders' statements.

The Baltic States actively support work on establishing a legal mechanism to direct Russian immobilised assets for the support of Ukraine. We urge our EU and G7 partners to finalize discussions on the "reparations loan" and other practical solutions to ensure Russia's obligation to make full reparation for the damage its war of aggression has caused to Ukraine and the Ukrainian people. The Russian assets must remain immobilized until Russia has fully compensated the damage

and destruction inflicted on Ukraine that already exceeds 500 billion EUR and Ukraine's territorial integrity has been restored in its entirety.

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania acknowledge the need to restrain Russia and they underscore the effectiveness of strong sanctions and additional tariffs in this regard, and reaffirm their readiness to sustain the pressure on Russia through these measures. We continue work on additional measures to target Russia's fossil fuels export. A robust sanctions policy is crucial for a further increase of pressure on Russia's economy and weakening its ability to wage its war of aggression against Ukraine. The Baltic States also undertake a commitment to cooperate on information exchange and outreach with the aim of countering sanctions evasion and circumvention. In this regard, we have been substantial contributors to sanctioning shadow-fleet tankers. These efforts are tangible and effective against Russia's actions to evade the Oil Price Cap. Therefore, we are determined to counter this fleet and strengthen our measures by working further together with our EU and G7 partners.

The Baltic States welcome the Agreement between the Council of Europe and Ukraine on the establishment of the Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine, signed in Strasbourg on 25 June 2025. The creation of the Special Tribunal is indispensable to restoring justice and ensuring accountability of the Russian leadership for the crime of aggression; it is sending a clear and unequivocal message to the aggressor, Russia, that impunity will not be tolerated. We reaffirm our commitment, and call on other states to join the Enlarged Partial Agreement (EPA) on the Management Committee of the Special Tribunal to operationalise the Special Tribunal as soon as possible. Furthermore, to strengthen its capacity to conduct effective investigations, we are committed to concluding bilateral cooperation agreements in criminal matters with the Special Tribunal.

The Baltic States will continue their joint efforts in multilateral fora to support Ukraine and isolate Russia and Belarus. It is essential to coordinate on elections in international organisations with this goal in mind. Russia and Belarus have no place in the elected bodies of international organisations. Their presence undermines the very foundations of international law, as enshrined in the UN Charter, and betrays the core responsibilities upon which international organisations are established.

Russia's aggression against Ukraine poses a direct threat to Euro-Atlantic security and challenges the very foundations of the European security architecture and the rules-based international order. The Baltic region on the eastern flank of NATO and the European Union is especially exposed to that threat. Therefore, the Baltic States are among the leading voices for, and supporters of Ukraine.

In order to withstand and deter future aggression, it is imperative to continue a sustained political, military and economic support to Ukraine. Ukraine's ability to defend itself is crucial for a lasting peace and stability across the Euro-Atlantic area. It is vital to immediately scale up military assistance to Ukraine comprehensively, significantly, and for the long term. A key element for the future security of Ukraine and Europe is robust security guarantees developed and implemented in close cooperation among Ukraine, Europe and the United States.

The Coalition of the Willing, uniting over 30 countries, is a vital instrument for mobilizing sustained, coordinated support to Ukraine and for advancing solid security guarantees for Ukraine, which will underpin long-term stability and security. The Coalition's collective action, together with very important U.S. support, demonstrates robust Euro-Atlantic solidarity and burden-sharing, with the Baltic states actively participating and pledging continued support.

NATO's Prioritised Ukraine Requirements List (PURL) initiative is a swift and practical mechanism with pooled funding allowing Ukraine to gain access to critical capabilities, accelerate deliveries and sustain frontline defence. It demonstrates strong Euro-Atlantic cooperation and effective burden-sharing, with the Baltic States actively contributing to the collective support.

Euro-Atlantic integration must be seen as a part of such security guarantees – a process that reinforces and strengthens Ukraine’s national defence and resilience. Ukraine must remain free to choose its own path and foreign policy orientation. This principle is non-negotiable. If we fail and allow Russia to prevail, the consequences will reach far beyond Ukraine’s borders. Not only will it undermine international law and erode the security architecture that has safeguarded peace in Europe for decades, but embolden aggression everywhere. Therefore, we must remain unwavering in our commitment towards Ukraine, making clear that aggression will never be rewarded and that freedom and sovereignty will always be defended.

Finally, we see Ukraine as one of the key pillars of European and Trans-Atlantic security in the future. Ukraine must be fully integrated into our defence and security architecture. We will do our utmost to gain Ukraine’s vast experience on how to defend itself against the Russia’s aggression.

## **Regional security and resilience**

### *Security and defence*

Russia remains the most significant, direct, long-term, and all-domain threat to Europe and to the Euro-Atlantic area as a whole. Russia continues to increase the development of military capabilities to challenge and test Allied security. Russia’s brutal, unjustified, and persistent aggression against Ukraine and increasingly aggressive hybrid/hostile actions against NATO and the EU members clearly show that the threat is real, and we need to counter that.

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are determined to further strengthen our collective security and defence, and to shoulder our share of responsibility for peace and security in Europe. Only a strong response and close cooperation between likeminded democratic countries can stop Russia from continuing these provocations.

The Baltic States will work together at all levels to promote the implementation of different defence and security initiatives in the EU. We support the urgent implementation of the Roadmap on European Defence Readiness 2030 aimed at closing critical capability gaps.

We continue to increase investments into our defence, and remain steadfast supporters of Ukraine’s victory. Following the agreement at the NATO Summit in The Hague, we are moving fast towards meeting the new 5% of GDP defence target and will be reaching it by 2026-2027.

We appreciate the Allied presence in the Baltic region and we commit to further invest in host-nation support in our countries.

We warmly welcome the steadfast commitment by Canada, Germany and the UK to the security of the Baltic States. As the framework nations of NATO Multinational Brigades in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, they play a vital role in strengthening transatlantic security and NATO’s deterrence and defence posture in the eastern flank.

We commend the announcement by Canada extending its military presence in Latvia to 2029. As the framework nation of the NATO Multinational Brigade in Latvia, Canada plays a vital role in strengthening transatlantic security and NATO’s deterrence efforts on the Eastern Flank. We also commend Germany’s decision to permanently station a brigade in Lithuania, marking a historic step in strengthening NATO’s commitment to the security of the Baltic region. We welcome the recently concluded EU–Canada and EU-UK Security and Defence Partnership, which marks a significant step towards like-minded cooperation under the Security Action for Europe (SAFE) initiative.

The United States’ continued leadership and cooperation with European allies in our region makes a critical contribution to national defence and to collective deterrence and defence posture. We are grateful to the United States for their sustained and robust military posture in our region and for the support that has significantly accelerated and complemented the development of military

infrastructure and capabilities in the Baltic States, especially the Baltic Security Initiative (BSI). We also value the strong U.S.–Baltic partnership in the field of energy security. U.S. liquefied natural gas (LNG), imported through the Klaipėda LGN terminal in Lithuania, plays a vital role in strengthening energy resilience across the region.

We welcome NATO's multi-domain activity, Eastern Sentry as a response to numerous NATO air space violations by Russia. The implementation of Eastern Sentry strengthens air defence posture across the eastern flank, including the Baltic States, building on NATO's Baltic Air Policing mission.

The Baltic States continue to develop military mobility infrastructure in close cooperation with the EU and NATO. Effective military mobility will strengthen deterrence and defence on the eastern flank.

The Baltic States recognize their responsibility to safeguard NATO's and EU's eastern border. Together we are building the Baltic Defence Line to deter provocations and security risks posed by Russia and Belarus. We closely coordinate this project with the Polish East Shield initiative. The current efforts have to be supplemented by EU's Eastern Flank Watch and European Drone Defence flagship initiatives in order to respond to the most pressing security needs and call for their swift implementation. We expect Investments strengthening the EU's eastern border to be accompanied by adequate EU financing, both in the current and next Multiannual Financial Framework.

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania support closer cooperation to enhance both resilience and defence capabilities to counter emerging and existing hybrid threats, including those posed by the shadow fleet, whilst strengthening coordination where violations of airspace, disruptions of our logistic systems and harassment of shipping routes in the Baltic Sea region are concerned.

EU–NATO cooperation in light of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine is more relevant than ever. We appreciate the complementarity and close coordination between both organisations with an aim to upgrade defence capabilities and close security gaps according to NATO requirements. We work together for a strong and secure Europe.

#### *Civil defence and crisis management*

The Baltic States remain committed to improving their civil protection capabilities including the establishment and maintenance of civil defence shelters, strengthening of national early warning systems and providing contingency of vital societal services. Special emphasis is placed on testing mechanisms for the mass evacuation of civilians, including in cross-border situations. In this effort, national and local (municipal) level mechanisms should be supplemented with the involvement of volunteers, the resources of non-governmental organisations and private sector. To ensure an effective crisis management, it is essential to foster preparedness among informed and resilient society in order to overcome threats and strengthen the internal security of each country as well as of the entire Baltic region. It is important for the Baltic States to continue the activities stemming from Sauli Niinistö's report, Safer Together - Strengthening Europe's Civilian and Military Preparedness and Readiness, the European Preparedness Union Strategy, the Regulation on serious cross-border threats, and other similar activities.

On 13 June 2025, a Memorandum of Understanding on co-operation in the strengthening of regional civil protection was signed between the Ministry of the Interior of Estonia, the Ministry of the Interior of Latvia, the Ministry of the Interior of Lithuania to enhance the effective management of mass movements of people, including large-scale evacuations, at the Baltic region level. This represents a significant step in strengthening cross-border cooperation in civil protection and substantially contributes to improving the security, safety, and crisis resilience of our community. On 28 October 2025, the above-mentioned ministries and the Ministry of the Interior and Administration of Poland have signed a Memorandum of Understanding on the accession of the

Republic of Poland to the Memorandum of Understanding on co-operation in the strengthening of regional civil protection.

The current geopolitical situation, the experience of the COVID -19 pandemic, and Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine have highlighted the importance of preparedness and ability to respond to various emergencies, including the need to strengthen the healthcare system to ensure the continuous operation of healthcare institutions. All the three Baltic States have joined the Joint Action on comprehensive and sustainable strategic stockpiles of medical countermeasures used in crisis. This EU4Health initiative, coordinated by the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare, will improve crisis preparedness, speed up distribution, and strengthen cooperation, thus supporting key EU health strategies such as the European Health Union and One Health.

At the same time, it is necessary to continue taking measures to ensure the seven capabilities for strengthening NATO's civil resilience, including the provision of necessary medical support in situations with a simultaneous large number of victims (MASCAL). A plan developed by NATO on medical support for collective defence, "Action Plan to Enhance Medical Support for Collective Defence", plays a significant role in the implementation of the above.

Since the escalation of Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine in 2022, the number of training events and seminars on civil-military cooperation and response to military threats has increased significantly, both at the national and international level. These activities should be continued, including by assessing the possibility of organising joint exercises between the Baltic States. On 24 April 2024, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Ministry of Social Affairs of Estonia, the Ministry of Health of Latvia, and the Ministry of Health of Lithuania on cooperation and mutual assistance in the health-related crisis management. This Memorandum enables the countries to enhance cooperation in health-related crisis management, share expertise, best practices, and available resources while ensuring preparedness and prevention as well as in an emergency or an imminent threat. Greater effort would be encouraged to apply the said measures of cooperation more actively in order to strengthen joint coordination and response readiness during health crises. Furthermore, in 2024 Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania established a High-level Baltic Working Group on Critical Medicines. At the expert level, regular calls are organised, and information is exchanged on current issues related to health sector emergency preparedness, and participation in joint exercises is ensured.

### *Security of critical infrastructure*

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania strongly support closer cooperation and coordination of actions concerning resilience and protection of critical infrastructure that should take place in various formats, both regionally and within the EU-NATO framework. It is necessary to re-evaluate the risks and develop improved contingency measures related to critical infrastructure, functions and services.

The security of our critical infrastructure both – offshore and onshore, is paramount.

Strengthening the resilience and defence of critical infrastructure require further investments, therefore the Baltic States are taking measures at the national level by investing in security tools such as anti-drone systems, monitoring systems for undersea cables, emergency reserve of transmission network and other equipment. The Baltic States will closely co-operate to attract the European Union Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) financing as well as investments in the framework of projects of common interest or projects with significant impact on the functioning of the regional energy market.

The Baltic States emphasize the importance of acquiring critical energy infrastructure equipment, especially software, from trusted vendors.

Effective protection of undersea cables, which are vital for global connectivity and security but remain highly vulnerable to various hybrid threats like maritime and submarine drones and cyberattacks, requires a shared regional approach on information exchange, joint risk assessments, and flexible protocols that respect national capacities while ensuring common security standards. Compatible regulation and procedures for an immediate response to cyberattacks, acts of sabotage (including by the so called shadow fleet) or other emergencies is required.

Taking into account the evidences presented by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Council of deliberate interference with GNSS signals by the Russian Federation, as a result of which the 42th ICAO Assembly adopted a resolution condemning the Russian Federation for the recurring GNSS-RFI originating therefrom that is jeopardizing the safety and security of international civil aviation, the Baltic States reaffirms a common concern on the growing threat posed by GNSS jamming and spoofing, which has recently intensified and poses serious risks to aviation and maritime safety. These deliberate disruptions are part of hybrid activities by Russia and Belarus targeting critical EU infrastructure and services. The Baltic States will coordinate actions on the regional and EU agenda to target GNSS jamming and spoofing as well as to co-ordinate research and development of GNSS free navigation alternatives, prioritizing aviation security and international cooperation. Additionally, the Baltic States intend to facilitate coordinated approach to development of anti-spoofing and jamming innovation as well as alternative terrestrial and non-terrestrial solutions for GNSS through countries' participation in the European Space Agency and exploring opportunities provided by the EU Space Programme.

The Baltic States highlight other space-based technologies to be applied for critical infrastructure monitoring, in particular, Earth observation-enabled solutions.

A number of MoUs have been signed at the regional level on the protection of critical infrastructure in the Baltic Sea. The Baltic States in cooperation with other regional partners have introduced efficient resilience mechanisms to enhance the security of undersea infrastructure. NATO capabilities have been deployed to raise situational awareness. Joint efforts have brought some well-functioning procedures and deterrence.

In a demonstration of regional solidarity and preparedness, the Baltic States will jointly conduct a tabletop exercise (TTX) focused on strengthening coordination in response to severe disruption scenarios, involving public-private cooperation and built-in trust among regional partners. This exercise will include cross-border data cable incidents and will involve the key telecommunications operators from Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania to simulate the loss of critical connectivity infrastructure. By practicing joint responses and resilience strategies, the Baltic States reaffirm their commitment to regional security, digital continuity, and the protection of vital communication networks.

#### *Border security, migrant instrumentalization*

The Baltic States strive to further enhance their close cooperation in the face of various hybrid attacks, including instrumentalization of migrants by Russia and Belarus, aimed to destabilize the EU external borders. We allocate necessary resources for the border infrastructure and border security mechanisms to ensure well controlled and secure external borders. Strong response is also needed at the EU level: therefore, further EU investments will be crucial in establishing a modern infrastructure to protect the external EU border.

#### *Promoting the competitiveness of the EU's eastern border areas*

The impact of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine is felt in the border areas of the Baltic States through significant economic slowdown, disrupted mobility, an unattractive investment climate, and hybrid threats posed by Russia and Belarus. These challenges threaten security and socio-economic development and slow down the important process of convergence with the rest of

the EU. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania emphasize the strong need for cooperation beyond one region or country to strengthen regional resilience, civil protection, tourism and business opportunities as well as the availability of services in the EU's eastern external border regions. In November 2024, the Baltic States together with Poland signed the Joint Declaration on Building Strong and Resilient EU Regions Bordering Aggressor Countries highlighting the common challenges and need for necessary support.

In addition to national and existing measures targeted at retaining and attracting population, developing dual-use infrastructure, supporting economic activity, and ensuring access to quality public services in the border areas, it is crucial that the forthcoming Multiannual Financial Framework includes targeted instruments and additional dedicated EU funds to address the specific challenges of the EU's eastern border regions, particularly the challenges of rural areas of the border regions, as a complementary measure to cohesion policy, including compensation mechanisms for national development budgets constrained by defence expenditures.

The European Territorial Cooperation (Interreg) as an effective instrument for supporting the development of cross-border regions has to play a significant role in the development of the EU's eastern border regions also in the post-2027 period. Additional and appropriate funding enables to address specific cross-border priorities, such as strengthening joint security, economic reorientation, and cross-border services. The budget of the Interreg programmes should be increased in the new period, allowing to initiate investments into the development of infrastructure that generate concrete benefits for cross-border population and enhance their capacity to respond to shared challenges.

#### *Countering information manipulation, strengthening societal resilience*

Foreign information manipulation and interference, including disinformation and propaganda, remain key threats to the Baltic information environment. Russia and Belarus are conducting coordinated hybrid campaigns aimed at destabilising the region, undermining democratic institutions, and eroding public trust, that are determined by their historical, geographic, and technological proximity and presence in our region.

The Kremlin targets the way we think, the way we live, the way we make decisions. Russia invests heavily in the targeted disinformation and propaganda, and disseminates it through radio, TV, websites, influencers, trolls, bots, and fake "experts".

To counter these threats, we must strengthen societal resilience by increasing awareness of Russia's hostile activities and goals, and must promote critical thinking, media literacy, digital and AI skills and civic participation in education, by supporting engaging, trustworthy and inclusive media content, and using pre-bunking to help people recognise and resist manipulation. We need to ensure that members of our societies do not act in the interests of foreign actors and against their own interests.

While the authoritarian Russia is not interested in a free and critically thinking society and is trying to silence dissenting voices, we, as democratic countries, have the obligation and tools at our disposal to work on our societal resilience and cognitive security.

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania strongly condemn Russia's hostile information manipulation and interference operations as well as attacks on the Baltic information and media space and the cultural sector, including their digital infrastructure.

The Baltic States are strongly committed to fighting disinformation and safeguarding the integrity of the information space at national, regional, and international levels. We will strive to foster an information space which is free and open, safe and secure, and resilient to information manipulation.

These efforts are reinforced through collaboration on the European Media Freedom Act, active participation in cases preventing the lifting of EU sanctions on Russian propaganda outlets, and such

initiatives as the European Digital Media Observatory Hub BECID<sup>1</sup>, assembling experts in fact-checking, media literacy, journalism, and academic research to detect, analyse, and expose manipulation. In this context we welcome the European Commission's ambitious proposal on the European Democracy Shield initiative.

Independent, well-funded, and resilient Public Service Media, capable of delivering reliable, inclusive, and pluralistic content that reflects the diversity of society and strengthens inter-personal and inter-group dialogue, trust and cohesion is one of the cornerstones for democratic society.

Latvia's LSM, Estonia's ERR, and Lithuania's LRT as public broadcasting organisations collaborate closely across news, culture, and music. Through the European Broadcasting Union's A European Perspective (AEP) project, a dedicated Baltic News section has been established, enabling automated translation and cross-border sharing of reliable content, enhancing societal resilience at both regional and European level.

### **Strengthening the transatlantic link**

The historical, political, economic, cultural, and social ties between countries on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean have laid a strong foundation for our enduring transatlantic relationship. This special bond, which has ensured peace and stability for decades, is not taken for granted. The Baltic States remain committed to advancing a positive and pragmatic transatlantic cooperation, including reinforcing the shared transatlantic goals of security, stability and prosperity, as well as safeguarding our transatlantic fundamental principles, such as freedom and democracy.

In the face of growing geopolitical threats and challenges, transatlantic unity is more important than ever. Together with our transatlantic Allies, the Baltic States will continue enhancing NATO's deterrence and defence, supporting Ukraine in its fight against Russian aggression, and building resilience against hybrid threats.

Over the decades, economic cooperation has been one of the engines for further development of the transatlantic relations. We encourage an enhanced trade cooperation between the EU and the United States of America for the benefit of businesses, workers and consumers on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean.

### **Situation in the Middle East**

The Baltic States welcome ongoing implementation of the first phase of US President's comprehensive plan to end the war in Gaza, including ceasefire and increasing humanitarian aid. Our countries are relieved that all living Israeli hostages have finally been returned to their families. All the deceased Israeli hostages shall be recovered immediately. The international community must assist in full implementation of the plan. Humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip is still very concerning and should be urgently improved. It is essential to ensure unimpeded access and sustained delivery of humanitarian aid into and throughout Gaza.

We highly appreciate US efforts to ensure the full implementation of the peace plan. Within the framework of international cooperation, progress must be made in stabilising Gaza and preparing for a governance of Gaza that will ensure the security of Palestinians and Israelis. Hamas must be disarmed and cannot have a role in future governance of Gaza.

We cannot ignore the escalation in the West Bank, the establishment of illegal settlements, extremist settler violence and threats of annexation, which directly undermine the achievement of peace in the Middle East. We share US President Trump's view that the annexation of the West Bank is unacceptable.

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<sup>1</sup> Baltic Engagement Centre for Combating Information Disorders

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania remain steadfastly committed to a lasting peace through a two-state solution, pledging to support efforts towards this goal and urging all parties to refrain from actions that undermine its feasibility. The Middle East Peace process must be meaningfully reactivated, otherwise, cycles of violence and radicalization will continue.

The fall of the Assad regime marks a historic moment and an opportunity for the Syrian people to finally live in peace. The Baltic States support an inclusive, peaceful and Syrian-led transition process. We welcome the adoption of the Constitutional Declaration, the appointment of a transitional government, the ongoing cooperation with the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), as well as steps taken to prevent impunity of the high-level officials of the Assad dictatorship. At the same time, it is essential that the commitments and fundamental principles contained in the Constitutional Declaration are fully implemented. We call on Syria to revoke the decisions by Assad's regime which violated the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine and Georgia, ensuring respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states. We hope that Russian military bases will be closed.

Iran must not acquire a nuclear weapon. While the recent reimposition of United Nations Security Council sanctions is a necessary step, a possibility for dialogue on Iran's nuclear programme remains. Iran needs to return to full and verifiable cooperation with the IAEA to ensure compliance with its nuclear programme. We trust the independence, competence and integrity of the IAEA in ensuring nuclear safety in the region and on a global scale. We condemn Iran's continued military support to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and call on the EU to respond, including with further restrictive measures.

## **Regional connectivity and digital agenda**

### *Rail Baltica project*

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania reaffirm their shared commitment to the implementation of the Rail Baltica project – a strategic, cross-border infrastructure project that is increasingly important to the European Union's security, cohesion, and connectivity. In today's shifting geopolitical context, Rail Baltica has evolved into a critical element of Europe's security and defence architecture, contributing directly to military mobility, deterrence policy, and resilience along the EU's eastern flank. Its role in enabling the North Sea–Baltic and Baltic Sea–Black Sea–Aegean Sea transport corridors underlines its importance beyond regional interest – it is a truly pan-European project.

The Baltic States emphasize that continued political and financial support from the EU is indispensable to meet the 2030 deadline set by the revised TEN-T Regulation. Building on the Commission's recognition of Rail Baltica's strategic value, stable, adequate, and uninterrupted funding for the construction should be ensured in accordance with the financial possibilities of the state budget and making maximum use of the funding allocated by the EU. We welcome the recent funding allocation under the Connecting Europe Facility CEF11 which highlights the effectiveness of Baltic cooperation and the project's alignment with EU priorities.

With negotiations for the next Multiannual Financial Framework currently in progress, it is essential that the CEF remains the primary funding tool for strategic infrastructure. The Baltic States are committed to positioning Rail Baltica as a strategic pan-European infrastructure critical to strengthening both military mobility and the EU transport network's resilience. Moreover, we advocate for fair and strategically balanced EU funding, which reflects the essential role of cross-border infrastructure in safeguarding connectivity and security along the Union's eastern border.

Efficient project management, consistent political support and targeted use of the already allocated resources are key to delivering this flagship TEN-T project. It is not merely an investment in infrastructure, but also in the strategic future of a united, secure, and interconnected Europe.

Together with the Via Baltica project, it forms the North–South transport backbone of the region, linking the Baltic States to the European transport network.

#### *Regional energy security and resilience*

In February 2025, Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania disconnected from the Belarus-Russia electricity grid (BRELL) and joined the Continental Europe's electricity grid. This is a fundamental contribution to the shared security of both Europe and NATO as a whole. The Baltic States and Poland will closely co-operate to attract the European Union CEF financing to secure the crucial infrastructure and new connectivity projects.

The construction of additional interconnections in the Baltic Sea region will strengthen the security and predictability of the Baltic energy market. For example, the Harmony link (between Lithuania and Poland) and the 4<sup>th</sup> interconnection (between Latvia and Estonia) integral to ELWIND – a joint Latvian-Estonian offshore wind farm will make a significant contribution to strengthening connectivity with continental Europe.

Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania completely stopped importing gas from Russia immediately after the full-scale war in Ukraine began. Currently we mainly import liquefied natural gas (LNG) from the U.S. and Norway.

With the Inčukalns underground gas storage facility in Latvia, functioning LNG terminals in Lithuania (Klaipėda) and Finland (Inkoo), as well as a backup terminal in Estonia (Pakrineeme port), the Baltic energy supply is stable and secure.

The natural gas market remains volatile despite its relatively stable operation. Despite the fact that the Baltic region as a whole has sufficient storage capacities for natural gas, these capacities could be utilised more optimally. This requires additional safeguard measures, such as wider use of financial instruments to reduce the cost-related risks of natural gas storage for energy traders, in a similar manner as in power markets.

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania share the vision of decarbonisation as the ultimate priority of the natural gas policy with further integration of renewable methane into the natural gas grid and the development of regional hydrogen infrastructure. The Baltic States commit themselves to exchanging information and best practices in this regard, including the biogas and biomethane expertise accumulated by Latvia and Estonia as well as Lithuania's ambitious vision towards the development of a hydrogen industry.

The Baltic States continue to focus on increasing and diversifying electricity generation from renewable sources such as solar, wind, hydro, biomass.

Further steps are urgent to introduce even larger renewable energy capacities. This is clearly demonstrated by the fluctuating prices of both wholesale power market as well auxiliary services market, despite the rapid growth of renewable energy capacities in the region.

We are committed to a coordinated approach to improve the Baltic energy market. It is essential to expand and fully utilise the potential grid flexibility opportunities to successfully integrate renewable energy sources into our energy systems thereby ensuring reliable power supplies.

We concur to accelerate further steps to enable market participants to assess the functioning of the balancing capacity and frequency reserve markets more effectively, encourage them to take part more actively and thus apply competitive pressure on prices for services such as frequency regulation. The introduction of a market information and announcement exchange platform could provide a useful tool. Enhanced cooperation in this area is vital for affordable consumer prices, strengthening cross-border electricity interconnections and improving the security of supply.

After a successful integration with the European grid, the Baltic States have launched a joint electricity balancing capacity market platform to ensure stability in the Baltic grid and provide the needed relevant reserves and frequency regulation potential in the context of ever-growing demand for such balancing services - reaching approximately 1,500 MW in 2025 and beyond that will adhere to the development of this evolving market.

Our countries welcome the switching/transition of the power market to a 15-minutes trading interval and the expected completion of battery energy storage systems in the Baltic grids. These developments allow to increase the availability of highly needed capacities for balancing capacity service markets.

The Baltic States agree that a further dialogue between stakeholders, involving Members of Parliaments, remains critical since the development of new capacities are heavily influenced by socio-economic considerations, such as acceptance by local communities of wind and solar parks.

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania recognise the importance of deepening regional cooperation in the energy sector through continued coordination of national energy strategies and alignment of our regulatory frameworks. This cooperation aims to strengthen the coherence and effectiveness of the Baltic States' common energy initiatives.

The Baltic States reiterate their strongest condemnation of an illegal seizure and militarization by Russia of Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP), as well as its continued attacks on Ukraine's civilian energy infrastructure. We are deeply alarmed that, at present, Europe's largest nuclear power plant has been forced to rely on emergency diesel generators to power its cooling pumps, further challenging an already precarious nuclear safety and security situation at the site. Russia's reckless actions continue to endanger not only Ukraine but also the wider region, with potentially severe global consequences. We remain committed to intensifying our joint efforts within the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and other international forums to address these issues and to work towards returning the ZNPP to Ukraine's control.

#### *Joint ambitions in technologies*

The Baltic States aim to become Europe's leaders in both development and usage of the AI, including the implementation of AI solutions in the public sector.

We are strongly committed to the development of language technology, aiming to expand the language corpus of the Latvian, Estonian and Lithuanian languages, to ensure the representation of the Baltic languages in large language models (LLMs). For instance, the Latvian company Tilde has created the world's first open-source artificial intelligence large language model, TildeOpen LLM, in which European languages, including Latvian, Estonian and Lithuanian are equally represented. TildeOpen LLM makes it possible to develop specialized AI applications in European languages, for example, similar to ChatGPT. The model has inbuilt resilience to information manipulation and contributes to the EU open strategic autonomy in technology.

To reinforce the Baltic States' position in the field of AI and to scale up the development of high-level AI systems in the EU, we need to maintain a coordinated approach in representing our common interests in the AI Gigafactories initiative vis-à-vis the European Commission, with particular emphasis on ensuring geographical balance, and inclusion of smaller EU Member States in large-scale infrastructure projects. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are jointly planning enhancements under the EU AI Gigafactory initiative to increase compute capacity in the region. Gigafactories are significant for strengthening the EU's technology sovereignty and should be evenly distributed across Europe.

In order to fulfil the Baltic States' strategic objective of becoming an integral part of the European AI and high-performance computing (HPC) ecosystem, Lithuania decided to create a new centre

dedicated to developing and applying AI. In October 2025, a Lithuanian consortium won €65 million in co-financing for the LitAI factory. With a total project value of €130 million, it will be the only AI factory of this scale in the Baltic States. It will provide over 80 services, including high-performance computing resources, data storage, accelerator access, and innovation promotion. Particular attention will be paid to strategic areas such as cybersecurity, green energy, smart industry and digital health.

With the aim to strengthen the Latvian AI ecosystem, to connect it to the EU level AI infrastructure and to set up a national competence centre, Latvia successfully applied and received EU co-financing in the call of *EuroHPC Joint Undertaking*, allowing Latvian academics and the private sector to access GPU<sup>2</sup> working hours on the Finnish HPC LUMI for the period of 2026 – 2028. This access enables Latvia to train new models at the European level and to create practical solutions for public administration, business and society.

In order to strengthen Estonian national AI ecosystem and enhance competitiveness, Estonia joined the LUMI supercomputer consortium in 2020. It gives Estonian researchers and companies access to world-class computing power for research and innovation.

The Baltic States also declare their ambitions in quantum technologies and in joining the microchip value chains. Latvia has established and tested the first in the Baltics, fully functional national-level quantum secure communication network incorporating QKD<sup>3</sup>. The most important annual international quantum information conference, Quantum Information Processing Conference (QIP 2026), will take place in Riga at the end of January 2026.

To continue fostering regional cooperation, Lithuania recently hosted the Nordic-Baltic Quantum Technology Hackathon for the first time. This unique event brought together top minds from academia and industry to solve real-world quantum challenges. From secure data transmission to sustainable energy solutions, teams competed and collaborated in Vilnius. It was more than a hackathon – it was a launchpad for regional quantum leadership.

Estonia is actively contributing to the European quantum technology community and strengthening its role as an emerging hub for innovation. In December 2025, Estonia will host QEst Hack 2025, a national quantum hackathon that will bring together businesses, students, and technology enthusiasts. Earlier this year, the Quantum Communication Infrastructure (QCI) Connect 2025 conference gathered representatives from over 17 EU countries involved in QCI projects, fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange across Europe.

Estonia's quantum progress is driven by three initiatives: EstQCI, which develops national expertise in quantum communications and secure e-government solutions; NeQst, which explores quantum computing for solving complex optimization problems; and OpenSuperQPlus, a European effort to build a 1000-qubit quantum computer, where Estonia, through the University of Tartu, contributes to software development.

In October 2025 Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian Microchip Competence Centres signed a Memorandum of Understanding in Riga to strengthen our regional position vis-a-vis global microchip value chains, since each of the Baltic States has a unique and mutually complementary set of competences.

The Baltic States declare their intension to ensure the physical presence of major cloud service providers (hyperscalers) in the region. We will increasingly share experiences on our national cloud services and data migration. These steps will significantly enhance the trust, reliability, accessibility and continuity of critical services as well as advance the region's digital resilience.

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<sup>2</sup> Graphic processor units per hour

<sup>3</sup> Quantum Key Distribution

The Baltic States have expanded universal connectivity across the Baltic Sea region by implementing two strategic initiatives – the *Baltic Ring* project and the “Uninterrupted 5G Coverage Across Via Baltica Corridor – *5G-BALTICS* project.

The Baltic Ring initiatives, supported by the European Commission, deployed a new fibre-optic route linking the Nordics with continental Europe. Project was completed successfully in September 2025 and holds a great value to the regional connectivity resilience. The objective of the *5G-BALTICS* project is to deploy 5G infrastructure for the transport corridor to reach uninterrupted coverage that meets service requirements for Connected and Automated Mobility (CAM), Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS), and also for multi-service/multi-application 5G services along the European transport corridor Via-Baltica. With the help of Connecting Europe Facility, the project is already active, with a target completion date of 2027. Together, with the deployment of the planned Rail Baltic digital infrastructure, these projects will enhance the resilience, competitiveness, and future-readiness of Europe’s digital ecosystem, securing uninterrupted connectivity, facilitating cross-border mobility, stimulating economic growth, and reinforcing the Baltic Sea region’s strategic role within Europe’s digital infrastructure.

The Baltic States express their interest in further developing cooperation in the space sector and call on the European Union to ensure a wider participation of EU Member States and innovative SMEs in the EU Space Programme, which includes targeted communication on EU activities and opportunities available to Member States. The Baltic States intend to resume the Baltic Space Roundtable format to promote mutual information exchange aligned position within the EU on its space activities.

### **Cooperation in coordinated export and investment promotion**

On 26 May 2025, the Baltic States’ Ministers of Economy agreed to develop a coordinated approach to export and investment promotion as well as to explore new forms of joint activities, including the organisation of visits by Baltic ministerial and business delegations to strategic third-country markets.

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania will develop a Joint Action Plan for 2026 on coordinated export and investment promotion. The Action Plan will outline concrete joint activities aimed at enhancing the Baltic States’ international visibility and competitiveness, with a particular focus on strategic third-country markets, priority sectors, and high-level business delegations. This effort will strengthen the Baltic region’s positioning as a unified, stable, and attractive market for international investors and partners. The Baltic States will continue their close cooperation in enhancing the region’s economic presence globally.

### **Cooperation in education, science and research**

Cooperation of the Baltic States in education and science is vital for fostering innovation, sharing knowledge, and addressing common challenges that transcend national borders. It also strengthens social resilience by promoting mutual understanding and the ability of Baltic people to adapt to rapid global and regional changes. In the future, joint research initiatives, regional innovation hubs, and cross-border educational programmes should be carefully considered to ensure sustainable impact and mutual benefit. We also recognise the need to further strengthen cooperation in education and research, one initiative worth further exploring being the establishment of a Baltic Science Fund focusing on thematic research programmes in social sciences and humanities outside the scope of existing international programmes.

## **Cooperation in the field of culture**

In the current geopolitical context and given Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, close cultural cooperation between our countries is more important than ever. Therefore, we recognize the work and achievements in the field of mutual cultural relations.

The Baltic States have traditionally pursued strong and close cooperation in culture, which is not focused on mutual competition, but on collaboration and creativity, complementing the common and emphasizing the different. A significant impetus was given by the Centenary programme, which gave an impulse for the creation of the Baltic Culture Fund in 2019.

The Baltic Culture Fund promotes cultural cooperation among three Baltic States and strengthens the internationalisation of Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian culture by supporting joint projects in different fields of culture.

In 2025, the four supported projects included showcasing Baltic book illustration and animation in Japan, a Baltic outdoor sculpture exhibition in the United States, support for the Baltic focus at the largest European jazz festival Jazzhead! 2026–2027 as well as at the International Puppet Theatre Festival in Charleville-Mézières, France. With the support from the Fund provided in 2024, this year all three Baltic States were jointly represented at the 23rd Ireland Music Week in Dublin, Ireland.

The Baltic States are committed to continuing exchanges of best practices and joint initiatives by developing a new Programme of Cultural Cooperation for 2027–2030. In preparing the programme for the new period, efforts will be also focused on identifying the most effective practices that promote cooperation of the Baltic States.

The Baltic Song and Dance Celebrations inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity are among the strongest traditions uniting the Baltic region. Their safeguarding is coordinated through the Baltic Committee on the Protection and Development of the Song and Dance Celebration Tradition, which oversees expert exchanges, mutual visits, and joint activities under the 2018–2028 Action Plan to ensure that the tradition is preserved, strengthened, and adapted to contemporary challenges. Both the Estonian Song and Dance Festival, titled Kinship, and the XIII Latvian School Youth Song and Dance Festival organized in 2025 further confirmed the strength of the tradition to celebrate the song and dance movement in the region.

Cinema is another area reflecting close cooperation between the Baltic States. All three countries regularly screen the latest films from the region and have joint representation at international cinema events. For example, the Baltic States organize the Baltic Film Days in their countries every year, the first Baltic film festival – CineBaltique was organized in Paris, France, and the 7th Boston Baltic Film Festival was held in Boston, U.S.

United by their historical experience, the Baltic States are working closely to safeguard their cultural heritage in times of crisis. Protection of cultural heritage, tangible, intangible and digital, is seen as an essential element of national security and resilience. This year, at the Baltic Committee on Culture meeting in Riga, the three countries agreed that a more robust inter-institutional coordination and international cooperation are needed to shield heritage from armed conflict, cyber attacks and disasters.

The measures discussed include a specialized network of Baltic heritage protection experts to share expertise and coordinate emergency responses. Also, joint efforts are essential to secure European support for long-term cross-border digital preservation of cultural assets, that ensures the security, accessibility, and continuity of critical cultural heritage data in the context of hybrid threats, thus strengthening societal resilience. Next steps for cooperation were further discussed and during

international workshop, “Countering Hostilities in the Cultural Domain”, that took place in Tallinn on 14–15 October in 2025.

The Baltic States continue to actively promote support for the Ukrainian media, culture and cultural heritage sectors, particularly, by joining the Culture Resilience Alliance coordinated by the Ministry of Culture and Strategic Communications of Ukraine.

### **Cooperation between the Baltic Council of Ministers and the Baltic Assembly**

The longstanding cooperation between the Baltic Council of Ministers and the Baltic Assembly has brought substantial results, reflecting a shared commitment to strengthening regional resilience, security and connectivity. In an increasingly challenging geopolitical environment, it is vital for the Baltic cooperation to focus on essential regional priorities. Effective and needs-based cooperation is vital to ensure coherent policymaking that benefits the people of the Baltic States. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania also recognise and highly value the growing importance of the Nordic-Baltic format of cooperation in our region.

The Baltic Council has defined the following priorities for cooperation in 2026:

- 1) Regional security, including food security and the resilience of supply chains;
- 2) Cross-border connectivity, including Rail Baltica and the protection of critical infrastructure;
- 3) Comprehensive and continuous support for Ukraine at all levels.

The 32<sup>nd</sup> Baltic Council will be held during the Estonian Presidency on 23 October 2026 in Tallinn, the Republic of Estonia.

**Jānis Vucāns**

President of the Baltic Assembly

**Baiba Braže**

Chairperson of the Cooperation Council  
of the Baltic Council of Ministers

Riga, 14 November 2025