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Companies in Poland and the Baltics say climate efforts strengthen competitiveness

Polish and Baltic companies see that climate mitigation efforts can strengthen competitiveness, and several companies see an opportunity to become fossil-free. These are some of the findings of a new report from the Haga initiative, presented today at COP 24 in Katowice, in cooperation with the Swedish government and the Nordic Council of Ministers. The report confirms that the positive view of climate efforts that has become increasingly common among Nordic companies, is also valid on the other side of the Baltic Sea.

Every one of the 20 Polish and Baltic companies that were interviewed for the report, said that climate efforts can boost competitiveness. All of the companies also do contribute to the climate transition. Together, the interviewed companies have close to EUR 33 billion in revenue and employ more than 75,000 people in the region.

The report shows that companies' views of the climate change issue is not that different in the different countries around the Baltic Sea. Even in Poland and the Baltics, many companies are dealing with fossil fuel dependence, and see that they must change to maintain competitive. Not least, companies see a need to take climate and sustainability issues seriously to be attractive employers.

“For companies in Poland and the Baltics, employer branding seems to be a very important reason for companies to address climate change. As in the Nordics, the young generation is worried about climate change, and considering that Poland and the Baltics have shrinking populations, competition is hard to recruit the best employees”, said Nina Ekelund, Executive Director of the Haga Initiative.

The challenges are of course different in Poland and the Baltics, compared with the Nordic region, not least with the strong coal dependence in Poland and shale oil in Estonia.

“Polish and Baltic business leaders understand the climate challenge, just like their counterparts in Swedish businesses. The big difference is that the conditions are very different. Where we in Sweden have forests, they have coal and shale oil, so one must be respectful about the challenge they are facing”, says Nina Ekelund.

Poland and the Baltic countries are among the EU Member States with the lowest GDP per capita, but they are also countries with rapid economic development. Sweden and the Nordics are an important trading partner and investor in the region.

This spring, the Haga initiative, together with its Nordic sister networks, conducted an interview study with 38 large Nordic companies on the importance of climate efforts for competitiveness and growth, in a project financed by the Nordic Council of Ministers.

"It is clear that a large part of the business community sees opportunities to strengthen its competitiveness by being part of the transition to a fossil-free economy. But for companies to be able to do their part, policy is required that enables long-term rules of play, where a basic principle must be that there should be a cost to emitting greenhouse gases and a pay-off to reduce the climate impact", says Isabella Lövin, Sweden's minister for the climate.

The Secretary General of the Nordic Council of Ministers, Dagfinn Høybråten, sees the results of the study as a very positive signal from the business world.

"It is encouraging to see that businesses have turned to seeing the challenge of climate change as an opportunity and competitive advantage and by that, they actually lead the way. On top of that we also hear the business world demanding even stricter and more predictable long-term regulations from the politicians", says Høybråten.

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