

Energy independence oslo

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This is the fourth Environmental Performance Review of Norway. It provides an independent, evidence-based evaluation of the country's environmental performance over the past decade.

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In early January, German Vice Chancellor Robert Habeck embarked on his first diplomatic mission of the year: in pursuit of a Baltic Sea pipeline. But this had nothing to do with Russian gas or the controversial Nord Stream project. On a snowy day in Oslo, Norway's capital, standing against a blue backdrop emblazoned with the Norwegian coat of arms, Habeck detailed a vision of a 750-kilometer (466-mile) channel to this Nordic nation that will bring 4 million metric tons of hydrogen fuel to Germany per year by 2030.

"Norway is our most important energy supplier today and should remain so as we move toward a climate-neutral future," Habeck said.

Soon after Russia invaded Ukraine last year, Norway emerged as the conscience-clearing alternative to Russian petroleum--quickly ascending to be Europe's top source of gas and a major source of crude oil. For Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Store, 2022 was a year of diplomatic missions across Europe to launch or strengthen energy partnerships. In March 2022, at a joint press conference with Store, Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen stated plainly what many European leaders had likely been thinking: "I would much rather have energy from Norway than from Russia."

But as the conflict raged on and energy prices soared, this tiny nation faced criticism for making extraordinary gains. In 2022, Norway earned around EUR121 billion (or \$131 billion) in net income from its petroleum industry, an increase from about EUR27 billion (or \$29 billion) in 2021. In May 2022, Polish Prime Minister

Mateusz Morawiecki called on Norway to share these "excess profits" to help rebuild Ukraine. Store's government didn't bite. It did, however, begin pivoting energy talks toward nobler ends: to help other countries go green.

"During the war, Norway realized it could play this more visible role as an energy supplier to Europe," said Roman Vakulchuk, head of the Centre for Energy Research at the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs. "It's well-positioned to emerge as the next clean energy superpower."

This country knows how to channel morally fraught profits to greener alternatives. In the early 1980s, after a decade of accumulating oil wealth, Norway began investing billions of dollars into building a robust domestic renewable supply. Today, Norwegians enjoy a 95 percent renewable electricity grid, around 92 percent of which comes from hydropower. Since the 1990s, they've also poured billions of dollars into onshore and offshore wind, and millions of dollars more into carbon capture and storage under the North Sea. As many other European nations scramble to build out renewable infrastructure, Norway provides a model for a smooth domestic energy transition. It's also sitting on a comfortable renewable surplus ready for export.

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