

Oslo 14.12.2022

An open letter to
President Ursula von der Leyen
Executive Vice-President Frans Timmermans
Commissioner for Energy Kadri Simson

We are writing to you regarding the ongoing negotiations about establishing a Green Industry Alliance between the EU and Norway.

We acknowledge that European countries are going through one of the worst energy crises in history and concerns around energy shortages are high on the agenda. Nevertheless, we would like to draw your attention to the political debate in Norway, where the government is seeking political support from the EU with a view to exploring and opening new oil and gas fields in the Barents Sea. With this letter, we in the Norwegian environmental movement want to show our support and encourage the EU to ensure that future energy and climate collaborations between Norway and the EU are centered around a joint commitment to cut climate emissions, preserve biodiversity, and protect vulnerable and pristine nature, especially in the Arctic.

New Arctic oil and gas exploration will not help the current energy crisis in the EU. It takes on average 16 years from when a discovery is made until production starts on the Norwegian shelf, with the Barents Sea pulling up the lead time average because of rough conditions and a lack of existing infrastructure. By the time any new gas reserves begin to operate, Europe should be well on its way to zero emissions, given its goal to reduce emissions by at least 57 per cent by 2030 and to be climate neutral by 2050, which is already below what science says is needed to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees.

Most of current oil and gas production on the Norwegian shelf comes from the North Sea and the Norwegian Sea, while most exploration in new areas happens in the Barents Sea in the Arctic region. The Norwegian oil and gas lobby is unfortunately using the energy crisis and gas demand from the EU as a reason to push for opening of the Barents Sea North region, which lies above the marginal ice zone and close to protected areas such as Svalbard. These pristine marine ecosystems are home to marine mammals such as humpback and bowhead whales, beluga, polar bear, and many others. Expanding hydrocarbon projects to these remote areas heightens the risks of oil spills and leakages, increases underwater noise pollution from shipping and seismic surveys, and threatens wildlife. Because of the Arctic's remoteness and harsh terrain, it will take longer to respond to a spill or organize a clean-up operation there. An accident could ruin local ecosystems for decades, wiping out populations of species and destroying traditional food supplies for Indigenous and northern communities.

The EU must continue to hold the line to protect the Arctic from harmful oil and gas exploration by standing up to the pressure from the Norwegian oil and gas industry and government. We hope that the EU will support a Norway-EU energy cooperation that is based on the vision of building renewable energy, creating transitional opportunities for workers in the oil and gas sector, and protecting vulnerable areas in the Arctic from further petroleum and mining activity. Depending on signals from the EU, we might see increased

interest in new investments in oil and gas production and infrastructure that will start producing after 2030. Therefore, any new agreements between the EU and Norway must be carefully developed to avoid signals that will lead to lock-in of new oil and gas fields that will stop us from staying within the 1.5-degree target. We propose that any green industry agreement between the EU and Norway should:

- Reiterate and reinforce the need to limit global warming to below the 1,5-degree target as well as protecting vulnerable biodiversity and nature.
- Exclude any language that supports new oil and gas exploration and development.
- Emphasize that Norway and the EU are committed to ensuring that oil, coal and gas stay in the ground, including in the Arctic, [in accordance with the EU Arctic policy of 2021](#).
- Ensure that any long-term agreement about gas contracts only includes gas from fields that are currently in production and exclude gas from undeveloped and undiscovered assets.

We would like to enter a dialogue with you on how Norway best can contribute to the EU's green deal and the energy crisis, while also reducing Norway's oil and gas production in line with the 1.5-degree target and protecting the Arctic. We would be grateful if you could come back to us with a suggestion of a time and date for a digital meeting. Let's join forces to bring hope to the next generation!



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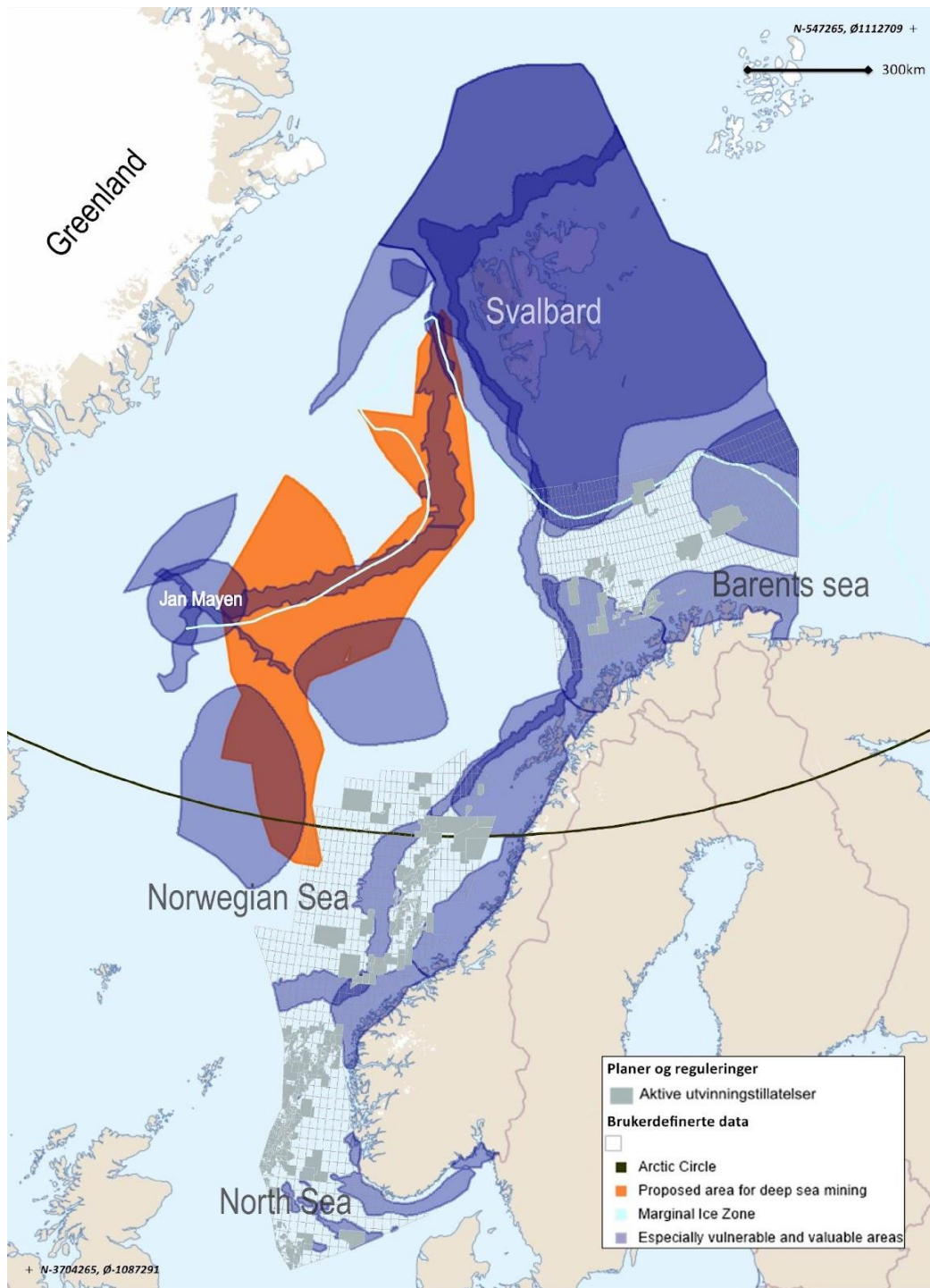
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This map shows the Norwegian continental shelf and the planned activity of the Norwegian government. The blue line represents the scientific definition of the Marginal Ice Zone, where the open sea meets dense drift ice - and close to protected areas such as Svalbard. The black line shows the arctic circle at 66 degrees. The blue areas are especially vulnerable and valuable nature areas, while the grid network shows the area open for petroleum exploration on the Norwegian shelf, with the gray squares being active exploration licenses. The orange area shows the proposed area for deep seabed mining, another threat to the Arctic waters.