

# Deep-sea mining: Norway halts controversial practice until 2029



Norway's newly elected government has delayed issuing deep-sea mining licenses in the Arctic. Norway has postponed controversial deep-sea mining plans, a delay environmentalists say must be "the nail in the coffin" for the industry.

In the last month (December 2025), the country's Labour government confirmed it will not issue licenses for deep-sea mining during the current legislative term, which doesn't end until 2029.

The agreement follows intense negotiations between Labour, the Socialist Left Party, the Green Party, the Red Party and the Centre Party. While Labour leads the government, it does not have a majority on its own and needed support from other political parties to get its 2026 State budget across the line.

## Norway's deep-sea mining mission

Last year, Norway became the first country in the world to greenlight deep-sea mining practices to accelerate the undersea hunt for minerals used to build green technology such as batteries for electric vehicles (EVs).

The bill means that around 280,000 square metres of the country's national waters – located between Svalbard, Greenland and Iceland – could eventually be opened up to collect rocks from the seabed known as nodules that contain minerals such as cobalt and zinc. It had planned to start issuing licenses for mining in 2025.

Despite claims that such a practice can be done sustainably, experts warn it could lead to “irreversible damage” to biodiversity and ecosystems and risks impacting carbon stored in the ocean.

Norway has long argued that accessing minerals from the seabed could help the country move away from the oil and gas industry, and lead to a “green transition” in the form of fuel cells, solar panels, EVs and mobile phones.

However, a report published last year by the Environmental Justice Foundation found deep-sea mining is not necessary for the clean energy transition. It predicts that a combination of new technology, a circular economy and recycling could cut demand for minerals by 58 per cent between 2022 and 2050.

The foundation’s CEO and founder, Steve Trent says deep-sea mining is a pursuit of minerals we don’t actually need that risks environmental damage “we can’t afford”.

“We know so little about the deep ocean, but we know enough to be sure that mining it will wipe out unique wildlife, disturb the world’s largest carbon store, and do nothing to speed the transition to clean economies,” he adds.

### **Is this the ‘nail in the coffin’ for Norway’s deep-sea mining industry?**

Norway’s decision to postpone deep-sea mining has been praised by numerous environmental groups – and has resulted in calls for the country to support a global moratorium on the practice.

“This must be the nail in the coffin for the deep-sea mining industry in Norway,” says Haldis Tjeldflaat Helle of Greenpeace Nordic.

“Any government that is committed to sustainable ocean management cannot support deep-sea mining.”

Helle has also urged Norway to “step up and become a real ocean leader” by bringing forward a proposal to protect the Arctic deep sea.

However, Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre told reporters that the move should be understood as a postponement rather than a permanent ban.

He adds that the Socialist Left Party, which halted budget agreements yesterday, do not “hold power forever” but confirmed that seabed mining will not take place during the current parliamentary period.