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Minister of Trade and Industry visiting Egersund: Does not exclude state mining, as long as it benefits the local communities



MINERAL AND MINING POLICY: Minister of Trade and Industry Jan Christian Vestre (Labour) was in Egersund on Thursday to discuss mineral policy. The meeting was shorter than planned, so Sokndal's mayor Jonas Andersen Sayed (KrF) and Eigersund's mayor Odd Stangeland (Ap) secured another meeting in Oslo. Photo: Ingunn Walderhaug

In the Government's budget proposal, an additional NOK 10 million has been allocated for mapping minerals. Minister of Trade and Industry Jan Christian Vestre (Labor) was in Egersund the same day and said that the grant is the start of a higher emphasis on minerals by the state.

On Thursday, Minister of Trade and Industry Jan Christian Vestre (Labor) and Storting politician Hadia Tajik (Labor) visited Egersund to discuss mineral policy. They met, among others, Eigersund's mayor Odd Stangeland (Ap), Sokndal's mayor Jonas Andersen Sayed (KrF) and representatives from the local business association.

On the same day, it became clear that the government is allocating NOK 10 million in the national budget to intensify the work on mapping minerals. Last year, NGU (Geological Survey of Norway) received NOK 197.6 million in allocations over the national budget.

Geological Survey of Norway

The Geological Survey of Norway (NGU) is the country's central institution for knowledge about bedrock, mineral resources, soils, and groundwater in Norway.

NGU is an agency under the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Fisheries.

"Is 10 million really that much?"

"It's certainly more than they've gotten before and the first escalation in a long time. The money is also earmarked for mapping critical raw materials and minerals that the world needs for the green shift. There is such a project here, with minerals that are on the EU's list of critical raw materials. We would like to have these projects realized in Norway, but they must be carried out in a sustainable, responsible manner with the support of the local communities. A share of value creation must benefit the local communities. That's why we're putting forward a mineral strategy before Christmas, but I couldn't quite wait and had to start increasing funding now. That's why we found NOK 10 million in an otherwise very tight scheme," Vestre replies to Dalane Tidende.

– The start of an escalation

To [Stavanger Aftenblad](#), the Minister of Trade and Industry has explained that the NOK 10 million is earmarked mapping of mineral deposits. At the same time, he points out to the newspaper that the areas especially in Eigersund are already well mapped.

"Is it to be understood that these funds are actually earmarked mapping outside Dalane?"

"No, they are not, and it will be up to the professional authorities to look at what is the need for mapping and where to do it. So, one could say that this should have been stepped up over time. It hasn't been done. The allocations to NGU have more or less been at a standstill, and in fact they have gone down for a few years as well, if I don't remember wrong. This is the start of an escalation. I believe that we have now surveyed just over half of our country. We probably have Europe's largest deposit of rare earth elements and metals. This means that we should get it mapped – also to make wise decisions about where we should have business and where not," says the Minister of Trade and Industry.

"We are not going to "bulldoze" forward, we will do it where the local communities want, where environmental interests are safeguarded and it does not violate international law." MINISTER OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY JAN CHRISTIAN VESTRE (LABOUR PARTY)

He points out that there are many places in Norway that are not suitable for mineral activities, even though there are deposits. These may be areas with vulnerable nature and vulnerable ecosystems, with Sami interests or areas where mining would violate international law," he points out.

"We are not going to "bulldoze" forward, we will do it where the local communities want, where environmental interests are safeguarded and it does not violate international law – and, as mentioned, where it benefits the local communities. That is the conditions for this. And I think we'll be able to do that. We have good input meetings with the mineral industry. I get good input here today, and we talk to everyone from industry, municipalities, the environmental movement, the Sami Parliament – everyone who has something to contribute, really. Then the goal is that we will present this strategy before Christmas.



BETTING BIG: While Sokndal has a long history of mining, and the plans in Eigersund are also very large, the state's focus on mineral policy and mapping of mineral deposits has been too small, according to the Minister of Trade and Industry. Now the work - and cooperation - is stepped up. Photo: Ingunn Walderhaug

Does not exclude state ownership

"Norge Mining believes there is a good basis for mining in Dalane. At the same time, you do not rule out, to Aftenbladet, that there may be talk of state mining. Is it to be understood that there could be an escalation towards a potential competition with Norge Mining?"

- Nope. Our goal in the green shift, which the Center Party and the Labor Party completely agree on in the government platform, is that we will mobilize as much private capital as possible for the green shift. Our goal is not for the state to displace private initiatives. Private initiatives are intended to ensure that a larger share of value creation is left locally. So it's great for us that it's being expanded privately. When the Prime Minister and I presented the "Green Industry Boost" at Rosenberg wharf in Stavanger at the end of June, we pointed out that minerals and critical raw materials are needed for the green shift, and that the state will provide risk relief in the form of guarantees, loans and equity in the order of NOK 60 billion over the next

few years. This is almost as much as the oil tax package – so it is a huge boost, precisely to mobilise private capital. But I do not rule out, as my predecessor did, that we can also use state ownership if it can help us get to the goal faster. But then it must be together with private, not in competition with private ones," says Vestre.

His predecessor, former Minister of Trade and Industry Iselin Nybø (V), maintained that it was out of the question for the state to carry out mining activities.

New meeting planned in Oslo

It was a very busy Vestre who came directly from Stavanger to Langholmen Panorama in Egersund, with only 35 minutes to spare before returning north for the next meeting in Haugesund. In fact, the meeting was so short that Odd Stangeland in the elevator on the way up secured an agreement that he and Andersen Sayed will be allowed to come to Oslo to have time for a more thorough meeting on mineral policy, the government's mineral strategy and the mining plans in Dalane.

Andersen Sayed has previously stated that he [was both provoked and surprised by the government's proposal for a new mineral law](#), which he believes greatly overrules the municipalities. Although the meeting on Thursday was short, the Sokndal mayor had time to show his specific input to the Minister of Trade and Industry, who eagerly noted and took pictures of Andersen Sayed's presentation.

In particular, Vestre was engaged by Andersen Sayed's points related to the challenges of landfills and tailings that cannot be used for anything.

"I'm actually shocked by the lack of research on this and incentives to use the tailings," Commented Vestre.



TAKING INPUT: The Minister of Trade and Industry says that local input has a lot to say for the Government's mineral strategy. Here he notes while Jonas Andersen Sayed (KrF) reviews his input to the strategy. To the left is Labor's representative in the Storting, Hadia Tajik. Photo: Ingunn Walderhaug