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Murmansk Launches Construction of Russia's Largest Wind Power Park

The turbines built near the windy coast of the Barents Sea will account for a major share of the green power produced by Russia over the next decade.

By The Barents Observer

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Dan Raustadt / Flickr (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

While ice-cold fall storms were gathering force in Russia's far northern region, Russian and Italian businessmen and state officials exchanged warm handshakes in a party tent erected on desolate lands about 80 kilometers northeast of the city of Murmansk.

The spot will soon house 57 major wind turbines, making it Russia's largest wind park and one of the biggest in the world north of the Arctic Circle.

Italian company Enel and its subsidiary Enel Green Power will build the Kolskaya Wind Farm.

By 2021, the 201 MW park will be in operation. It will be able to produce up to 750 GWh per year.

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"We are breaking ground on a strategic wind project," Simone Mori, Enel Group's Head of Europe and Euro-Mediterranean Affairs, said in the ceremony. "With the start of construction of this facility, we are confirming our commitment to Russia's energy transition towards a low-carbon economy."

Murmansk Governor Andrey Chibis was also at the ceremony, where he said that his region wanted more green energy.

"Our objective is to turn Murmansk into a truly leading region and the use of the newest technology, like green energy, is a step in that direction," he added.

The Italian company won the contract for the wind project's development in 2017. It was based on a tender organized by the Russian government and has a total cost frame of $300 million. It was part of a government bid to develop more renewable energy.

The power plant will be built on the very same spot where Dutch company Windlife Energy and its Russian subsidiary Windlife Arctic Power for several years lobbied for the development of a similar wind project.

Those plans, however, never materialized.

The Kolskaya Wind Farm will provide additional power to the Northwest Russian region that from before is a major producer of electricity. Murmansk region today produces about 60% of its energy from nuclear power and the remaining 40% from hydropower.

And critics argue that the Far Northern region actually does not need the additional power-generating capacities.

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Russia has ambitions to increase its generation of renewable energy and the country's Energy Strategy from 2009 outlined an ambition to generate and consume up to 4.5% of its power from alternative renewable sources by 2020.

The Murmansk wind project is part of that picture.

However, the Russian energy transformation is currently nowhere near the 4,5% target. According to the Kommersant business daily, the country's federal government in the period 2025-2035 intends to invest only 400 billion rubles in green generation and increase generation capacity by only about 5 GW.

That is far less than what has previously been outlined for investors, Kommersant says.

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