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Russia Steps into Oil-Free Future With New Arctic Research Station

By The Barents Observer

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The Snowflake research station will be fully fueled by hydrogen and is being built as Russia prepares to take over the chair of the Arctic Council. **arctic-mipt.com**

Russia is looking beyond oil as it builds the "Snowflake station," a state-of-the-art climate research station in the Yamal-Nenets region of Siberia.

The Snowflake IAS will be a fully autonomous year-round diesel-free facility powered by renewable energy sources and hydrogen fuel, a project presentation says.

"It is envisioned as a unique new platform for international cooperation between engineers, researchers, scientists, and students working on bold solutions that constitute a basis for life and work in the Arctic."

It will be "a vehicle for supporting joint research on climate change, ecology and environmental pollution, including that of the oceans."

The Yamal-Nenets autonomous district today produces about 80% of Russia's natural gas, as well as substantial volumes of oil. Over the next three years, regional industrial production is expected to increase by more than 30%.

"This is not for us," regional governor Dmitry Artyukhov responded when asked about renewable energy in a conference last year.

Still, this is where the Snowflake research station will be built. The station will be located on the tundra outside the regional capital Salekhard, project developers say.

With support from both regional and federal authorities, the station will be a welcome change for a country with one of the worst climate change policies, as well as growing public concern.

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The 2,000-square-meter facility will be able to house a significant number of researchers from all over the world. A total of nine cupola-shaped and interlinked buildings will provide comfortable living, labs and research premises for scientists.

It will be operational all year round and will be fully fueled by hydrogen, says Nikolay Kudryavtsev, rector of the Moscow Physical-Technical Institute.

The project is supported by the Arctic Council and will be ready in the year 2022, during Russia's chairmanship in the Arctic club, Kudryavtsev makes clear. It is projected to cost up to 12 million euros.

"Researchers, engineers, students and youth can come for work visits and year-round tests and demonstrate technology that is already becoming part of our lives," he says.

The station is backed by the Physical-Technical Institute with support from the Education and Science Ministry, Foreign Affairs Ministry and Ministry of the Far East and the Arctic, as well as by the governor of the Yamal-Nenets autonomous district.

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