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## **Between Continuity and Change:**

Analysing Norwegian Presentations and  
Justifications of the Green Alliance

Master's thesis in European Studies

Supervisor: Lise Rye

May 2024



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# Summary

For 30 years, the EEA agreement has served as the backbone for Norwegian cooperation with the EU. This master's thesis explores the complex relationship between Norway and the EU through the lens of the newly established Green Alliance. It aims to uncover how the Green Alliance has been portrayed before, during, and after the conclusion of the agreement in 2023. In doing so, it tries to show why Norway, which already has extensive and dynamic cooperation with the EU through the EEA Agreement, pursued and entered the GA. The goal is to be able to say something about the development in the Norwegian policy towards the EU, whether it is characterised by continuity or change

The findings indicate that the GA is framed as a response to evolving European policies that could potentially marginalise Norway. It is depicted as an important evolution in Norway's EU relations, aimed at enhancing cooperation in areas such as green industrial transformation, energy, and environmental sustainability. The thesis finds that the GA justified using pragmatic ideas, finding that the GA was driven by a wish to secure Norwegian economic and industrial interests and solve existing challenges in the present cooperation.

In conclusion, the thesis posits that the GA signifies both continuity and transformation in Norway's approach to EU relations, adopting new agreements to address specific modern challenges and opportunities better whilst still keeping the EEA agreement as the cornerstone of the Norwegian cooperation with the EU.

# Sammendrag

I 30 år har EØS-avtalen fungert som fundamentet for det norsk samarbeidet med EU. Denne masteroppgaven utforsker det komplekse forholdet mellom Norge og EU gjennom den nyetablerte Grønn Alliansen. Den tar sikte på å avdekke hvordan Grønn Alliansen har blitt fremstilt før, under og etter inngåelsen av avtalen i 2023. I den forbindelse forsøker den å belyse hvorfor Norge, som allerede har et omfattende og dynamisk samarbeid med EU gjennom EØS-avtalen, valgte å fremforhandle og inngå den Grønn Alliansen. Målet er å kunne si noe om utviklingen i norsk politikk overfor EU, om den er preget av kontinuitet eller endring.

Funnene viser at Grønn Alliansen er presentert som et svar på utviklingen i EU, som muligens risikere å marginalisere Norge. Den blir fremstilt som en viktig utvikling i Norges forhold til EU, med mål om å styrke samarbeidet innen områder som grønn industriell omstilling, energi og miljømessig bærekraft. Oppgaven konkluderer med at Grønn Alliansen er forankret i pragmatiske ideer og drevet av et ønske om å sikre norske økonomiske og industrielle interesser, samt ønsket om å løse eksisterende utfordringer i det nåværende samarbeidet med EU.

Oppgaven konkluderer med at Grønn Alliansen representerer både kontinuitet og endring i Norges tilnærming til EU-relasjoner. Ved å inngå nye avtaler, søker Norge å håndtere spesifikke moderne utfordringer og muligheter, samtidig som EØS-avtalen fortsatt utgjør grunnsteinen i det norske samarbeidet med EU.

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# List of Abbreviations

CBAM	Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism
DI	Discursive Institutionalism
EC	European Community
EEA	European Economic Area
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
EU	European Union
EU ETS	European Union Emissions Trading System
GA	Green Alliance
IRA	Inflation Reduction Act
TCA	Trade and Cooperation Agreement

# 1 Introduction

The European Economic Area (EEA) agreement turns 30 years old in 2024 and has, since its entry into force in 1994, served as the basis for the increasingly close and integrated relationship Norway has with the European Union (EU). Still, the EEA agreement is not the only agreement between the EU and Norway. More than 100 agreements of varying size and importance regulate and allow the cooperation between these two parties to be as close and integrated as it is (Melchior & Nordås, 2024, pp. 7–8). In recent years, the cooperation between the EU and Norway has seen the addition of new agreements. Notably, the Green Alliance (GA) concluded in 2023 emerges as an interesting development in this dynamic collaboration.

This thesis hypothesises that Norway, in a situation reminiscent of its position in 1992, is at a crossroads where the EEA agreement no longer sufficiently protects its interests. Against this backdrop, this thesis seeks to understand why Norway, despite its robust and dynamic collaboration with the EU through the EEA agreement, continuously forms new agreements with the EU. This question will be explored through an examination of Norwegian presentations of one of the most recent agreements between the EU and Norway, specifically, The Green Alliance from 2023.

This is synthesised into two research questions, the first of which is related to the GA and the presentations and justifications of the GA, “How has the Green Alliance been portrayed before, during and after the conclusion of the agreement in April 2023?” The first research question will serve as the approach to answering the second research question: “Why does Norway, which already has extensive and dynamic cooperation with the EU through the EEA Agreement, constantly enter into new agreements with the EU?” The end goal of this second research question is to be able to say something about the development in the Norwegian policy towards the EU and whether it is characterised by continuity (in the form that the EEA Agreement is still regarded as an adequate solution for Norway) or change (in the form that the EEA Agreement is no longer regarded as an adequate solution for Norway).

This thesis attempts to analyse the questions presented, employing a qualitative case study approach that examines policymaker’s statements in relation to the discourse surrounding the GA. The theory that supports this qualitative research is the new institutionalist approach articulated by Vivien Schmidt, which is the theory of discursive institutionalism (DI). DI offers both a theory (that linguistic expressions are a suitable introduction to the study of politics) and a method for doing this (in the distinction between pragmatic and normative expressions). By delving into the ideas and the discourse promoted by the selected actors within the Norwegian political landscape, the study aims to shed light on the interplay between political discourse and political output. This thesis aims to contribute to more than just categorising statements; it is also about understanding their implications within the larger context of EU-Norway relations. This detailed and methodical analysis aims to add a valuable dimension to the academic discourse on Norwegian relations with the EU by connecting the academic background with the analytical findings.

The thesis' findings show that the GA is portrayed as a strategic approach to secure economic and industrial interests and solve existing challenges in the present cooperation. Building on this understanding, the thesis suggests that the GA represents both continuity in maintaining and valuing the EEA Agreement as the cornerstone of cooperation with the EU and change by adopting new agreements to address specific modern challenges and opportunities better.

## 1.1 The Green Alliance

Securing Norway's access to the EU's internal market and expanding to include services, the EEA agreement was originally designed to respond to the limitations of the 1973 trade agreement (NOU 2012: 2, 2012, p. 47). Given the dynamic changes in international trade and policy developments within the EU, where the plans presented in the Green Deal proposed measures that can ensure the EU has access to expertise in new technology and that the EU could use trade policy instruments to ensure "fair international trade" and emphasised the needs of a competitive EU-based industry (NOU 2024: 7, 2024, p. 228). This development within the EU calls into question the current nature of Norway's cooperation with the EU, as Norway may be treated as a third country in certain situations. Some parts of the discourse present the GA as a response to this development.

The GA is presented as a historic agreement to "strengthen climate, energy and industrial cooperation between Norway and the EU". The agreement focuses on strengthening joint efforts in climate action, environmental protection, clean energy transition, and green industrial transformation, setting ambitious targets to meet and exceed existing environmental and climate goals (European Commission, 2023a). Central to the GA is the stated shared commitment of both parties to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030 compared to 1990 levels, with the ultimate objective of achieving climate neutrality by 2050. These goals align with the global efforts under the Paris Agreement to limit global warming to 1.5°C. The GA outlines specific priority areas for cooperation, including combating climate change through carbon pricing and capture initiatives, enhancing environmental protection and circular economy practices, and promoting the green industrial transition by fostering political and industrial partnerships. Furthermore, the Alliance emphasises the acceleration of a clean energy transition, highlighting the role of hydrogen and offshore renewable energies and advocating for the decarbonisation of the transport sector, particularly in shipping. The Alliance also emphasises that regulatory and business cooperation is vital to setting global environmental standards and facilitating the transition to circular and net-zero economies (Norway-EU Green Alliance, 2023).

## 1.2 Structure of the Thesis

This introductory chapter sets the stage for the thesis by outlining the research questions and objectives and providing background information on the state of the cooperation between Norway and the EU. It is followed by the chapter containing the literature review. Divided into two main parts, the second chapter first explores the scholarly works on the general cooperation between Norway and the EU, the first part providing a historical context and identifying current dynamics. The second part narrows the focus to

energy and industrial policy, examining how these specific areas play a critical role in the recent developments under the GA. This review will identify gaps in the existing literature the thesis aims to address, positioning the research within the broader academic debate.

The third chapter introduces and elaborates on the theoretical foundation of discursive institutionalism as theorised by Vivien A. Schmidt. It will explain how this theory is pertinent to understanding the complex dynamics of international policy and cooperation, particularly in analysing how discourse shapes institutional changes and policy decisions. The application of this theory in analysing the discourses around the GA will be precisely detailed.

The fourth chapter discusses the qualitative methodology employed in the thesis, focusing on discourse analysis to examine the public and internal discussions by Norwegian political actors regarding the GA. It will detail the selection criteria for the discursive materials analysed, including speeches, policy documents, and media articles, and explain the methods used to ensure rigorous data analysis.

Chapter five is the analytical chapter of the thesis. This section delves into the discourses surrounding the GA and examines how Norwegian political actors frame and justify the agreement. It will analyse these justifications in light of the theory of DI and seek to uncover the underlying motivations and strategic considerations expressed through these discourses.

Chapter six builds on the analysis and discusses the findings' implications in a broader context. It connects the discourses surrounding the GA with the operationalisation of DI and the existing literature on EU-Norway relations. The discussion aims to clarify how the findings expand or challenge previous understandings of Norway's strategic positioning within European industrial and energy policy frameworks.

Chapter seven, the concluding chapter, synthesises the research findings, reflecting on the insights gained regarding Norway's motivations and strategies in making the GA. It will summarise the contributions to the understanding of EU-Norway cooperation and the nature of the GA, discuss the thesis' limitations, and suggest avenues for future research.

## 2 Literature Review

This literature review focuses on two main areas of interest in the existing cooperation between the EU and Norway. The first is Norwegian cooperation with the EU on a general level. This exploration aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics between Norway and the EU. This will serve as a backdrop for the analysis of the stated motivations behind Norway's decision to engage in and agree to the Green Alliance. Secondly, the literature review will examine Norwegian cooperation with the EU on energy and industrial policy. It aims to explore previous research on Norway's relationship with the EU in these domains, as they are central to the GA. Understanding the historical and current dynamics in energy and industrial policy will provide valuable insights into the motivations and implications of the GA. The literature review will provide a basis for assessing whether GA represents continuity or change (whether the EEA is considered sufficient or not) and for assessing the more specific arguments for cooperation in the relevant areas. By understanding the broader EU-Norway relationship and the specific dynamics in energy and industrial policy, the literature review will provide a nuanced understanding of why the GA was pursued and agreed upon. This understanding will contribute to the academic discourse on Norway's energy collaboration with the EU and its broader cooperation within the EU context.

### 2.1 Norwegian-EU Cooperation on a General Level

The Norwegian cooperation with the EU since the inception of the EEA has transformed into a significant and comprehensive partnership, impacting a wide range of sectors. Consequently, it becomes essential to examine Norwegian interests within the framework of EU cooperation from multiple perspectives beyond the focus on industry and energy policy. This section of the literature review aims to delve into the multifaceted nature of the Norwegian-EU relationship, exploring it within a broader context. Given the scope of this field, an extensive range of secondary literature is available, offering many insights into how this relationship has been presented and interpreted. By venturing beyond industry and energy policy scope, the thesis aims to provide a nuanced understanding of how Norway navigates its relationship with the EU, highlighting the diverse interests and considerations at play. This exploration enriches this thesis' comprehension of the existing dynamics and sheds light on the complexities of cooperation, setting the stage for an in-depth discussion on the subject.

When examining the literature on the history of the cooperation between the EU and Norway and the broad lines, it is evident that the 1973 free trade agreements were inadequate. These agreements were outdated as they did not include services or grant Norway access to the single market. Furthermore, the EEA agreement effectively superseded the prior agreement between the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and the European Community (EC) after it was successfully negotiated and mutually accepted (NOU 2012: 2, 2012, p. 44). This thesis aims to analyse and discuss whether the emergence of the GA could indicate a comparable advancement in the cooperation between the EU and Norway within the context of the EEA agreement.

The comprehensive Official Norwegian Report, NOU 2012: 2, also known as the "Europautredningen," provides an in-depth exploration of the cooperation between the EU and Norway. It highlights the significance of the 1973 free trade agreements, acknowledging their effectiveness in serving their intended purpose and noting their immediate obsolescence upon implementation. The report underscores that as soon as the EC achieved its objective of creating a single European market, the 1973 free trade agreements were deemed insufficient (NOU 2012: 2, 2012, pp. 47, 60). The report further explains that these free trade agreements, which previously governed the relationship between the EFTA states and the EC, fell short of accommodating the EFTA states' wish for access to the EC's single market on equal terms as EU member states. Therefore, the report's authors argue that the transition towards a more dynamic agreement, the EEA agreement, was a logical progression (NOU 2012: 2, 2012, p. 321). In the case of Norway, the shift from the old free trade agreement to the EEA Agreement is portrayed as an extension of Norwegian European policy and a response to the establishment of the EC's single market. The report maintains that this continues the Norwegian EC policy due to the sustained emphasis on securing markets for Norwegian industrial exports (NOU 2012: 2, 2012, p. 44). Against the backdrop of the findings of the NOU2012:2, this thesis delves into whether the GA constitutes a shortcoming in the EEA agreement, drawing heavily on the literature detailing Norway's historical integration into the EU. Therefore, the 1973 trade agreements emerge as an important point in this discussion.

Since the publication of the last NOU in 2012 on the relationship between the EU and Norway, significant developments have occurred in the EU-Norway cooperation. A recent Official Norwegian report, NOU 2024: 7, titled "Norge og EØS: Utvikling og erfaringer", provides a detailed explanation of the current relationship between the EU and Norway. This literature review will specifically focus on the sections of this NOU that are particularly relevant to the GA. In the NOU 2024: 7, the industrial policy of the EU is described as one of the areas where the EU has developed the most in the past ten years. The development has been shifting towards a situation where the EU increasingly allows itself to interfere in the single market. As described in the NOU, this development has been driven by several factors. A significant cause of this development is crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine, collapses in the global trade political framework like the World Trade Organisation, and not least, geopolitical changes related to increased rivalry between the EU and major powers such as the USA, China, and Russia (NOU 2024: 7, 2024, p. 213).

Furthermore, what is noteworthy to this thesis is that the EU's Green Deal has become more central as a basis for political change in the EU. Internal market policy is now more likely to spill over into areas not covered by the EEA agreement, such as trade policy. The EU's industrial policy has increasingly shifted its focus towards green initiatives. It has adopted a more proactive role aimed at safeguarding vulnerable value chains. Furthermore, it seeks to shield the economies of EU member states amidst the prevailing geopolitical uncertainties (NOU 2024: 7, 2024, p. 213).

The NOU clarifies that some aspects of the EU's new industrial policy initiatives fall under the EEA agreement while others do not. The covered parts are primarily associated with the single market, whereas the uncovered parts pertain to areas where the EU's industrial policy intersects with policy areas outside the EEA agreement. This distinction is particularly relevant to this thesis, given that the thesis departs from the assumption that the GA is a reaction to political developments not covered by the EEA agreement

(NOU 2024: 7, 2024, p. 213). To the interest of this thesis, the NOU 2024: 7 portrays the EU's climate policy as an area where immense changes have occurred in the past years. These changes affect a range of other policy areas, including the industrial policy area. Here, the GA is presented as a development to mitigate the problems that have emerged in the wake of this development. In the NOU, the GA is described as a multifaceted framework that offers a proactive approach to aligning Norway's industrial activities with the evolving landscape of the EU's comprehensive climate policy. This strategic alignment addresses and balances industrial development with stringent environmental goals, fostering innovation, sustainable practices, and fair economic growth. By collaborating on key initiatives within the green transition, such as renewable energy technologies and carbon-neutral projects, the GA endeavours to create a closer integration between Norway's and the EU's industrial policies. This enhances Norway's standing in the internal market and reinforces the shared commitment to environmental stewardship and sustainable economic advancement (NOU 2024: 7, 2024, pp. 236–237).

The NOU thoroughly explains some of the consequences of being treated as a third country by the EU, providing three examples, two where Norway was on the receiving end of these consequences and one where the Faroe Island was considered a third country. One of the cases mentioned in the report is the case of battery customs, where, following Brexit, another issue emerged related to third-country problems. According to the Cooperation and Trade Agreement (TCA) between the EU and the United Kingdom (UK), electric cars manufactured in the EU could be sold duty-free to the UK and vice versa. However, this duty-free privilege did not extend to countries outside the EU (third countries). Cars made in the EU but powered by Norwegian batteries faced an additional 10% tariff. The issue stemmed from electric car batteries constituting a significant portion of a car's value; hence, duty exemptions for the EU and UK were not beneficial for third countries wishing to sell car batteries there (NOU 2024: 7, 2024, p. 241).

From Norway's perspective, this extra tariff posed a threat to establishing a robust battery industry, as competitive conditions are essential for market access. On June 22nd, 2022, the Norwegian Parliament urged its government to ensure international competitiveness for Norwegian battery players by working against imposing this anticipated battery tariff resulting from the UK-EU trade agreement. The Norwegian government attempted resolution by linking its battery initiatives with mutual benefits for the EU and Norway and aligning with the EU's Green Deal through participation in various battery projects under the Important Projects of Common European Interest framework and engagement in the European Battery Alliance. A resolution could necessitate amendments in TCA between EU-UK. Discussions have been ongoing among all parties involved, but no final decision has been reached as of January 2024 (NOU 2024: 7, 2024, p. 241).

To enhance this thesis' interpretation of the context in which the GA was created, it is essential to understand the nature of the ongoing cooperation between the EU and Norway through the EEA agreement. This involves understanding which aspects of the EU Norway participates in and which aspects the country chooses to remain outside. From the negotiation of the EEA agreement in the early 1990s, a central exemption from the EEA agreement 1994 was that Norway would not take part in the trade policy of the EU and the customs union (NOU 2024: 7, 2024, p. 45). The NOU described the issues of not being a full member of the EU but instead being in the grey areas of the EU's policy when the EU crafts new legislation encompassing various sectors. The report uses the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) as an example of a trade-policy

instrument that challenges Norway's position in the EEA. Over the past few years, the EU has launched trade policy instruments, such as CBAM and investment screening, to protect the internal market and European businesses. Many of these instruments challenge the EEA agreement because they lie in the borderland between the EU's common trade policy, which Norway does not participate in, and the internal market regulation. If and when the Commission decides to anchor the new rules in trade policy, Norway risks being treated as a third country. This underscores the necessity for Norwegian businesses to align with these changing frameworks to maintain competitiveness, especially in the face of sector-overarching regulations like CBAM (NOU 2024: 7, 2024, pp. 20–21).

Another important factor to consider when trying to understand why Norway is seeking a new agreement with the EU, despite already having comprehensive and dynamic cooperation through the EEA, is the existence of a climate agreement between Norway and the EU. Established in 2019, this agreement covers many of the same areas as the GA between Norway and the EU. A crucial aspect is the integration of Norway into the European Union's Emissions Trading System (EU ETS) (NOU 2024: 7, 2024, pp. 17–18).

Overall, the insights provided by NOU 2024: 7 contribute to the analysis of the research questions guiding this thesis, suggesting an evolving dynamic in Norway's cooperation with the EU. It reflects on how emerging EU industrial policies, shaped by recent crises and geopolitical developments, have influenced the effectiveness of the EEA agreement in facilitating cooperation between Norway and the EU. This report facilitates a nuanced understanding of the interconnections between the EU's strategic industrial initiatives and Norway's adaptive strategies through mechanisms like the GA. Thus, the NOU 2024: 7 helps to enrich this thesis's understanding of the broader trade, policy, and environmental objectives within Europe, hinting at the need for ongoing adaptation in Norway's strategic approaches to sustain and enhance its alignment with future EU policy directions.

Economic factors emerge as key drivers in the literature on EU-Norway cooperation across various policy domains, indicating that these elements significantly influence Norway's collaborations with the EU. One of these is Frode Veggeland's article from 2016, which examines the driving forces behind adaptations in Norway's adaptations to the EU. Veggeland's analysis delves into the economic dimensions of Norwegian interests within the area of food and agriculture. This approach is rooted in a rational-economic framework, positing that actors are inclined to act in manners that maximise their benefits. In the case of the Norwegian agricultural policy, this materialised in reservations from things such as the liberalisation of trade. This materialised for the Norwegian fishery industry as opting for improved market access (Veggeland, 2016, pp. 4–5). Veggeland further states that Norway's alignment with EU standards transcends mere institutional obligations, extending into the realm of indirect pressures originating from its economic reliance on the European market (Veggeland, 2016, p. 4,21). This insight sets an example for the thesis, fostering an anticipation that economic incentives were pivotal in Norway's pursuit and agreement on the GA.

Describing the general cooperation between Norway and the EU from a historical perspective, Rolf Tamnes's book from 1997 emerges as an interesting part of the existing literature. One interesting takeaway is that the EU referendums in 1972 and 1994 had one thing in common: the EC was changing, and the Norwegian government was worried about becoming marginalised (Tamnes, 1997, p. 153). Tamnes describes the



developments in the EC from 1973 with the expansion to new member states, the political deepening of the cooperation seen through the Maastricht treaty from 1991, and crucially, the EC's realisation of the single market, the introduction of new plans for an economical, monetary, and political union, and its aspiration to become a European pillar in Atlantic cooperation marked a significant transformation. The Norwegian leadership perceived this shift as so dramatic that standing still would lead to substantial changes, stirring a renewed anxiety about being marginalised. This sentiment intensified as the Norwegian economy and business sector underwent significant transformations. Thus, external developments and domestic circumstances influenced the approach towards the EC (Tamnes, 1997, pp. 154–155). Tamnes's book underscores how historical shifts within the European Community have shaped Norway's strategies towards the EU. By illustrating these pivotal changes, it sets the stage for a detailed analysis of whether the GA represents a similar evolution in the cooperation between Norway and the EU today.

## 2.2 Norwegian-EU Cooperation on Energy and Industrial Policy

The body of literature exploring the progression of EU-Norway cooperation in energy and industry policy is extensive. A significant section of this literature pinpoints economic incentives as a primary driver for cooperation. Nevertheless, these studies also highlight the importance of sustainability and compliance with climate policy objectives within the framework of Norway's energy strategies. This section of the research aims to review the literature that outlines the dominant trends in EU-Norway industrial and energy policy. This segment of the thesis will review the literature that outlines the overarching trends of EU-Norway industrial and energy policy.

In his article on Norway's role as a small state in the great European energy game, Austvik (2019) describes and analyses the longer and broader lines of the EU-Norway energy cooperation. Austvik claims that with the signing and implementation of the EEA, there was a shift in the Norwegian energy policies, especially in the oil and gas sector (Austvik, 2019, p. 140). Austvik highlights Norway's shift from conflict to collaboration and adaptability in its approach to the EEA agreement. Norway changed its attitude to its relationship with the EU, as demonstrated by the privatisation of essential state firms and the adoption of the EU's competition legislation (Austvik, 2019, p. 151). The primary motivation for Norway's cooperation with the EU, first through the EEA agreement and later through other agreements, was economic incentives, such as market access and economic integration. Whilst Norway did not need the EEA agreement to sell oil and gas to the EU, the rest of its economy benefitted greatly from the cooperation (Austvik, 2019, p. 139). Austvik also mentions the process of Europeanising the Norwegian energy policy after the EEA agreement. This underscores a crucial element of the collaboration between Norway and the EU since 1994, where Norway has tried to align with EU policies and directives (Austvik, 2019, pp. 140–141).

A number of academic articles highlight economic or material gains as driving forces behind Norwegian cooperation with the EU within the sphere of energy policy. Gullberg, Ohlhorst, and Schreurs investigate the economic, political, environmental, and technological factors that drive and hinder renewable energy cooperation between Germany and Norway (Gullberg et al., 2014, p. 216). The article finds that profit motives largely dominate Norwegian considerations, as Norwegian state-owned electricity producers and grid operators cooperate with Germany, whether this is profit from sales to Germany or income from German investments (Gullberg et al., 2014, p. 220). The

authors also promote sustainability as a critical consideration in Norway's cooperation with Germany, as renewable energy export to Germany could help reduce emissions by decreasing other more polluting energy forms (Gullberg et al., 2014, pp. 220–221).

Gullberg et al. (2014) provide a foundational understanding of the drivers and barriers to Norway's renewable energy cooperation with Germany, which serves as an image for its broader relationship with the EU. They identify economic motives, especially profit-driven interests of state-owned entities, and the potential to contribute to Europe's decarbonisation efforts as the primary drivers. This economic underpinning is further reinforced by Szulecki et al. (2016), who highlight Norway's focus on securing stable demand for its energy exports, particularly natural gas, within the EU's Energy Union framework. Their article, *Shaping the 'Energy Union': Between National Positions and Governance Innovation in EU Energy and Climate Policy*, offers a comprehensive analysis of the EU's concept of an "Energy Union", with a particular focus on the perspectives and contributions of the Norwegian government during its development. It underscores Norway's advocacy for including natural gas as a crucial component of the EU's future energy mix. The authors argue that Norway's primary concern is ensuring a stable demand for its energy exports rather than securing its energy supply (Szulecki et al., 2016, pp. 558–560).

The discourse around Norway's energy policies and EU alignment is further elaborated by Gullberg and Aakre (2018), who delve into the nature of the climate policy cooperation between Norway and the EU. The text emphasises the significance of collaboration on renewable energy in the context of climate policy. It also highlights the different stances within the Norwegian business sector and the government, which oppose policies that undermine cost-efficiency, such as strict commitments and restrictions on reducing emissions beyond Norway's borders. The article by Gullberg and Aakre offers an in-depth analysis of the discussions around the EU's climate policy and the cooperation with Norway in 2018, providing an extensive description of how the EU's energy policies have evolved recently, emphasising the establishment of the EU Energy Union (Gullberg & Aakre, 2018, p. 4). The article details the present and future of EU energy policy, with the pursuit of further integration of the policy as a goal since 2007. The discussions for future goals have been contentious, and Norwegian governments have taken part and expressed their support for one common goal guiding the policies: reducing greenhouse gasses (Gullberg & Aakre, 2018, p. 5).

Skjærseth & Rosendal (2023) examine Norway's compliance with the EU Renewable Energy Directive. They observe a shift from initial reluctance to exceeding targets, showcasing the evolving nature of Norway's policy alignment with the EU's climate agenda. This evolving cooperation is contextualised within the broader framework of the European Green Deal and the Fit for 55 packages, signifying the latest collaborative efforts. The article explores the nuances of EU-Norway renewable energy collaboration. Initially reluctant, the Norwegian government not only met but surpassed the directive's targets despite minimal political support for the initiative (Skjærseth & Rosendal, 2023, p. 330). The most significant contribution of this piece is its analysis of the recent volatility in Norwegian energy policies, influenced by the EU's climate agenda. The article provides insights into Norway's cooperation with the EU's European Green Deal and the Fit for 55 packages (Skjærseth & Rosendal, 2023, p. 332).

Jevnaker et al. (2015) discuss the strategic motivations behind Norway's partnership with the EU, focusing on the market and regulatory effects. The authors maintain that the

market effect is crucial, considering that the EU is the primary recipient of Norway's natural gas exports, thus directly influencing Norway's economy. The regulatory effect also plays a significant role. Norway's adherence to the EU's energy and environmental frameworks via the EEA agreement indicates a profound economic entanglement, particularly in the petroleum sector. A significant reduction in EU oil and gas consumption would severely affect the Norwegian economy. The regulatory impact is also significant, though in a different way. Despite its non-membership in the EU and relative policy autonomy, Norway is tightly connected to the EU's energy and environmental regulatory frameworks via the EEA agreement (Jevnaker et al., 2015, p. 223). The chapter also contributes to the notion that Norway's interest in energy cooperation with the EU is tied to the country's economic prospects in the petroleum sector (Jevnaker et al., 2015, pp. 223–224).

The literature on Norway's energy cooperation with the EU underscores cooperation underpinned by economic, environmental, and political factors. Economic incentives drive Norwegian state-owned entities to engage in energy trading (Gullberg et al., 2014, pp. 220–221). Meanwhile, political and environmental considerations shape the discourse, with Norway promoting natural gas as part of the EU's "Energy Union" (Szulecki et al., 2016, pp. 558–560) while grappling with internal debates over climate policy costs (Gullberg & Aakre, 2018, pp. 4–5). Norway's policy trajectory has shifted towards alignment with the EU's climate agenda, evidenced by exceeding the EU Renewable Energy Directive's targets and embracing the European Green Deal (Skjærseth & Rosendal, 2023, p. 332). These studies depict Norway's balancing act between economic gains from energy resources and commitment to environmental sustainability, reflecting the complex dynamics of its non-EU member status yet deeply integrated cooperation within the EU's energy framework.

It becomes clear where the thesis fits into the existing literature and what expectations the thesis builds upon before analysing and discussing the research questions, building on the literature review on the general cooperation between Norway and the EU. Generally, the main forces guiding cooperation between the EU and Norway are expected to be rational and economic foundations, which this thesis refers to as pragmatic ideas. These foundations will drive the development and strengthening of cooperation. Furthermore, the ideas categorised as normative in this thesis impact how the parties establish and carry out their cooperation.

The literature review provides valuable insights into the historical collaboration between the EU and Norway. It shows that during significant stages of EU development, Norway has pursued a deeper integration with the EU. These findings from the literature review have been elevated to form some of the background for the second research question in this thesis. The subsequent sections of the thesis will investigate whether this pattern continues in the present context.

### 3 Discursive Institutionalism

Vivien Schmidt's Discursive Institutionalism (DI) presents a new perspective on institutionalism, positioning ideas and discourse as central to political outcomes and institutional changes. DI serves as the theoretical basis and methodological approach to answering the research questions for this thesis. This approach offers a way to conduct a detailed analysis of the dynamics of Norway's GA with the EU. DI distinguishes between cognitive ideas, referred to as pragmatic ideas in this thesis, and normative ideas. This distinction provides a method for the thesis to discern economic and material justifications (pragmatic justifications) from value-driven justifications (normative justifications) in policymaking. DI underscores the interactive nature of discourse, which extends beyond the mere exchange of ideas. This framework will steer the analysis and discussion on the discourse surrounding the GA in this thesis, offering a comprehensive understanding of recent policy shifts within the context of the European Economic Area agreement and Norway's participation in the GA with the EU.

In "Discursive Institutionalism: The Explanatory Power of Ideas and Discourse" (2008), Schmidt presents DI as the fourth 'new institutionalism' iteration. In contrast to the other variants of new institutionalism, namely rational choice historical and sociological institutionalism, DI underscores the pivotal roles of ideas and discourse in determining political outcomes and institutional transformations. Schmidt argues that institutions are not just static structures but dynamically shaped through discourse, facilitating ideas' influence on policy and institutional change (Schmidt, 2008, pp. 303–304). DI offers an analytical lens for political studies, highlighting the significance of ideas, discourse, and the interactive processes of deliberation and argumentation in shaping institutions and public policy. The utilisation of DI to analyse the Norwegian stated reasons and justifications for entering into the GA with the EU on top of the already existing cooperation will help to inform and structure the analysis of how the GA from the Norwegian side has been presented and justified (Schmidt, 2008, p. 304).

Cognitive ideas—also sometimes called causal ideas—provide the recipes, guidelines, and maps for political action and serve to justify policies and programs by speaking to their interest-based logic and necessity. [...] Normative ideas instead attach values to political action and serve to legitimate the policies in a program through reference to their appropriateness. (Schmidt, 2008, pp. 306–307)

Schmidt's description of cognitive ideas is essentially pragmatic. They involve selecting the most suitable alternative based on practicality and benefits. For the purpose of this thesis, which considers Norway's relationship with the EU, pragmatic ideas are, for instance, found in statements that highlight the material and economic advantages of this relationship for Norway. The second category, normative ideas, underscores the influence of values and norms in shaping the political development of the cooperation between the EU and Norway. This division allows for a more nuanced understanding of policy-making and institutional behaviour by considering both pragmatic benefits and value-driven as these are presented in political discourse (Schmidt, 2008, pp. 306, 308). Schmidt introduces DI as an umbrella concept encompassing a wide range of political science research that emphasises the significance of the substantive content of ideas and

the dynamic process through which ideas are communicated and shared via discourse (Schmidt, 2010, p. 3).

Schmidt also focuses on discourse as an interactive process, not just focusing on the ideas conveyed through the discourse. Discourse is defined in this way: "Discourse is not only what you say, however; it includes to whom you say it, how why, and where in the process of policy construction and political communication in the "public sphere"". In relation to this thesis, the analysis of the GA will focus on the context in which the GA is launched as an idea, negotiated, and finally operationalised (Schmidt, 2008, p. 310). DI also emphasises the importance of recognising the dual role of discourse through both communicative and coordinative discourse, meaning between political actors and the public in "communicative" and communication among political actors in "coordinative" (Schmidt, 2008, p. 310). This distinction is central in this thesis as it touches upon how politicians in government, which were leading in making the agreement, communicated to both fellow decision-makers and the agreement to the GA to the general public. It is also essential to add and acknowledge that Vivien Schmidt's explanation of DI does not deny the relevance of other "new institutionalisms." Instead, DI accentuates the critical role of discourse within the foundations of "new institutionalisms".

DI enables an exploration of how the GA is framed within the political discourse in Norway, allowing for analysis of the stated motivations, strategic considerations, and the negotiation processes underlying this partnership. It offers a comprehensive lens to examine the interplay between institutional contexts and policymaking, highlighting the role of interpreting political discussion and argumentation to understand political outcomes. By employing DI, this thesis aims to uncover the complex dynamics in formulating and implementing the GA, underscoring the importance of discourse in navigating the challenges and opportunities of industrial and energy policy cooperation between Norway and the EU. In light of this, the choice of DI as the theory guiding this thesis is based on its nuanced approach to analysing political discourse and institutional dynamics. DI emphasises the significance of ideas, discourse, and deliberative processes in shaping institutional outcomes and policy decisions. The operationalisation of DI will be instrumental in interpreting, analysing, and drawing conclusions from the gathered data. All gathered data, including newspaper articles, political declarations, and speeches, will be taken into account with appropriate significance, as suggested by Vivien Schmidt. The institutional backdrop of the EEA agreement and additional agreements between the EU and Norway will be equally emphasised for interpreting recent policy shifts.

## 4 Methodology

This thesis addresses the research questions by examining the discourse that unfolded during the GA's formation, conclusion, and subsequent phase. The thesis is particularly interested in the portrayal of Norwegian political figures and the justification of the GA. In the process of analysing the discourse, the thesis categorises the statements into either normative or pragmatic. The methodology employed in this study involves an operationalisation of DI, executed through a discursive analysis of key statements and documents related to the GA's portrayal and justification, primarily by Norwegian politicians.

Pragmatic ideas are identified as concrete benefits and strategic gains that Norway anticipates from its involvement in the EU-Norway GA. These encompass economic prosperity, technological innovation, enhanced energy security, and expanded market access. Such ideas underscore rationalistic facets of the Alliance, spotlighting tangible outcomes anticipated from this partnership.

Normative ideas within the discourse accentuate ethical values and collective aspirations. These reflect a profound dedication to environmental conservation, climate responsiveness, and sustainability, resonating with mutual objectives and ideals. This aspect delves into value-based motivations underpinning the GA, illuminating its role as a joint initiative to foster an eco-conscious future marked by climate resilience.

To best answer the research questions: "How has the Green Alliance been portrayed before, during and after the conclusion of the agreement in April 2023?" and "Why does Norway, which already has extensive and dynamic cooperation with the EU through the EEA Agreement, constantly enter into new agreements with the EU?", this thesis has prioritised the contents of the statements made by politicians surrounding the GA. A qualitative case study approach was deemed the most efficient way to do this. The analysis will review relevant documents to uncover the negotiation dynamics and discourses that led to the GA.

The thesis adopts a three-part structure for both the analysis and discussion in order for the analysis to be able to identify any changes over time. The first part examines the period preceding the 2021 Norwegian parliamentary election and the lead-up to the signing of the GA. The second part scrutinises the agreement text of the GA, its signing, and the associated statements. The final part delves into the period following the agreement's conclusion. This structure effectively delineates the temporal boundaries within which this study operates from just before the 2021 Norwegian parliamentary election to April 2024. The chosen time frame is based on the emergence of the battery customs case and Espen Barth Eide's subsequent statements, which introduced the idea of an industrial partnership between the EU and Norway in an attempt to circumvent the issue and connect closer to the EU's Green Deal.

Guided by the theory of DI, this thesis adopts document analysis as its primary methodological approach. This decision is rooted in DI's emphasis on the importance of discourse in shaping policy outcomes and institutional change, making document analysis particularly suited for dissecting the nuanced discussions and narratives that have characterised the formation and evolution of the GA. Document analysis, in this context,

involves thoroughly examining a wide array of textual materials, including but not limited to official documents, legislative texts, public speeches, and policy statements issued by Norwegian policymakers. Furthermore, the document analysis will focus on the evolution of the discourse surrounding the GA. This perspective will enrich the analysis by placing strategic moves and policy decisions within a larger context. Using a detailed and systematic approach to document analysis, this thesis aims to understand better the discursive dynamics at work in forming the GA, providing insights into the complex interplay of ideas, values, and strategic considerations underpinning this vital aspect of Norway-EU relations.

This research primarily utilises primary sources to understand the discourse surrounding Norway's agreement with the EU on the GA. The core of this research lies in a detailed analysis of official documents, such as debate records, meeting notes, and public statements available on government websites, supplemented by statements to news outlets. These documents provide an in-depth understanding of Norway's motivations and expectations regarding the GA. The paper also includes a comprehensive review of documents related to this alliance, with notes from EU/EEA affairs meetings and parliamentary plenary sessions regularly released by the Norwegian government and Storting as crucial sources. Given the limitation of being unable to access policymakers' thoughts, this thesis selects primary sources to analyse what actors say and facilitate discussions based on the operationalisation of the theory of DI.

Primary sources are selected for their relevance, open access, and reliability. They offer invaluable insights into governmental viewpoints and public dialogues surrounding the GA. The strengths lie in their reliable nature, painting a comprehensive picture of governmental objectives and tactical approaches while explaining official narratives and policy trajectories. However, potential biases are acknowledged. These sources might accentuate positive facets while overlooking criticisms or shortcomings related to the GA. The formal tone of government documents could mask underlying conflicts or dissenting perspectives divergent from official positions.

Critical discourse analysis is incorporated into this research methodology to counterbalance these biases and extract an all-encompassing interpretation from existing data. This approach facilitates a thorough research of discourse language and structure while examining explicit and implicit strategies embedded within texts. It helps understand how dialogues surrounding the GA are constructed and rationalised within the official discourses.

## 5 Analysis

As Europe strives towards a greener future, the Green Alliance between Norway and the EU represents an interesting development in the existing cooperation between the two parties in environmental, climate and industrial cooperation. Conceived amid concerns of exclusion from economic developments within the EU, for Norway, the GA serves as both a strategic response and a diplomatic venture aimed at embedding Norway more deeply within Europe's green transition. This chapter delves into key actors' portrayals of the GA, exploring how these representations reflect broader themes of cooperation, sustainability, and economic resilience.

This analysis is divided into three sub-chapters, each analysing the portrayals of the agreement chronologically. First, the period from the months leading up to the 2021 Norwegian parliamentary election to the signing of the agreement is analysed. Second, the agreement itself is analysed, accompanied by the analysis of the statements made in relation to the signing. Finally, the period since the signing of the agreement is analysed. This approach enables a thorough and chronological understanding of the discourse surrounding the GA, from its inception to its current state and how it may have changed.

The portrayals of the GA, from its conception via adoption to its operationalisation, offer a glimpse into the narratives portrayed by Norway. These narratives are not only responses to the practical needs of policy and market dynamics. They also resonate with commitments to environmental stewardship and sustainable development. This analysis delves into various stakeholders' framing of the GA, emphasising how economic and environmental priorities intersect. The discourse surrounding the GA is multifaceted, portraying it as a means to climate objectives, a strategic avenue for economic involvement, and a platform for long-term industrial cooperation. This chapter will decode Norway's positioning within the EU's policy framework by examining official statements and public communications related to the GA. It assesses whether the GA signifies a progression in EU-Norway relations beyond the EEA agreement. Through this analysis, the thesis seeks to clarify the underlying motivations for Norway's commitment to this alliance, alongside its existing engagements with the EU.

### 5.1 Origins of the Green Alliance

The proposal for establishing an industrial alliance between the EU and Norway, which would foster a closer relationship, originated from Espen Barth Eide. Eide, who would later serve as the Minister of Climate and Environment and subsequently the Minister of Foreign Affairs, launched this idea before the 2021 parliamentary election. The motivation for this proposal was the fear of Norway being relegated to a third-country status in instances where agreements are made between the EU and other third countries, as was exemplified by the TCA between the EU and the UK (NOU 2024: 7, 2024, p. 241).

Eide proposed that Norway align itself with the EU's Green Deal to circumvent Brexit-associated tariffs on electric vehicles equipped with Norwegian batteries. The GA and the subsequent operationalising of the agreement could mitigate potential negative impacts



on Norway's battery industry, which could arise from a 10% tariff on electric vehicles traded between the EU and the UK, set to commence in 2027. Eide's proposition entailed Norway becoming a key collaborator with the EU in climate transition without being a member of the EU's customs union. This could exempt Norwegian batteries from tariffs by categorising them as goods produced within the EU (Melgård, 2021). This strategy was designed to align Norway more intimately with EU climate and industrial policy, offering mutual benefits and addressing challenges associated with climate-related tariffs.

In the wake of the 2021 parliamentary election, discussions unfolded between what would become the two governing parties of Norway. These negotiations culminated in the formation of "Hurdalsplattformen," a political platform outlining their governance strategy. For the first time, a public document referenced the proposal by Barth Eide for strategic cooperation with the EU focused on an industrial partnership. Specifically, the platform articulated an intention to continue and expand Norway's climate collaboration with the EU. The platform stated the aim to enhance the relationship between the EU and Norway by incorporating a strategic industrial partnership designed to bolster job creation across Norway (Regjeringen, 2021, p. 29). The intent to establish an extended cooperation with the EU underscores the evolution and deepening of Norway's engagement with the EU, particularly in areas pivotal to sustainable development and economic expansion.

In the context of "Hurdalsplattformen", the two governing parties' positions on Norwegian cooperation with the EU are also relevant. The Norwegian Centre Party openly opposed the EEA agreement, emphasising political autonomy and refusing to transfer any authority to the EU. They stated in their programmes that they want to replace the EEA agreement with trade and cooperation agreements (Senterpartiet, 2021, pp. 120–121). In contrast, the Norwegian Labour Party has long been divided on whether Norway should be a full member of the EU. Still, the Labour Party firmly believes that the EEA agreement is essential and has served Norway well. However, they disagree with the Centre Party that there are viable alternatives to the EEA agreement other than full membership (Arbeiderpartiet, n.d.). This context could be interesting to keep in mind when analysing the GA and its nature as a non-binding agreement with the EU; perhaps the Centre Party would oppose a GA that could be more binding and comprehensive.

The differing views on the EEA agreement and EU membership underscore the importance of open dialogue and transparency in Norway's cooperation with the EU. Since 2007, there has been a semi-annual tradition in Norway where the Minister of Foreign Affairs presents the crucial issues pertaining to the EU and the EEA to the Norwegian Storting. The autumn of 2021 was no exception, featuring the first statement from the newly elected government and the recently appointed Foreign Minister Anniken Huitfeldt. In her statement, she first explained the recent developments in the EU's Green Deal and how the government planned on reacting to them, "The Green Deal opens up new opportunities for Norwegian value creation and export. Therefore, we will develop a strategic industrial partnership with the EU. It will strengthen our opportunities to create jobs throughout Norway"<sup>1</sup> (Huitfeldt, 2021).

The Foreign Minister provided an in-depth explanation of the Green Deal and its significance. As she described, the Green Deal is the cornerstone of Norway's green

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<sup>1</sup> «Den grønne given åpner nye muligheter for norsk verdiskapning og eksport. Derfor vil vi utvikle et strategisk industripartnerskap med EU. Det vil styrke våre muligheter til å skape arbeidsplasser i hele Norge».

transition. It serves multiple purposes simultaneously. It acts as the EU's growth strategy, the EU's response to the UN's sustainable development goals, and the means by which the climate commitments in the Paris Agreement are implemented (Huitfeldt, 2021). She described the Green Deal as not just a climate program but also a growth and industry program, emphasising its goal to ensure job security and continued value creation while reducing emissions. Then she made it clear that it is important to Norway for several reasons; "this is because much of the regulations become ours through the EEA cooperation. Because we have a separate climate agreement with the EU. And because the EU is our most important market" (Huitfeldt, 2021). The Foreign Minister spent some time describing the relevance of the Green Deal for Norway and what specific steps would be taken to connect to the development of the EU. She described how the Green Deal presented new avenues for Norwegian value creation and export, highlighting the necessity of developing a strategic industrial partnership with the EU. As explained, this partnership would bolster Norway's capability to generate employment nationwide. She emphasised that merely analysing the situation was insufficient; a comprehensive industrial investment and restructuring strategy was crucial. She affirmed Norway and Norwegian businesses' roles as integral parts of the solution in helping Europe achieve its climate goals (Huitfeldt, 2021).

The address delivered to the Norwegian Storting encapsulated the Foreign Minister's and her government's intent to cultivate a strategic alliance with the EU. This alliance aims to establish a more structured affiliation with the EU's Green Deal. This thesis interprets these statements as a significant indication of their commitment to environmental sustainability and cooperation at a European level.

The pragmatic aspect of the statements highlights the Green Deal as a pivotal element in Norway's green transition, signifying a convergence of economic growth strategies and sustainability objectives. This alignment underscores the Green Deal's role not only as a climate initiative but also as a catalyst for industry and value creation. Given its deep entanglement with EU regulations and market dynamics, it is crucial for Norway's economic landscape.

On the normative front, the discourse extends beyond mere regulatory compliance or economic benefits. It evokes a shared value system and collective commitment to sustainability and climate action, resonating with the broader goals of the Paris Agreement and the UN's sustainable development objectives. The statements in her address to the Storting position the Green Deal as a venture towards a sustainable future, where Norway's strategic industrial partnerships with the EU play a critical role in facilitating job creation and environmental stewardship across Norway.

In February 2022, Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre and then Minister of Climate and Environment Espen Barth Eide travelled to Brussels to discuss the green transition. They brought a significant message to the EU that the ambitious goals of the green transition could not be fully realised without Norway's involvement and contribution (Statsministerens Kontor, 2022).

Norway has solutions that the EU needs, and for Norwegian industry, the EU is the most important market. An enhanced partnership with the EU will be of great significance for a number of Norwegian industrial initiatives in the coming years, such as offshore wind, batteries, minerals, green shipping, hydrogen, and carbon capture and storage. This is an effort that will secure existing and create new sustainable jobs in Norway. (Statsministerens Kontor, 2022)

In interviews before and following the discussions, Støre and Eide emphasised the compatibility of Norway's resources and capabilities with the EU's objectives for its industries. They remarked, "What we see is that some of what Norway has to offer aligns with the goals the EU has set for the industry," highlighting the natural synergy between Norway's potential contributions and the EU's targets (Falnes & De Rosa, 2022).

Furthermore, Eide articulated a potential strategic partnership between Norway and the EU as essential to their collaborative efforts to combat climate change. He outlined the existing foundation of this partnership on the EU's Green Deal, constituted by three main pillars: the EEA agreement, the carbon market, and the agreement on cooperation within sectors outside the carbon quota system, such as transport and agriculture. Eide then identified a gap in their collaboration, a missing "fourth pillar" related to the Green Deal. He declared, "We are missing the fourth pillar when it comes to the climate cooperation with the EU. Now, we are going to add a fourth leg to this chair, so it stands firm," signalling a commitment to reinforce and expand the scope of their joint environmental initiatives, ensuring a more robust and comprehensive approach to the green transition (Falnes & De Rosa, 2022).

From what can be gathered through the analysis, the discussions on the green transition and a strategic partnership are the result of concern from the Norwegian side about being left out of key policy developments happening in the EU. Barth Eide paints this picture in his statements, "It is about creating a more strategic framework around it, where we are inside the "we" that the EU talks about when they talk about us in Europe" he also highlights that "in recent years, the EU member states have shown that they are more willing than before to prioritise their businesses and close the door to non-member countries like Norway", another key takeaway from his statements is that he emphasises the fact that "We are deeply integrated but not fully part of the European economy" (Falnes & De Rosa, 2022). This statement furthers the understanding that whilst the EEA agreement enables Norwegian access to large parts of the EU cooperation, but not everything and that the GA is an attempt to mitigate some of the problems and inadequacies which arise from the current cooperation between the EU and Norway.

There are several interesting takeaways from the official press statement from the meeting between the Norwegian delegation led by Støre, Commission President von der Leyen, and Executive Vice-President Timmermans. Støre explained that in line with their shared goals of reducing emissions and boosting employment, Norway and the EU had started to enhance their cooperation by forming the GA. He described their focused efforts on sustainable energy and industry, advancing technologies, and developing markets as crucial for accelerating the green transition. Additionally, they aim to support a balanced transition, achieve climate-neutral growth, and maintain energy security, building on existing and new frameworks within the robust framework of Norway-EU relations (European Commission, 2022a). The statements made by Von der Leyen in this instance were more related to the normative values of the GA, focusing on "achieving climate neutrality" and "work more closely together to unfold the potential for decarbonising our economies and in particular our energy systems, making them more resilient to climate change and to global tensions" and also highlighting the EEA agreement as an "excellent basis for strengthening our EU-Norway cooperation on climate" (European Commission, 2022a).

In a meeting with the European Committee of the Norwegian Storting in April 2022, a year before the GA was signed, the Norwegian Minister of Trade and Industry, Jan

Christian Vestre, shared ideas and details about what he described as an industrial partnership and named the Green Alliance. The statements exposed a comprehensive strategy aimed at strengthening Norway's ties with the EU. It highlighted the Norwegian government's active role in aligning with the EU's environmental and industrial policies and that Norway took the initiative to start the process of negotiating the GA. This alignment was particularly evident in key areas such as critical batteries, carbon capture and storage, hydrogen, offshore wind, and energy-intensive industries (Stortinget, 2022a).

Vestre further underscored the EEA agreement as pivotal to Norway's collaboration with the EU. The statements recognised that while the EEA agreement offers market access for Norwegian companies, it poses certain challenges. Vestre mentioned the battery customs case as an example of these challenges. Furthermore, the statements focus on the fact that through its Green Deal, the EU is making significant investments and that Vestre expressed a solid commitment to strategically position Norwegian companies to benefit from the market opportunities resulting from this initiative (Stortinget, 2022a). Furthermore, Vestre stated that from the Norwegian side, in their dialogues with the EU, they signalled the desire to cooperate more closely with the EU on the sectors mentioned in the industrial strategy published by the government (Stortinget, 2022a). The stated motivations and intentions by the Norwegian Minister reflect the pragmatic ideas guiding the process of making the GA, with an emphasis on improving the conditions for the Norwegian industry in cooperation with the EU; this can be seen from the focus on the "reindustrialisation of Norway" (Stortinget, 2022a).

During the first semi-annual statement to the Norwegian Storting in 2022 on issues pertaining to the EU and the EEA, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Anniken Huitfeldt, stated some of the motives behind the proposed collaboration, the GA between the EU and Norway. The GA was described as a means to connect closer to the EU's green deal and, in that way, through closer industrial cooperation with the EU, contribute to the development of Norwegian industry and value creation (Huitfeldt, 2022a).

Towards the end of May 2022, Minister of Trade and Industry Jan Christian Vestre, was on his way to Brussels to, as a newspaper phrased it, "To make a trade: Norwegian minerals against solution on battery-issue". In this meeting, the message Vestre was set to relay to his EU colleagues was that "a partnership could mean that Norway says we can be a stable and long-term supplier of critical raw materials to European companies, while the EU, on the other hand, aims to find solutions for issues like the battery toll," (Melgård, 2022a).

In a written question to the Minister of Trade and Industry, Jan Christian Vestre, a member of the Storting, the former Minister of Climate and Environment, Ola Elvestuen, inquired whether the battery customs case would be resolved as a result of the industrial partnership with the EU on sustainable value chains, including land-based raw materials and batteries, which started negotiations in May of 2022 and would be signed in March 2024. Vestre's answer first described the background of the industrial partnership as more than just the battery customs case; it was also an initiative made to accelerate the green transition in the industry and reach our climate targets. To the question on the battery customs case, Vestre answered that in the joint statement with Maroš Šefčovič, the EU's Vice President, formulations on the dialogue on the application of the rules of origin to Norwegian batteries were included. He hoped that a solution to the customs case would arise through this (Stortinget, 2022b).

In the work programme for EU and EEA affairs for 2022-2023, published by the government, the stated intentions for entering into the GA are mentioned. Like other statements and parts of the discourse, the pragmatic ideas behind the GA are described in detail. It is pointed out that the EU and Norway have mutual interests in cooperation on such a deal. Furthermore, the overarching goal of the GA is to “contribute to green value creation, increased export opportunities, jobs, and greater climate benefits”<sup>2</sup>. Furthermore, the Norwegian efforts are targeted towards the areas where they could make the most impact (Utenriksdepartementet, 2022).

Building on the work programme for EU and EEA affairs for 2022-2023, the second semi-annual statement issues pertaining to the EU and the EEA also mentioned the same ideas guiding the formation of the GA. Emphasising the goal of contributing to green industrial development, increased export opportunities, new jobs, and larger benefits for the climate as a result of this development (Huitfeldt, 2022b).

In early 2023, before any formal commitment to the GA, the Norwegian Minister of Trade and Industry, Jan Christian Vestre, expressed concern. Amid the EU’s ongoing efforts to preserve its access to American markets following the introduction of the Biden administration’s Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), the American efforts to cut climate emissions through subsidies and tax cuts within the USA. The IRA prompted worries that it would lure European businesses’ investments or jobs out of the EU (De Ville, 2023, p. 4; Norsk Telegrambyrå (NTB), 2023). Vestre pointed out that there was no certainty that Norway would be included in these agreements if the EU were successful. He stated that a partnership with the EU could be instrumental in avoiding situations such as the one resulting from the EU-UK TCA, where Norway was considered a third country (Norsk Telegrambyrå (NTB), 2023). These statements by Vestre express that the EEA agreement does not include trade policy and does not include Norway in trade agreements the EU makes with other third countries.

The GA was initially supposed to be signed at the climate meeting in Sharm El Sheik in November of 2022. However, it was delayed because of disputes over the inclusion of formulations which stated that Norwegian oil and gas should be part of the transition to a greener economy in Europe. Norway sought to have its oil and gas sector play a significant role in Europe’s energy transformation, a move that created internal contention between the Norwegian and EU sides. Specifically, disagreements arose between the political leadership of the Climate and Environment Department and the Oil and Energy Department over the wording of this aspect in the draft agreement. Despite the overall goal of the GA being to accelerate the transition to a decarbonised economy and industry, the draft from Norway emphasised that petroleum resources would still be necessary during the energy transition, including commitments for continued exploration and supply to the EU beyond 2030. This inclusion, reportedly after intense lobbying from the Oil and Energy Department, reflects the heightened importance of Norwegian oil and gas in light of Europe’s search for energy security following Russia’s military actions in Ukraine (Ask, 2022; Melgård, 2022b).

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<sup>2</sup> «Grønn verdiskaping, økte eksportmuligheter, arbeidsplasser og større klimagevinster»

## 5.2 Conclusion of the Green Alliance

The GA was officially established on April 24, 2023. The agreement was signed in Brussels by Ursula Von der Leyen, the Commission President of the EU, and Jonas Gahr Støre, the Prime Minister of Norway. This event marked the culmination of a negotiation process that had begun in February 2022 when the Norwegian government, led by Støre, met with the EU Commission and discussed a strategic partnership with the EU (European Commission, 2022a; Statsministerens Kontor, 2022). The GA agreement text provides a valuable anchor for analysing the discourse surrounding the GA. The agreement text is essential to understanding the discourse. The language and commitments within the agreement offer insights into the stated motivations and stated intentions that led to the expansion of Norway's cooperation with the EU. By examining the language of the agreement, this study seeks to shed light on the presentations and justifications of the GA.

The GA stands out among international agreements because it is concisely encapsulated within a mere 10-page document. The document is systematically organised into four distinct sections. The initial section lays out a broad statement of intentions, setting the stage for the following content. The subsequent section identifies the key areas of cooperation. These encompass various topics, including climate change, environmental protection, green industrial transformation, clean and just energy transition, green mobility, regulatory and business cooperation, research and education and Innovation, and Sustainable Finance. In the third section, the GA expresses its commitment to facilitating the green transition, not in isolation but in collaboration with third countries. The document culminates with a section that outlines the governance of the agreement, as agreed upon by Norway and the EU in 2023 (Norway and the European Union, 2023). The following analysis will adhere to the structure of the GA, providing a chronological examination of the GA's contents.

In the first section of the GA, "General", both parties commit to enhancing dialogue and cooperation towards a just and sustainable transformation in climate, environment, energy, and industry. The agreement emphasises the deep, existing relationship between the two, grounded in shared values and a common regulatory framework established through the EEA. The EU and Norway acknowledged the urgency of addressing the triple planetary climate change crisis, biodiversity loss, and pollution. They reaffirmed their joint commitments to ambitious 2030 climate targets of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% from 1990 levels and achieving climate neutrality by 2050. This target aligns with the goal to limit global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius, ensuring energy security, environmental protection, and respect for human rights. Both parties underscored their strategy of achieving climate neutrality as a pathway to economic growth, job creation, and competitiveness. They stressed the importance of fostering a rule-based international order and multilateralism, mainly through their continued support of the Paris Agreement and Sustainable Development Goals. Furthermore, the agreement text highlighted the intention to deepen cooperation within various bilateral, regional, European, and global frameworks, focusing on environmental aspects of sustainable development. The agreement details efforts to decarbonise Europe's energy systems and promote green and just mobility and transport, acknowledging the challenges posed by increased global production, trade, and transport in future decades (Norway and the European Union, 2023, pp. 1–2).

The section outlining the GA's priority areas for cooperation is the bulk of the agreement, encompassing eight areas deemed essential for the cooperation in the GA. However, this thesis will focus on three areas outlined in the second section of the GA: climate change, green industrial transformation and clean and just transition.

The sub-chapter on climate change includes two insights important to this thesis. Firstly, the sub-section underscores a shared recognition of the significance of carbon pricing, including the EU ETS, as a crucial driver of economic growth while simultaneously reducing emissions. Secondly, the sub-section articulates the mutual intent to enhance the technologies associated with carbon capture and storage. The aim is to increase the commercial viability of these technologies and their role in decarbonising sectors that are identified as hard to abate. These sectors, typified by heavy industry and heavy-duty transport, face inherent challenges in reducing emissions (Norway and the European Union, 2023, pp. 2–3).

The sub-section on the green industrial transformation is a relatively short sub-section of the GA's priority areas but includes formulations vital in understanding the GA's rationale. It states that the green industrial transition is essential in achieving the climate targets; here, the GA emphasises the importance of "securing supply of critical raw materials and technologies instrumental for the green and digital transition, while ensuring the competitiveness and resilience of their economies». Furthermore, and quite importantly, the sub-section mentions "the establishment of a Strategic Partnership on Sustainable Raw Materials and Batteries Value Chains," officially launched in March of 2024. Building on this, the statement "Both sides agree that the partnership on raw materials and batteries could be followed by partnerships in other areas of green industrial policy of mutual interest to both parties" is essential, recognising that the GA is an agreement focused on enhancing the green industrial policy cooperation between the EU and Norway (Norway and the European Union, 2023, p. 5).

The part on a clean and just transition has five sub-sections, each formulating what a clean and just energy transition should look like. The first sub-section reiterated a mutual emphasis both parties placed on speeding up the transition to green energy by 2030 and the goal of climate neutrality by 2050. The section furthers the view that hydrogen and offshore renewables are crucial to doing just that while strengthening Europe's competitiveness and ensuring a lasting energy partnership that includes energy security. In the last sub-sections of the clean and just transition section, the agreement first presents its high ambitions for the role of offshore renewable energy in delivering on climate goals, stating that the EU and Norway aim to reach 300 GW and 40 GW of offshore renewable energy by 2050 respectively (Norway and the European Union, 2023, pp. 5–6).

The third chapter of the agreement, facilitating transition with third countries, is mostly not very relevant to this thesis. The final chapter is, however, relevant to the governance of the GA and includes parts that are interesting to this thesis. It stipulated that "Both sides intend to inform each other of key policy developments, strategies and initiatives relevant to the GA, as appropriate" and finally that "both sides aim to conduct this understanding without prejudice to, and in light of, rights and obligations stemming from the EEA agreement" (Norway and the European Union, 2023, p. 10). Highlighting both the collaborative nature of the GA and the EEA as a foundation for cooperation through the GA.

Overall, the agreement expresses a shared goal to expand dialogue and cooperation in tackling the challenges Norway and the EU stand before. This underscores the pragmatic aspect of DI. The alliance's focus on climate neutrality as a growth, job, and competitiveness strategy demonstrates the interplay of pragmatic considerations in policy formulation (Norway and the European Union, 2023, p. 1). Regarding normative ideas, the agreement underscores shared fundamental values, adherence to a rule-based international order, and commitment to the Paris Agreement and Sustainable Development Goals (Norway and the European Union, 2023, p. 1).

On the day of the signing, Von der Leyen and Frans Timmermans, the Executive Vice-President of the Commission and responsible for the European Green Deal, expressed their views on the agreement. Von der Leyen emphasised the shared vision between the EU and Norway for a climate-neutral continent, stating, "This Green Alliance strengthens our bond and allows us to design a better future together" (European Commission, 2023b). Similarly, Timmermans highlighted the shared values and mutual commitment to addressing climate and biodiversity crises, expressing his pleasure in working alongside Norway towards a greener, healthier future (European Commission, 2023b).

The Norwegian Prime Minister, Jonas Gahr Støre, emphasised the importance of the GA, describing it as a "historic agreement" that will provide a political framework for closer climate, energy, and industrial cooperation between Norway and the EU, which he highlighted as indispensable in the fight to achieve the climate targets and implement the green transition (Statsministerens Kontor, 2023). Støre also referred to the GA as a "non-binding international agreement"<sup>3</sup>, a "declaration of intent on cooperation"<sup>4</sup>, and an "operational cooperation declaration"<sup>5</sup> (Ask, 2023). Furthermore, the statements in this press release testify to the importance placed on the aim to "strengthen climate, energy and industrial cooperation between Norway and the EU" in areas such as "battery production, critical raw materials, and energy" (Statsministerens Kontor, 2023). Støre also emphasised the key opportunities from the GA: "Several areas have been specifically mentioned, including carbon capture and storage, offshore wind power, hydrogen, critical raw materials, batteries, and green shipping. These are areas where Norway can play a leading role" (Statsministerens Kontor, 2023). Støre also devoted some time to discussing the benefits of the agreement to the GA for Norwegian, the industrial sector and society. He highlighted that one of the key benefits of the GA for Norway is the "opportunities it offers to create new jobs in the renewables sector in the time ahead" (Statsministerens Kontor, 2023).

When asked by an online newspaper about the potential benefits Norwegian companies could reap from the GA, Støre described the agreement as a "strong declaration of intent regarding cooperation," supplementing Norway's already binding agreements with the EU. He emphasised that Norway has decided to achieve its climate goals in collaboration with the EU and that this agreement serves as an operational declaration of that cooperation. Støre further stressed that the effectiveness of this agreement ultimately lies in their hands and underscored the need to invite companies into this cooperation (Ask, 2023).

Aligning with this, the pragmatic ideas in the GA focus on the tangible benefits and strategic interests that the GA serves. The emphasis on "jobs within the renewable

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<sup>3</sup> Ikke-folkerettslig bindende avtale.

<sup>4</sup> Viljeserklæring om samarbeid

<sup>5</sup> Operativ samarbeidserklæring



industry” highlights that environmental policies can and should serve economic objectives. This duality presents the green transition as an opportunity for economic development and job creation rather than solely an environmental imperative. It reflects a pragmatic approach where environmental goals are integrated with economic strategies to ensure social and political feasibility.

### 5.3 Portrayals of the Green Alliance Post-Conclusion

During an oral question session in the Storting, shortly after signing the GA, Climate and Environment Minister Espen Barth Eide praised the GA for addressing the battery customs issue with the UK. Responding to an inquiry about the government's control over this case, he confirmed that the comprehensive measures taken under the GA had largely resolved these concerns. In his answer, Eide also reflected on the broader implications of Brexit, which had prompted unexpected challenges and led to Norway's proactive steps in forming an industrial agreement with the EU. He highlighted Norway's subsequent membership in the European Battery Alliance and the GA itself, which he noted were instrumental in closely connecting Norway to emerging industries essential for replacing fossil fuels, including battery production (Stortinget, 2023b).

In the first semi-annual address to the Storting in 2023, Foreign Minister Anniken Huitfeldt briefed the Norwegian Storting on key aspects of the EU-Norway collaboration, encompassing climate, environment, industry, and the green transition. She emphasised the criticality of maintaining Norwegian engagement in these cooperative efforts. This emphasis underscores the government's decision in April 2023 to agree to the GA, reflecting a strategic alignment with EU initiatives in these sectors. Once again, the GA is described as a “non-binding international agreement”<sup>6</sup> that will serve as a framework for partnerships in important policy and industrial areas for the EU and Norway (Huitfeldt, 2023).

Building on this, in the first meeting with the European committee in the Norwegian Storting after the signing of the GA in April of 2023, Foreign Minister Anniken Huitfeldt presented the green transition and cooperation with the EU. Specifically, the GA was presented and discussed, as well as how the concrete results from the GA would pan out. She highlighted that the GA operates on a higher policy level and that the government needs to work concretely and see how they, in different areas, contribute to ensuring that it has a concrete impact. She then explicitly states the motivations for cooperating with the EU on critical raw materials and rare minerals based on the fear of being on the outside, especially regarding a potential deal between the EU and the US. The Foreign Minister stated that she would do anything in her power to make Norway a part of that deal. Furthermore, the GA was discussed more explicitly, reiterating that “the Alliance is what we, together with the EU, make it out to be” (Stortinget, 2023c).

During a session with the European committee at the Norwegian Storting in October 2023, Jan Christian Vestre, the Minister of Trade and Industry, underscored the critical importance of the EEA agreement. As Norway's primary agreement connecting Norway to the EU, the Minister depicted the EEA agreement as the foundation for establishing a new cooperative framework, the GA, with the EU. In this meeting, Vestre describes the GA as a political superstructure for more detailed cooperation across various sectors and

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<sup>6</sup> «Ikke-folkerettslig bindende avtale»

themes<sup>7</sup>. He also emphasised the reasons for agreeing to the GA. Supposedly, with the EEA agreement as a foundation, the GA was crafted to “provide our businesses with as similar framework conditions and competitive opportunities in the internal market as possible”<sup>8</sup> (Stortinget, 2023a). The statements analysed show the pragmatic ideas that shaped the presentation and justification of the GA.

In the second semi-annual address concerning key EU and EEA issues of 2023, the newly appointed Foreign Minister and former Climate and Environment Minister, Espen Barth Eide, presented the GA as a strategic initiative to bolster Norway's collaboration with the EU. He stated that the framework is designed to provide a unified platform that elevates these joint efforts. He emphasised the Norwegian government's dedication to securing fair participation for Norwegian industries and related parties within Europe's evolving green sectors. Eide highlighted that the current focus is on enriching the GA with substantial collaborative ventures and specific initiatives, mainly targeting the development of cooperation on critical minerals and batteries. Moving forward, the plan involved the formulation of detailed roadmaps and strategic work plans for other areas deemed crucial under the GA initiative (Barth Eide, 2023).

Following the Foreign Minister's statements on important EU and EEA issues in the second half of 2023, some of the discussions focused on the GA and its role in Norwegian politics. Several politicians highlighted it as an important aspect of the EU-Norway's current and future relationship. One of those, Solveig Vitanza, a parliamentary member from the Norwegian Labour Party, emphasised the GA as an excellent example of political cooperation that would pave the way for future green jobs in Norway. Like Støre and Eide, she described the GA as a framework to enhance Norway-EU cooperation in climate, energy, and industrial sectors. While emphasising this, Vitanza also stated that the development of these policy areas in the EU is rapid, that the agreement on the GA should not make Norway complacent and that Norwegian authorities should constantly be vigilant to protect and advocate for Norwegian interests. (Stortinget, 2023d).

She then put it in the context of the American Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), which is an important point related to the fear of being treated as a third country when the EU concludes trade agreements with other third countries. The establishment of the IRA aimed to foster a green transition in America, a move that was met with criticism from numerous prominent European politicians. This includes Ursula von der Leyen, the President of the EU Commission, and Emmanuel Macron, the President of France. The basis for their critique lies in the fact that certain aspects of the package explicitly require production to be based in the US (Amaro, 2022; Stortinget, 2023d).

In a meeting with the European committee at the Norwegian Storting in February of 2024, Barth Eide stated that drawing from his experience as the lead negotiator at the latest climate summits, the strides made in crucial summits such as those in Glasgow and Dubai could be largely credited to the EU's leadership. He emphasised that this underscored the necessity for Norway to strategically align with the EU's Green Deal initiatives, which they now had done through the GA (Stortinget, 2024). Whilst he emphasised the EU's leadership, Eide highlighted the strategic interest for Norway to integrate closely with EU policies to address and influence global climate challenges effectively. This is a clear normative motivation, presenting the GA as a pragmatic approach to advancing economic and environmental interests and a commitment to a

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<sup>7</sup> «Politisk overbygning for et mer detaljert samarbeid innenfor ulike sektorer og temaer»

<sup>8</sup> «Skal gi bedriftene våre så like rammebetingelser og konkurransemuligheter i det indre markedet som mulig»

collective European effort towards sustainable development. Therefore, the justification for the GA, as articulated by Barth Eide, goes beyond mere economic or technological interests. It encompasses a broader, value-driven approach that aligns with Norway's environmental ethics and its strategic interests in contributing to and shaping European and global responses to climate change.

The first agreement under the GA's umbrella was signed in March 2024, which is critical to this thesis and its understanding of the GA's development as it is the first actual output from the alliance. The EU-Norway industrial partnership on sustainable value chains, including land-based raw materials and batteries, was the first building block in the GA framework. It was a partnership which was a long time coming, with Vestre meeting with Maros Sefcovic, the EU's executive vice president responsible for leading the Commission's work on the EU green deal and issuing a joint statement already in June of 2022 which this agreement was based on (European Commission, 2022b). Vestre has characterised the agreement as significant for the broader Norwegian business landscape and particularly for those involved in the battery and raw material value chains. The overarching goal of the GA, as posited by Vestre, is to improve the circumstances under which Norwegian entities engage in developing EU policy and regulation.

An industrial partnership could, in its essence, be perceived as a pragmatic materialisation of the ideas guiding the Norwegian policy towards the EU. Given its focus, as formulated by Minister of Trade and Industry Jan Christian Vestre, on establishing a strong Norwegian renewable industry and the importance of equal international market access for Norwegian companies (Ministry of Trade Industry and Fisheries, 2024).

Building on Espen Barth Eide's initial ideas prior to the 2021 parliamentary elections, the GA's first agreement addresses critical issues raised by Norway's status as a third country in EU agreements, particularly the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement. The agreement addressed trade issues, focusing on industrial sectors critical to Norway's economy, such as energy and technology. This agreement is described as the first step in a series of strategic alignments designed to strengthen Norway's integration with EU policies. It reflects a deliberate effort to secure economic benefits through increased cooperation, particularly in light of the EU's Green Deal. By doing so, Norway hopes to mitigate the effects of its non-EU status while strengthening its economic resilience against potential trade barriers and regulatory misalignments.

## 6 Discussion

Through the analysis, numerous interesting takeaways from the discourse surrounding the GA were uncovered. This part of the thesis discusses these findings in light of the previous research presented in Chapter 2. The objective of the discussion is to comprehend the rationale behind the establishment of the Green Alliance from a Norwegian perspective. The aim is to contribute to the academic literature on the drivers of Norwegian European policy throughout history, utilising the findings obtained from the analysis of the discourse surrounding the GA. Like the analysis, this discussion is divided into three sections, each discussing the GA chronologically. It begins with the period preceding the signing of the GA, then moves on to the agreement and statements made on the signing day, and finally ends with the period following the signing, linking it to the existing literature on Norway's integration and cooperation with the EU.

### 6.1 Discussing the Discourse Pre-Conclusion of the Green Alliance

The analysis traces the GA back to events that unfolded in 2021, before the Norwegian parliamentary election. A significant development was the proposal by Espen Barth Eide, which sought to formalise Norway's affiliation with the EU's Green Deal. This move was strategically designed to bypass the Brexit-related tariffs imposed on electric vehicles fitted with Norwegian batteries. Following the election, the Labour Party and the Norwegian Centre Party emerged as governing entities. They agreed to the "Hurdalsplattform", which expressed an intent to establish an industrial partnership with the EU (Regjeringen, 2021, p. 29). This marked the inception of what would later evolve into the GA. The thesis posits that the intent to establish an industrial partnership with the EU can be categorised as pragmatic, given that the statement underscored the significance of fostering job creation across Norway. This focus on practicality and economic growth aligns with the tenets of pragmatism.

This intent to formalise the Norwegian connection to the EU's green deal was further elaborated by Anniken Huitfeldt in the fall of 2021. Following the analysis of her statements, this thesis argues that the statements are pragmatic. She describes the EU Green Deal as more than a climate program; it is also a growth and industry program, and she explains how Norwegian connection to it could foster new avenues for Norwegian value creation and export, also emphasising job creation (Huitfeldt, 2021). When analysing Huitfeldt's statements on the EU Green Deal, it is clear that the initiative to connect closer is seen as an environmental measure and a catalyst for economic growth. Huitfeldt emphasises the Green Deal's potential to open new industrial and economic opportunities for Norway, particularly in green technologies and renewable energy, which could significantly enhance job creation and economic growth. Her statements suggest a strategic alignment with the EU that is presented as an initiative which could benefit Norway by pre-emptively adapting to future EU policies and rules, thus maintaining a competitive edge in the EU market. This analysis deepens our understanding of the

strategic implications for Norway and underscores the multifaceted nature of the Green Deal as both a climate strategy and a growth framework.

After the statements by Huitfeldt, the official negotiations that would culminate in the GA commenced with a meeting between Norway and the EU in February 2022. Prime Minister Støre and Ursula von der Leyen led this meeting. The discourse following this meeting can be categorised as primarily pragmatic from the Norwegian side but also somewhat normative from the EU representatives. Regarding the meeting, Støre underscored what Norway could contribute to the GA while highlighting the EU's significance as the most crucial market for the Norwegian industry (Statsministerens Kontor, 2022). The normative elements of the post-meeting declarations stem from von der Leyen's remarks. The Commission President emphasised aspects of the GA on "achieving climate neutrality" and the decarbonisation of both parties' economies, thereby enhancing their resilience to climate change. The thesis posits that the analysis of the statements made after the start of the process, which led to the GA agreement, reveals that the Commission President adopted a more normative approach to the GA than her Norwegian counterparts. This observation is based on her emphasis on climate neutrality and decarbonisation, which are normative aspects of the agreement.

The statements made by Minister of Trade and Industry Jan Christian Vestre in a meeting with the European committee in April of 2022 and the statements made by Foreign Minister Anniken Huitfeldt in both her addresses on EU/EEA matters to the Storting in 2022 collectively emphasised a focus on the "reindustrialisation of Norway" and doing this by connecting Norwegian businesses to the EU's green deal (Huitfeldt, 2022a; Stortinget, 2022a). From a pragmatic standpoint, the focus on structuring the initiative with the EU and filling it with content demonstrates an ambition to capitalise on the economic and industrial benefits of the EU Green Deal. The reference to critical raw materials and batteries, among other sectors, underscores an appreciation of the economic opportunities the EU's green transition presents. This is in line with the pragmatic aspect of DI, where policy decisions are influenced by the practical benefits and economic advantages they offer to Norway. The initiative is perceived as a route to reindustrialisation, indicating a rational economic motivation behind Norway's participation in the GA.

The analysis showed that the discourse about the GA, prior to the agreement's signing in April 2023, was primarily driven by the Norwegian government. According to this thesis' analysis, the government focused on certain ideas and motivations that were essentially pragmatic. A significant example of this pragmatic approach is Vestre's response to a question about resolving the battery customs issue through an industrial partnership with the EU, which includes sustainable value chains, land-based raw materials, and batteries. Vestre indicated that he had engaged in numerous discussions with both the EU and the UK regarding this matter. In a joint statement with the EU Commission's Vice President, Šefčovič, about the strategic industrial partnership in June, they identified specific areas for further work. One of these areas was the dialogue on the application of origin rules to Norwegian batteries. Vestre's strategy was to use the strategic industrial partnership with the EU to promote Norwegian interests, intending to find a solution that would allow them to avoid battery tariffs impacting the establishment of a strong battery industry in Norway (Stortinget, 2022b). This response from Vestre clearly illustrates the pragmatic approach that the Norwegian government adopted in these negotiations and partnerships.

In the analysis of the troubles agreeing to the GA, it is presented that these troubles were related mainly to the inclusion of formulations in the GA, which stated that "The EU supports Norway continuing to search and invest to secure oil and gas for the European market". This thesis argues that this feud over the wording in the GA points to predominantly pragmatic considerations, not normative ideas, as the driving forces behind the GA. This view is further strengthened when looking at Vestre's statements in relation to the American IRA and the EU's work to preserve its access to American markets following its introduction. He stated that the GA could be instrumental in tagging along on a possible agreement between the EU and the USA (Norsk Telegrambyrå (NTB), 2023).

Furthermore, the mention of the EEA agreement as the cornerstone of Norway-EU cooperation, along with the identified challenges and opportunities, underscores the dynamic nature of this relationship. The statements revealed an awareness of the limitations of existing frameworks and a strategic intent to bolster cooperation through the GA. The stated aim was to achieve mutual benefits and a stronger alignment with the EU's green transition and the Green Deal. This plays well into the thesis's research question on the reasons behind the formation of the GA and what the GA tells us about the EEA agreement and the current form of cooperation.

Building on this, in relation to its second research question and the first part of the analysis and discussion, this thesis argues that the GA does offer a new perspective on certain aspects of the state of the EEA agreement. While the EEA agreement is emphasised as the cornerstone of Norwegian cooperation with the EU, it has proven inadequate in safeguarding Norwegian interests within the realm of industrial cooperation with the EU and the connection with the EU's Green Deal. This became particularly evident looking at the background for forming the GA (the battery customs case) and following the official initiation of negotiations on the GA. Further emphasising this argument, Eide's statements on the existing cooperation connected to the climate cooperation between the EU and Norway, which was structured around three pillars, lacking a fourth pillar that would link Norway to the EU's Green Deal. Eide emphasised that this missing pillar underscored the need for a more comprehensive and inclusive approach to environmental policy and cooperation that connects Norway to the EU's ambitious Green Deal framework.

Based on the analysis of the lead-up to the materialisation of the GA, the thesis maintains that the creation of the GA is linked with geopolitical shifts in Europe and globally, similar to other statements and justifications made by politicians. The EU-UK TCA, resulting from Brexit, and the IRA in the USA are clear examples of the geopolitical developments that prompted issues in the Norwegian form of cooperation with the EU.

## 6.2 Discussing the Green Alliance and the Discourse Surrounding the Conclusion

Uncovering the essence of the GA agreement and the statements made surrounding its signing in April 2023, this thesis delves into what they say about why Norway, with its already extensive and dynamic cooperation with the EU, entered into the GA. This sub-chapter focuses on interpreting the agreement's text and statements, offering a deeper understanding of their significance in this historic event.

The GA agreement, the focal point of this thesis, is a concise yet detailed document that emerged from negotiations initiated in February 2022. It outlines the intended cooperation between the EU and Norway across multiple sectors, all linked to the green transition. Despite its brevity, it offers a wealth of information and is presented as a framework for collaboration on the path to a sustainable future.

The language in the GA is more normative than the statements analysed and discussed in the period leading up to the agreement. Emphasising a commitment to achieving the 2030 climate targets of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% from 1990 levels, achieving climate neutrality by 2050, and emphasising environmental protection (Norway and the European Union, 2023, pp. 1–2). The language of the GA is throughout the agreement text more normative than the Norwegian discourse in negotiations and leading up to the signing. For instance, as emphasised in the analysis, the GA contains wording and an emphasis on human rights, environmental protection and ensuring that economic growth is sustainable and equitable.

However, the language in the agreement and its contribution to the discourse is still predominantly pragmatic, as the analysis shows. Much of the agreement focuses on the practical benefits, feasible strategies and specific actions or policies intended to achieve clear and tangible goals. For instance, the agreement mentions in the “general” chapter the importance of economic growth, job creation and competitiveness through the green transition. Throughout the agreement in the various chapters, the pragmatic aspect of the GA is evident, emphasising the importance of critical raw materials and technologies in ensuring competitiveness and the resilience of their respective economies in the green industrial transformation. This thesis argues that these formulations focus on the practical benefits, emphasising the GA's economic and material gains and strategic advantages.

This thesis addresses the question of whether pragmatic or normative ideas influenced the language in the GA. It maintains that the agreement was more normative than the earlier discourse during the negotiation and creation of the GA. This discourse focused on multilateralism, human rights, and environmental stewardship. However, the core of the GA is fundamentally structured around pragmatic ideas. These methods aim to achieve strategic objectives, such as bypassing battery customs due to the EU-UK TCA. This thesis ultimately suggests that while value-driven motivations are recognised and integrated into the agreement text, the primary framework of the agreement is constructed around practical and strategic considerations, rendering it essentially pragmatic.

Moving on to the analysis of the statements made in relation to the GA's conclusion, the thesis finds that Ursula von der Leyen, commission president, and Frans Timmermans, commission vice president, both expressed their views on the GA, emphasising normative language in explaining and justifying it. Timmermans emphasised shared values and mutual commitment to addressing climate and biodiversity crises. At the same time, von der Leyen focused on strengthening the bond between Norway and the EU to create a better future. Støre's statements following the signing were fairly normative compared to his Norwegian colleagues' statements during the GA negotiation phase. He emphasised the GA as an essential strategy in the fight to meet the climate goals. On the other hand, he also took a more pragmatic approach to the GA, focusing his statements on crucial opportunities such as critical raw materials, batteries, and various renewable energy industries. Devoting time to describe the GA's benefits to the Norwegian industrial sector,

and, like his Norwegian colleagues before him, emphasising the opportunities it provides for job creation across the country.

Connecting the second main research question to the discussion on the GA and the discourse surrounding its conclusion, it becomes evident that the nature of the alliance and its presentations and justifications reveal significant insights. Norwegian officials characterise the GA as a political superstructure, a non-binding international agreement, and a declaration intent on cooperation. This portrayal of the GA starkly contrasts with the binding nature of the EEA agreement, which emerged from significant political developments in the EU during the 1980s and 1990s. The non-binding nature of the GA can be attributed to several factors, particularly the recent political dynamics within the EU and Norway's current government composition. The Norwegian Labour Party, a driver behind this alliance, leads a coalition with the more Euro-sceptical Centre Party, which likely influences the agreement's non-committal nature.

Furthermore, unlike the circumstances that led to the EEA agreement, the current political development within the EU suggests a shift towards more flexible, sector-wide collaborations (NOU 2024: 7, 2024, pp. 20–21). This is exemplified by the GA, which addresses contemporary issues such as climate action and green energy not fully covered by the EEA. This analysis argues that the GA, while not as comprehensive as the EEA, serves a strategic role in adapting Norway's EU relations to the changing political and environmental landscape.

### 6.3 Discussing the Discourse Following the Conclusion of the Green Alliance

Following the signing of the GA, discussions continued about its implications for Norwegian industries, particularly concerning the battery customs case. Responding to inquiries shortly after the GA's signing, Espen Barth Eide confirmed that determined actions had largely mitigated the battery customs issue. The solution partly involved a strategic partnership focusing on sustainable land-based raw materials and battery value chains, established in March 2024. This initiative aligned with Norway's efforts to align with the EU's industrial strategies and mitigate external trade barriers imposed by the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement (Ministry of Trade Industry and Fisheries, 2024). These rules, which stipulated a 10% tariff on electric vehicles equipped with non-EU and non-UK batteries, including those from Norway, clarified the pragmatic forces driving the GA's formation. Before and after its formalisation, the GA's discourse underscores the stated motives and actions to secure Norwegian interests within the EU's regulatory framework. This discourse has been pivotal in illustrating how the GA serves as a response to immediate industrial challenges and a strategic alignment with broader European economic policies. This thesis argues, therefore, that the agreement is not only a testament to pragmatic diplomatic engagements but also reflects Norway's adaptive strategies within an evolving international trade landscape.

This discourse highlighted the GA's role in addressing specific trade and industry challenges facing Norway, framing the agreement as a framework for enhancing Norway's economic engagements within Europe. The strategic focus on raw materials and battery value chains mainly aims to fortify Norway's industrial base against the backdrop of shifting trade dynamics post-Brexit.



Building on the role of the GA in strengthening Norway's industrial strategies, the thesis now turns to the first tangible implementation of this framework, the EU-Norway industrial partnership on sustainable value chains, including land-based raw materials and batteries. The discourse surrounding partnership and its nature could be said to be pragmatic, and the statements on the partnership underscore this assumption. Vestre highlights the importance of this partnership for Norwegian businesses in general and especially for actors within the value chains of battery and raw materials. This can be seen as a direct response to the battery customs issue and an attempt to bypass it and limit any future issues by tying Norway closer to the EU in the areas of batteries (Stortinget, 2023a).

Generally, the discourse after the agreement to the GA is similar to before the signing. Huitfeldt emphasised the aspects of the GA related to climate, environment, industry, and the green transition. Vestre emphasised the GA as an approach to providing Norwegian businesses with the same framework conditions and competitive opportunities as EU businesses. Vitanza framed the GA using both pragmatic and normative perspectives. She highlighted the GA as a model of political cooperation that could stimulate green job creation in Norway, highlighting advantages like economic growth and job creation. In light of the American IRA, Vitanza also connected the GA to broader strategic concerns, such as maintaining competitive conditions for Norwegian businesses equivalent to those of EU companies (Stortinget, 2023d). This context demonstrates the pragmatic approach to securing beneficial conditions for Norwegian industries.

The analysis of the discourse in the period after the conclusion of the GA reveals an interplay of pragmatic and normative considerations. From a pragmatic perspective, the statements underscored Norway's engagement with the EU and the importance of the EU's single market for Norwegian industries. This aspect aligns with pragmatic ideas, highlighting Norway's economic interests and the tangible benefits gained from its relationship with the EU. From a normative view, the emphasis placed by the discourse on climate and environmental policies signifies the value-driven dimension of Norway's foreign policy. The recognition of the EU's leadership in these areas, coupled with Norway's alignment with the EU's Green Deal, mirrors a mutual commitment to sustainability and environmental stewardship. The statement gives a good picture of Norway's broader relationship with the EU, encapsulating the balance between economic pragmatism and normative values.

In light of the literature review at the beginning of this thesis, the analysis hints that the findings largely align with the literature presented in NOU 2024: 7. This thesis argues that the developments in the EU, particularly concerning the green transition and industrial and trade policies, significantly impact the EEA agreement. In recent years, the EU has increasingly asserted its influence in the single market, driven by crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, geopolitical tensions, and shifts in global trade frameworks. This evolution in EU policies, notably the Green Deal, has become increasingly pivotal in reshaping political priorities within the EU.

This thesis argues that the GA represents an approach to align Norway's industrial strategies with the development in the EU. The alliance aims to mitigate issues arising from the developments in the EU, which, in recent years, have been geared towards a situation where the EU more often interferes in the single market. The collaboration in the GA focuses on renewable energy technologies and carbon-neutral projects, aiming to integrate Norway more closely with the EU's Green Deal and industrial policies.

Furthermore, the NOU report outlines how being treated as a third country poses challenges for Norway, particularly illustrated by the battery customs issue post-Brexit. The GA, therefore, is seen as a response to these challenges, providing a framework for Norway to engage more deeply with the EU's strategic initiatives, particularly those not covered by the EEA agreement.

Whilst much of the discourse post-conclusion of the GA focuses on pragmatic aspects, ideas and considerations, the normative focus is still present. Primarily, Espen Barth Eide's statements provide a salient example. He mentioned the EU's international leadership displayed at the climate summits in Dubai and Glasgow (Stortinget, 2024). His statements reveal an aspiration for closer cooperation with the EU, driven by shared values and the belief that the EU is a positive influence in combating climate change. The inclusion of normative ideas and values in the GA discourse, as well as the statements made by Støre regarding the signing of the GA and the content of the agreement text itself, which emphasised the commitment to climate goals, environmental protection, human rights, and Sustainable Development Goals within an international rules-based order, indicates a discourse that goes beyond pragmatic considerations.

On the other hand, however, despite the fact that certain presentations and justifications in the GA highlight normative values and ideas, the analysis and discussion of the thesis have demonstrated that the statement and justifications primarily prioritised the pragmatic aspects of the GA. The thesis argues that it is increasingly clear that these aspects of the GA were the driving force for the Norwegian intent to engage in extended cooperation with the EU through the GA. This approach to understanding the GA can be seen throughout the analysis of the troubles in concluding the GA, where Norway persistently advocated for the inclusion of provisions highlighting the significance of Norwegian oil and gas for the EU, even after the establishment of goals for achieving climate neutrality.

Elevating the discussion on the presentations and justifications of the GA to address the second research question, which, at a more general level, looked at the cooperation between the EU and Norway as a whole and why Norway pursued and entered into the GA, can offer insights into the evolving dynamics of this relationship. The thesis argues that the GA is a strategic response to the evolving EU policies that extend beyond the current scope of the EEA agreement, aiming to secure Norway's industrial and economic interests in light of the EU's expanding authority and power in the green transition and expansion into industrial and trade.

The aim of the GA extends beyond the limitations of the EEA Agreement, reflecting a strategic desire to deepen cooperation with the EU in response to emerging challenges. The GA emerged in light of the recent geopolitical shifts, notably the EU-UK TCA and its implications for tariffs on foreign-made batteries and the American IRA, underscoring the risks of Norway being marginalised in critical trade negotiations. The GA aims to fortify Norway's position by aligning more closely with the EU's green and industrial policies, ensuring Norwegian businesses or other actors do not face disadvantages as a third country.

The GA emerges as an interesting development in the historical view of Norway-EU relations, prompting comparisons to the transformative period of the early 1990s when the EEA agreement was negotiated and created. At that time, the EEA agreement represented a significant shift, which broadened the scope of cooperation to include both trade and services, thus integrating Norway deeper into the EU's single market. This was

a response to what was perceived as outdated trade agreements of the early 1970s, which failed to address the evolving dynamics of European integration.

The analysed statements by Norwegian politicians highlight the perceived inadequacies in the EEA agreement, particularly regarding access and stability for Norwegian stakeholders within the EU's single market. These statements suggest a growing sentiment that while the EEA remains the cornerstone of the collaboration, it no longer fully addresses and covers the complexities of the current EU-Norway cooperation, especially in light of recent geopolitical tensions and the EU's expanded focus on green policies and industrial protection and the development of policies extending to cover several policy areas.

Unlike the sweeping changes of the 1990s, the GA does not aim to overhaul the existing framework but to supplement it in targeted ways. This approach reflects a nuanced adaptation to contemporary challenges, specifically the EU's increasing importance in green transition policies and the broader geopolitical landscape. While the EEA agreement solidified Norway's economic interactions with the EU, the GA is positioned as a strategic initiative to ensure Norway's participation in areas of critical importance, such as green technology, energy transition, and sustainable industrial practices. One of the key differences between the situation leading to the emergence of the GA and the 1990s is the political will for radical change. During the 1990s, Norway had substantial momentum to fundamentally redefine its relationship with the EU. However, there appears to be limited appetite for a complete overhaul of the established cooperation model. The GA represents a targeted response, adapting to new EU strategies without fundamentally altering the bedrock of the EEA agreement. This suggests a current preference for evolution over revolution in Norway's approach to EU cooperation.

The thesis argues thus that the GA does signify a shift in the model of cooperation, reflecting Norway's strategic recalibration in response to evolving EU policies and global geopolitical shifts. However, this shift is not as profound as the transformation witnessed in the 1990s. Instead, it represents an incremental adaptation, ensuring that Norway remains effectively engaged with the EU's economic and political strategies while maintaining the core tenets of the EEA agreement. This strategy underscores a pragmatic approach to international diplomacy, where adjustments are made to enhance benefits within an existing framework rather than seeking to replace it entirely.

## 7 Conclusion

For the better part of 30 years, the EEA agreement has proved to be a dynamic and resilient form of cooperation with the EU, and the consensus has been that it has served Norwegian interests in the EU well. In this thesis, the current geopolitical development and the development in the EU are seen in the context of the dynamic collaboration Norway has with the EU, with an aim to uncover why Norway entered into the Green Alliance and the insights derived from the presentations and justifications by Norwegian political actors offers insights into the cooperation Norway has with the EU in general.

This thesis has presented a comprehensive analysis and nuanced discussion in the lead-up to, the conclusion to, and the period after the conclusion of the GA. Focusing on the Norwegian presentations and justifications of the Alliance, the thesis seeks to answer the research questions presented in the introduction: "How has the Green Alliance been portrayed before, during and after the conclusion of the agreement in April 2023?"

The findings in this thesis, related to the first primary research question, have shown that the establishment of the GA is identified as a strategic and pragmatic response to the emerging challenges within the EEA agreement. It is also seen as a proactive effort to strengthen Norway's collaboration with the EU, especially in the areas of energy policy and climate action. The statements by key Norwegian politicians have described the GA as a pragmatic approach tailored to secure economic and industrial interests. These sectors underscore a strategic alignment vital for enhancing Norway's economic goals and maintaining its competitiveness in an EU market increasingly geared towards sustainable initiatives and green policies.

On the other side, whilst it is true that most of the framing of the discourse and the statements on the GA was dominated by pragmatic ideas and considerations, this thesis also pulls forward the normative perspective. The GA is also stated to signify a shared commitment to ambitious climate goals, targeting a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and achieving climate neutrality by 2050. The discourse surrounding the GA frequently emphasises its role in advancing sustainable development and advocating environmental stewardship. This aligns with broader global initiatives, such as the Paris Agreement. Furthermore, the justification made by Espen Barth Eide that Norway should connect closer to the EU and the EU's work in achieving the climate goals due to the instrumental role of the EU in climate summits, which shows an approach towards justifying and presenting the GA as an approach to connecting to the EU based on the two parties who share the same values.

To summarise the thesis' answer to the first primary research question, the thesis highlights that the analysis and discussion uncover that the foundation of the GA is rooted in both pragmatic and normative stated motivations, but primarily pragmatic. From a pragmatic viewpoint, the analysis reveals that Norway's pursuit of the GA was propelled by a strategic need to secure economic and industrial interests and solve existing challenges in the present cooperation. This is particularly evident in sectors crucial for the green transition, vital for enhancing Norway's economic resilience and maintaining its competitive advantage in an EU market that is increasingly oriented

towards green initiatives and policy development outside the areas covered by the EEA agreement.

Addressing the second research question, "Why does Norway, which already has extensive and dynamic cooperation with the EU through the EEA Agreement, constantly enter into new agreements with the EU?" The goal is to be able to say something about the development in the Norwegian policy towards the EU, whether it is characterised by continuity (in the form that the EEA Agreement is still regarded as an adequate solution for Norway) or change (in the form that the EEA Agreement is no longer regarded as an adequate solution for Norway).

The analysis and subsequent discussion of this thesis have uncovered that despite its extensive and dynamic cooperation with the EU through the EEA Agreement, Norway constantly enters into new agreements with the EU due to several strategic reasons. First, the EEA Agreement, while comprehensive, primarily covers the single market and related areas. New agreements allow Norway to address emerging challenges and opportunities outside the scope of the EEA, such as environmental concerns, energy policy, and the green transition. These areas are increasingly significant in light of global climate goals and the EU's green initiatives. This is especially evident in the statements from Espen Barth Eide, which underscored the need for an additional fourth pillar in Norway's approach to cooperating with the EU's climate initiatives, the GA. Second, entering into new agreements like the GA helps Norway secure its economic and industrial interests, particularly in sectors crucial for the green transition, such as renewable energy, critical raw materials, and batteries. These sectors are vital for maintaining Norway's competitive advantage in an EU market that is increasingly oriented towards sustainability. This strategy is exemplified by Espen Barth Eide's proposal in 2021 for an industrial partnership, which was introduced as a solution to the battery customs issue that emerged due to Norway's non-participation in the EU's trade policy. Thirdly, the geopolitical landscape and changes within the EU itself necessitate new forms of cooperation to ensure Norway remains well-positioned to deal with EU policies that extend beyond the current scope of the EEA Agreement. The GA can be seen as Norway's response to recent geopolitical and political developments within the EU, which have increasingly led the EU to interfere in the single market, prioritise EU businesses, and close the door to non-member countries like Norway.

The EEA Agreement is still regarded and portrayed as, in most cases, an adequate and fundamental framework for cooperation, serving as the foundation for Norway's relationship with the EU and the GA. It is portrayed as a dynamic and resilient form of collaboration, adjusting to changes through continuous updates and modifications.

However, there is also an element of change. Norway seeks to supplement the EEA Agreement with new, non-binding agreements that can address specific areas not fully covered by the EEA. This suggests that while the EEA Agreement remains crucial, it alone may not be sufficient to cover all aspects of the evolving relationship between Norway and the EU, especially in the face of new economic, environmental, and geopolitical challenges. In light of the historical development of the Norwegian cooperation with the EU, the thesis posits that the situation differs from the early 1990s when the EEA agreement was negotiated. While the developments in the EU and the cooperation between Norway and the EU may be similar to the situation before the EEA agreement, this thesis posits that given the lack of political will to change the Norwegian form of cooperation with the EU, substantial changes in the cooperation are unlikely. The GA

represents a response to the challenges arising from the recent developments in the EU for Norway without radically changing the form of cooperation. The EEA Agreement replaced a trade agreement from the early 1970s that was considered outdated because it did not include services or offer Norway access to the EU single market. This thesis suggests that we may be seeing a variation of the same situation happening again, where the 1990s free trade agreement must be supplemented with other instruments/platforms, such as the GA.

In summary, Norway's strategy includes both continuity in maintaining and valuing the EEA Agreement as the cornerstone of cooperation with the EU and change by adopting new agreements to address specific modern challenges and opportunities better, indicating a dynamic approach to its international relations and commitments. Furthermore, this thesis argues that the GA offers a new perspective on certain aspects of the state of the EEA agreement. While the EEA agreement remains the cornerstone of Norwegian cooperation with the EU, it has proven inadequate in safeguarding Norwegian interests in the EU. The GA characterised as a political superstructure, a non-binding international agreement, and a declaration of intent on cooperation, serves a strategic role in adapting Norway's EU relations to the changing political and environmental landscape. The GA is a strategic response to the evolving EU policies that extend beyond the current scope of the EEA agreement, aiming to secure Norway's industrial and economic interests in light of the EU's expanding authority and power in the green transition and expansion into industrial and trade. The GA extends beyond the perceived limitations of the EEA Agreement, reflecting a strategic desire to deepen cooperation with the EU in response to emerging challenges.

This thesis faces several limitations, primarily due to the unique circumstances surrounding the GA and its negotiation process. Firstly, the analysis is limited to statements made by the Norwegian Labour Party. This focus arises because other political parties have made no significant statements regarding the GA. The Labour Party was the key negotiator and proponent of the GA, and because the agreement did not require approval by the Norwegian Storting, it was not extensively debated by other political actors. This lack of broader political discourse limits the scope of analysis to a single party's perspective. Secondly, the negotiation process for the GA and the initial agreement under its umbrella was conducted in a closed setting. This secrecy extends to ongoing developments, where Norway is currently negotiating broader green cooperation with the EU. Reports indicate that Norway refuses to grant access to outsiders for these negotiations, further restricting the availability of information and external scrutiny (Ask, 2024). This closed nature of the process poses a limitation on the transparency and comprehensiveness of the analysis.

Additionally, the GA is a relatively new political development, which means secondary academic literature on the topic is scarce. This absence of established research constrains the depth of theoretical and empirical analysis possible within this thesis. Finally, the non-binding nature of the GA has influenced the public discourse surrounding it. Because the agreement does not impose binding obligations, there has been a notable lack of public or parliamentary debates during its formation. The Norwegian government, particularly the Labour Party, has driven the GA, resulting in a limited diversity of perspectives and critical discussions in the public sphere. These limitations highlight the challenges faced in conducting a comprehensive analysis of the GA and underscore the need for further research and transparency in negotiating and implementing such agreements.

As mentioned, the GA is a recent policy development that was only a year old when writing this thesis. Future research on the GA and its impact on EU-Norway cooperation at a more general level could focus on the implementation and execution of the actual policy outputs from the alliance and examine how they affect current collaboration with the EU. This thesis does not evaluate the impact of the GA on EU-Norway cooperation. Future research could uncover whether the GA successfully achieves the aims presented by Norwegian politicians. By focusing on these aspects, further studies could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the GA's effectiveness.

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