

# Estonia plugs electric cars as power prices soar

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An electric car is charged at the Paris Auto Show on September 30, 2010. It brought the world Skype, Europe its first capital with free public transport, and now Estonia is touting the globe's first fast-charging network for electric vehicles.

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network for electric vehicles.

But its [launch](#) this week was overshadowed by public outrage over skyrocketing [electricity prices](#) since power market deregulation here in January.

Intended to cut [carbon dioxide emissions](#), the network now has 151 charging-stations up and running across the small northern Baltic state, with 14 more planned by this summer, according to KredEx, the public agency in charge of building it.

But the move comes as the price of electricity soared 23.6 percent from December to January as a result of deregulation in the eurozone country of 1.3 million, Statistics Estonia figures show.

The nation's [competition watchdog](#) has begun proceeding "in order to control the [profit margins](#) charged by Eesti Energia for power supplied to the general public," Maarja Uulits, Competition Authority spokeswoman told AFP on Thursday.

Eesti Energia is entirely owned by the Estonian state, which also financed the new fast-charging network created by ABB, a Swiss engineering firm.

Funding for the network came from a 2010 carbon credit deal in which the Estonian government sold its CO2 quota to Japan's Mitsubishi Corporation.

The new charging stations dot all major highways at intervals of 40-60 kilometres (25-40 miles). It takes 20 to 40 minutes to charge up a 16-kilowatt-per-hour battery from 0-80 percent of capacity, according to KredEx.

In 2011, the centre-right government of Prime Minister Andrus Ansip bought 500 Mitsubishi i-MiEV electric cars for use by social workers and has subsidies of up to 18,000 euros (\$24,000) for private individuals to get electric wheels.

Estonia joined the EU in 2004 and eurozone in 2011.

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