



LEGAL TEXTS

▼ The EEA Agreement

The EEA Agreement, an international treaty, was signed on 2 May 1992 between the European Community and the EU Member States, and the three EFTA States Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein.

Throughout the European Economic Area, the same rules apply to economic operators in order to maintain a homogeneous market. The EEA Agreement is based on the **primary legislation** of the European Union, and on the subsequent secondary legislation (*acquis communautaire*). Thus, a large part of the EEA Agreement is identical to the parts governing the four freedoms as laid down in the Treaty of Rome.

The EEA Agreement consists of **129 Articles**, **22 Annexes** and **49 Protocols**.

- The **articles** represent the primary legislation;
- the **annexes** refer to the *acquis communautaire* applicable in the EEA. The EEA-relevant EU acts listed in the annexes are regulations, directives, and decisions (binding acts), and recommendations, notices, communications, guidelines, and resolutions (non-binding acts); and
- the **protocols** contain provisions on specific areas such as rules on the origin of goods, transitional periods for the EEA EFTA States in certain fields, or financial modalities. These matters are generally not based on EU legislation.

In the Final Act, the plenipotentiaries of all the contracting parties adopted the Agreement itself, the 49 Protocols and the 22 Annexes. They also adopted 30 Joint Declarations that are listed in an annex to the Final Act.

A central feature of the EEA Agreement, and one which distinguishes it from most other international agreements governed by public international law, is its dynamic aspect. The common rules of the Agreement are continuously updated with new EEA-relevant EU legislation. This aspect is essential given the large output of EU legislation on the Internal Market. Every month, a number of EEA-relevant pieces of legislation

are incorporated into the EEA Agreement by decision of the EEA Joint Committee (see chapter on EEA Decision-making).

Over the years, more than 10 000 legal acts have been integrated into the EEA Agreement, compared to 1 875 at the time of its signature. However, several of these acts are now obsolete or have expired.

▼ EEA-related Agreements

The Surveillance and Court Agreement of 2 May 1992 established the **EFTA Surveillance Authority** and the **EFTA Court**. In connection with the signature of the EEA Agreement on 2 May 1992, the EFTA States also concluded an Agreement on a **Standing Committee of the EFTA States**, which enables the EFTA States to facilitate preparations for the EEA Joint Committee and the adoption of decisions.

▼ Agreements on the EFTA Website

For those who are specifically interested in the EFTA and EEA Agreements and all the relevant legal information, the EFTA Secretariat provides links to **legal documents** on its website at: <http://secretariat.efta.int> (Legal documents).