

Cooperation Programmes and Technical Assistance

In addition to the bilateral technical cooperation provided by the Member States, EFTA provides technical cooperation to assist our partner countries in harmonising their statutory frameworks and implementing current regulations to facilitate trade.

This assistance is provided under the EEA Agreement and existing free trade agreements. In some cases, EFTA also provides technical cooperation to potential free trade partners.

Capacity-building, training, and transfer of know-how in trade related matters are at the core of EFTA's technical assistance. Projects under the EEA Agreement also include infrastructure development. Please note that the EFTA Financial Mechanism, which aims to reduce social and economic disparities within the European Economic Area and to enable all EEA countries to participate fully in the Internal Market, is not part of EFTA's Technical Assistance Programme.

EFTA's technical cooperation can be divided into two categories:

- (i)** Activities related to EFTA's free trade agreements and declarations on cooperation financed exclusively by EFTA Member States; and
- (ii)** EFTA's participation in EU projects and programmes in the areas of statistics and quality infrastructure.

Activities related to EFTA's Free Trade Agreements and Declarations on Cooperation

Since the early 1990s, EFTA has actively negotiated declarations on cooperation and free trade agreements with countries from Central and Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean Basin. This network has since been extended to the rest of the world. EFTA therefore has an extensive free trade network, and many of our partner countries are developing countries or countries in transition. In order to facilitate the implementation of the free trade agreements, or to prepare for closer economic integration or upcoming negotiations, EFTA provides technical cooperation.

Upon request and in close consultation with the recipient countries, EFTA arranges seminars, workshops, study visits and provides scholarships tailored to the needs of the individual partner country. These activities cover areas such as customs and origin matters, technical standards, trade facilitation/export promotion, intellectual property rights, piracy and counterfeited goods, sanitary and phytosanitary standards, and fisheries. EFTA has also assisted SACU in setting up its secretariat functions. Nevertheless, the EFTA policy is flexible and all requests for assistance from partner countries are analysed on their individual merit and in accordance with the guidelines set by the EFTA Council.

These activities are governed by the EFTA Council Guidelines on Technical Cooperation ([Decision No 5 of 2011](#)) and cover a series of programmes and projects funded under the Association's budget.

For further information on EFTA's participation in EU projects and programmes, please click [here](#).
For further information on EFTA's statistical cooperation programmes please click [here](#).

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