

E U R O P E A N E C O N O M I C A R E A
S T A N D I N G C O M M I T T E E
O F T H E E F T A S T A T E S

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ICELAND CHAIR WORK PROGRAMME
EFTA STANDING COMMITTEE

FIRST HALF OF 2018

The purpose of this programme is to highlight some main horizontal and thematic priorities which will be focused on under the Standing Committee structure during the first half of 2018. This programme is inter alia based on the work programmes prepared for the Subcommittees and for selected EEA EFTA working groups by the Secretariat.

I. HORIZONTAL PRIORITIES

Brexit

Deepen the dialogue between the EEA EFTA States, the EU and the UK in order to preserve the integrity of the internal market during any transition phase. Ensure that relevant parts of the Withdrawal Agreement are extended to the EEA-EFTA States and enter into force simultaneously with the Withdrawal Agreement. Continue the close collaboration and information sharing for all Brexit related matters, including for future arrangements with the UK post-Brexit.

Reduce the number of acts awaiting incorporation

Prioritise making progress in incorporating acts into the EEA Agreement that are currently under consideration by the EFTA side. Continue specific efforts in the financial services area, which now constitute more than half of the acts, which have passed the compliance date on the EU side. The key, in this respect, is to ensure active and early engagement by both the EEA EFTA States and the EU side to enter into dialogue to obtain common solutions.

Influence EEA-relevant legislation and strengthen knowledge of the Agreement and the EEA Financial Mechanism

Continue the preparation of EEA EFTA Comments, which serve as an important tool for influencing EEA-relevant legislation. In this respect, ensure that executive summaries be prepared for such comments, that the necessary follow-up takes place and that the valuable response from the Commission services is shared with the appropriate experts. As a follow-up to the EFTA Chairmanship workshop held in autumn 2016, a workshop dedicated to influencing EEA-relevant legislation is to be prepared with the assistance of the Secretariat in spring 2018. Follow at all levels the ongoing EU efforts to evaluate and review existing legislation through its Better Regulation Agenda (REFIT). Continue to strengthen the knowledge of the EEA Agreement and the Financial Mechanism through the organisation of events and make full use of the available tools to disseminate EEA information.

II. THEMATIC PRIORITIES

The key objective is to ensure a well-functioning internal market across all policy areas of the EEA Agreement. Apart from the thematic priorities set out below and the daily processing of relevant pre-pipeline, pipeline issues and adopted acquis in all fields, the focus will be on seeking a solution to decentralise enforcement of European competition rules between the EU and EEA EFTA pillar following-up the new EU One Health Action Plan against Antimicrobial resistance (AMR), processing the animal health file, the review of the European Supervisory Authorities (ESAs), presenting EEA EFTA views on the road mobility package and following EU discussions on the services e-card.

Climate Change, Energy and Environment

Guided by the Paris Agreement, follow EU finalisation on the Emissions Trading System (ETS) review and the trilogue negotiations on proposals regarding the effort sharing and land use, land use change and forestry (LULUCF) regulations implementing the EU's 2030 climate and energy policy framework. The circular economy strategy, which present proposals on waste package and strategy on plastics, will be monitored closely as well as the EU's negotiations on the package for Clean Energy for All Europeans. Particular focus will be placed on fluorinated gases (F-gases), the Energy Efficiency Directive and the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive.

Digital Single Market

Extend the Digital Single Market fully to the EEA EFTA States through timely incorporation of legal acts with a particular focus on finding a solution for the General Data Protection Regulation, which respects the principles of the EEA Agreement. Timely incorporation and implementation of the Directive on security of network and information systems (NIS Directive) is another important matter. Follow closely the proposed initiatives part of the Digital Single Market (DSM) Strategy that are under consideration by the European Parliament and the Council. A particular focus will be placed on the Cybersecurity Act (ENISA), the revision of the Body of European Regulators for Electronic Communications (BEREC) and the regulatory telecom framework and on the proposal for a framework for the free flow of non-personal data in the EU.

Social Dimension

Follow closely the developments under the Pillar of Social Rights. Ensure horizontal assessment of EEA-relevant initiatives such as the gender equality inspired work-life balance file, in order to allow for smooth incorporation into the EEA Agreement. Ensure that the views of the EEA EFTA States on the European Accessibility Act as presented in the respective EEA EFTA Comment is disseminated to EU institutions and taken into account during the trilogue.

Research and innovation, education and culture

Early preparation to ensure the timely participation of the EEA EFTA States in the follow-up programmes to Horizon 2020, Erasmus+ and Creative Europe is crucial. This calls for active engagement from the EEA EFTA States and the Secretariat in following the preparation of the EU Multiannual Financial Framework 2021 to 2027. As the EEA EFTA States have already presented their preliminary position papers in the field of research and innovation, it will be particularly important to engage with the EU once the Communication on the first outline for a new programme is presented in spring 2018. Similarly, it is important for the EEA EFTA States to monitor the mid-term evaluation in the field of education and culture, which is expected to be published in early 2018 in order to provide the EEA EFTA States input on the post-2020 programmes.