



EUROPEAN FREE TRADE ASSOCIATION

Ref. 25602

EFTA 1960 – 2010

Elements of 50 years of European history

Geneva/Brussels, 28 April 2010

On 3 May, the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) will celebrate its 50th anniversary. To mark this occasion, EFTA will publish a book “EFTA 1960 – 2010; Elements of 50 years of European history”. It includes material from a recent seminar on the development of EFTA in the wider European context and the implications of EFTA and the European Economic Agreement (EEA) for the Member States. The book will be presented at an event in Geneva on the day of the anniversary.

The seven founding members – Austria, Denmark, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom – began exploring the idea of a free trade agreement amongst themselves in early 1959, in response to the formation of the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1958. The resulting EFTA Convention entered into force on 3 May 1960.

Today, EFTA has four members; Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland. Together, the EFTA countries rank 10th in world merchandise trade and 5th in world commercial service trade. The Association has one of the world’s largest networks of free trade relations. To date, the EFTA States have signed 20 free trade agreements with 29 countries, and negotiations are ongoing with several new partners.

EFTA is also assisting the Member States in the management of the Agreement on the European Economic Area (EEA). The Agreement entered into force in 1994 and extends the Internal Market of the EU to three of the EFTA countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. Switzerland has concluded bilateral agreements with the EU, outside of the EFTA framework. This means that economic operators in the EEA EFTA States can conduct their business under the same legal framework, and are subject to the same rights and obligations in areas covered by the Agreement, as operators in the EU States.

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For more information, see [A short introduction to 50 years of EFTA](#) and [This is EFTA 2010](#), or visit the EFTA website at www.efta.int.

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