



EUROPEAN FREE TRADE ASSOCIATION CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

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Framework Programme 2011

I Introduction

The aim and mission of the EFTA Consultative Committee (EFTA CC) is threefold:

- To take part in the shaping of the EFTA and EEA agenda, and influence policies in the areas that affect the social partners;
- To be a forum for dialogue between social partners from all EFTA countries, and a link to social partners in the EU and the EU accession countries;
- To raise awareness of the social and economic aspects of EFTA's free trade agreements (FTAs) and the EEA, and the role of the social partners.

As in previous years, the Committee will in 2011 meet with EFTA ministers in spring and autumn, including a meeting with the three EEA EFTA Ministers in the second half of the year.

In addition to meetings with ministers, the Committee will continue its exchange of views with the Standing Committee of the EFTA States and the EFTA Parliamentary Committee and also seek to engage in dialogue with relevant EFTA working groups on up-coming issues.

The Committee will continue to express itself through resolutions and opinions, and present these to relevant EFTA and EEA authorities. It will invite relevant speakers to present new initiatives and to contribute to in-depth discussions in the Committee on often intricate and technical policy issues. To add value to the overall work, the Committee will continue to participate in relevant meetings in the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) through the so-called osmosis procedure.

The Framework programme is meant as an overview of ideas and as a point of reference for how the Committee could organise its work and priorities in 2011, not as a fixed catalogue of topics dictating the work of the Committee. It needs to be flexible to adapt to latest developments in EFTA and the EU.

Although latest EU developments are mainly viewed through the EEA cooperation, the Consultative Committee will continue to encourage the Swiss delegation of the Committee to give updates on Swiss-EU bilateral relations and keep the other members informed on how latest EEA developments could be of relevance to Switzerland.

II Initial list of possible priorities in 2011

Third-country relations

- Monitor latest developments in EFTA's third-country relations.
- Follow up on the work that the Committee did in 2010 on labour and environmental standards in free trade agreements; monitor especially the degree to which the model provisions concerning the environment and labour standards and the model chapter agreed by Ministers in June 2010 on sustainable development will be included in upcoming EFTA negotiations and agreements.

Europe 2020 – long-term response to the economic and financial crisis

A key focus of the EFTA CC in 2008-2010 was the global economic and financial crisis and its impact on economies and labour markets in the EEA. How to ensure new, long-term and sustainable growth in the EEA will be central also to the Committee's work in 2011. The EU's attempt at long-term recovery is its Europe 2020 growth strategy. Like its predecessor (Lisbon Strategy) Europe 2020 is not per se EEA relevant, however many of its policies, programmes, and legislative proposals will be and will thus require the EEA EFTA side to engage actively with the EU side on new developments (as underlined in the EEA CC resolution on Europe 2020 in May 2010).

The Europe 2020 strategy is based on 7 flagship initiatives of which four have been published: Digital Agenda (May 2010), Youth on the Move (Sept. 2010), Innovation Union (Oct. 2010), New Industrial Policy (Oct. 2010), and New Skills and Jobs (Nov. 2010). The remaining two are foreseen in the coming weeks and months: Platform against Poverty (Dec. 2010) and Resource Efficiency (early 2011). While all seven flagships are highly relevant, and interlinked in an effort to reach the overall targets of Europe 2020, some proposals might be more relevant to follow up on for the EFTA CC than others, such as in the area of innovation, skills and jobs, and industrial policy.

New initiatives with regard to the Internal Market

The Internal Market is an integral part of Europe 2020. The Single Market Act published at the end October, presenting 50 proposals to revitalise the Internal Market and return it to the centre stage of EU policy, is not necessarily an end in itself but rather a tool to implement other policies. It is meant to serve as a common foundation for all the flagship initiatives under Europe 2020; many of the proposals in the flagships and in the Single Market Act thus overlap. The revitalisation of the internal market is naturally of great importance to the EEA and the EFTA CC could in 2011:

- look at relevant proposals under the Single Market Act;
- focus on how to make the Internal Market work better in practice;
- look at the role of public sector services in the Internal Market;
- explore a joint meeting/event with EESC Single Market Observatory;
- look at the role of the EFTA Court (e.g. we could organise a trip to the Court for a hearing on the upcoming Icelandic posting of workers case); and
- explore a follow-up meeting with EFTA WG on Health and Safety at Work and Labour Law on social and labour market issues in the Internal Market.

Social Dialogue

Follow up on the EFTA delegation visit to Zagreb in May 2010 and invite the Croatian social partners to an EFTA CC meeting in 2011 to further elaborate on the functioning of and promote social dialogue in the four EFTA States and in the EEA.

Joint conference with the EFTA Parliamentary Committee

The EFTA CC and the EFTA PC have agreed to organise/host a joint conference towards the end of 2011 on “post-crisis...” scenarios, possibly linked to the functioning or future of the Internal Market. The Secretariat will follow-up with regard to planning.

III Preliminary draft meeting schedule for 2011

<i>Date</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>Meeting</i>	<i>Participation</i>
3-4 March	Brussels	EFTA CC	All members
		Meeting with EFTA Standing Committee	All members
11-15 April	Spitsbergen, Norway	EEA Joint Parliamentary Committee	EEA CC co-chairs (observers)
11-13 May (travel on 11 and meeting on 12-13 May)	Tartu, Estonia	EEA CC Bureau	Bureau members
		EEA CC	All members
20-22 June	Vaduz	EFTA CC	All members
		Meeting with EFTA Parliamentary Committee	All members
		Meeting with EFTA Ministers	All members
Oct./Nov. (tbc) (depending on date of the EEA Council)	Brussels	EFTA CC	All members
		Meeting with the three EEA EFTA ministers	All members
		Possibly joint seminar/conference with EFTA Parliamentary Committee	All members
October/November (tbc)	Brussels or Strasbourg	EEA Joint Parliamentary Committee	EEA CC co-chairs (observers)
Nov/Dec. (tbc) (depending on schedule of EFTA Ministerial Chair)	Oslo or Geneva (tbc)	EFTA CC meeting	All members
		Meeting with the EFTA Ministerial Chair (Norwegian Minister)	All members
		EEA CC Bureau meeting	Bureau members