

EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AREA
JOINT PARLIAMENTARY
COMMITTEE

38th meeting

Akureyri, Iceland, 3-4 May 2012

Press Statement

Members of the European Parliament and Parliamentarians from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway met in Akureyri, Iceland, 3-4 May 2012, at the 38th meeting of the European Economic Area Joint Parliamentary Committee (EEA JPC). Members of the Swiss Parliament attended the meeting as observers.

Under the Presidency of Mr Pat the Cope Gallagher (MEP, ALDE, Ireland), President of the EEA JPC and Mr Harry Quaderer (MP, Independent, Liechtenstein), Vice-President of the EEA JPC, the Joint Parliamentary Committee received briefings and statements on the functioning and developments in the EEA Agreement from the following representatives of the EEA executive bodies:

- Mr Søren HASLUND, representing the President-in-Office of the EEA Council,
- Mr Gianluca GRIPPA, President-in-Office of the EEA Joint Committee ,
- Mr Nikulás HANNIGAN, representing the EFTA Presidents of the EEA Council and of the EEA Joint Committee,
- Ms Oda H. SLETNES, President of the EFTA Surveillance Authority.

The Committee adopted three resolutions on the following topics:

The Annual Report of the Functioning of the EEA in 2011

Co-rapporteurs: Mr Harry Quaderer (Independent, Liechtenstein)
 Ms Zuzana Brzobohata (S&D, Czech Republic)

On the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the signing of the EEA Agreement, the EEA JPC notes in the resolution that the EEA Agreement is still functioning well with EU legal acts are incorporated in the Agreement in an appropriate manner. The EEA JPC compliments the EEA EFTA side on the lowest average transposition deficit rate historically. However, the Committee welcomes the work of the EEA Joint Committee to reduce the time period from the entry into force of acts on the EU side and those on the EEA EFTA side of a number of legal acts. The EEA JPC highlights that the competence to impose fines of the EFTA Surveillance Authority under the European Aviation Security Authority cannot set a precedent for other cases. The Committee also asks the Joint Committee to clarify the modalities for the EEA EFTA States' participation in EU agencies and authorities in general. The Committee also raises a number of other issues on the functioning of the EEA in its resolution.

The Review of the EEA

Co-rapporteurs: Mr Svein Roald HANSEN (Labour Party, Norway)
 Mr Pat the Cope GALLAGHER (ALDE, Ireland)

The EEA has recently been reviewed by the EEA EFTA States, and is currently being reviewed by the EU. In light of these processes, the EEA JPC adopted a resolution highlighting several issues with regard to the EEA. The Committee underlines that any review of the Agreement should address the democratic concerns of the Agreement by strengthening the parliamentary dimension within the EEA. The EEA JPC asks the EEA Council to review the possibilities for a reinforced and more holistic approach in order to achieve more predictability in the notion of EEA relevance of new legislative proposals, and to address the concerns related to the incorporation of legal acts that fall both inside and outside the EEA Agreement. The Committee also underlines the importance of full participation by the EEA EFTA States in the EU agencies and bodies related to the Internal Market for the successful functioning of the EEA.

Furthermore, the EEA JPC asks COSAC to review their position and grant the EEA EFTA States' permanent observer status in light of these states being full participants in EU's Internal Market, and that the relations between the European Parliament and the national parliaments of the EEA EFTA States should be strengthened through regular invitations to participate in respective Committee meetings and hearings in the European Parliament on EEA relevant matters.

The EEA JPC also highlights the importance of strengthening the knowledge and competence about the EEA Agreement in the EU and the EU Members States.

Lastly, the Committee took note of the ongoing process of accession negotiations between Iceland and the EU, and acknowledged the consequences of Iceland's potential EU membership on the overall EEA framework. In addition, the Committee awaited further details from the Council of the EU on the potential inclusion of Andorra, Monaco and San Marino as well as other third countries in the EEA Agreement.

The White Paper on a Single European Transport Area

Co-rapporteurs: Ms Anna HEDH (S&D, Sweden)
Ms Irene Johansen (Labour Party, Norway)

The EEA JPC welcomes the overall goal and strategy set out in the Commission's 2011 White Paper and supports the EU's objective to achieve a single European transport market by removing barriers, taking a multimodal approach and emphasising safety and security in the transport sector. However, the Committee stresses the need for a differentiated transport policy in peripheral and sparsely populated areas and to the specific needs of some EEA EFTA States and calls for a deep and continuous consultation among EU institutions and the EEA EFTA States.

The EEA JPC considers it urgent to strengthen European transport research and innovation policy and calls on the participation of EEA EFTA States in EU research projects related to cleaner and more efficient transport and is supportive of the strategy for the coherent development and deployment of key technologies to create a more modern, efficient and user friendly transport system. The Committee emphasises that the challenge remains for EU and national decision-makers to propose policies which provide a clear road map for moving towards alternative energy sources and enhancing the competitiveness in the transport sector.

The adopted resolutions are attached.