

**Priorities of the Icelandic Chair**  
**Standing Committee of the EFTA States**  
**First half of 2024**

The purpose of this overview is to highlight the priorities of the Icelandic Chair of the EFTA Standing Committee during the first half of 2024. The priorities are supplemented by work programmes of the EFTA Subcommittees and Working Groups.

**30th Anniversary of the EEA Agreement**

The 30th Anniversary of the EEA Agreement underlines the special partnership between the EEA States and the prosperity it has brought about for its citizens and businesses during the last 30 years. It is important to underline the unity of the EEA States in times of multi-dimensional global challenges. EEA EFTA States look forward to participating in a gathering of EEA Leaders in relation to the European Council meeting in March and hosting a special event in relation to the EEA Council in May 2024.

**Incorporation of EEA relevant acts**

Timely incorporation of EEA relevant EU legislation into the EEA Agreement is essential to ensure a level playing field throughout the EEA. Efforts should be continued to deliver a meaningful number of draft Joint Committee decisions on a steady basis to the EU side.

Particular focus will be made in the fields of energy, statistics and financial services. Continued efforts will be made to move forward older files in the backlog. In the area of health preparedness and response, Iceland will place an emphasis on including the relevant acts into the EEA Agreement as soon as possible.

Strive to reduce the number of Joint Committee decisions where entry into force is pending due to constitutional requirements, particularly for Joint Committee decisions where more than six months have passed since adoption.

**Future of the Internal Market and files with horizontal dimensions**

In the current geopolitical climate, EU legislative priorities relating to the Internal Market are increasingly focused on economic security and how to ensure the competitiveness of the internal market. With the assistance of the EFTA Taskforce, it will be important to continue the broad discussion on related proposed legislation and acts. Specifically, to determine the implications for the EEA EFTA States inside or outside the Agreement with the assistance of related EFTA Working Groups. The EEA EFTA States should also look into jointly contributing to the work of the EU on the future of the Internal Market.

**Decision-shaping**

An increased emphasis shall be made on providing more EEA EFTA Comments where possible at an earlier stage. Discussions shall be undertaken on whether the current process can be simplified, with the aim of creating a clearer policy on when comments shall be submitted. Given the importance of activating all EEA EFTA actors, the EFTA Advisory Bodies will be

informed when an EEA EFTA Comment is to be undertaken and when it has been submitted to the EU.

In view of EP elections and a new European Commission, the possibility of setting joint priorities of the EEA EFTA States will be looked into based on the five-year work programme of the European Commission.

### **EEA outreach**

With the 30 years of the Agreement, continued emphasis shall be placed on strengthening the knowledge of the EEA Agreement and the Financial Mechanisms. Full use will be made of the available tools and the EFTA House to disseminate information on the EEA.

In addition to biannual EEA seminars, a special event on plastic pollution in the ocean will be organised under the Icelandic chairmanship. Furthermore, as a part of a broader emphasis of Iceland's foreign policy on fighting plastic pollution, an Art Exhibition "Arctic Creatures" will be held in the EFTA House during the first half of 2024.

### **Participation in programmes**

Continue to ensure the EEA EFTA States' participation in relevant EU programmes for the current programme period 2021-2027, based on the rights and obligations set out in the EEA Agreement.

### **Synergies between the three EFTA House organisations**

Under Iceland's last chairmanship an emphasis was placed with successful outcomes on a number of synergy elements between the three EFTA House organisations, including efficient cost management and a joint facilities and service team. Now the focus will be placed on looking into ways to increase the interaction of staff to enhance knowledge between the three organisations.