

30 years EFTA Statistical Office (ESO):

EEA related activities in statistics

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EUROPEAN FREE TRADE ASSOCIATION

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Introduction: The Efta Statistical Office in Luxembourg



Introduction: The Efta Statistical Office in Luxembourg

The EFTA Statistical Office (ESO) was established in 1991 as a liaison office between the EFTA NSIs and Eurostat.

With the EEA Agreement established in 1994, the three EEA EFTA countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway became partners in the European Statistical System (ESS).

The initial and overarching objective of the office was, and still is to promote the full inclusion of the EFTA States in the continuously evolving European Statistical System (Protocol 30 of the EEA Agreement).

Another important milestone was the establishment of the bilateral agreement between EU and Switzerland in 2006.



The European Statistical System (ESS)

The European Statistical System (ESS) is the partnership between the European Community statistical authority, which is the Commission (Eurostat), and the National Statistical Institutes (NSIs) and of all EEA Member States - EU and EFTA.

The EFTA Statistical Office acts as a broker between the EEA EFTA Member States and Eurostat in this regard.



Incorporation of statistical legislation into the EEA agreement

A key task for ESO, is to coordinate and support the EEA EFTA NSIs in the process of incorporating new EEA relevant legal acts in the area of statistics.

This work can be described as consisting of two main stages:

1. The identification and preparation of legislation
2. The incorporation of legal acts into the EEA Agreement



Incorporation of statistical legislation into the EEA agreement

Protocol 30

Specifies that EFTA States participate fully without the right to vote in EC committees and other bodies needed for the management and development of programmes and actions devoted to statistics.

Defines obligation for data transmission of EFTA States ("EFTA at 3") to Eurostat; and Eurostat to integrate such data in public data bases and to publish it alongside with data from EU Member States.

Annex XXI

Lists the legal acts that conduct statistical production in the EEA.



Inclusion monitoring

One key element in the statistical cooperation between the EFTA countries and Eurostat is that the EFTA States shall provide data to Eurostat in accordance with their legal obligations, and Eurostat is obliged to publish statistics on these countries through the normal dissemination channels of Eurostat.

For this reason, ESO monitors inclusion of data in Eurostat publications and provides several indicators on inclusion of EFTA data.

Part of this monitoring also includes examining situations where EFTA States' data are not included in Eurostat publications and the reasons for this.



The European Statistical Training Programme (ESTP)

The European Statistical Training Programme (ESTP) provides European statisticians with continuous training in new methods, techniques and best practices in order to maintain and improve the quality of national and European statistics.

The programme offers a selection of courses, workshops and seminars on a broad range of topics, which are continuously developed and revised in order to respond to emerging statistical information needs of the ESS.

Including the courses organised in 2021, the EFTA Member States have conducted a total of 52 ESTP courses over the years.

The full and free access for EFTA statisticians to the ESTP has been of great benefit for the EFTA Member States. In the period between 2011–2020, a total of 374 statisticians from the EFTA National Statistical Institutes participated in ESTP courses.



Statistical Technical Cooperation

Together with partners like Eurostat or other international organisations such as the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) or the United Nations Statistical Division (UNSD), the EFTA Statistical Office (ESO) engages also in statistical capacity building in countries outside the ESS, often referred to as statistical technical cooperation with third countries.

Total spending: approximately 5 million euros
Technical cooperation budget, 2003 – 2020



