

## **Draft EEA EFTA Statement**

### ***Statement on the occasion of the EEA Council meeting on 23 November 2022.***

Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway reiterate the importance they attach to the European Economic Area (EEA) Agreement, which establishes a solid basis for a privileged relationship between the EEA EFTA States and the European Union. While formal EEA Council conclusions were regrettably not adopted at today's meeting, we underline the good functioning of the EEA Agreement, which was the subject of an in-depth stocktaking and confirmation at our meeting.

At the core of our cooperation with the EU under the EEA Agreement lies a strong commitment to a Europe built on peace, democracy, and the rule of law. These values are threatened by Russia's unlawful invasion of Ukraine. In these tragic times, the EEA EFTA States remain the closest of partners of the EU and are aligned with the EU's sanctions against Russia. Together we stand united in solidarity with Ukraine. This is a fundamental premise upon which our strong and robust collaboration with the EU rests.

The EEA Agreement brings together the EEA EFTA States – Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway - and the EU as equal partners in the Internal Market. A well-functioning Internal Market is important for the prosperity and wellbeing of its citizens and for the resilience of Europe in a more crisis-prone world. The high quality of our cooperation in finding common solutions to challenges as they arise remains an important part of this.

The EEA EFTA States' close work with EU partners plays a key role in the transition to a climate-neutral and environmentally-friendly future. At today's EEA Council meeting, the EEA EFTA States underlined the need for the energy transition and energy security to go hand in hand and recognised the objectives of the REPower EU plan. It was also underlined that many current initiatives related to the green transition can benefit from diverse cooperation and implementation of best available technical solutions.

We are furthermore determined to work with the EU to speed up the digitalisation of industry and create a safe digital space, in line with the objectives of Europe's Digital Decade. Many initiatives related to the digital transition are supported by EEA-relevant proposals and it is essential to ensure the active involvement of the EEA EFTA States in their design and implementation. In today's EEA Council meeting, the EEA EFTA States underlined the need for active involvement of the EEA EFTA States in measures to improve cybersecurity, especially in highly interconnected critical infrastructures. We look forward to the continued close involvement of the EEA EFTA States to further enhance cooperation on these matters.

Greater knowledge of the EEA Agreement throughout the EEA at all levels is in the interest of all Contracting Parties and of the good functioning of the Internal Market. The EEA EFTA States underline the need to further strengthen communication efforts on the EEA Agreement and its benefits for citizens and businesses. This was also recalled at today's EEA Council which was the first to take place at EFTA House.