



EUROPEAN FREE TRADE ASSOCIATION

CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Ref. 22-2842

13 December 2022

Report of the EFTA Consultative Committee Chair:

Review of the work of the EFTA Consultative Committee in 2022

The EFTA Consultative Committee (CC) is a forum for the EFTA social partners to influence and shape EEA and EFTA policies. On a yearly basis, the Committee presents its work programme. In the [work programme for 2022](#) (ref. 21-3128), a new procedure was created on the implementation and follow-up of the yearly work programmes.

More concretely, the proposal was that a yearly review report would be drafted by the outgoing Chair with assistance from the Secretariat. The Chair of the EFTA Consultative Committee in 2022 was from the Norwegian Workers, Ms Liz Helgesen. This review report is a result of that proposal.

First, the review report will shortly explain the methodology that lies behind the evaluation of the work of the Committee. Second, the relevant policy areas will be reviewed. Specific sections will be devoted to EFTA trade policy topics and the same goes for EEA-related matters. A chronological overview of meeting topics will follow. Finally, conclusions regarding the work of the Committee in 2022 will be drawn and lessons learned will be addressed.

1. What is the yearly review?

The EFTA CC, generally, has three main objectives which serve as a guiding light for their activities. First, to take part in shaping both EFTA and EEA policies, in areas that affect social partners. Second, to be a forum for dialogue among social partners from all EFTA States, and to form a link to EU counterparts. The third is related to awareness-raising of the EFTA free trade agreements and the EEA. To reach these objectives the CC holds various meetings and presents its opinions and publishes relevant material to increase the profile of the Committee and the role of the EFTA social partners.

More concretely in this review we will delve more deeply into the activities of the CC with the objectives in mind. It can be complicated to measure success and this publication is an attempt to quantify the work of the Committee over the year.

The CC held three meetings with EFTA Ministers, two meetings with senior officials or Ambassadors from the EFTA countries, a seminar with the relevant EFTA working groups, multiple joint sessions with the EFTA Parliamentary Committee through the year, met with

their counterparts on the EU-side and finally held six internal meetings. What we will focus on are the substantive topics that were addressed over the course of the year.

The *raison d'être* for the publication of this document is to:

- Strengthen the work of the Committee;
- Identify areas of further improvement;
- Work as a useful measurement and a benchmark for future activities;
- Help increase continuity in the work of the CC;
- Implement and follow through on the proposed yearly work programmes suggested by the Chair of the EFTA CC.

2. Substance: EEA Agreement and EFTA trade policy

The Committee had their plate full and discussed and followed relevant topics in 2022. In the work programme of 2022 various subjects were identified for the CC to follow and discuss over the year. As always in the dynamic world of European and global trade politics, topics came up that were not expected. The most noteworthy examples in 2022 were the occurrence of the invasion of Russia in Ukraine and the subsequent energy issues that arose from the war.

There were also many relevant topics that already highlighted in the EFTA CC 2022 work programme that the committee followed-up on, both in the fields of trade policy, and the EEA Agreement. A detailed overview of the topics and priorities of the EFTA CC in 2022 (can be found in Annex I).

2.1 EEA-related topics

The EFTA CC's key agenda items regarding the EEA Agreement included the war in Ukraine and its impact on the EEA, the Fit for 55 package and climate initiatives, digital transition files such as the Digital Services Act and the Digital Markets Act, and artificial intelligence. Furthermore, the Committee continued to monitor proposals resulting from the Action Plan for Implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights. They also continued to scrutinise the Commission's proposals and initiatives relating to the Single Market, such as the Single Market Emergency Instrument.

Further information regarding the various EEA subjects discussed over the course of the year, please see the overview of meetings (chapters 3.1 and 3.2).

2.2 Relations with EU social partners

The EFTA CC's relationship with our counterparts on the EU side is of significance for the EEA EFTA social partners. The relationship is formalised in the EEA Consultative Committee which

meets on a yearly basis. At the plenary session of the EEA CC two resolutions and reports (see below in Chapter 3.1).

The cooperation between the two sides of the EEA Consultative Committee has been reinforced by the Osmosis procedure, through which representatives of the EFTA Consultative Committee participate in the work of the EESC and vice versa.

The procedure has helped enhance regular dialogue between the EFTA Consultative Committee and the EESC, and this cooperation has proven to be both valuable and productive. Extensive contact with EU counterparts has contributed to an increased awareness of the EEA among members of the EESC, which is often reflected in the EESC's opinions.

In 2022 EFTA Consultative Committee members were invited to join meetings of EU civil society platforms, organised by the EESC, with two countries which in the year had been granted EU candidacy status. This cooperation was based on the Osmosis procedure. The EFTA CC appointed rapporteurs to follow meetings of the EESC's Observatories. First contact was established to prepare for possible observer status of EFTA CC members in those observatories.

2.3 EFTA trade topics

It is worth highlighting the horizontal topics most heavily featured on the CC's agenda when it comes to EFTA trade policy. These issues were discussed with Ministers, external speakers, and within the Committee.

Trade and sustainable development (TSD) have been the top priority of the CC for several years and this year was no different. This year for the first time the EFTA CC members were active participants in the TSD Monitoring Mechanism of EFTA and contributed to the preparation of Joint Committee meetings with trade partners. Further, the volatile trade environment coupled with the war in Ukraine made its mark of the agendas of the Committee.

The CC further observed EFTA relations with third countries. The processes specifically referred to in the work programme of 2022 were the negotiations with India, Malaysia, Vietnam, Moldova, and Thailand. The EFTA CC met with the Minister of Economy of Moldova to discuss the negotiations between EFTA and Moldova in June 2022. It further sent an observer to Thailand to take heed of the ongoing negotiations between EFTA and Thailand. The negotiation processes between EFTA and India and Vietnam progressed were quieter and therefore there was not much to observe. The EFTA CC observed the negotiations with Malaysia during the year.

TSD monitoring mechanism and the EFTA Consultative Committee

It is also worth noting that throughout the year, the Committee actively took part in the EFTA trade and sustainable development mechanism. The mechanism was introduced in a report explaining EFTA's 10 years of experience of negotiating and including Chapters on Trade and Sustainable Development in EFTA's Free Trade Agreement.

The EFTA CC is made aware of Joint Committee meetings with EFTA's trade partners well in advance so the CC can help the Member States identify topics to raise at the meeting through a questionnaire. This only applies to trade agreements where trade and sustainable development provisions are to be found and is not applicable to all EFTA trade agreements.

The Committee contributed responses prior to meeting of a Joint Committees of EFTA and Ecuador in late 2021, before the meeting of EFTA and Georgia in May 2022 and Indonesia in late 2022. There the social partners addressed topics of particular interest to be raised at the Joint Committee meetings. The EFTA CC will continue to provide constructive feedback regarding TSD topics in EFTA FTAs in 2023.

3. Meetings of the EFTA CC

Meeting	What?	Who?
9 February 2022 Briefing of the TCC to the EFTA advisory bodies	EFTA trade relations	EFTA CC, EFTA high-level officials and EFTA parliamentarians
22 March 2022 Internal meeting.	EEA	EFTA CC
22 March 2022 Meeting with Standing Committee of the EFTA States.	EEA	EFTA CC and EEA EFTA Ambassadors.
22 March 2022 Seminar with EFTA Working Groups.	EEA	EFTA CC, EFTA experts in Working Groups.
10-11 May 2022 EEA Consultative Committee.	EEA	Joint plenary meeting of EEA EFTA social partners and EU social partners.
20 June 2022 Meeting of EFTA advisory bodies and EFTA Ministers.	EFTA trade relations	EFTA CC, PC, and Ministers.
20 June 2022 Joint meetings of EFTA advisory bodies	EFTA trade relations	EFTA CC, PC, Ministers of Kosovo and Moldova, and guest speakers.
20 June 2022 EFTA CC internal meeting	EFTA trade relations	EFTA CC

13 October 2022 EFTA CC videoconference	EFTA trade relations	EFTA CC and guest speakers
22 November 2022 Advisory bodies meeting with EFTA Ministerial Chair	EFTA trade relations	EFTA CC, PC and EFTA Ministerial Chair
22 November 2022 EFTA CC internal meeting	EFTA trade relations and EEA	EFTA CC and guest speakers
22-23 November 2022 Joint sessions of the EFTA advisory bodies	EFTA trade relations and EEA	EFTA CC, PC, and guest speakers
23 November 2022 Advisory bodies and Standing Committee at Ministerial level	EEA	EFTA CC, PC and EEA EFTA Foreign Ministers
9 December 2022 EFTA CC internal meeting	Internal matters	EFTA CC

3.1 First half of 2022

If the topics are reviewed chronologically, in order of EFTA CC meetings and engagements, (reference made to Annex III the meeting schedule of the EFTA CC of 2022), we can have a more comprehensive overview.

The first meeting of the year was held on 9 February 2022 where the Parliamentary Committee and Consultative Committee jointly met with high-level trade officials of the EFTA Member States (TCC). There, the officials presented the state of play of third country relations and introduced horizontal initiatives such as the preference utilisation rate analysis done by the EFTA States, TSD monitoring mechanism, and other related topics.

The second meetings of the year took place on 22 March 2022 in Brussels. There, the focus was on topics related to the EEA Agreement. The CC met with the EEA EFTA Ambassadors and President of the ESA College to discuss latest development and future perspectives in the EEA and EFTA relations with the EU. At their internal meeting; the Committee approved the proposal of the EFTA CC Chair to improve transparency in the workings of the Committee by publishing meeting reports of the EFTA CC after they had been approved.

That same day the CC also hosted a seminar with relevant EFTA Working Groups. There the social partners and experts from Ministries in Member States held a dialogue with a

representatives from the Commission on improving working conditions on platform work and further on the reskilling and upskilling agenda of the EU.

Experts from the Member States and the social partners liaised on legislative proposals relevant for the EEA EFTA States, including the Minimum Wage Directive of the European Union. On this occasion the EFTA CC also met for an internal meeting to learn about the EU's Single Market Emergency Instrument, and EEA EFTA States' positions on the Digital Services Act and Digital Market Act. Internal topics such as the cooperation between the EESC and the EFTA CC and EFTA CC's participation in the TSD Monitoring Mechanism were discussed.

The following meeting took place in Bergen on 10 and 11 May 2022 with EU social partners (European Economic and Social Committee) for the plenary session of the joint EEA Consultative Committee (CC). The joint body agreed upon two resolutions and reports at the meeting:

- On the [social dimension of the Fit-for-55 package](#). There the EEA CC noted that although the EEA EFTA States would be highly likely to implement the relevant EU legislation stemming from the Fit-for-55 package it was unlikely that they would be included in cushioning policies such as the Social Climate Fund.
- On the [challenges and opportunities of greater use of AI in working life](#). In that resolution the Committee argued that all EEA States should seek to address issues raised by the increased use of AI in the workplace in a comprehensive and systematic manner while following the principles of transparency and human monitoring.

This body is important because it works as a joint platform of communication between social partners in the entire EEA (all 27 Member States of the EU and the 3 EEA EFTA States). In addition, they met with a representative of the EFTA Court and a prominent academic to discuss EEA law. Finally, the EEA social partners discuss the security and defense situation in the Arctic. It is worth noting that the EEA CC issued a [statement](#) in solidarity with Ukrainian civil society actors after the meeting. There the Committee called for further support for Ukrainian civil society and encouraged the EEA States to continue to welcome Ukrainian refugees; and to stay course when it came to the sanction's regime imposed against Russia and Belarus.

3.2 Second half of 2022

On the margins of the yearly EFTA summer Ministerial meeting, that was held on 20 June 2022 in Borgarnes Iceland, the EFTA Consultative Committee convenes both jointly with the EFTA parliamentarians (as the EFTA advisory bodies) and internally. They also meet with the EFTA Ministers. At a meeting with the EFTA Ministers on trade policy items such as the war in Ukraine, the position of EFTA States in a volatile trade environment, the state of play of EFTA trade relations with third-countries and horizontal issues related to trade matters, and Swiss-EU relations.

Earlier the same day, the EFTA advisory bodies met two Ministers in prospective trade partner countries: the relevant Ministers for Moldova and Kosovo. There, the prospective for trade

agreements were discussed. The advisory bodies also held other joint sessions where they covered the Commission proposal on Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence. At the meeting of the EFTA CC reviewed relevant third-country horizontal topics and held internal deliberations.

The Committee reconvened in the fall for a virtual meeting on 13 October 2022. There the new EU trade and sustainable development approach of the EU Commission was discussed with a Commission representative. Further, the Vice-Chair of the Committee briefed the members on a third-country visit he attended as the observer of the EFTA CC, to Thailand in early September in view of the EFTA trade negotiations with Thailand.

The second Ministerial engagements of the year took place on 22 and 23 November 2022 in Brussels. There, the Committee, jointly with the parliamentary committee met with the EFTA Ministerial Chair to discuss EFTA trade business on 22 November and the EEA EFTA Foreign Ministers to have substantive discussions on the EEA Agreement on the margins of the EEA Council meeting on 23 November.

At the meeting with the EFTA Ministerial Chair the two advisory bodies raised several topics of interest such as EFTA's trade relations with Ukraine in relation to Russia's war against Ukraine; a review of the ongoing third-country processes' such as EFTA negotiations with Mercosur; horizontal issues such as trade and sustainability and SMEs; and general political priorities of the Liechtenstein Chairmanship.

For the first time, the EEA EFTA Foreign Ministers met with the advisory bodies for a meeting which took place with a structured and formal agenda on the margins of the EEA Council. In the past, the Ministers briefed the advisory bodies on the substance of the EEA Council meeting. The advisory bodies used the opportunity to raise important topics related to EEA EFTA relations with the European Union. Of most relevance was the war in Ukraine and its impact on the EEA cooperation; energy and climate topics; and finally, the digital transition.

As has become customary, the Consultative Committee held joint sessions with the EFTA Parliamentary Committee. The two advisory bodies covered a lot of ground on topics both related to free trade and EU-relations. The joint sessions included discussions on how to empower small and medium sized enterprises in free trade agreement; the revamped EU approach on trade and sustainable development; developments in transatlantic relations; the EU proposal to ban products made with forced labour in the EEA; EEA enlargement prospects and the Single Market Emergency Instrument.

At the internal meeting of the Consultative Committee on 22 November a new Chair and Bureau was elected. It was decided that the Chairmanship in 2023 would be held by the Norwegian Employers and the new Chair would be Kristin Hansen from NHO. The Committee further discussed and subsequently approved a new work programme and preliminary meeting schedule for 2023. The CC heard a short update on the state of play on EEA EFTA relations with the United Kingdom and on the first sustainability impact assessment of EFTA and the role of the social partners in the exercise.

On 9 December the Committee met for the last time in 2022. There they took stock of their work throughout the year and discussed this report.

4. Lessons learned and prospects

Overall, the year of 2022 was a full and comprehensive year of work for the EFTA CC.

After impediments to the normal work of the CC in 2020 and 2021 we were able to meet again in person. At the same time the restrictions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic normalised virtual meetings. Therefore, the Committee decided to hold two virtual meetings outside the normal meeting rotation and thereby create more engagement with one another throughout the year.

Many steps were taken to improve the efficacy and output of the Committee, including preparing this document for the first time. This coincided with steps to increase transparency. The EFTA Consultative Committee in March 2022 decided to begin to publish all internal reports in the public domain. These reports may be found in the [EFTA public journal](#).

Importantly, the EFTA social partners must play an active role in raising awareness of EFTA free trade agreements and on the EEA Agreement. The Committee touched upon these topics this year and approved measures to increase transparency. The EFTA CC will continue to encourage the EFTA Member States to implement the highest possible standard of transparency. Further, a strategic discussion must be had within the Committee on the distribution of documents of the Committee and the role of the CC in promotion of EFTA and EEA topics domestically.

Among the priority areas identified in 2022 was the relations with the EU social partners. This increased steadily over the course of the year and culminated in EFTA social partners being invited to Civil Society Platform meetings of EU civil society with Moldovan and Ukrainian civil society; two countries which are now applying for EU membership. This is an area which can be further improved participation in European Economic and Social Committee Observatories. Further, the EFTA CC Chair and the EESC co-chair of the EEA CC were invited to take part in the two EEA Joint Parliamentary Committee meetings this year.

Based on the issues and topics identified in this report I would suggest the following:

1. The EFTA CC continue its regular meetings in person, supplemented by virtual meetings when appropriate.
2. The Committee will be a constructive partner of the EFTA States to provide advice and input to relevant EEA and EFTA policy decisions. This would include the TSD monitoring mechanism, EFTA sustainability impact assessments, EEA Consultative Committee reports and other documents as the Committee sees fit to publish.
3. Build on and improve relations with the EU social partners (EESC). This has led to good and useful results, such as increased dialogue with EU candidacy countries. Hopefully,

in the coming year and years, this will be further strengthened by more regular dialogues by the two sides of the EEA cooperation. As per the Osmosis procedure it would also be of use to invite EU social partners to EFTA CC meetings.

4. As was suggested at the EFTA CC meeting in Borgarnes in June, the Committee should study the EU's experience of civil society participation in the implementation of free trade agreement through Domestic Advisory Groups (DAGs).
5. EFTA social partners will continue to work towards promoting both trade and EEA awareness in the Member States and with EU counterparts. It is vital to educate and cultivate knowledge on the EEA and EFTA third country relations both domestically and abroad.

Annex I

13 December 2022

EFTA CC – priorities to follow and discuss 2022

EEA-related priorities and topics					
Topic	Who	Source	When	Reference in 2022 work programme	Follow/discuss
Single Market Emergency Instrument	DG GROW, European Commission	EP legislative Train	22 March 2022 – EFTA CC	Yes	Discuss
DMA and DSA	Internal	DMA Comment DSA Comment	22 March 2022 – EFTA CC	Yes	Discuss
EU wage transparency proposal	EESC, Commission or Council Presidency	Proposal	EFTA CC meeting in November?	Yes	Discuss
Artificial Intelligence (and work) Regulation	Internal – Commission, EESC	Proposal EEA CC resolution and report	EEA CC 11 May 2022	Yes	Discuss – EEA CC resolution
Social Dimension of Fit for 55 Package	EEA CC	EEA CC resolution and report	EEA CC 11 May 2022	Yes	Discuss – EEA CC resolution
CBAM	Commission and social partners	Q&A European Commission	Discussed in 2021	Yes	Follow
EEA EFTA participation in EU Programmes	Internal	EFTA website	Follow	Yes	Follow
Platform work	European Commission, DG EMPL	EU Proposal	22 March – WG Seminar	Yes	Discuss

Lifelong learning and employability	European Commission, DG EMPL	Commission	22 March – WG Seminar	No	Discuss
Minimum adequate wage directive	Internal	European Commission Proposal	Discussed at Seminar with EFTA WG 22 March 2022 20 June Ministerial	Yes	Discuss
Increased 'Strategic Autonomy' within the EU and its repercussions for EFTA States and EU Chips Act proposal.	Internal	EU Chips Act Strategic Autonomy	Ministerial 2021	No	Follow
War in Ukraine	Internal		EEA CC – March 2022 Ministerial June 2022 Ministerial November 2022	No	Discuss
Potential enlargement of the EEA	Internal		Ministerial meetings November 2022 Observer status of Civil Society Platforms	No	Discuss
EU ban on forced labour proposal	Commission DG GROW	Commission	On the margins of EEA Council on 22 November 2022	No	Discuss
EU proposal on corporate	Commission DG JUST	Proposal	On the margins of	No	Discuss

sustainability due diligence			EFTA Ministerial Borgarnes 2022		
Trade-related and other priorities and topics					
The role of Domestic Advisory Groups in monitoring the implementation of Free Trade Agreements	EESC colleagues/EU DAG Chairs	Report	Mentioned at EFTA CC internal meeting June 2022 Continuous discussions	No	Discuss
EU TSD Review	Discuss with one or more of the authors.	Report	13 October 2022 – EFTA CC Mentioned again at EFTA CC meeting on 22 November 2022	No	Discuss
EESC collaboration and rapporteurs for Observatories	Internal	Ongoing discussions at meetings	22 March – EFTA CC Continued engagement	Yes	Discuss
Swiss-EU relations	Internal	Ongoing topic of discussion	20 June Ministerial meeting 2022 Ongoing	Yes	Discuss
TSD Monitoring Mechanism	Internal	EFTA CC partakes in the mechanism	22 March – EFTA CC Ongoing	Yes	Discuss
Sustainability Impact Assessments	Internal	Ongoing topic of discussion	20 June EFTA CC 22 November	Yes	Discuss

			2022 EFTA CC		
PPMs	Internal	Ongoing discussion on conditionality to certain goods and trade	Part of ongoing TSD discussion	Yes	Follow
Mercosur FTA	Internal	EFTA website	20 June EFTA CC 22 November EFTA CC	Yes	Discuss
Thailand FTA	Internal	EFTA website	20 June EFTA CC EFTA CC Observer in third country visit September 22 November EFTA CC with Ministers	Yes	Discuss
Utilisation rate of EFTA FTAs	Internal	Introduced at meeting with TCC on 9 February 2022	20 June EFTA CC	No	Discuss
SMEs and free trade	Internal		Ministerial November 2022	No	Discuss
Transatlantic trade relations	Internal		Joint session of ABs during November Ministerial 2022	No	Discuss

Annex II

Ref. 21-3128
13 December 2022

Work Programme 2022

I Introduction

The objectives of the EFTA Consultative Committee (EFTA CC) are threefold:

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

To reach the aims outlined above, the EFTA CC will conduct the following meetings in 2022 (preliminary meeting schedule can be found in Annex I):

- Meeting with EFTA Ministers (spring/summer)
- Meeting with the EFTA Standing Committee (spring)
- Seminar on employment and social affairs, organised jointly with EFTA working groups (spring)
- Joint EFTA advisory bodies' spring conference (spring)
- Meeting with the Ministerial Chair of the EFTA Council (autumn)
- Meeting with the three EEA EFTA Foreign Ministers (autumn)
- Meetings with the EFTA Parliamentary Committee (EFTA PC) throughout the year, as deemed of mutual interest

Through the close cooperation between the EFTA CC and various bodies of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), through the so-called osmosis procedure, members of the EFTA CC may participate in relevant meetings of the EESC, and vice versa, when mutual benefits can be derived therefrom, especially by avoiding duplication of work in the two Committees as described in the EFTA CC Rules of Procedure (ref-14-46784), with reference to rules 17 to 20.

The EFTA CC may also plan and organise additional activities throughout the year. This may take the form of webinars, meetings or opinions issued based on the many policy areas mentioned in the work programme. The work programme is flexible and can be adapted to new developments in EFTA and the EU.

The 'Norwegian Workers' will hold the chairmanship of the EFTA CC in 2022 as set out in the Note on the Rotation System of the EFTA Consultative Committee (ref. 16-3584).

II List of priorities in 2022

Third-country relations

The EFTA CC will continue to monitor and scrutinise developments in EFTA's third-country relations. The committee will keep a strong focus on initiatives with relevance for the social partners. In particular, the committee will follow up on the implementation of the chapter on Trade and Sustainable Development (TSD), and the final steps in the implementation of measures to increase transparency in EFTA trade negotiations that were adopted by EFTA Ministers in October 2020 (ref. 20-3130). The EFTA CC will continue to monitor developments relating to the possible adoption of sustainability impact assessments of EFTA FTAs and the progress of newly adopted provisions on digital trade (e-commerce). The EFTA CC will further continue to discuss process and production methods (PPMs) as a possibility to ensure sustainable trade.

With regard to ongoing third-country processes the EFTA CC will continue to follow the EFTA–Mercosur legal review, and how the issues outstanding related to climate change and deforestation will be addressed. Further, the Committee will observe negotiations with India, Malaysia, Vietnam, Moldova, and the possible relaunch of the negotiation with Thailand. The EFTA CC will also follow the modernisation of EFTA FTAs especially with the update of TSD provisions in mind. The EFTA CC will continue to monitor existing trade agreements such as the EFTA–South Korea FTA, and those FTAs with a chapter on trade and sustainability such as Turkey and Indonesia.

Two EFTA CC observers will participate in the EFTA Parliamentary Committee's third-country visit, that is planned in March 2022. Linked to this visit, the EFTA CC members may organise a supplementary programme to establish contact with social partners. The participating CC observers will brief the rest of the committee on the visit afterwards with a written and oral report.

EU priorities, horizontal issues and Single Market initiatives

The EFTA CC will follow closely various initiatives from the European Union that have an impact on the EEA EFTA States and are linked to employment and social affairs, keeping in mind the recent European Commission Action Plan to implement the European Social Pillar and the legislative and non-legislative initiatives proposed under the Action Plan.

A special emphasis will also be given to the European Commission's initiatives under the European Green Deal and the Fit for 55 package, A Europe Fit for the Digital Age, and An Economy that Works for People.

The EFTA CC will continue to monitor the Commission's proposals for a Directive on adequate minimum wages in the European Union, a carbon border adjustment mechanism (CBAM), and the Social Climate Fund, and other relevant Fit for 55 legislation, and the implementation of the of OECD/G20 processes for fairer taxation. The EU's wage transparency proposal will be monitored and the EU's next steps with regards to platform work. Further the EFTA CC will

follow files related to the digital development within the Single Market, such as the Digital Services Act, Digital Markets Act and AI.

The EFTA CC will continue to follow new initiatives and the implementation of the Single Market such as the proposed single market emergency instrument in the field of competition. The participation of the EEA EFTA States in EU Programmes will be discussed and scrutinised. Although not within the scope of the EEA Agreement, the committee may follow developments on areas that are relevant to the social partners, such as the European industrial strategy.

EFTA CC opinions and EEA CC reports and resolutions

The EEA CC will prepare reports and resolutions on the following topics in 2022:

- Social aspects of the Fit for 55 package
- Challenges and opportunities of increased use of artificial intelligence (AI) in work life

The EFTA CC will consider issuing EFTA CC opinions on EEA and free trade issues relevant to the social partners.

Joint events with other EFTA committees and working groups (WGs)

The EFTA CC will consider organising a joint meeting with the relevant EFTA committees and WGs during spring 2022 as has become tradition.

If the epidemiological situation allows, the EFTA CC will consider organising, together with the EFTA Parliamentary Committee, a high-level spring conference.

EU social dialogue and relations with the EESC

The EFTA CC will invite representatives of the European social partners (e.g. ETUC, BusinessEurope and SGI Europe) to exchange views on topical issues on their agendas.

The EFTA CC will strengthen its contact with the EESC Single Market Observatory, the Sustainable Development Observatory, the Labour Market Observatory and other EESC bodies (ref. 19-4232). The committee might appoint special rapporteurs to follow the EESC bodies, as is stipulated in rule 18 of the EFTA CC Rules of Procedures.

EFTA relations with the EU

The EFTA CC will follow developments in EFTA's relations with the EU, both regarding EEA cooperation and the Swiss–EU bilateral agreements, including the EEA Financial Mechanism, keeping in mind issues pertaining to the situation of rule of law and human rights in the beneficiary states.

The Swiss delegation of the EFTA CC will on a continuous basis be invited to provide updates on Swiss–EU bilateral relations and keep the other members informed of how the latest EEA developments are also of relevance to Switzerland.

Implementation and follow-up

This work programme for 2022 will be implemented throughout the year with guidance from the Chair of the EFTA CC. At the last meeting of the year, usually held in November, the committee will review this document, mindful of the progress made over the year in addressing specific topics. A yearly review report will be drafted by the outgoing chair with support from the EFTA Secretariat that will be shared with committee members and the public before the end of the year.

Annex III

Ref. 21-3126

13 December 2022

Provisional meeting schedule for 2022

Dates	Place	Meeting
9 February	Videoconference	Briefing of the TCC to the EFTA advisory bodies
22 March	Brussels, Belgium	Meeting with the EFTA Standing Committee Chair Seminar with EFTA Working Groups EFTA CC Bureau EFTA CC meeting
10-11 May	Bergen, Norway	EEA CC Bureau EEA CC meeting
19-21 June	Borgarnes, Iceland	Meeting of EFTA advisory bodies and EFTA Ministers Joint meeting with the EFTA Parliamentary Committee EFTA CC Bureau EFTA CC meeting
13 October	Videoconference	EFTA CC Bureau EFTA CC meeting
22-23 November	Brussels, Belgium	Meeting with EEA EFTA Foreign Affairs Ministers Meeting with EFTA Ministerial Chair Joint meeting with EFTA advisory bodies

		EFTA CC Bureau EFTA CC meeting
9 December	Videoconference	EFTA CC Bureau EFTA CC meeting