



# Introductory Seminar on the European Economic Area

Anniversary Edition  
#EEA30Years



**18 September 2024**

EFTA House, Brussels & online





# Unveiling the Magic

## EFTA and the EEA Agreement



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# EFTA

## Responsible for the management of

- The EFTA Convention
- EFTA's worldwide network of free trade agreements
- The EEA Agreement

## EFTA Statistical Office (ESO)

- Supporting EFTA Member states participation in the European Statistical System (ESS)
- Facilitate incorporation of relevant statistical acts into the EEA Agreement
- Monitor inclusion of statistics on EFTA states in ESS publications
- Provides technical assistance with partner organisations outside EEA



# The EFTA Secretariat in Brussels

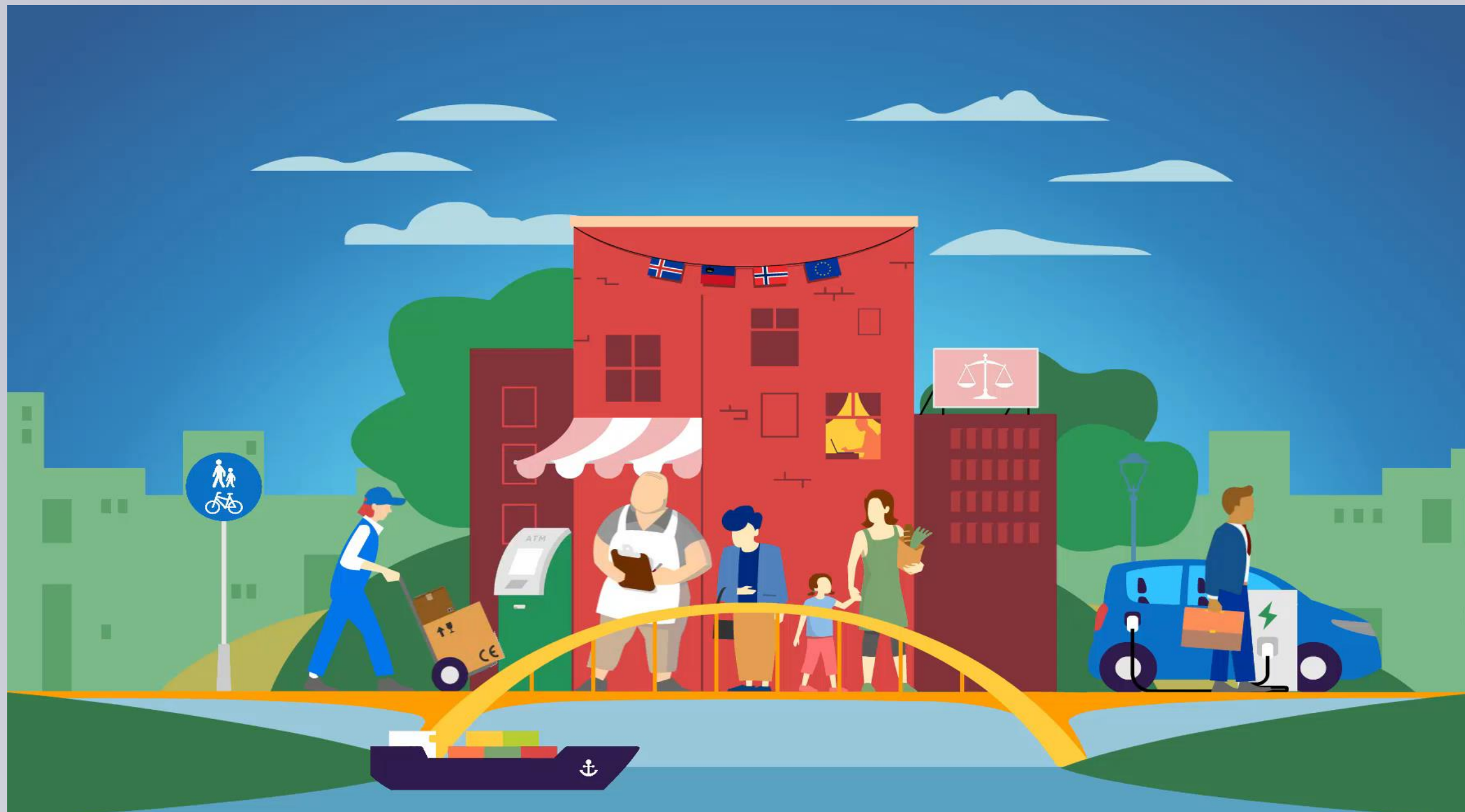
- Secretariat for the EEA EFTA States in their EEA work - “the EEA process”
- Coordinating role between EEA EFTA States and the European Commission
- Secretariat for the EEA advisory bodies





# The EEA Agreement

Why, What, How and what not...



# Objectives and principles of the EEA Agreement

*“... establishing a dynamic and homogenous European Economic Area, based on common rules and equal conditions of competition and providing for the adequate means of enforcement at the judicial level, ...”*





# The Challenge

## Reconciling two different models of cooperation

### The EU model

- *Supranational cooperation* - transfer of competence and sovereignty
- Institutions with *defined roles* in the *decision-making processes* Commission – European Parliament – Council
- Important concern *Preserving decision-making autonomy* of the EU

### The EFTA model

- *Intergovernmental* cooperation. - No transfer of competence, no “common policies”
- Decisions taken by *consensus* between the governments of the EEA EFTA states
- Important concern *Preserving sovereignty*



# EEA institutional model

## The Two Pillar structure





# The EEA Agreement

## Substantive scope

### Four Freedoms

- Free movement of goods
- Free movement of services
- Free movement of capital
- Free movement of persons

### Horizontal Policies

- Environment
- Social policy
- Consumer protection
- Statistics
- Company law

### Common Rules

- State aid
- Competition
- Public procurement

### Cooperation

- EU programmes

### Cohesion

- EEA and Norway Grants





# The EEA process

The framework for participation and engagement





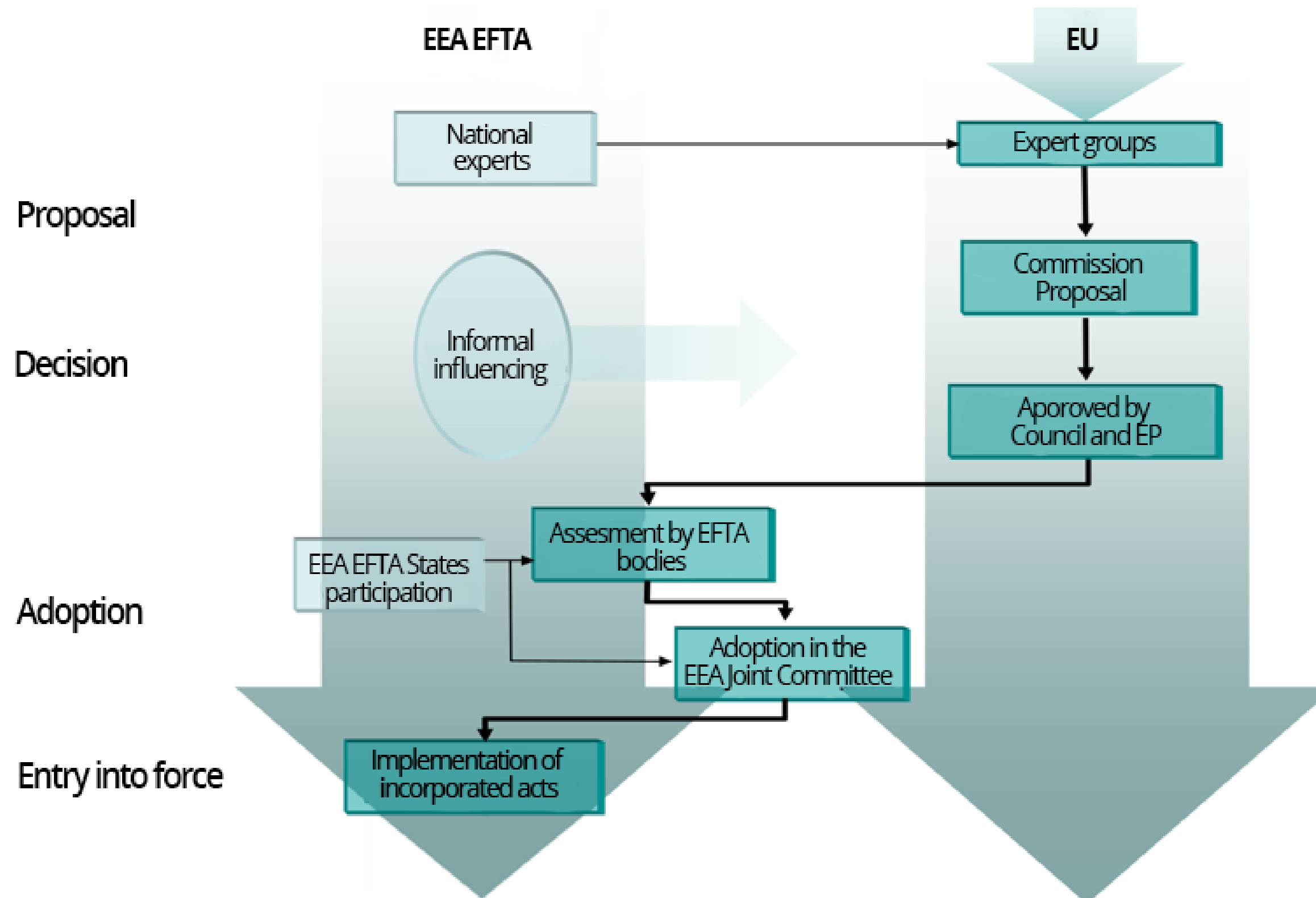
# Two main strands of the EEA work

- **Decision shaping** – Participation in the development of EU legislation before EU adoption
- **Decision making** – Incorporation of an adopted EU, EEA relevant legislative act into the EEA Agreement



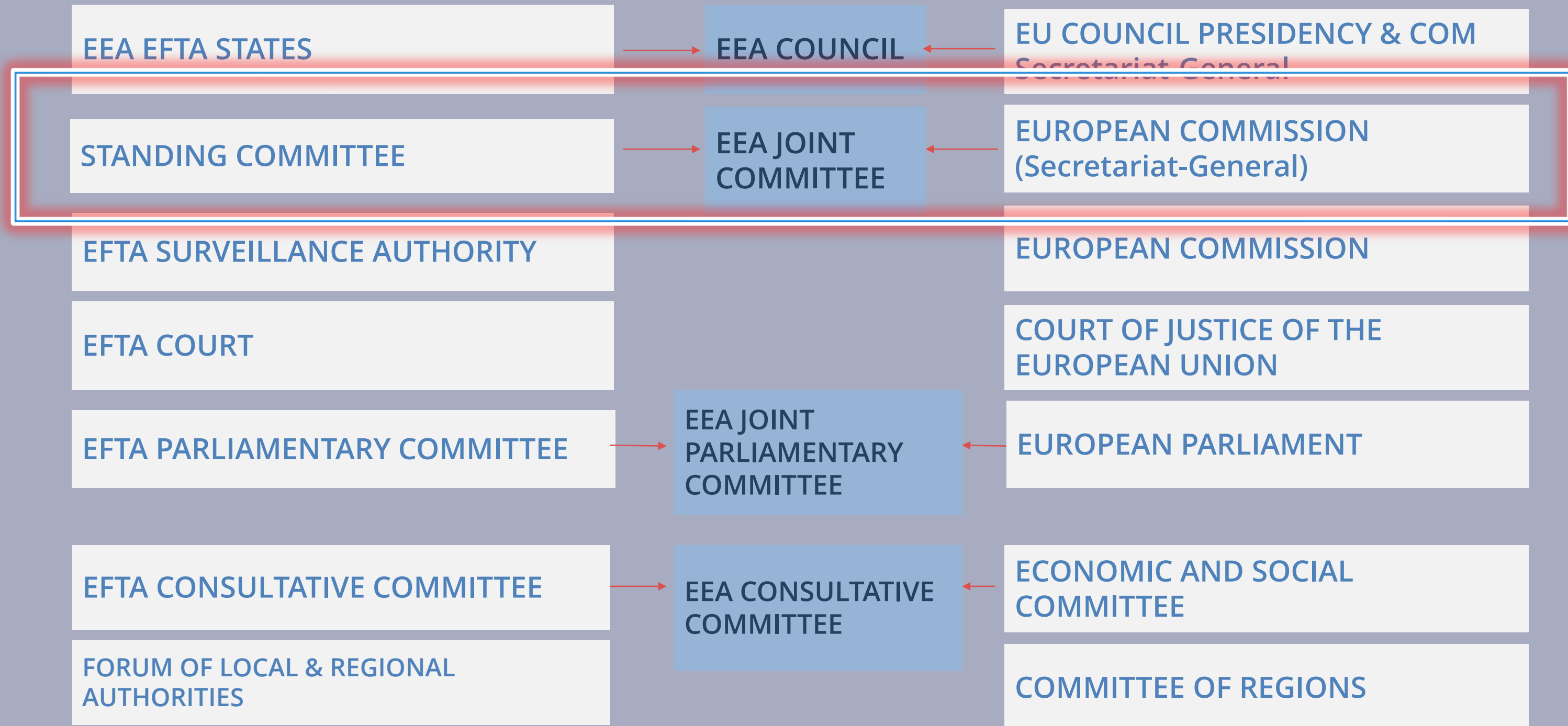


# From EU to EEA participation and engagement throughout the process





# Decision making within the Two Pillar Structure





# Standing Committee of the EFTA States

Subcommittee I  
Free Movement of  
Goods

Subcommittee II  
Free Movement of  
Services and Capital

Subcommittee III  
Free Movement of  
Persons

Subcommittee IV  
Flanking and  
Horizontal Policies

Subcommittee V  
Legal and Institutional  
Matters

## WORKING GROUPS

- Competition Policy
- Customs Matters
- Customs Security Measures
- Energy Matters
- Fisheries
- Food Chain
- Intellectual Property
- Processed Agricultural Prod.
- Public Procurement
- State Aid
- Technical Barriers to Trade
  - Expert Groups

- Company Law
- Electronic Communications, Audiovisual Services and Information Society
- Financial Services
- Postal Services
- Transport
- **Services**

- Free Movement of Persons, Employment and Social Policy
- Recognition of Professional Qualifications
- Social Security

- Budgetary Matters
- Civil Protection
- Consumer Affairs
- Cultural Affairs
- Education, Training and Youth
- Enterprise Policy and Internal Market Affairs
- Environment
- Gender Equality, Anti-Discrimination and Family Policy
- Health and Safety at Work and Labour Law
- Public Health
- Research and Innovation



# Decision making





# Numbers and key sectors

- Legal acts incorporated into the EEA Agreement
  - **1.875 acts** when signing the Agreement in 1992
  - **14 300+ acts** incorporated since the signing
  - **8 000+ acts** in force today
- Food and Veterinary area – 270 – 44 % of all the acts incorporated in 2023
- Other high-volume sectors
  - *Financial Services*
  - *Transport*
  - *Goods*
- Up and coming areas
  - **Environment** – up and coming to facilitate **the Green Deal**
  - Acts with **distinct horizontal challenges**



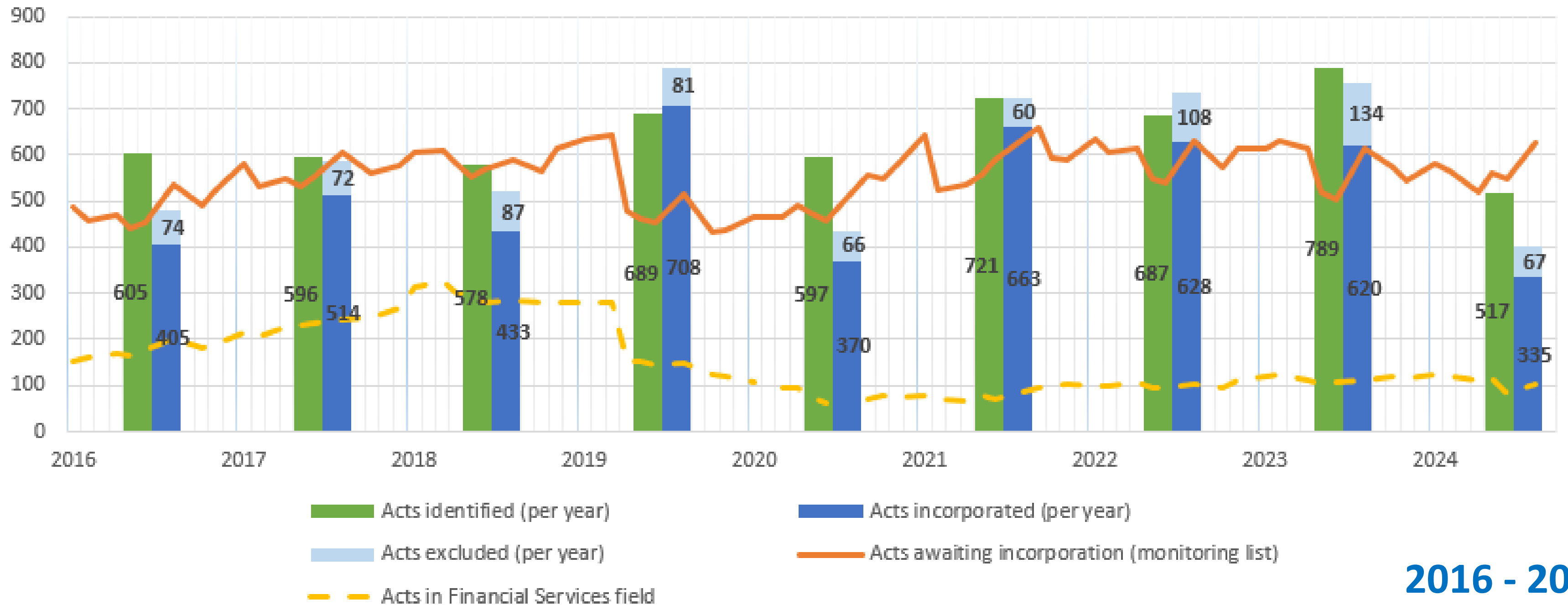


# Processing volumes and backlog

Acts awaiting incorporation vs acts identified and acts incorporated or excluded

## Processing volumes and Backlog

(acts awaiting incorporation vs. acts identified & acts incorporated/excluded)



2016 - 2024

# The EEA Agreement in Europe of today

- The EEA Agreement remains robust and resilient – celebrating its 30 years
- EU adapts more, and more complex legislation
  - The nature of the EEA agreement – inherent delay of incorporation
  - The European Green Deal and the Digital Agenda on high speed – Timely incorporation of essence
- Challenges in managing the EEA Agreement
  - EU law and EEA law have different scope
  - Increased regulatory powers to EU agencies
  - The Geopolitical situation reflects EU developments
    - Internal market legislation with a touch of e.g. trade policy, industry policy, security issues and customs code
- Important happenings in Brussels in the coming year  
New Commission – New Plans ahead – New Program period in the making





# EEA knowledge and close cooperation

- Essentials to ensure a well-function EEA Agreement



# Thank you for your participation!

