



Introductory Seminar on the European Economic Area

12 March 2025

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

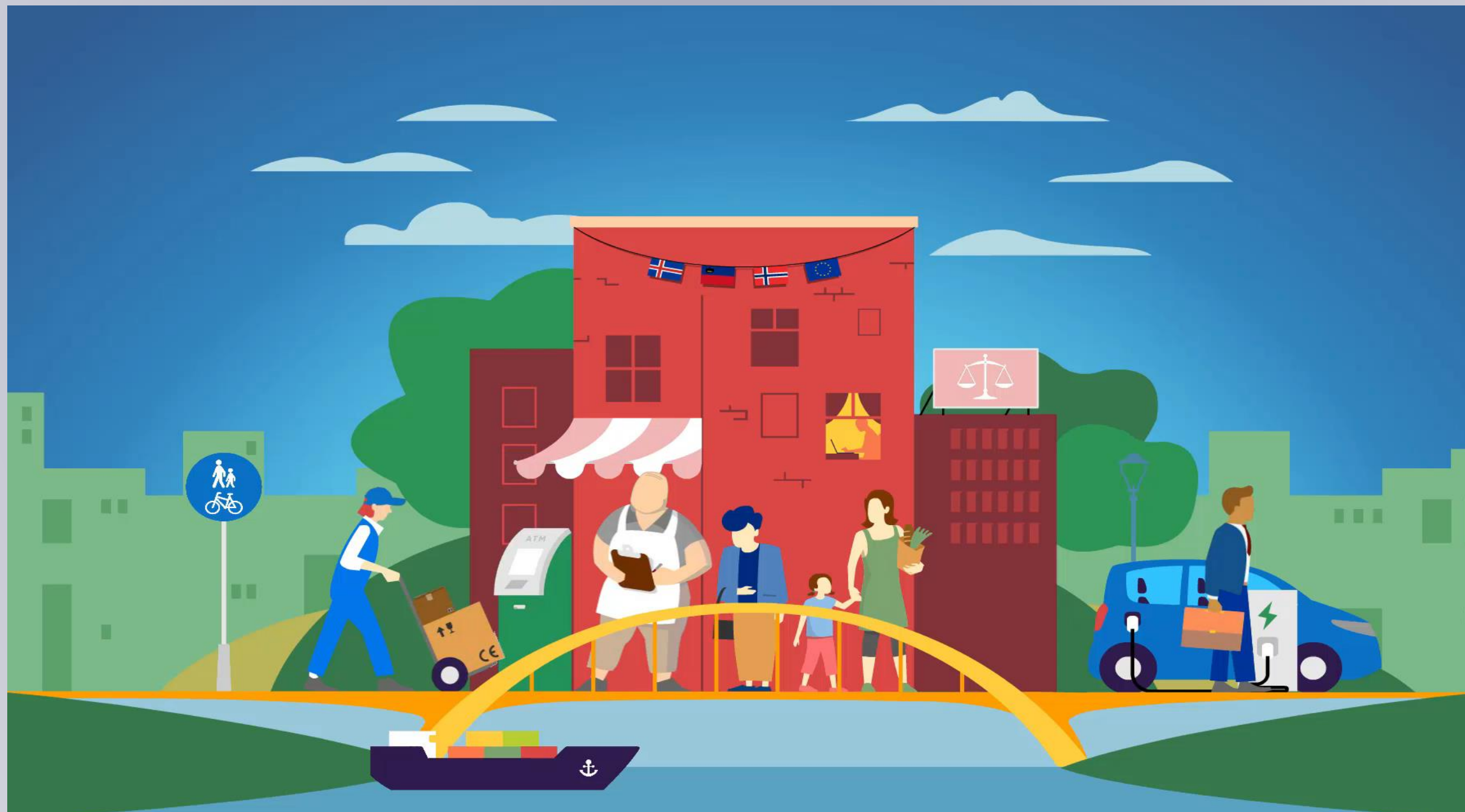
The EFTA Secretariat in Brussels

- 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



Policy areas not covered by the EEA Cooperation

- The Economic and Monetary Union
- EU trade policy provisions
- EU aid policy
- EU customs union
- Common agricultural policy
- Common fisheries policy
- EU justice and home affairs policy
- EU common foreign and security policy

The EEA process

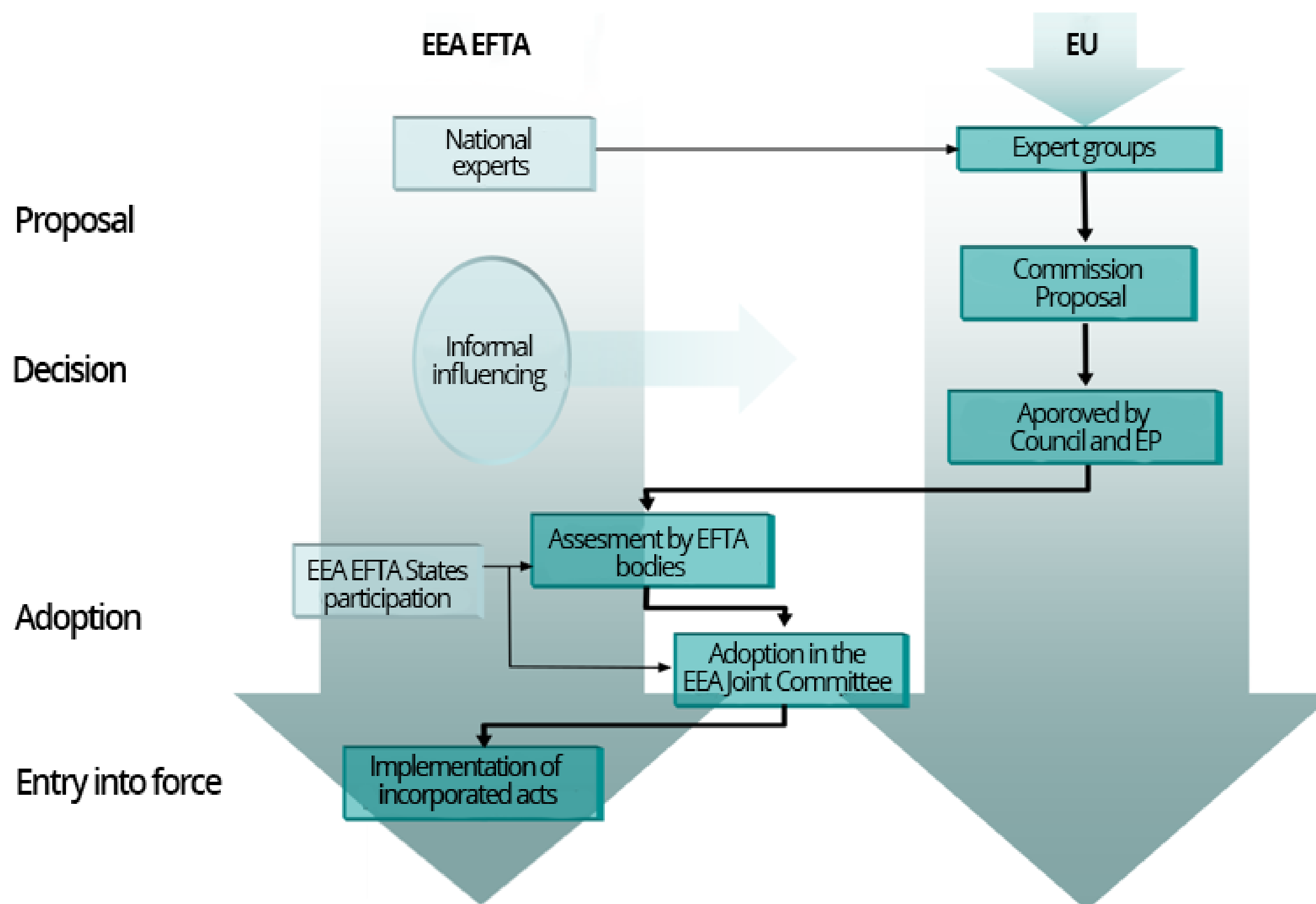
The framework for participation and engagement



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 Matters
- Energy Matters
- Food Chain
- Intellectual Property
- Processes Agricultural Products
- Public Procurement
- State Aid
- Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT)*

* Assisted by sector-specific expert groups

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

* Assisted by the Expert group on Data Protection

- 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
- Environment
- Gender Equality, Anti-Discrimination and Family Policy
- Heads of National Statistical Institutes
- Health and Safety at Work and Labour Law
- Public Health
- Research and Development

Decision making



Numbers and key sectors

- Legal acts incorporated into the EEA Agreement
 - **1.875 acts** when signing the Agreement in 1992
 - **14 700 acts** incorporated since the signing
 - **8 479 acts** in force today
- **Food and Veterinary area** – 212 – 38 % of all the acts incorporated in 2023
- Other high-volume sectors
 - *Goods*
 - *Financial Services*
 - *Transport*
- Up and coming areas
 - **Environment** – up and coming to facilitate **the Green Deal and Clean Industrial Deal**
 - Acts with **distinct horizontal challenges**
 - **Competitiveness Compass, Omnibus, New Program Period**



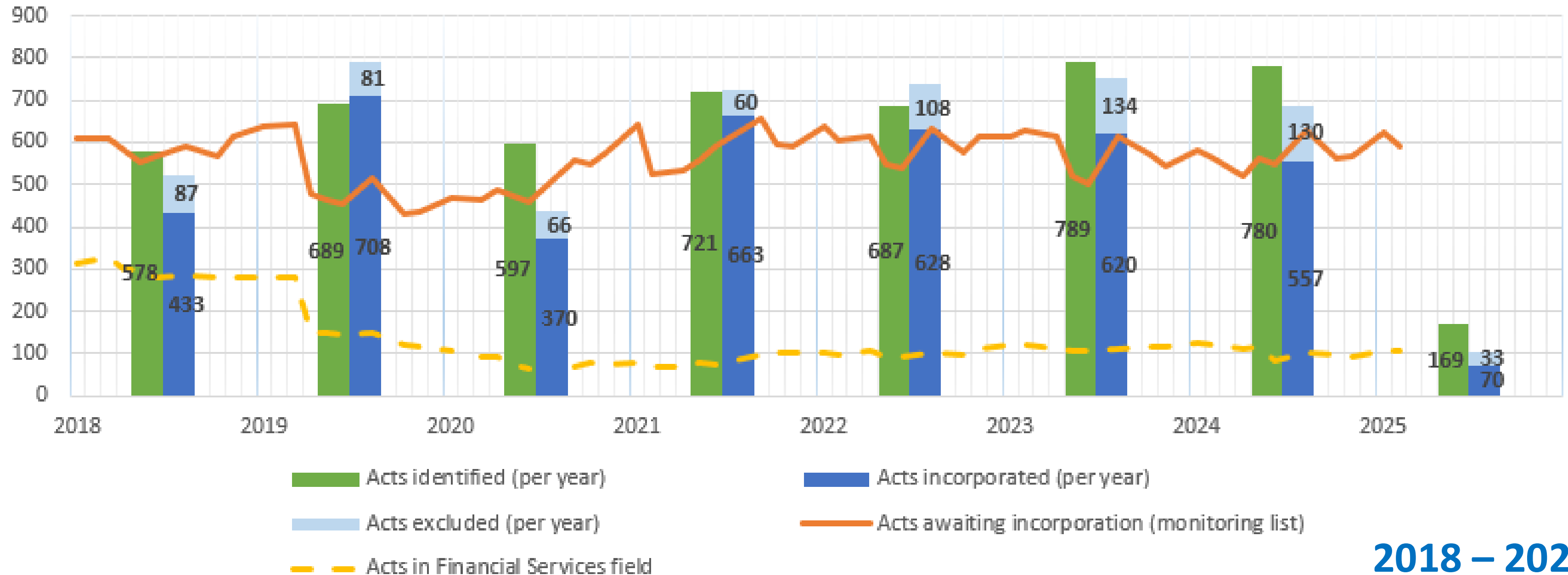
Processing volumes and backlog

Acts awaiting incorporation vs acts identified and acts incorporated or excluded

Processing volumes and Backlog

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

From Jan 2018 - Feb 2025



2018 – 2025/02

The EEA Agreement in Europe of today

- The EEA Agreement has remained robust and resilient
- EU adapts more, and more complex legislation
 - The nature of the EEA agreement – inherent delay of incorporation
 - The European Green Deal, Clean Industrial Deal, the Digital Agenda and new initiatives
 - Timely incorporation of essence and strategic choices must be made.
- 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
- Brussels Q1 2025 – A new game is on
New Plans rolling out – New Program period in the making –
Geopolitical challenges continues



EEA knowledge and close cooperation

- Essentials to ensure a well-function EEA Agreement



Thank you for your participation!

