

EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AREA

STANDING COMMITTEE OF THE EFTA STATES

FORUM OF ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES OF THE EEA EFTA STATES

Ref. 25-1415

26 June 2025

27th MEETING OF THE EEA EFTA FORUM

Brussels, 12 and 13 June 2025

Opinion on the EU Preparedness Union Strategy

Rapporteur: Tom Georg Indrevik

The EEA EFTA Forum of Elected Representatives of Local and Regional Authorities:

- A. Having regard to the Niinistö report, *Safer together – Strengthening Europe’s Civilian and Military Preparedness and Readiness*;
- B. Noting Joint Communication JOIN (2025) 130 final on the European Preparedness Union Strategy (hereinafter referred to as “the Strategy”);
- C. Acknowledging the role of the EEA EFTA Forum as a body in the EFTA structure as stipulated in Decision of the Standing Committee of the EFTA States No 10/2009/SC establishing a Forum of Elected Representatives of Local and Regional Authorities of the EEA EFTA States:
 - 1. Highlights the need for clarification of the legal basis for EEA EFTA participation in the initiatives presented in the Strategy;
 - 2. Notes that initiatives related to civil protection usually fall under the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM), which has been incorporated into Protocol 31 to the EEA Agreement and thus provides a legal basis for EEA EFTA participation.

Norway and Iceland participate in the UCPM;

3. Notes that some planned acts under the Strategy also cover Internal Market issues and might therefore fall under the scope of the EEA Agreement;
4. Stresses that the local and regional levels play a major role in ensuring preparedness and resilience;
5. Underlines that as the democratic level closest to the people, municipalities and regions are well placed to ensure a whole-of-society approach, bringing together citizens, local communities, businesses, civil society and social partners, as well as the scientific and academic communities;
6. Notes that many of the key objectives and actions proposed in the Strategy have direct relevance to the local and regional level in all EEA EFTA States, and their implementation may be important to facilitate the functioning of this level, particularly in the most extreme crisis;
7. Encourages the European Commission to consult local and regional authorities regularly and involve them in the planned actions of the Strategy;
8. Points to the urgency of building a common culture of resilience and civil preparedness in all municipalities and regions across the European Economic Area;
9. Points to the fact that part 7 of the Strategy concerns cooperation with external partners, where the Commission underlines that working with neighbourhood partners to anticipate, prepare for, prevent and respond to crises is mutually beneficial;
10. Highlights that the EEA EFTA States have long experience and expertise on the local and regional level of a whole-of-society and whole-of-government approach. This can be shared with interested EU Member States;
11. Highlights the need for a well-functioning European Economic Area in times of crisis;

12. Notes that some EEA EFTA States have a general framework agreement on security and defence with the European Union;
 13. Encourages the EEA EFTA States and the Commission to clarify whether there are any gaps in the legal framework that may hinder mutually beneficial cooperation on preparedness between the EEA EFTA States and the EU.
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