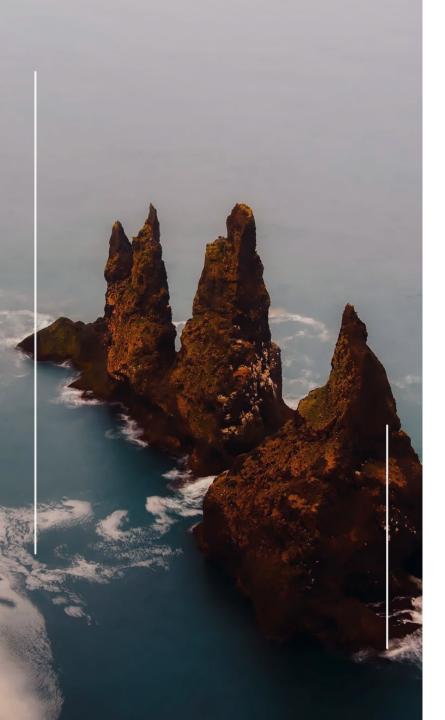


The role of parliamentarians, social partners and regional authorities in the EEA



Ingerid Bratz
Officer, EEA Coordination Division
EFTA Secretariat



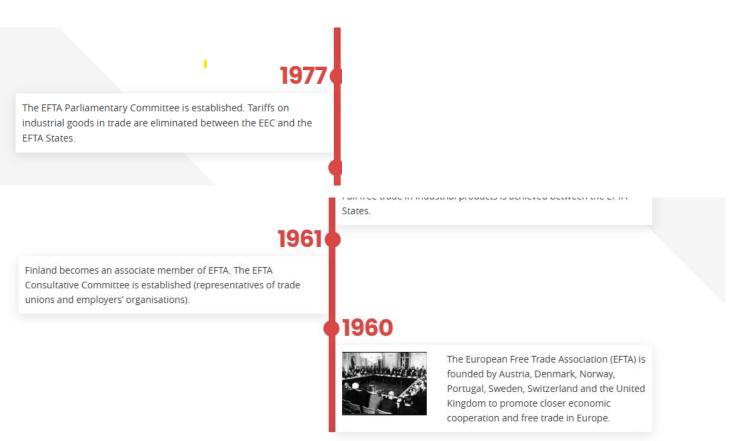


Agenda

- What is the role and mandate of the EFTA Advisory Bodies?
- Parliamentary scrutiny
- Oversight role of the social partners
- Input from local and regional authorities
- Recent topics of interest to the Advisory Bodies



Origins of the EFTA Advisory Bodies







The EFTA Advisory Bodies - who and what role?

Who?

- EFTA Parliamentary Committee: forum for EFTA States' parliamentarians
- **EFTA Consultative Committee**: representatives of trade unions, business and employers' associations in the EFTA States

Role is to..

- Advise the Member States on matters falling within the scope of EFTA – advisory function to the EFTA trade Ministers and Foreign Ministers (EEA)
- Provide a link and channel for information between parliamentarians and social partners in the EFTA countries, in the EU and third countries



The Advisory Bodies wear two hats

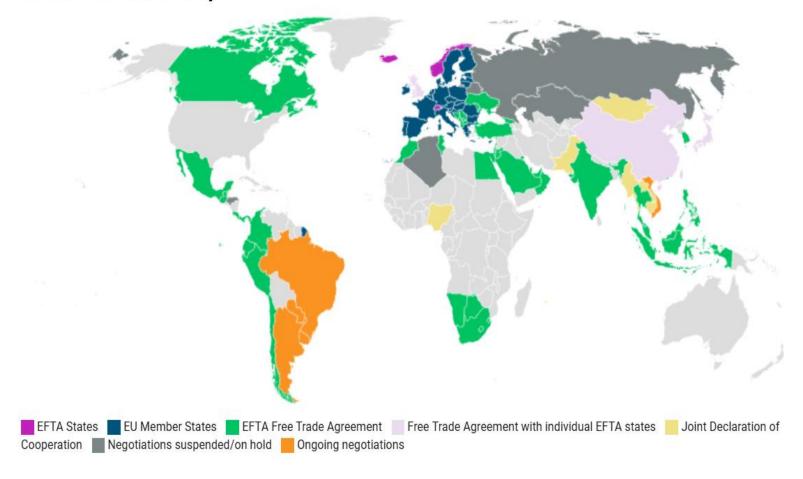


Mandate is to provide **advice and scrutiny** on:

- 1.Relations with the EU the EEA Agreement
- 2. Relations with third countries
 - EFTA's trade relations
 worldwide



EFTA Free Trade Map



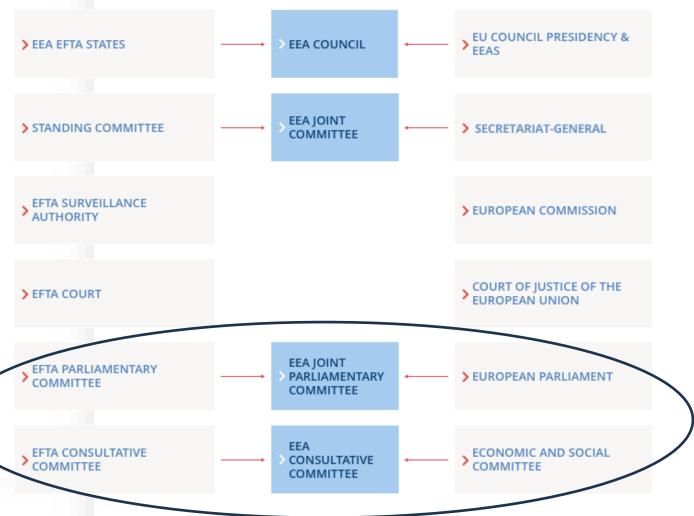
EFTA trade relations

 Since the early 1990s, EFTA has established an extensive network of contractual free trade relations all over the world.

- Over 30 FTAs signed to date
- Recently signed FTAs with Malaysia and MERCOSUR



The Advisory Bodies and the EEA Agreement



This diagram illustrates the management of the EEA Agreement. The left pillar shows the EFTA States and their institutions, while the right pillar shows the EU side. The joint EEA bodies are in the middle.



Parliamentary scrutiny of the EEA

EEA Joint Parliamentary Committee (EEA JPC): EFTA parliamentarians and members of the EP's delegation for relations with EFTA

- Forum where MPs and MEPs can monitor the implementation and functioning of the EEA Agreement
- EEA-relevant legislation incorporated into the Agreement – legislative impact at home
- Fosters democratic oversight and accountability
- Not involved in the decision-making process but discuss policy relevant to the Internal Market
- Meet twice a year (EFTA State and Strasbourg)
- Adopt reports and resolutions



EEA Joint Parliamentary Committee meetings

Committee carefully select relevant topics for meeting agendas

- New EU legislation under negotiation or in decision-making process that may enter the EEA Agreement
- Broader issues of interest to the Internal Market
- Invite experts and external guests
- Present EEA EFTA Comments
- E.g. Al Act, CBAM, EU Civil Protection Mechanism
- Exchange views, helping to ensure that the EEA EFTA perspectives are considered in the EU process
- Bring knowledge back home to citizens of EEA EFTA countries
 link between political life in the EU and in EFTA



Oversight role of the social partners

EEA Consultative Committee: EFTA CC members + members of the European Economic and Social Committee

- Gives social partners (employers and trade unions) a voice in the EEA
- Monitors economic and social aspects, e.g. labour market and social policy, impact of policies on businesses and employers, education and skills
- Promotes dialogue and democratic legitimacy social partners able to scrutinise functioning of the EEA
- Meets 1-2 times per year
- Net Zero Industry Act, green subsidies, minimum wage directive
- Expresses its views in the form of reports/resolutions, see e.g. report/resolution on <u>30 years of EEA</u> <u>cooperation</u>





Input from the EEA EFTA Forum

Roughly 2/3 of EU legislation is implemented at local and regional level

EEA EFTA Forum: Informal body established by EEA EFTA States in 2009 to involve elected representatives from local and regional authorities in EEA matters

- Iceland and Norway, with Switzerland as observers
- Meets at least 1-2 times a year
- Formulates its views in the form of **Opinions** addressed to the Standing Committee of the EFTA States

Recent Opinions:

- <u>Urban Wastewater</u>
- Public Procurement



Recent topics of interest to the Advisory Bodies

Advisory Bodies also regularly meet EFTA and EEA Ministers – within the EFTA pillar

- Geopolitical context and impact on the EEA Russia's war of aggression, trade issues
- European competitiveness and the future of the Internal Market – e.g. Draghi and Letta reports
- Green and digital agendas e.g. climate change, decarbonisation efforts and AI
- Security and defence matters e.g. increased defence spending and European security





The Advisory Bodies have a bird's eye view



- Scrutinise and advise the EFTA Member States on EFTA matters
- Form a **bridge** between parliaments and institutions
- Bring EFTA matters closer
 to the citizens of the EFTA
 States

Democratic accountability and legitimacy



