

CONCLUSIONS

Subject: Conclusions of the 35th meeting of the EEA Council
Brussels, 23 May 2011

1. The thirty-fifth meeting of the EEA Council took place in Brussels on 23 May 2011 under the Presidency of Mr János Martonyi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Hungary, representing the Presidency of the Council of the European Union. The meeting was attended by Mr Jonas Gahr Støre, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Norway, Ms Aurelia Frick, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Liechtenstein, and Mr Thorir Ibsen, Ambassador, Head of the Mission of Iceland to the EU, as well as by Members of the Council of the European Union and by Representatives of the European Commission and the European External Action Service.
2. The EEA Council noted that within the framework of the Political Dialogue the Ministers discussed *North Africa, Middle East and Piracy off the coast of Somalia*.
3. The EEA Council noted the Council Conclusions from December 2010, in particular that the EU relations with the EFTA countries, which were already considered to be very good and close in 2008, have further intensified in the past two years. The EEA Council is looking forward to continue the positive relationship.

4. The EEA Council welcomed the adoption of the seven “Flagship Initiatives” of the Europe 2020 by the Commission. With many of the proposals contained in these initiatives being EEA relevant, the EEA Council welcomed the contribution of the EEA EFTA States to the Strategy.
5. The EEA Council welcomed the progress made on the Single Market Act, recalling that the Single Market has a key role to play to deliver growth and employment and promote competitiveness. The EEA Council furthermore welcomed the EEA EFTA Comment to the Act received on 10 March. The EEA EFTA States will follow up to the various proposals resulting from the Act and will continue to contribute to its development.
6. The EEA Council welcomed the launch of the European semester of economic policy coordination in January 2011 and took note of the recently adopted Euro Plus Pact aimed at further strengthening policy coordination to improve competitiveness and achieve a higher degree of convergence.
7. The EEA Council welcomed that the new system of European Financial Supervision, including the three supervisory authorities in the areas of Banking, Insurance, and Securities, had begun operating on 1 January 2011. The EEA Council welcomed that the EEA EFTA States would participate in the authorities and looked forward to conclude a formal agreement on the modalities of their participation. The EEA Council furthermore expressed the hope that an understanding can be reached soon on the appropriate form of participation of the EEA EFTA States' relevant authorities in the European Systemic Risk Board (ESRB).

8. The EEA Council welcomed the entry into force on 3 March 2011 of the Third Package for the Internal Energy Market aimed at creating an interconnected and competitive European energy market. With the EEA EFTA States being fully integrated in the internal energy market, the EEA Council underlined the importance of a timely participation of the EEA EFTA States in the new bodies, Agency for the Cooperation of European Regulators (ACER) and the European Network of Transmission System Operators (ENTSO) which will play an important role for the cooperation between European energy regulators and transmission system operators.
9. The EEA Council welcomed the progress made in incorporating the Renewables Directive into the EEA Agreement. In this context, the EEA Council took note of the EEA EFTA States' large shares of renewable energy sources. Furthermore, the EEA Council acknowledged the EEA EFTA States' commitment to ambitious targets for their share of renewable energy by 2020.
10. The EEA Council took note of the Energy Efficiency Plan 2011, published on 8 March 2011, along with a Roadmap for moving to a competitive low carbon economy in 2050. The Plan constitutes an important contribution to reaching the EUs 20% energy saving target as well as helping to realise the EU's longterm energy and climate goals.
11. The EEA Council reiterated the importance of maintaining close cooperation between the EU and the EEA EFTA States in energy and climate change policies, in particular in the areas of emission trading, the promotion of competitive low carbon economy, energy efficiency and renewable energy resources, as well as on carbon capture and storage (CCS). The EEA Council also welcomed the incorporation of the aviation emissions scheme into the EEA Agreement.
12. The EEA Council welcomed the conclusion of most projects, programmes and funds under the EEA and Norwegian Financial Mechanisms 2004-09 by the implementation deadline 30 April 2011. The EEA Council emphasised the importance of ensuring that projects with one-year extensions will be completed within this final deadline.

13. The EEA Council welcomed the progress made in the implementation of the EEA and Norwegian Financial Mechanisms 2009-2014, including specification of programme areas to be supported. The EEA Council urged all parties to strive for rapid completion of the negotiations on the country specific Memoranda of Understanding to ensure sufficient time for implementation of programmes.
14. The EEA Council welcomed the implementation of the Additional Protocols resulting from bilateral negotiations between the European Commission and Iceland and Norway concerning the review of the quota levels for certain fish and fishery products.
15. Ministers noted the progress made in the negotiations between the EU and Iceland on Iceland's accession to the European Union.
16. The EEA Council noted the Progress Report of the EEA Joint Committee and, in particular:
 - welcomed that in March 2011, the European Parliament had a debate on a Commission proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on consumer rights , and that it continues its constructive work towards the adoption of that directive, and noted in this context that the EEA EFTA Comment had been taken into consideration;
 - noted the result of the negotiations on liberalisation of trade in agricultural products between the European Commission and Norway based on Article 19 of the EEA Agreement, hoped for an expedient implementation of the outcome and looked forward to the foreseen review of the conditions of trade in agricultural products in two years time, with a view to exploring possible concessions;
 - agreed to continue the dialogue on the trade regime for processed agricultural products within the framework of Article 2(2) of Protocol 3 of the EEA Agreement;

- welcomed the participation of the EEA EFTA States in EEA relevant EU Programmes, noting that these are co-financed by the EEA EFTA States. It emphasised the importance of including the EEA EFTA States in appropriate programmes thus contributing to building a more competitive, innovative and social Europe;
 - took note of further progress made in the development of an Integrated Maritime Policy and welcomed the active involvement of the EEA EFTA States. It noted that the EEA EFTA States are currently looking into the possible participation in the new programme for the further development of the Integrated Maritime Policy;
 - noted that since the last meeting of the EEA Council, the Aviation Safety Regulation 216/2008 and the Audiovisual Media Services Directive have not yet been incorporated into the EEA Agreement and expressed its expectation for an early conclusion of this process;
 - recalled the adoption in 2007 of the Horizontal Food Law Package, and looked forward to its full implementation by all contracting parties by 1 November 2011.
17. The EEA Council recalled its commitment to the EU's social agenda reinforced in the Europe 2020 Strategy and welcomed the new inclusive growth initiatives, in particular the EU Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion and the Agenda for New Skills and Jobs and reiterated the importance of how these issues will be followed up. The EEA Council underlined and encouraged efforts to meet social needs through innovation.
18. The EEA Council welcomed the EEA EFTA contributions to the decision-shaping process of EEA relevant EU legislation and programmes through their participation in relevant committees, expert groups and agencies and by submitting EEA EFTA Comments.
19. The EEA Council held an orientation debate on *Raw Materials*.

20. The Ministers reiterated that it was the common interest of all Contracting Parties to ensure appropriate information on the EEA Agreement within the European Economic Area.
 21. The EEA Council underlined the importance of inviting EEA EFTA Ministers to relevant informal EU Ministerial Meetings and Ministerial Conferences on the basis of EEA EFTA participation in the Internal Market, and expressed its appreciation to the incoming Polish Presidency for the continuation of this practice. The EEA Council also recalled the practice of inviting the EEA EFTA States - at the level of officials - to political dialogue meetings at the level of relevant Council Working Parties.
 22. The EEA Council noted the Resolutions of the EEA Joint Parliamentary Committee adopted at its 35th meeting in Strasbourg on 24-25 November 2010 on *the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion* and on *Europe 2020: Innovation and the EEA* and at its 36th meeting in Spitsbergen on 13 April 2011 on *the High North: Opportunities and Policy Challenges* and on *the Annual report of the EEA JPC on the functioning of the EEA in 2010*, and the Resolutions of the EEA Consultative Committee adopted at its 19th meeting in Tartu, Estonia, on 12-13 May 2011 on *the Single Market Act* and on *Innovation and Energy*.
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