

EEE 1602/1/15  
REV 1

LIMITE

## CONCLUSIONS

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Subject: Conclusions of the 43rd meeting of the EEA Council  
(Brussels, 18 May 2015)

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1. The forty-third meeting of the EEA Council took place in Brussels on 18 May 2015 under the Presidency of Ms Zanda Kalniņa-Lukaševica, Parliamentary State Secretary for EU Affairs of Latvia, representing the Presidency of the Council of the European Union. The meeting was attended by Mr Gunnar Bragi Sveinsson, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iceland, Mr Vidar Helgesen, Minister of EEA and EU Affairs at the Office of the Prime Minister of Norway, and Ms Aurelia Frick, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Liechtenstein, as well as by Members of the Council of the European Union and 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 would discuss 1) *Ukraine and Russia*; 2) *the Eastern Partnership* and 3) *Syria, Iraq, Libya and ISIL- Da'esh, including combating radicalization and extremist violence in Europe*. An orientation debate was held on the *Digital Agenda*.

3. The EEA Council welcomed that the conclusions on a homogenous extended single market and EU relations with Non-EU Western European countries adopted by the Council of the EU in December 2014 acknowledged the key role played by the EEA Agreement throughout the last 20 years in advancing economic relations and internal market integration between the EU and the EEA EFTA States. The EEA Council highlighted that the Agreement had been robust and capable of adapting to changes in EU treaties and EU enlargements. The EEA Council recognised that the good functioning and further development of this extended Single Market would be a key driver for renewed growth in Europe.
4. The EEA Council emphasised the need for responsibility and solidarity among the countries of Europe to overcome the social and economic challenges that had arisen from the economic crisis. In particular, the EEA Council expressed concern regarding the continued high level of youth unemployment in some EEA Member States.
5. Emphasising the fact that greater knowledge of the EEA Agreement throughout the EEA would be in the interest of all Contracting Parties, the EEA Council urged them to ensure that the appropriate information on the EEA Agreement was made readily and easily available to all.
6. The EEA Council noted that free movement of capital is a fundamental internal market freedom and an integral part of the EEA *acquis* and acknowledged that restrictions can be implemented only temporarily on the basis of the provisions of Article 43 of the EEA Agreement.
7. Noting the Progress Report of the EEA Joint Committee, the EEA Council expressed its appreciation for the work of the Joint Committee in ensuring the continued successful operation and good functioning of the EEA Agreement.

8. The EEA Council stressed the need to swiftly conclude the work necessary for the incorporation into the EEA Agreement of the EU Regulations on the European Supervisory Authorities in the area of financial services to ensure effective and homogenous supervision throughout the EEA, as called for in the Conclusions approved by the EU and EFTA Ministers of Finance and Economy at their informal meeting of 14 October 2014. The EEA Council also highlighted the high importance of a swift incorporation and application of the outstanding legislation in the field of financial services in order to ensure a level playing field throughout the EEA in this important economic sector.
9. Acknowledging the contribution made by EU programmes to building a more competitive, innovative and social Europe, the EEA Council welcomed the participation of the EEA EFTA States in EEA-relevant programmes to which they contribute financially.
10. The EEA Council recognised the still existing need to alleviate social and economic disparities in the EEA, as well as the positive contribution of the EEA and Norway Financial Mechanisms 2009-2014 and their predecessors in reducing economic and social disparities throughout the EEA. It noted that more than one year after the launch of the negotiations on the renewal of the EEA and Norway Financial Mechanisms for another term, the negotiations were still on-going and the progress achieved was still mixed. In light of the delay incurred, the EEA Council called for increased efforts in view of a swift conclusion of these negotiations.
11. The EEA Council also took note of the on-going negotiations in parallel with the Financial Mechanism negotiations on bilateral issues between each of the EEA EFTA States and the EU, and also called for a swift conclusion of these negotiations.
12. The EEA Council welcomed the ongoing efforts made to both reduce the number of EEA-relevant EU acts awaiting incorporation into the EEA Agreement and to accelerate the incorporation process. While commending all the steps undertaken in the course of the last years, the EEA Council noted that the number of acts awaiting incorporation was still too high. The EEA Council called for continued work in order to significantly and durably reduce the current backlog and thereby ensure legal certainty and homogeneity in the EEA. It urged all parties to engage constructively to find solutions to pending difficult issues.

13. The EEA Council noted that progress was still needed on a number of outstanding issues and looked forward to reach a conclusion as soon as possible in particular regarding the Third Postal Directive, the 2009 TELECOM Package (including the Regulation on the Body of European Regulators for Electronic Communications – BEREC), the Directive on Deposit Guarantee Schemes, the Regulation on Novel Foods and Novel Food Ingredients, the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, the Regulation on Medicinal Products for Paediatric use and the EU legal acts in the area of organic production.
14. The EEA Council recalled that there was still a number of Joint Committee Decisions, for which the six-month deadline provided for in the EEA Agreement with regard to constitutional clearance had been exceeded. It encouraged the EEA EFTA States to strengthen their efforts to resolve the pending cases as soon as possible and to avoid such delays in the future.
15. With regard to the Third Package for the Internal Energy Market, the EEA Council underlined the importance of stepping up efforts to incorporate this legislative Package into the EEA Agreement in order to establish a fully functional internal market for energy, and in particular encouraged the parties to identify mutually acceptable solutions for appropriate EEA EFTA participation in the Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators (ACER).
16. The EEA Council placed great importance on continued close cooperation between the EU and the EEA EFTA States in environment, energy and climate change policies, particularly in light of the 2030 Framework for Climate and Energy and the proposal for A Framework Strategy for a Resilient Energy Union with a Forward-Looking Climate Change Policy. The EEA Council underlined in particular the importance of the EU, its Member States and the EEA EFTA States working closely together to achieve an ambitious and universal climate agreement during the COP21 Conference in Paris in December 2015 in order to contain global warming within the limit of 2°C. The close cooperation should also continue in particular in the areas of security of energy supply, emissions trading, promotion of competitive, climate resilient, safe and sustainable low carbon energy, energy efficiency, renewable energy resources, carbon capture, utilisation and storage (CCUS), marine environment and other environmental issues such as waste, chemicals, water resource management and industrial pollution.

17. The EEA Council acknowledged the significance of the negotiations on a Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) between the European Union and the United States. The EEA Council welcomed the exchange of information between the European Commission and the EEA EFTA States initiated in the EEA Joint Committee in December 2014. Bearing in mind inter alia Protocol 12 to the EEA Agreement, the EEA Council encouraged a continuation of this exchange of information.
18. The EEA Council acknowledged that the Contracting Parties, pursuant to Article 19 of the EEA Agreement, had undertaken to continue their efforts with a view to achieving the progressive liberalisation of agricultural trade. The EEA Council welcomed the launch in 2012 of negotiations on the further liberalisation of agricultural trade and on the protection of geographical indications between the EU and Iceland. The EEA Council also welcomed the launch of negotiations between the EU and Norway in November 2013 on the protection of geographical indications and on further liberalisation of agricultural trade within the framework of Article 19 in February 2015. The EEA Council noted that the EU had expressed its disappointment on the fact that the increased Norwegian customs duties for certain agricultural products, and the reclassification of hortensia, had not been revoked and that the EU had again encouraged Norway to reverse these measures.
19. The EEA Council welcomed the dialogue between Iceland and the EU on the review of the trade regime for processed agricultural products within the framework of Article 2(2) and Article 6 of Protocol 3 to the EEA Agreement in order to further promote trade in processed agricultural products and looked forward to the conclusion of this dialogue in the near future. The EEA Council encouraged the Contracting Parties to continue the dialogue on the review of the trade regime for processed agricultural products within the framework of Article 2(2) and Article 6 of Protocol 3 to the EEA Agreement in order to further promote trade in this area.

20. The EEA Council underlined the importance of continuing the practice of inviting officials from the EEA EFTA States to political dialogues held at the level of the relevant Council working parties.
  21. The EEA Council underlined the importance of inviting EEA EFTA Ministers to informal EU ministerial meetings and ministerial conferences relevant to EEA EFTA participation in the Internal Market, and expressed its appreciation to the current Latvian and incoming Luxembourg Presidencies for the continuation of this practice.
  22. The EEA Council recognised the positive contributions made by the EEA EFTA States to the decision-shaping process of EEA-relevant EU legislation and programmes through their participation in the relevant committees, expert groups and agencies, as well as through the submission of EEA EFTA Comments.
  23. The EEA Council noted the Resolutions of the EEA Joint Parliamentary Committee adopted at its meeting in Strasbourg on 17 December 2014 on *Follow-up to the Climate and Energy Policy Framework 2030* and on the *Annual Report of the EEA Joint Committee on the Functioning of the EEA Agreement in 2013*, and the Resolutions of the EEA Joint Parliamentary Committee adopted on 31 March 2015 on *The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership and its possible implications for the EEA EFTA States – Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway* and on *Industrial Policy in Europe*.
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