



**EUROPEAN ECONOMIC
AREA
Council of the EEA**



Luxembourg, 14 June 2005
EEE 1605/05 (Presse)

**23rd meeting of the EEA Council
Luxembourg, 14 June 2005**

Conclusions

1. The twenty-third meeting of the EEA Council took place in Luxembourg on 14 June 2005 under the Presidency of Mr Jean Asselborn, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Luxembourg. The meeting was attended by Mr. Jan Petersen, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Norway, Mr David Oddsson, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iceland and Mrs Rita Kieber-Beck, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Liechtenstein, by Members of the Council of the European Union and by Mr Olli Rehn, Member of the Commission.
2. The EEA Council noted that within the framework of the Political Dialogue the Ministers discussed the Northern Dimension/Russia, the Western Balkans and Middle East.

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3. The EEA Council noted that the enlarged EEA of 1 May 2004 has functioned well. The EEA Enlargement Agreement was, however, still being applied on a provisional basis. The Ministers appealed to the Contracting Parties that had still not ratified the Agreement to do so without delay.
4. The Ministers appreciated the good progress made in the implementation of the new EEA Financial Mechanism and the Norwegian Financial Mechanism. With the legal framework and guidelines in place and the Memoranda of Understanding concluded with Beneficiary States, the implementation has entered a new stage of project generation. The importance of transparency and broad participation in this work was underlined. The EEA Council welcomed the launching of the first calls for proposals.
5. The EEA Council welcomed the signing of the Accession Treaty with Bulgaria and Romania on 25 April and recalled that Article 128 of the EEA Agreement states that any European State becoming a member of the Community shall apply to become a Party to this Agreement. The parties concerned were therefore asked to negotiate and conclude the respective Enlargement Agreements in conformity with this. The EEA Council underlined the common objective of simultaneous accession of new members to the EU and to the EEA, in order to secure the homogeneity and the good functioning of the European Economic Area.
6. The EEA Council encouraged all Contracting Parties to inform relevant actors about the EEA Agreement, in order to facilitate a smooth functioning of the Agreement and safeguard the interests of economic operators in the whole of the EEA.
7. The EEA Council took note of the ratification process of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe since the signing of the Treaty on 29 October 2004.
8. The EEA Council noted the re-launch of the Lisbon Strategy at the Spring Summit on 22 and 23 March 2005, by re-focussing on growth and employment. The Lisbon Strategy shall continue to include the economic, social and environmental pillars, mobilising synergies to boost growth and employment. The Ministers acknowledged that further improvement of the Internal Market plays an important role in reaching the goals of the Lisbon Strategy. The EEA Council noted EEA-EFTA input to the mid-term review, in particular the recommendations concerning innovation, environmental sustainability, employment and gender equality.

9. Regarding the review of the overall work in the EEA co-operation, the EEA Council noted the Progress Report of the EEA Joint Committee. The Ministers welcomed the continuation of a well-functioning co-operation, and the speedy incorporation of new legislation for the Internal Market into the Agreement.

The EEA Council in particular:

- Recalled the importance of timely EEA-EFTA participation in EEA relevant EU Agencies and looked forward to a decision by the EEA Joint Committee on EEA-EFTA participation in the European Food Safety Authority as soon as possible.
- Recalled the aim of maintaining the good functioning of the Internal Market in the field of civil aviation. The EEA Council noted in that context the common interest of the EU and the EEA-EFTA States to develop further the close ties in this field, in particular with regard to common rules and principles governing the organisation of the European airspace (Single European Sky). The EEA Council also noted that the EU and the EEA-EFTA States continue to pursue close informal contacts with respect to the EU's Open Skies Policy. Furthermore, the EEA Council encouraged all Contracting Parties to prevent any possible restrictions to the freedom to provide air services within the EEA, such as discriminatory charges or tax measures.
- Acknowledged that the possible extension of elements of the Internal Market to third countries, such as the Balkan States, may have implications also for the EEA-EFTA States and that it may be mutually beneficial for the Contracting Parties of the EEA Agreement to develop relations with international partners in a way that benefits the good functioning of the EEA Agreement.
- Welcomed the continued constructive dialogue in order to find practical solutions with regard to a system of pre-arrival declarations - the so called "24-hours rule" – and thereby to avoid new obstacles to the free movement of goods in the European Economic Area.
- Acknowledged the EEA-EFTA stake in the efforts to establish a general framework for services in the Internal Market.
- Welcomed the continued EEA-EFTA contributions in the decision-shaping process of EEA relevant EC legislation and programmes through i.a. the participation in appropriate committees and working groups, and through EEA-EFTA Comments.

- Reaffirmed the importance of EEA-EFTA participation in EEA relevant EU programmes. This participation is co-financed by the EEA-EFTA States and contributes to the strengthening of the EEA co-operation outside the four freedoms of the Internal Market, thereby promoting the common political and economic goals attached to the EEA Agreement.
10. The EEA Council reaffirmed the shared aim of creating stable, peaceful and prosperous relations with the neighbouring countries. The EEA Council acknowledged that giving neighbourhood countries or third countries a stake in the Internal Market would be mutually beneficial to all parties involved and of great relevance to the EEA. The EEA Council welcomed the continued exchange of information on further developments of the European Neighbourhood Policy and discussion on possible areas of co-operation.
 11. The EEA Council held an orientation debate on the state of play of the Doha-round (WTO).
 12. The EEA Council noted the interest of the EEA-EFTA States in the ongoing discussions on the EU Financial Perspectives for 2007-2013, due to EEA-EFTA participation in EU related activities (programmes, etc.) financed by the EU budget.
 13. The EEA Council underlined the need to finalise the outstanding issues to ensure rapid implementation of transit of fish and the shrimp quota, which are included in the EEA Enlargement Agreement.
 14. The EEA Council recognised the desirability of inviting EEA-EFTA ministers to attend relevant informal EU Ministerial Meetings as well as Ministerial Conferences, based on the EEA-EFTA participation in the Internal Market. The EEA Council also recalled the practice of inviting the EEA-EFTA States, at the level of officials, to political dialogue meetings with relevant Council working groups in troika format and expressed its appreciation to the incoming UK Presidency for the continuation of this practice.
 15. The EEA Council noted the following Resolutions by the EEA Joint Parliamentary Committee adopted at its 24th meeting in Reykjavík, Iceland on 25 April 2005 on *The Annual Report on the functioning of the EEA Agreement in 2004* and on *The Review of the Regional Aid Guidelines*. It also noted the Resolution of the EEA Consultative Committee adopted at its 13th meeting in Tallinn, Estonia on 31 May 2005 on *The Lisbon Strategy – role and expectations of Economic and Social Partners in the EEA* and its Resolution on *Instruments for increased economic and social cohesion in Europe* adopted on 8 June 2005.