

EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AREA JOINT PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE

INFORMATION NOTE

**on the EU-EFTA Parliamentary relations and
on the work of the EEA JPC**

Directorate General for External Policies of the Union



30 April 2009/ LM

The objective of the European Economic Area (EEA) Agreement is to create a single market in Europe consisting of 450 million citizens. Since the withdrawal from EFTA and the accession to the EU (on 1 January 1995) of Austria, Finland, and Sweden, and with the accession on 1 May 2004 the 8 Eastern European countries, Malta and Cyprus, the EEA comprised the 25 EU Member States and remaining EFTA States Iceland, Liechtenstein¹, and Norway. Following the accession of Bulgaria and Romania on 1 January 2007, the EEA now consists of 30 countries.

The EEA seeks to boost the competitive position of the countries engaged under the Agreement by removing barriers to the free movement of goods, persons, services, and capital, and thus to increase prosperity in the area.

The task of the EEA JPC is to contribute, through dialogue and debate, to a better understanding between the Community and the EFTA States in the fields covered by the EEA Agreement.

In order to ensure democratic parliamentary control, the President of the EEA Council, as well as the representatives of the EEA Joint Committee, will be invited to participate actively in the work of the EEA JPC. The Bureau may invite any other person to attend meetings of the JPC.

All EC legislation applying to the EEA, as well as its implementation shall be subject to scrutiny by the EEA JPC, and members of the EEA JPC have the right to put oral and written questions to the representatives of the EEA Council and the EEA Joint Committee.

The EEA JPC expresses views in the form of reports or resolutions, as appropriate. It shall, in particular, examine the Annual Report of the EEA Joint Committee, issued in accordance with Article 94(4) of the EEA Agreement, on the functioning and the development of the Agreement.

Institutional background

The Agreement on the European Economic Area (EEA) was signed in Oporto on 2 May 1992, the European Parliament giving its assent² on 28 October 1992. The Agreement was then amended to take account of the Swiss decision³ not to enter the EEA, the Adjusting Protocols being signed in Brussels on 17 March 1993. The Agreement entered into force on 1 January 1994.

Signature of the agreement had been delayed by two referrals to the European Court of Justice:

- (i) on 14 August 1991 the European Commission requested the Court's opinion on the compatibility of the EEA Agreement with the provisions of the EEC Treaty, and more particularly of the judicial machinery which it was proposed to set up under the agreement. On 14 December 1991, the Court gave as its opinion (opinion 1/91: OJ C 110, 29 April 1992) that "the system of judicial supervision which the agreement

¹ Liechtenstein joined the EEA on 1 May 1995 after resolving outstanding issues related to its custom union with Switzerland

² voting 384, **in favour 351**, against 16, abstentions 17

³ in a referendum on 6 December 1992, Switzerland decided, by double majority of population and cantons, not to join the EEA

proposes to set up is incompatible with the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community".

Subsequent negotiations between the Commission and the EFTA countries culminated in a number of amendments. On 14 February 1992 the European Parliament adopted a resolution calling on the Commission to seek again the opinion of the Court of Justice, following which

- (ii) on 27 February 1992 the Commission sought the Court's opinion on the compatibility with the EEC Treaty of the renegotiated provisions of the agreement. On 10 April 1992 the Court gave as its opinion (opinion 1/92: OJ C 136, 26 May 1992) that the relevant provisions were compatible.

Role of the European Parliament¹

It is difficult to assess exactly the influence of the European Parliament on the EEA Agreement. Given the EP's implicit right of veto inherent in the requirement for its assent under Article 238 of the EEC Treaty, this influence has been quite substantial. Throughout the negotiation process the EP was able to formulate demands to the negotiating parties, threatening to refuse its assent should those demands not be met.

In various resolutions adopted before and during the EEA negotiation phase (resolutions of 14 December 1989, OJ No. C 15 of 22.01.90, 5 April 1990, OJ No. C 113 of 07.05.90, 14 March 1991, OJ No. C 106 of 22.04.91, 14 June 1991, OJ No. C 183 of 15.07.91 and 14 February 1992, OJ No. C 67 of 16.03.92), the EP emphasized in particular two conditions for its assent: total autonomy of the Community's decision-making power should be safeguarded, and the influence of the EP in the EC decision-making process should in no way be eroded through the EEA Agreement. The EP could under no circumstances have accepted a situation where the EFTA countries would have had a higher degree of influence on EC legislation than the EP.

As the EP considered that its demands concerning these two points were met in the final Agreement, it gave its assent to the conclusion of the EEA Agreement on 28 October 1992 (legislative resolution of 28 October 1992 [1] and resolution of 30 October 1992 [2], OJ No. C 305, 23.11.92). Furthermore, Parliament gave its assent to the EEA decision amending Protocol 47 and certain Annexes to the EEA Agreement (OJ C 194, 19 July 1993) and to the EEA decision to incorporate the 'acquis communautaire' into the EEA Agreement (OJ C 205, 25 July 1994).

Setting-up of the EEA Joint Parliamentary Committee

Under article 95 of the Agreement, an EEA Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) was established, details of which were set out in Protocol 36 to the Agreement.

From 1981 until the establishment of the EEA JPC, regular meetings took place between the European Parliament and the Committee of members of parliament of EFTA countries.

¹ this section is taken from the "Fact Sheets" prepared by the Directorate General for Research

In the late '80s, as moves towards the creation of the European Economic Area gained impetus, the European Parliament decided to reinforce its bilateral links with the parliaments of the EFTA countries by setting up individual bilateral delegations for relations with each of these. This tendency was reinforced by the successive decisions by Austria, Sweden, Finland, and Norway, to apply for EC membership, with the subsequent upgrading of parliamentary relations with these countries to joint parliamentary committees.

The constituent meeting of the EEA JPC took place in Brussels on 24-25 January 1994, and was opened by EP President Egon KLEPSCH and Ms Kirsti KOLLE GRØNDAHL, Speaker of Stortinget. At this meeting, the EEA JPC adopted its Rules of Procedure¹. The constituent meeting had been preceded by a "special meeting" of MEPs and EFTA MPs in Bergen in June 1993 to prepare for the setting-up of the EEA JPC.

Every year, the presidency and the vice presidency of the EEA JPC alternate between the EU and the EFTA side.

Subsequent EEA JPC meetings have taken place as follows:

- 2nd meeting: Helsinki, 26 - 27 April 1994
- 3rd meeting: Brussels, 13 October 1994
- 4th meeting: Brussels, 29 May 1995
- 5th meeting: Triesenberg (FL), 20 November 1995
- 6th meeting: Akureyri (IS), 3 June 1996
- 7th meeting: Brussels, 7 October 1996
- 8th meeting: Oslo, 14 April 1997
- 9th meeting: Brussels, 27 - 28 October 1997
- 10th meeting: Vaduz, 25 - 26 May 1998
- 11th meeting: Luxembourg, 23 - 24 November 1998
- 12th meeting: Keflavik, 16 March 1999
- 13th meeting: Brussels, 6-7 December 1999
- 14th meeting: Oslo, 24-25 May 2000
- 15th meeting: Brussels, 27-28 November 2000
- 16th meeting: Vaduz, 19-20 June 2001
- 17th meeting: Brussels, 15-16 October 2001
- 18th meeting: Reykjavik, 26-28 May 2002
- 19th meeting: Brussels, 26 November 2002
- 20th meeting: Ålesund, 19-20 May 2003
- 21st meeting: Brussels, 27 November 2003
- 22nd meeting: Vaduz, 26-27 April 2004
- 23rd meeting: Brussels, 22-23 November 2004
- 24th meeting: Reykjavik, 25 April 2005
- 25th meeting: Brussels, 22-23 November 2005
- 26th meeting: Tromsø, 23 May 2006
- 27th meeting: Brussels, 10 October 2006
- 28th meeting: Vaduz, 26-27 June 2007
- 29th meeting: Strasbourg, 14-15 November 2007

¹ at its 6th meeting, the JPC adopted amendments to the Rules of Procedure designed to take account of established practice (see PE 218.364)

- 30th meeting Svartsengi, 29 April 2008
- 31st meeting Brussels, 4 November 2008
- 32nd meeting Strasbourg, 25-26 March 2009

Originally established as a 66-member body (33 MEPs and 33 EFTA MPs), it was agreed by mutual consent following the accession to the EU in January 1995 of Austria, Finland, and Sweden, to reduce the component delegations to 12 members each¹. This change took effect with the 4th JPC meeting (Brussels, 29 May 1995).

At each meeting, the JPC has had discussions with representatives of the EEA Council of Ministers, the EEA Joint Committee, and the EFTA Surveillance Authority (ESA).

Parliamentarians from the Swiss Federal Assembly attend the meetings as observers.

Reports and resolutions adopted, and issues discussed, by the EEA JPC

At its *constituent meeting* (Brussels, 25 January 1994), the JPC adopted a declaration insisting "on the need for full cooperation from the EEA Council and the EEA Joint Committee in order to ensure that the EEA Treaty is implemented with thorough scrutiny and complete transparency".

At the *2nd meeting* (Helsinki, 26-27 April 1994), the JPC considered reports² on the four freedoms, competition policy, and flanking policies, and adopted recommendations in each of these areas (see PE 208.439).

At the *3rd meeting* (Brussels, 13 October 1994), the EEA Joint Committee reported on the action taken on the recommendations adopted at the previous meeting³, and also answered written questions tabled by JPC members concerning environmental protection, and the nuclear reprocessing plant at Sellafield (UK). In addition, the JPC considered reports on trans-European networks, state aid, and social policy, and adopted recommendations in each of these areas (see PE 209.668).

At the *4th meeting* (Brussels, 29 May 1995), the JPC considered reports on the annual report on the activities of the EEA in 1994, and on competition policy and state aid, and adopted resolutions in these areas (see PE 213.331).

At the *5th meeting* (Triesenberg, 20 November 1995), the JPC considered reports on the environment, and on freedom of movement of persons, and adopted resolutions in these areas. The JPC also adopted a resolution on relations with the EEA Council and the Joint Committee in which it requested that "written responses to specific recommendations adopted by the JPC" should "systematically be provided in advance of JPC meetings in order to allow time for JPC members to study them" (see PE 215.446).

¹ on 16 March 1995, the European Parliament took a decision setting-up a 12-member delegation to the EEA JPC

² EEA JPC reports are drawn up by co-rapporteurs, one each from the EP and EFTA delegations

³ at all subsequent meetings, the EEA Joint Committee has reported on the recommendations/resolutions adopted at the previous meeting ; the interinstitutional dialogue with EEA Council and Joint Committee has become a significant feature of EEA JPC meetings

At the *6th meeting* (Akureyri, 3 June 1996), the JPC considered reports on the annual report on the activities of the EEA in 1995, and on telecommunications, and adopted resolutions in these areas (see PE 218.122).

At the *7th meeting* (Brussels, 7 October 1996), the JPC welcomed the decision taken by the EEA Council on 11 June 1996 "to take note systematically of the reports and resolutions adopted by the JPC", and expressed the hope that this should not be limited to a merely formal procedure.

Also at this meeting, the JPC considered reports on the four freedoms, competition policy, and pan-European cumulation, and adopted resolutions on the two latter subjects (see PE 219.775). Following a lengthy discussion of the draft report on the four freedoms with particular reference to Norwegian salmon farming and freedom of movement of persons in the context of the association of Iceland and Norway with the Schengen Agreements, the JPC failed to reach the majority necessary to adopt the resolution contained in this report. In effect, the Rules of Procedure as revised at the previous meeting of the JPC in Akureyri in June 1996 require a 2/3 majority in order to adopt a resolution in its entirety.

It was further decided, subject to review by the EEA JPC Bureau meeting in early 1997 (following reconstitution of the EP delegation in January 97), that reports should be prepared with a view to the 8th JPC meeting on the annual report of the Joint Committee on EEA activities in 1996, on the implications for the EEA of the single market in the energy sector, and on freedom of movement of capital and in the financial services sector.

At its *8th meeting* (Oslo, 14 April 1997), the JPC had a thorough exchange of view with the representatives of the Presidency-in-Office of the EEA Council, the Presidency-in-Office of the EEA Joint Committee and the President of the EFTA Surveillance Authority on the development of the EEA Agreement and the follow-up to resolutions adopted by the JPC.

The JPC stressed that the functioning of the EEA in 1996 and the report from the Joint Committee had improved over the last year. The dialogue between the Joint Committee and the JPC had also improved although there was still room for progress. The JPC expressed concern about the backlog of implementation of EU legislation.

The committee considered and adopted resolutions on:

-The annual report on the activities of the EEA in 1996

Co-rapporteurs: Mr Haakon BLANKENBORG (Labour Party - Norway)
Mr Gary TITLEY (PSE - UK)

-The single market in energy

Co-rapporteurs: Mr Hjörleifur GUTTORMSSON (People's Alliance - Iceland)
Ms Marjo MATIKAINEN-KALLSTRÖM (PPE - Finland)

-Freedom of movement of capital and financial services

Co-rapporteurs: Mr Einar STEENSNAES (Christian Democratic Party - Norway)
Mr Sören WIBE (PSE - Sweden)

The main business of the *9th meeting* (Brussels, 27-28 October 1997) was the consideration of the draft reports on A Common European Transport Policy (co-rapporteurs: Mr Otto BUCHEL

(Patriotic Union - Liechtenstein) and Mr Jonas SJÖSTEDT (GUE - Sweden)), and on the Information Society and the EEA (co-rapporteurs: Ms Johanna BOOGERD-QUAAK (ELDR - Netherlands) and Ms Gunnlaugur SIGMUNDSSON (Progressive Party - Iceland)).

By a unanimous vote the Joint Parliamentary Committee adopted a resolution on a common European transport policy calling for a strengthened safety and environment policy in the maritime transport sector. The Committee also emphasized the importance of finalising the bilateral EU- Switzerland negotiations on transit transport, taking into account Switzerland's environmental problems.

The resolution on the information society and the EEA was also adopted unanimously by the Committee. The resolution urges the EEA to stimulate more systematically the electronic use of art and culture and calls for a European legislation in connection with electronic commerce as well as a coordinated European approach for promoting worldwide recognition of the GSM system.

At the *10th meeting* (Vaduz, 25-26 May 1998) the committee considered four draft reports. Despite some backlog of acts to be incorporated into the EEA Agreement, the meeting agreed in its resolution on the Annual Report on the functioning of the EEA Agreement (1997) (co-rapporteurs: Mr Otto BUCHEL (Patriotic Union - Liechtenstein) and Mr Gary TITLEY (PSE - UK)) that the EEA was functioning well. In its resolution on the Amsterdam Treaty and its implications for the EEA (co-rapporteurs: Mr Sören WIBE (PSE - Sweden) and Mr Haakon BLANKENBORG (Labour - Norway)) the JPC called for further analysis of how the extended use of the co-decision procedure foreseen would effect the decision-shaping in the EEA. The JPC discussed the report on free movement of workers (co-rapporteurs: Mr Sighvatur BJÖRGVINSSON (Social Democratic Party - Iceland) and Ms Marjo MATIKANEN-KALLSTRÖM (PPE - Finland)) and called for a study of the feasibility of setting up a system of "green cards", which would allow educational institutional institutions throughout the EEA, which fulfil minimum criteria for given professional qualifications, to issue such cards to graduates, who would then be allowed to work anywhere in the EEA without further recognition procedure. Finally, in its resolution on the outcome of the Kyoto Conference and its implications for the EEA (co-rapporteurs: Mr Markus FERBER (PPE - Germany) and Mr Bror Yngve RAHM (Christian Democratic Party - Norway)) the JPC called on the EEA States to play an active and constructive role in order to pave the way for a successful outcome of the forthcoming Buenos Aires Conference.

At its *11th meeting* (Luxembourg, 23-24 November 1998), the JPC discussed the draft report on the EU-enlargement and its effects on the EEA (co-rapporteurs: Mr Sören WIBE (PSE - Sweden) and Mr Vilhjálmur EGILSSON (Independence Party - Iceland)) and the draft report on food safety in the EEA (co-rapporteurs: Ms Grete KNUDSEN (Labour Party - Norway) and Ms Marjo MATIKANEN-KALLSTRÖM (PPE - Finland)).

As a sufficient number of members of the European Parliament were not present to meet the demand for quorum requested in Rule 13 of the Rules of Procedure, the JPC decided to postpone the votes on the draft resolutions to the next ordinary JPC meeting.

The committee also discussed the feasibility of a possible future association between EEA/EFTA parliamentarians and the Conference of Community Affairs Committee (COSAC) and the JPC gave a mandate to its chairman to draw the attention of the EEA/EFTA parliaments to the COSAC and to urge them to explore the possibility of a liaison.

COSAC had come to play a more predominant role both at national and European levels over the last few years. In May 1989 the Presidents of the Parliaments of the Member States of the European Community agreed to reinforce the role of national parliaments in the Community process by bringing together the various committees in the national parliaments specialising in European affairs. The following November these committees met with representatives of the European Parliament for the first time. The European Parliament sends a delegation to all COSAC meetings.

The COSAC meetings have come to address a broad variety of issues, ranging from enlargement, employment and EMU to institutional discussions designed to improve parliamentary scrutiny. The fact that the Amsterdam European Council acknowledged COSAC in the Treaty, highlights the increased significance of the role national parliaments play in the Union's legislative procedures. The Amsterdam Treaty also provides for increased influence of the European Parliament in the legislative procedures which calls for rethinking of the way in which institutions relate to one another.

On this background, the EEA Joint Parliamentary Committee considered it important for EEA EFTA States to closely monitor developments regarding the inter-institutional relationships and to continue to assess the decision shaping and -making process in the European Parliament and the national parliaments. As the EEA EFTA States are taking over most of the Single Market legislation, this could also be an important forum for the EEA EFTA parliaments to exchange information on how various parliaments are handling EU legislation, on national information procedures etc., and thus strengthen democratic control over EEA legislation.

The chairman of the JPC therefore asked the Presidents of the EEA EFTA parliaments to consider raising this issue in their respective parliaments.

At its *12th meeting* (Keflavik, 16 March 1999) the JPC agreed that the so called Financial Mechanism in the EEA Agreement, through which Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein have been contributing to the promotion of social and economic cohesion within the EEA, expired on 31 December 1998. It called, however, on Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein to take positive stance to participating financially in joint efforts to reduce social and economic disparities between the current 18 EEA Member States and the countries that will accede to the EU and the EEA.

The Financial Mechanism was agreed upon when the EU and Member States of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) concluded the agreement on a European Economic Area (EEA). A sum to be paid for five years was fixed. Since some times, divergent opinions on what should happen to the Financial Mechanism after the 31 December 1998 had been expressed and the lack of consensus had certain adverse effects on the implementation of the EEA Agreement. The position of the EU was that the Financial Mechanism should be continued, providing assistance to the present beneficiaries within the EU, while the EFTA side was of the opinion that the Financial Mechanism had run its course. The EFTA side, however, declared its willingness to contribute financially to new cohesion efforts in the context of enlargement.

The EEA JPC urged the contracting partners to find a quick solution as regards the Financial Mechanism to secure the continued good functioning of the EEA Agreement.

In general terms, the EEA was functioning well, the EEA JPC stated. It also pointed out that the role of the European Parliament in EU decision making will increase when the Amsterdam treaty enters into force. The EFTA side of the EEA should take this into account when participating in the shaping of future EEA legislation.

The EEA JPC requested the EEA Joint Committee to present, as soon as feasible, a report on the effects of the enlargement on the EEA Agreement. Furthermore, it called upon all parties to ensure that the accession of new Member States to the EU does not have a negative impact on free trade and trade patterns between the EFTA States and their current free trade partners.

The EEA JPC also requested the EU, in cases of conflict concerning consumer protection and free movement of goods, to respect as far as possible stricter national legislation. It called on the EU and on EFTA/EEA States to defend consumers' interest in upcoming negotiations in the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and stressed the importance of preserving the particular features of national or regional food production, without jeopardising the overall hygienic objectives.

Following resolutions were adopted:

-Resolution on the Annual Report on the functioning of the EEA in 1998

Co-rapporteurs: Mr Árni M. MATHIESEN (Independence Party - Iceland)
Mr Gary TITLEY (PSE - UK)

-Resolution on homogeneity in the EEA

Co-rapporteurs: Mr Haakon BLANKENBORG (Labour Party - Norway)
Ms Jutta HAUG (PSE - Germany)

-Resolution on consumer issues in the EEA

Co-rapporteurs: Mr Jonas SJÖSTEDT (Confederal Group of the European United Left/Nordic Green Left - Sweden)
Mr Alois BECK (Progressive Citizen's Party - Liechtenstein)

-Resolution on the EU enlargement and its effects on the EEA

Co-rapporteurs: Mr Sören WIBE (PSE - Sweden)
Mr Vilhjálmur EGILSSON (Independence Party - Iceland)

-Resolution on food safety in the EEA

Co-rapporteurs: Ms Grete KNUDSEN (Labour Party - Norway)
Ms Marjo MATIKAINEN-KALLSTRÖM (EPP - Finland)

At its *13th meeting* (Brussels, 6-7 December 1999), the JPC adopted a resolution on the activities of the EEA JPC in the period 1995-1999.

An overview showed that the Committee had adopted 23 resolutions on most aspects of the EEA Agreement during the previous five years. The EEA JPC resolution recommended that the Committee should increasingly look into how parliaments at the national and European level were influencing legislation.

The Joint Parliamentary Committee urged the EEA Joint Committee to provide regular briefings on developments in the EU, in particular on possible effects of enlargement. The EEA JPC

underlined the importance of distinguishing between the impact enlargement would have on the EEA Agreement as such and the impact it could have on the functioning of the Agreement. In view of the forthcoming enlargement of the EEA, the Committee called on the contracting parties to ensure homogeneity in the EEA.

In an exchange of views, HSH Prince Nikolaus of Liechtenstein, representing the President-in-Office of the EEA Council, gave an overview of recent developments in the EEA, emphasising that new EU member states were obliged to apply to join the EU and EEA simultaneously. The EEA Council underlined the importance of the parliamentary cooperation in the EEA, contributing to a better understanding of the functioning and benefits of the EEA Agreement.

Ms Päivi LUOSTARINEN, representing the Presidency of the EU Council of Ministers, briefed the delegates on the enlargement of the EU/EEA, stressing that ways and means should be found in good time to avoid legal gaps between the EU and the EEA.

Mr. Knut ALMESTAD, President of the EFTA Surveillance Authority, presented the 5th Single Market Scoreboard, comparing the implementation of Single Market legislation throughout the European Economic Area. He stated that the progress towards completion of the EEA was satisfactory but urged governments to make an effort to overcome existing shortcomings. The EEA JPC expressed its concern about the implementation of the Single Market and endorsed a deadline of 2002 for the completion of the four freedoms.

At its *14th meeting* (Oslo, 24-25 May 2000), the Joint Parliamentary Committee adopted three resolutions on:

-Justice and Home Affairs and the EEA.

The Committee called on the EEA EFTA States to closely monitor all initiatives taken by the EU in the field of justice and home affairs and to assess the impact on the EEA Agreement.

-the Annual Report on the Functioning on the EEA Agreement in 1999.

The Committee agreed with the general assessment that the EEA Agreement is functioning in a satisfactory manner. The Committee wished to be kept informed of the possible impacts on the EEA Agreement in view of the ratification of the Amsterdam Treaty and of its potential effects on the Agreement during the EU/EEA enlargement negotiations.

-Homogeneity in the European Economic Area.

The Committee urged the EEA States to eliminate the backlog of transposition of Single Market legislation into national laws and regulations and also urged the governments of the eighteen EEA States to increase public awareness of the Single Market.

During an exchange of views Ambassador Caimoto DUARTE, representing the President-in-Office of the EEA Council, expressed his satisfaction on the new EEA financial arrangement for an additional contribution of the EEA EFTA States towards further reduction of social and economic disparities between the regions with a view to promoting a continuous and balanced strengthening of trade and economic relations among the EEA regions. He informed the Committee of developments in the enlargement process, the Intergovernmental Conference and the follow-up to the Lisbon Summit.

Mr BARBASO, President-in-Office of the EEA Joint Committee, spoke of a problem that had haunted the Agreement, namely the lack of adequate information to individuals and economic actors on the status of EEA legislation. He was, in this context, pleased to report that substantial progress had been made to increase the transparency of EEA legislation.

Ambassador BULL, EFTA President of the EEA Joint Committee and representing the EFTA President of the EEA Council, highlighted EFTA's involvement in EU programmes and the efforts to secure the participation of EFTA experts in the management of the programmes from the very beginning.

The President of the EFTA Surveillance Authority, Mr ALMESTAD, presented the latest Single Market Scoreboard (No. 6) on the implementation of Single Market directives in Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein.

The Committee further welcomed the positive outcome of the recent referendum in Switzerland on the Swiss-EU agreements.

During its *15th meeting* (Brussels 27-28 November 2000), the Joint Parliamentary Committee adopted two resolutions on:

-e-Commerce and EEA legislation

Co-rapporteurs: Ms Marjo MATIKAINEN-KALLSTRÖM (EPP-ED - Finland)
Mr Vilhjálmur EGILSSON (Independence Party - Iceland)

The Committee welcomed the e-Europe initiative and the Action Plan and recommended that the EEA EFTA States follow the initiative and take relevant actions, and stressed the importance of removing artificial barriers for e-Commerce caused by differences in taxation systems between the EU and the EEA EFTA States.

-EFTA participation in EC programmes

Co-rapporteurs: Ms Siri FROST STERRI (Conservative - Norway)
Mr Toine MANDERS (ELDR - Netherlands)

The Committee welcomed the comprehensive participation of EEA EFTA States in EC programmes and underlined the benefits these programmes represented for the EU and EEA EFTA citizens alike and encouraged the EEA EFTA States to take actively part in the decision-shaping when a new programme is proposed through submitting EFTA comments at an early stage in the process.

Ambassador Gunnar Snorri GUNNARSSON, President of the EEA Joint Committee and representing the President-in-Office of the EEA Council, Minister Jacques FAURE, representing the EU President of the EEA Council and Ms Eva GERNER, representing the EU President of the EEA Joint Committee briefed the JPC on recent developments of the EEA Agreement.

The President of the EEA Surveillance Authority, Mr Knut ALMESTAD, presented the latest Single Market Scoreboard (no. 7) on the implementation of Single Market directives in Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein.

The Committee discussed the developments in the EU after the entry into force of the EEA Agreement in 1994 and the impact on the EEA. Due to the evolution within the EU and its indirect impact on the EEA decision-shaping process, the JPC decided to pursue the debate on this matter at the 16th meeting.

At its *16th meeting* (Vaduz 19-20 June 2001), the Joint Parliamentary Committee unanimously adopted two resolutions on:

- The Annual Report on the Functioning of the EEA Agreement in 2000
Co-rapporteurs: Mr Gary TITLEY (PES - UK)
Mr Otto BÜCHEL (Patriotic Union - Liechtenstein)

The Committee welcomed the Annual Report agreeing that the EEA is functioning satisfactorily. However, it called on the contracting parties to eliminate long outstanding backlog in the area of free movement of goods by the end of 2001, and called on the contracting parties to reassume the incorporation of veterinary *acquis* as soon as possible. The Committee reiterated its warning that incompleteness in the homogeneity of the Internal Market within the EEA at the time of the next EU enlargement could have serious consequences for the functioning of the market.

- EC Comitology and the EEA
Co-rapporteurs: Mr Vidar BJØRNSTAD (Labour Party - Norway)
Mr Markus FERBER (EPP-ED - Germany)

In promoting the transparency of the EEA legislation, the Committee welcomed the participation of the EEA EFTA States in a vast number of EC comitology committees, believing that this participation greatly facilitates the implementation of EEA relevant legal acts adopted by the European Commission through the comitology procedure, as involvement in the comitology process leads to an increased understanding and knowledge in the EEA EFTA States about the proposed measures.

Ambassador Folke LÖFGREN, representing the President-in-Office of the EEA Council, Mr Percy WESTERLUND, President-in-Office of the EEA Joint Committee and HSH Prince Nikolaus von Liechtenstein, EFTA President of the EEA Joint Committee and representing the EFTA President of the EEA Council, briefed the JPC on recent developments of the EEA Agreement.

The President of the EEA Surveillance Authority, Mr Knut ALMESTAD presented the latest Single Market Scoreboard (no. 8) on the implementation of Single Market directives in Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein.

The Committee also discussed the Treaty of Nice and its possible impact on the EEA as well as the consequences of EMU for the EEA EFTA countries.

At its *17th meeting* (Brussels 15-16 October 2001), the Joint Parliamentary Committee unanimously adopted two reports on:

- New Governance of the EU and its implications for the EEA
Co-rapporteurs: Mr Gary TITLEY (PES - UK)
Mr Jürgen ZECH (Progressive Citizens' Party - Liechtenstein)

The Committee welcomed greater openness and transparency in the European Commission's consultation processes but stressed that the core of the policy making had to stay within the democratically accountable and responsible institutions. The Committee also reiterated its support for the EEA EFTA participation in the EC comitology committees and called on the EU side to ensure that the views of the EEA EFTA States were taken into account in a possible process of reforming the comitology system.

-New competition policies in the EEA

Co-rapporteurs: Ms Thorgerdur GUNNARSDÓTTIR (Independence Party - Iceland)
Mr Markus FERBER (EPP-ED - Germany)

The Committee underlined the importance of incorporating EU competition policy reforms into the EEA Agreement to ensure a homogeneous EEA and a satisfactory level of co-operation between the EU and EFTA pillar in the enforcement of the EEA Agreement; the Committee also stressed the importance of EEA EFTA participation in a proposed network of competition authorities in order to ensure uniform application of the competition rules throughout the EEA.

Ambassador Gunnar Snorri GUNNARSSON, representing the President-in-Office of the EEA Joint Committee, Minister Plenipotentiary Bruno NÈVE de MÉVERGNIES, representing the EU-Presidency of the EEA Council, Mr Matthias BRINKMANN, representing the EU President of the EEA Joint Committee and Mr Bernd HAMMERMANN, representing the EFTA Surveillance Authority, briefed the JPC on recent developments in the EEA and follow up to the JPC resolutions adopted in Vaduz, June 2001.

The JPC discussed a Working Paper on the EEA Agreement and the four freedoms: the application of primary law and case law in the EEA presented by Mr HAMMERMANN.

At its *18th meeting* (Reykjavik 26-28 May 2002), under the joint chairmanship of its new President Erika MANN, Member of the European Parliament, and Vice-President Morten HØGLUND, Member of the Norwegian Parliament, the Joint Parliamentary Committee unanimously adopted two reports on:

-Liberalisation of Energy Markets in the EEA

Co-rapporteurs: Ms Marjo MATIKAINEN-KALLSTRÖM (EEP-ED - Finland)
Mr Vidar BJØRNSTAD (Labour Party - Norway)

The Committee stressed a rapid introduction of liberal measures in the EEA in order to secure further development of the Internal Energy Market in a positive direction, and underlined the importance of the EEA countries complying with the decisions for the opening and liberalisation of the electricity and gas markets in a non-discriminatory way. It furthermore highlighted the importance that common EEA rules on electricity and gas take into account public service obligations, and that the liberalisation of the energy policies of the EEA must be developed in a sustainable direction.

-The Annual Report on the Functioning of the EEA Agreement in 2001

Co-rapporteurs: Mr Össur SKARPHÉDINSSON (Social Democratic Alliance - Iceland)
Mr Markus FERBER (EPP-ED - Germany)

The Committee emphasised that the EEA Agreement is a dynamic Agreement evolving in a changing Europe and calls on the EEA EFTA States to agree on a common position for the updating of the EEA Agreement to counteract breaches in the legal homogeneity of the Internal Market as a result of EC Treaty changes after the entry into force of the EEA Agreement, and to submit its proposal to the EU side at the earliest possible stage.

Ambassador Eduardo GARRIGUES, representing the President-in-Office of the EEA Council, Mr Percy WESTERLUND, President-in-Office of the EEA Joint Committee, Ambassador Gunnar Snorri GUNNARSSON, EFTA President of the EEA Joint Committee, and Mr Einar BULL, President of the EFTA Surveillance Authority, briefed the EEA JPC on recent developments in the EEA. In an exchange of views, the EEA JPC urged the EU side to ensure that the necessary time and resources would be deployed to deal with a possible request from the EFTA side for an update of the EEA Agreement, even if such a proposal was put forward before the enlargement of the EU. The EEA JPC, moreover, expressed its concern about the European Commission's safeguard measures for steel products, which it considered to be in breach of the EEA Agreement.

The JPC further discussed Working Papers on State Aid in the EEA and on the Consequences of the EMU for the EFTA countries, presented by the President and the Vice-President.

At its *19th meeting* (Brussels 26 November 2002), the EEA Joint Parliamentary Committee unanimously adopted two reports on:

-The financial services in the EEA

Co-rapporteurs: Dr Johannes BLOKLAND (EDD - Netherlands)

Mr Jürgen ZECH (Progressive Citizen's Party - Liechtenstein)

The Committee welcomed the satisfactory implementation of EEA relevant legislation in the Financial Services Action Plan by the EEA EFTA States, and urged the EEA EFTA and EU States to work for a speedy adoption and implementation of all new legislation according to the Action Plan.

-Decision-shaping in the EEA

Co-rapporteurs: Ms Gunn Karin GJUL (Labour Party - Norway)

Mr Gary TITLEY (PES - UK)

The Committee called on the EEA EFTA States to use the opportunities to participate in the EEA decision-shaping process to their fullest and at the earliest possible stage in the process. The EEA JPC also called on the EEA EFTA and EU States, in view of the EU and EEA enlargement, to promote and safeguard the right of the EEA EFTA participation in the decision-shaping process.

The Committee discussed developments of the EEA Agreement and the imminent enlargement of the EEA.

Ambassador Sten LILHOLT, representing the EU President of the EEA Council noted the great improvement in incorporating new acts into the EEA Agreement, and invited the EEA EFTA States to maintain the high rate. He 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. The Ambassador stated the need to share the

responsibility to narrow the gap between the much larger economic and social disparities in the enlarged EEA.

Mr Percy WESTERLUND, EU President of the EEA Joint Committee, stated that negotiations concerning the extension of the EEA Agreement to future EU Member States would be launched after the European Council in December 2002 and as soon as the new EU Member States had applied for EEA accession. The Commission would invite the EEA EFTA States to enhance their financial contribution to social and economic cohesion. The EEA EFTA contribution could be administrated through the existing Financial Instrument, which should be made permanent.

Ambassador Kjartan JÓHANSSON, President-in-Office of the EEA Joint Committee and representing the President-in-Office of the EEA Council, stated that the EEA EFTA States were willing to continue to contribute to social and economic cohesion in view of the larger internal market, and expressed surprise at the level of the financial claim as indicated by the Commission. He underlined that any possible, future contributions would have to be seen in the context of lost market access in fish when the candidate countries became members of the EU. Ambassador JÓHANSSON stressed that the EU enlargement should not lead to any new trade barriers in Europe.

Mr Einar BULL, President of the EFTA Surveillance Authority, presented the most recent Internal Market Scoreboard (no 11).

The EEA JPC stressed that the EEA enlargement negotiations must be conducted in an open, constructive and transparent way, with a view to concluding negotiations by April 2003 so that simultaneous enlargement of the EU and the EEA could be achieved.

The JPC discussed Working Papers on Financial Mechanism/Instrument 1994-2003 presented by Mr Morten HØGLUND and on the Future of Europe, presented by the MEP Timothy KIRKHOPE, Member of the Convention.

At its *20th meeting* (Ålesund, 19-20 May 2003), the Joint Parliamentary Committee adopted two resolutions on:

-The Annual Report on the functioning of the EEA Agreement in 2002
Co-rapporteurs: Mr Gunnar BIRGISSON (Independence Party - Iceland)
Mr Gary TITLEY (PSE - UK)

-The Future of an Enlarged Europe
Co-rapporteurs: Mrs Diana WALLIS (ELDR - UK)
Mr Vidar BJØRNSTAD (Labour Party - Norway)

The EEA JPC underlined the importance of the simultaneous enlargement of both the EU and the EEA to avoid chaotic conditions for EU and EEA citizens and economic operators after 1 May 2004. Although welcoming the enlargement of the EU and the EEA, the Committee expressed concern about the EEA EFTA States' ability to shape decisions and to make its voice heard in an enlarged Europe. The EEA JPC furthermore called on the EEA EFTA States and the EU Member States to assess the outcome of the Convention on the Future of Europe on the functioning of the EEA Agreement. The Committee discussed a number of possible consequences for the EEA EFTA States.

The EEA JPC discussed the Lisbon Strategy, its relevance for Europe and called on the EEA EFTA States to pursue the Lisbon Strategy in line with the EU Member States.

Ambassador John BOUCAOURIS, representing the EEA Council, Mr Matthias BRINKMANN and Mr Erik ÅRHUS representing the EEA Joint Committee, and Mr Einar BULL, President of the EFTA Surveillance Authority, gave an overview of the development of the EEA Agreement during the last six months. They expected the negotiations on the EEA enlargement to come to a conclusion in the very near future.

The EEA JPC recommended that proper European Commission delegations in Iceland and Switzerland be established.

At its 21st meeting (Brussels, 27 November 2003), under the joint chairmanship of its President Jürgen ZECH, Member of the Parliament of Liechtenstein, and Vice-President Erika MANN, Member of the European Parliament, the Joint Parliamentary Committee issued the following statement:

"The EEA Joint Parliamentary Committee calls for a strengthened political dialogue between the EU and the EEA EFTA States.

The EEA JPC therefore welcomes the initiative of the EP delegation to the EEA JPC to invite the three Foreign Ministers of the EEA EFTA States (Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway) to address the EP Committee on Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence Policy on their views on developments in Europe and the future EU-EFTA relations within the EEA framework.

The EEA JPC recommends that the Foreign Ministers of the EEA EFTA States should address the EP in due time before the European elections in June 2004".

The EEA JPC also adopted two resolutions on:

-The Wider Europe and the EEA

Co-rapporteurs: Mr Birkir JONSSON (Progressive Party - Iceland)
Ms Erika MANN (PES - Germany)

The EEA JPC underlined that the EEA EFTA States should also intensify their economic relations with the "Wider Europe" countries in order to avoid potential discrimination of EEA EFTA operators vis-à-vis EU counterparts, and examine the opportunity for deeper political relations outside the scope of the Internal Market.

-The "Draft Constitution for Europe" and its implications for the EEA

Co-rapporteurs: Ms Diana WALLIS (ELDR - UK)
Mr Vidar BJØRNSTAD (Labour Party - Norway)

The EEA JPC acknowledged the efforts made by the Convention to increase democracy and transparency within the EU and to improve decision- and policy making. The EEA JPC raised concerns about the lack of a corresponding function for the EEA EFTA States following the role given to the national parliaments in the draft Constitution and called on the European Parliament

and the parliaments of the EEA EFTA States to consider ways of achieving similar checks on the principle of subsidiarity concerning EEA legislation.

H.S.H Prince Nikolaus of Liechtenstein, President-in-Office of the EEA Joint Committee and representing the President of the EEA Council, Ambassador Alessandro MEROLA, representing the EU President of the EEA Council, Mr Percy WESTERLUND, EU President of the EEA Joint Committee, and Mr Einar BULL, President of the EFTA Surveillance Authority, gave an overview of the development of the EEA Agreement during the last six months. They expressed appreciation of the recent signing of the EEA Enlargement Agreement and looked forward to its rapid ratification by all contracting parties.

Mr Halldór GRÖNVOLD, Chairman of the EFTA Consultative Committee and Co-Chairman of the EEA Consultative Committee, presented a Working Paper on EU agencies and the EEA.

On 17 March 2004, the Foreign Ministers of Liechtenstein, Mr Ernst WALCH, Iceland, Mr Halldor ASGRIMSSON and Norway, Mr Jan PETERSEN addressed a joint meeting of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence Policy and the Delegation to the EEA Joint Parliamentary Committee. The topic was: "The wider Europe and the future EU-EFTA relations within the EEA framework".

At its *22nd meeting* (Vaduz, 26-27 April 2004), under the joint chairmanship of its President Erika MANN, Member of the European Parliament, and Vice-President Gunnar BIRGISSON, Member of the Icelandic Parliament, the Joint Parliamentary Committee adopted two resolutions and one recommendation on the following topics:

-Draft annual report on the functioning of the EEA Agreement in 2003
Co-rapporteurs: Mr Morten HØGLUND (Progressive Party - Norway)
Ms Diana WALLIS (ELDR - UK)

The EEA JPC welcomed the enlargement of the EU and the EEA on 1 May 2004, noting the considerable EEA EFTA contributions to social and economic cohesion in Europe through a new Financial Mechanism 2004-2009. The EEA Parliamentarians noted that the EU's new Neighbourhood Policy would pave the way for a deeper political and economic relationship between the EU and the "Wider Europe" countries and called on the EEA EFTA States to examine their relations with these countries in line with the EU. In this context, the EEA JPC welcomed the recent meeting between EEA EFTA Foreign Ministers and the European Parliament and proposed that such events could take place on a regular basis.

-Towards participatory democracy: the role of local and regional authorities in the EU and the EEA
Co-rapporteurs: Ms Erika MANN (PES - Germany)
Ms Bryndis HLÖDVERSDÓTTIR (Social Democratic Alliance - Iceland)

The EEA JPC called on the EFTA States to establish an EFTA Committee of the Regions, which would function as an advisory body representing local and regional representatives from the EFTA States, to allow for informal cooperation with the EU's Committee of the Regions.

-EU ban of CO gas in the packaging of fresh meat
Rapporteur: Mr Morten HØGLUND (Progressive Party - Norway)

The EEA JPC recommended that a transition period for CO gas in the packaging of fresh meat in Norway should be reconsidered to allow market operators to adapt accordingly.

The EP delegation to the EEA JPC and one member of the EFTA delegation abstained from voting on this recommendation.

H.E Mr Joseph LYNCH, Ambassador representing the President-in-Office of the EEA Council, H.S.H Prince Nikolaus of Liechtenstein, EFTA President of the EEA Joint Committee and representing the EFTA President of the EEA Council, Mr Vittorio GHIDI, European Commission, representing the President-in-office of the EEA Joint Committee and Mr Hannes HAFSTEIN, President of the EFTA Surveillance Authority, gave an overview of the functioning and development of the EEA Agreement.

Following the European elections in June 2004, the EP delegation for Relations with Switzerland, Iceland and Norway and the delegation to the EEA JPC were merged into one delegation in order to avoid overlapping activities.

At the 23rd meeting (Brussels, 22-23 November 2004), the Joint Parliamentary Committee adopted two resolutions on the following topics:

-The Internal Market Strategy 2003-2006 and the EEA

Co-rapporteurs: Mrs Diana WALLIS (ALDE - UK)

Mr Jürgen ZECH (Progressive Citizens' Party - Liechtenstein)

The EEA JPC welcomed the Internal Market Strategy as an essential initiative for making the EEA the most competitive and dynamic knowledge based economy in the world by 2010. It further called on the EEA countries to adopt an earnest and rigorous approach to implementing relevant initiatives in the Strategy's 10 point action plan, called on the EEA Countries to continue efforts to free trade in services, and to find solutions that guaranteed acceptable levels of worker and consumer protection and worker remuneration.

-The decision shaping within the EEA and the role of the parliamentarians

Co-rapporteurs: Mr Vidar BJØRNSTAD (Labour Party - Norway)

Mr Jens-Peter BONDE (IND/DEM - Denmark)

The EEA JPC noted the discrepancies in the level of involvement of parliamentarians in decision-making processes between the EEA EFTA States and the EU Member States and called on the EEA EFTA Parliamentarians to make every effort to strengthen their role in these processes by a better use of existing structures.

The EEA JPC further decided to request the presence of its Presidency at future EEA Council meetings.

Ambassador Kjartan JÓHANNSSON, President of the EEA Joint Committee and representing the President-in-Office of the EEA Council, Mr Nieck Peter Van ZUTPHEN, Deputy Director general of the Dutch Foreign Ministry, representing the EU President of the EEA Council, Mr Richard WRIGHT, EU President of the EEA Joint Committee and Mr Hannes HAFSTEIN, President of the EFTA Surveillance Authority, gave an overview of the functioning and development of the EEA Agreement.

At the *24th meeting* (Reykjavik, 25 April 2005), the Joint Parliamentary Committee adopted two resolutions on the following topics:

-Annual Report on the functioning of the EEA Agreement in 2004

Co-rapporteurs: Mr Gunnar BIRGISSON (Independence Party - Iceland)
Ms Ewa HEDKVIST PETERSEN (PSE - Sweden)

The EEA JPC stated that the EEA Agreement was functioning well. It called on the EEA EFTA States to pursue monitoring and assessing the EU Neighbourhood Policy as this policy could have important repercussions for the EEA EFTA States and equally stressed the need for further developments of the Northern Dimension.

-Review of the regional aid guidelines

Co-rapporteur: Mr Morten HØGLUND (Progress Party - Norway)
Ms Diana WALLIS (ALDE - UK)

The EEA JPC noted that the former Norwegian system of regionally differentiated social security tax had been the single most important instrument in Norwegian regional policy. The EEA JPC recalled that parts of the northern areas of Europe are characterised by very low population density and that depopulation due to lack of employment opportunities is a problem in many of these areas. It called on the Commission to consider, in the review of the regional aid guidelines, the use of effective and cost-efficient measures to prevent depopulation and to stimulate employment and settlement in regions with low population density.

The EEA JPC also discussed the free movement of services (the services directive) and new environmental legislation and the EEA.

Mr HØGLUND briefed the EEA JPC on EU safeguard measures against farmed salmon from Norway and the recently imposed anti-dumping measures against Norway. He underlined that in Norway's firm opinion trade defence measures were neither called for nor legally justified in accordance with the WTO rules. The Commission provided information on the reasoning for its decision.

Ambassador Jean Louis WOLZFELD, representing the EEA Council, Matthias BRINKMANN and Elisabeth WALAAS, representing the EEA Joint Committee and Einar BULL, representing the EFTA Surveillance Authorities briefed the JPC on the functioning and development of the EEA Agreement.

At the *25th meeting* (Brussels, 22-23 November 2005), the Joint Parliamentary Committee adopted unanimously two resolutions on the following topics:

-The resolutions of the EEA JPC 2000-2005

Co-rapporteurs: Mr Morten HØGLUND (Progress Party - Norway)
Ms Ewa HEDKVIST PETERSEN (PSE - Sweden)

The EEA JPC urged the Joint Committee to provide regular briefings on developments in the EU, and the possible impact of the EEA Agreement, in particular the re-launched Lisbon Strategy and the European Neighbourhood Policy. Moreover, the EEA JPC urged the EEA EFTA States to take full advantage of their opportunity to influence decision-shaping at an early

stage in the decision-making procedure. The Committee also called on the EEA Council to confer more closely with the EEA JPC on issues of particular concern in the EEA context.

-New environmental legislation and the EEA

The EEA JPC noted that the Lisbon agenda and the Sustainable Development Strategy of the EU aim at increasing wealth in a manner that respects and enhances social progress and environmental protection. The Committee noted with concern that the marine environment was currently being subject to a variety of threats and if not addressed these threats and pressures would put at risk the generation of wealth and employment opportunities derived from oceans and seas.

The EEA JPC also had a joint meeting with the European Parliament Internal Market and Consumer Protection Committee (IMCO) where it had a fruitful debate on the Services Directive. It was agreed that similar joint meetings could be held in the future on the Internal market and the EEA.

Following a constructive debate in the JPC, the Committee adopted unanimously a statement on the Services Directive welcoming in general terms the aims of the proposed Directive on Services in respect of its potential contribution towards the functioning of the Internal Market and the attainment of the Lisbon goals. The JPC expressed the hope that the form of the Directive eventually agreed by the EU legislative process would indeed attain the stated objectives and confirmed its intention to continue to follow the ongoing legislative process.

Prince Nikolaus of Liechtenstein, President-in-Office of the EEA Council, Matthias BRINKMANN, representing the European Commission, Michael ARON, representing the UK Presidency of the EU Council and Einar BULL, President of the EFTA Surveillance Authority briefed the JPC on the functioning and development of the EEA Agreement.

At the *26th meeting* (Tromsø, 23 May 2006), the Joint Parliamentary Committee adopted unanimously two resolutions on the following topics:

-The Annual Report on the Functioning of the EEA Agreement in 2005

Co-rapporteurs: Mr Franz HEEB (Progressive Citizen's Party - Liechtenstein)
Ms Ewa HEDKVIST PETERSEN (PES - Sweden)

The EEA JPC stated that the EEA Agreement was functioning well. It welcomed the relatively low number of EU acts under consideration on the EFTA side and urged the EEA EFTA states to take actions with a view to enhanced participation in the EEA decision-shaping process. It further noted that the EEA EFTA side has expressed concern over the EU ban on the use of fishmeal in ruminant feed, and expressed its wish that the issue could be solved in a timely manner. The JPC additionally welcomed the good progress made on EEA EFTA participation in the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA).

-Europe's High North: Energy and Environmental issues

Co-rapporteurs: Mr Svein Roald HANSEN (Labour Party - Norway)
Mr Paul RÜBIG (EPP-DE - Austria)

The EEA JPC emphasized that the Arctic environment is a vital source of renewable and non-renewable natural resources which were of utmost importance not only for the region, but for

Europe as a whole. It consequently called on relevant authorities to ensure that the exploitation of resources and the management of the marine environment in the High North was done in an environmentally sound and sustainable manner, and in this context stressed the importance of cooperation within the Northern Dimension.

H.E. Mr Anton KOZUSNIK, Austrian Ambassador to Norway, representing the President-in-Office of the EEA Council, H.E. Mr Stefán Haukur JÓHANNESSEN, Ambassador of Iceland to the European Union, EFTA President of the EEA Joint Committee and representing the EFTA President of the EEA Council, Mr Matthias BRINKMANN, European Commission, representing the President-in-Office of the EEA Joint Committee and Mr Bjørn T. GRYDELAND, President of the EFTA Surveillance Authority briefed the JPC on the functioning and development of the EEA Agreement.

Members further discussed a Working Document on The Implementation of EEA Legislation, as well as on the Services Directive.

At the *27th meeting* (Brussels, 10 October 2006), the Joint Parliamentary Committee adopted unanimously two resolutions on the following topics:

-The implementation of EEA legislation

Co-rapporteurs: Mr Gudlaugur Thór THÓRDARSON (Independence Party - Iceland)
Ms Diana WALLIS (ALDE - UK)

The JPC welcomed the fact that the new EU Member States in general had kept their transposition deficits at a low level. It called for a concerted effort by all EEA Member States to implement and enforce rules effectively, correctly and on time, and further requested consideration of potential means of involving citizens of the three EEA EFTA States more directly in the monitoring and enforcement processes with regard to EEA legislation.

-Enlarging the EEA: Experiences and Perspectives

Co-rapporteurs: Mr Mieczyslaw JANOWSKI (UEN - Poland)
Ms Laila DÅVØY (Christian Democratic Party - Norway)

The JPC emphasized the multiple benefits resulting from the enlargement of the EEA, especially due to the intensification of trade and cultural exchange. It further looked forward to the forthcoming enlargements, and in this context urged relevant authorities to come to a swift and balanced conclusion in the current negotiations with the aim of guaranteeing the parallel enlargement of the EU and the EEA and to ensure the continued good functioning of the Internal Market.

Mr Helge SKAARA, Deputy Head, Norwegian Mission to the EU, representing the President-in-Office of the EEA Council and the President-in-Office of the EEA Joint Committee, Mr Pekka HUHTANIEMI, Under-Secretary of State, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, representing the EU President of the EEA Council, Mr Matthias BRINKMANN, European Commission, Acting EU President of the EEA Joint Committee and Mr Bjørn T. GRYDELAND, President of the EFTA Surveillance Authority briefed the JPC on the functioning and development of the EEA Agreement. During the exchange of views that followed, the adjustment of the Financial Mechanisms was given considerable attention.

Mr STEVENSON, rapporteur of the Committee on Fisheries, outlined the recent developments regarding the use of fishmeal, and informed the JPC that the report on the future of the fishmeal and fish oil industry had not yet been considered in plenary, despite being voted through the Committee on Fisheries in May 2005. The JPC agreed to send a letter to the President of the European Parliament, stating its wish that the report would be put on the agenda.

The members were briefed by Mr Jens-Peter BONDE on the issue of soft legislation, and Ms Diana WALLIS presented the latest developments as regards the Services Directive.

The EEA JPC further had a joint meeting with the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Foreign Ministers of Norway and Liechtenstein and the Permanent Secretary of State of Iceland, where the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Northern Dimension were discussed.

At its 28th meeting (Vaduz, 26-27 June 2007) the Committee elected Ms Katrín JÚLÍUSDÓTTIR (Social Democratic Alliance, Iceland) as President for the remainder of the year. Under the joint chairmanship of Ms JÚLÍUSDÓTTIR and the Vice-President Ms Diana WALLIS (ALDE, United Kingdom), the Joint Parliamentary Committee adopted unanimously 2 resolutions on the following topics:

The Annual Report on the Functioning of the EEA Agreement in 2006

Co-rapporteurs: Mr Bjarni BENEDIKTSSON (Independence Party, Iceland), and
Ms Diana WALLIS (ALDE, United Kingdom)

In the resolution the EEA JPC emphasised that if the EEA is to have a meaningful future, it needs to be taken more seriously and to focus on increased resources and efforts on the part of the European Commission so that the good functioning of the EEA is not put at risk. The Committee furthermore welcomed that most EEA relevant acts had been processed in an efficient manner but still stressed the need to keep the backlog to a minimum. As concerns EEA enlargement, the EEA JPC expressed its grave concerns that a settlement in the accession of Bulgaria and Romania to the EEA was seriously delayed and emphasised that this delay should not have any serious repercussions. The Committee stressed that disruptions such as these can have grave consequences for the good functioning of the Agreement. As for the incorporation of Directive 2004/38/EC on the free movement of persons, the Committee regretted that the transposition deadline had been missed, leading the European Commission to activate Article 102 of the EEA Agreement. These measures have only been taken once before in the successful history of the EEA. The Committee urged the relevant authorities to resolve the issue in a pragmatic way and with utmost urgency.

The EU Future Maritime Policy: Implications for the EEA

Co-rapporteurs: Mr Børge BRENDE (Conservative Party, Norway) and
Mr Alyn SMITH (Greens/EFA, United Kingdom)

In the resolution the EEA JPC acknowledged that the European Commission's Green paper on EU's Future Maritime Policy lays the foundation for a future dynamic and pro-active Maritime Policy which is directly linked to the internal market. The EEA EFTA States' flagged fleet has a 26% share of the world fleet and the Committee welcomed the way in which Iceland and Norway have contributed constructively to the establishment of this policy. The Committee recognised that NO_x and SO_x emission still represent a serious pollution problem and expressed its concern that if no further measures are introduced, emissions from international shipping around Europe may surpass the total emissions from all land based sources in the EU member

states combined by 2020. Furthermore, the Committee emphasised the importance of international efforts in developing effective tools and enforcement procedures with the aim of combating Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing. The Committee emphasised that innovation and new technologies are the keys to future cleaner ships and urged strong support and funding at both national and regional levels. In the resolution, the Committee also encouraged increased collaboration between the EU and the Arctic Council in issues concerning maritime affairs.

In addition to the debates on the two resolutions, the Committee discussed a working document on Soft legislation and transparency related to the EEA, drafted by Mr Jens-Peter BONDE (IND/DEM, Denmark). The European Commission was represented by Mr Dominique KLEIN.

Mr Eberhard von SCHUBERT, representing the German Presidency in-office of the EEA Council, Ms Rita KIEBER-BECK, Liechtenstein Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Matthias BRINKMANN, representing the President in-office of the EEA Joint Committee, H.S.H Prince Nikolaus of Liechtenstein, the EFTA President of the EEA Joint Committee, and Mr Bjørn T. Grydeland, President of the EFTA Surveillance Authority briefed the JPC on the functioning and development of the EEA Agreement and exchanged views with Committee members.

In a Joint Meeting between the INTA Committee, the EFTA Parliamentary Committee and the SINEEA delegation on Free Trade on 9 October 2007, parliamentarians from the EP and EFTA (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland) met to discuss non-EEA trade issues of common interest and, in particular, the respective approaches and experiences of EFTA and the EU with regard to negotiating and concluding free trade agreements with third countries.

Mr Børge Brende (Norway) and Mr Christofer Fjellner(EP) both welcomed this opportunity to have an exchange on views between the EFTA parliamentarians and the MEPs on the trade questions falling outside the EEA Agreement.

A lively debate took place on multilateral vs. bilateral approach to the trade questions, which countries/regions are economic and political priorities, the institutional framework of FTA and the parliamentary dimension.

Mr Paul Rübig (EP) raised the question of agriculture goods and custom regulations as well as the secure energy supply and environmental consequences.

Following introductions from Mr Falkenberg, the Commission and Mr Bryn, Secretary General of EFTA, the meeting discussed trade relations to Korea, India, China and Chile as well as a common approach with respect to human and social rights and environmental standards and clauses.

At the 29th meeting (Strasbourg, 14-15 November 2007) of the EEA Joint Parliamentary Committee (EEA JPC), under the Presidency of Ms Katrín JÚLÍUSDÓTTIR (Social Democratic Alliance, Iceland), President of the EEA JPC and the Vice-President Biljana RAEVA (ALDE, Bulgaria), the Joint Parliamentary Committee adopted unanimously 2 resolutions on the following topics:

The Open Method of Coordination and the EEA

Co-rapporteurs: Mr Henrik CADUFF (Patriotic Union, Liechtenstein)

Mr Jens Peter BONDE (IND/DEM, Denmark)

In the resolution on the Open Method of Coordination, the EEA JPC highlighted that this method, while having become a recognised political practice and appropriate policy instrument, constitutes a shift from the traditional regulations, directives and decisions which are incorporated into the EEA Agreement and hence requires special efforts to provide the EEA EFTA States and EEA EFTA stakeholders with the necessary mechanisms for participation in the important policy processes of EEA relevance carried out under the method.

Energy and Climate Change: Implications for the EEA

Co-rapporteurs: Mr Svein Roald HANSEN (Labour Party, Norway)
Mr Paul RÜBIG (EPP-ED, Austria)

In the resolution on Energy and Climate Change, the EEA JPC underlined the two main challenges facing Europe with regard to energy and environmental policies: how to tackle climate change and its effects on the environment, economy and society at large, while at the same time securing future energy supplies. While the costs of stabilising the climate are considerable, the EEA JPC underlined that strong and early action far outweighs the economic and social costs of not acting and should be seen as an important investment in the future, creating a wide range of opportunities for growth and development. Investments needed to be made to increase energy efficiency, renewable energy sources and the use of bio fuels, with the aim to drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The Committee also emphasised the importance of the EU and EFTA working closely together to develop ambitious global targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

In addition to the debates on the two resolutions, the Committee discussed a working paper titled “Future Perspectives for the European Economic Area”, presented by Ms Katrín JÚLÍUSDÓTTIR and Ms Bilyana RAEVA (ALDE, Bulgaria), in which the co-rapporteurs depicted the political and institutional changes of the EU and the way in which those changes have affected the EEA, and raised questions as to the future of the EEA. The Committee decided to revert to the document at its next meeting where it would also adopt a set of recommendations relating to the issues covered.

Mr Joe BORG, European Commissioner for Fisheries and Maritime Affairs, addressed the EEA JPC on the EU Maritime Policy and engaged in a debate with members of the Committee on the various aspects of that policy and the relevance for the EEA EFTA States. In his statement the Commissioner welcomed the constructive contributions of Iceland and Norway to Europe’s Maritime Policy and in his speech he highlighted that evidence of Icelandic and Norwegian positions could be seen in the Blue book which was presented in October.

Mr Stefán Haukur JÓHANNESSON, the President in-Office of the EEA Joint Committee and representing the President in-Office of the EEA Council, Ms Maria José MORAIS PIRES, representing the EU President of the EEA Council, Mr Lars-Olof HOLLNER, representing the EU President of the EEA Joint Committee, and Mr Per SANDERUD, President of the EFTA Surveillance Authority briefed the JPC on the functioning and development of the EEA Agreement and exchanged views with Committee members.

At the 30th meeting (Svartsengi, 29 April 2008) of the EEA Joint Parliamentary Committee, under the joint chairmanship of Ms Bilyana RAEVA (ALDE, Bulgaria) and the Vice-President

Mr Svein Roald HANSEN (Labour Party, Norway), the Joint Parliamentary Committee adopted unanimously 2 resolutions and 1 recommendation on the following topics:

Resolution: The Annual Report on the Functioning of the EEA Agreement in 2007

Co-rapporteurs: Ms Renate WOHLWEND (Progressive Citizen's Party, Liechtenstein, and
Mr Alyn SMITH (Greens/EFA, United Kingdom)

In the resolution the EEA JPC concluded that the EEA is functioning well. It welcomed that at the beginning of 2008 the issues that had caused considerable problems and delays in 2007, such as the EEA Enlargement, free movement of persons, EEA EFTA participation in EFSA, and the Greenhouse Gas Emission Trading Scheme, had been solved. At the same time, the EEA JPC reiterated its concern about these delays and urged the relevant authorities to use all means necessary to prevent such differences going unsolved in the future. The EEA JPC also welcomed Bulgaria and Romania as new members of the EEA and EEA EFTA participation in the new generation of EU programmes 2007-2013. However, the EEA JPC regretted that it had not been possible to secure EEA EFTA participation in the EU Gender Institute in 2007 and requested detailed explanation for this from the relevant authorities. Finally, the EEA JPC recommended that the EEA EFTA States and the European Commission start consultations on the EEA EFTA States' possible financial contribution to reduce the social and economic disparities in the European Economic Area after April 2009.

Resolution: Health service in the European Economic Area

Co-rapporteurs: Mr Svein Roald HANSEN (Labour Party, Norway), and
Mr Paul RÜBIG (EPP, Austria)

In the resolution the EEA JPC stressed the importance that any action in the field of cross-border health services does not undermine national values and principles and the quality of health services. The Committee also underlines the importance of maintaining a sufficient supply of health services in scarcely populated areas, and emphasised the maintenance of specialised services and that developments in the area of patient mobility do not lead to greater social inequality with respect to health service. Further on, the EEA JPC emphasised that the responsibility to organise and finance the national health and social security system should remain with the EEA States in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity; however, a common approach should be considered. The EEA JPC also urged the establishment of common quality standards within the Union and the independent and neutral information of patients about the quality of care within the Member States. Finally, the EEA JPC underlined the potential benefits of competition and diversity seen from the patients' point of view to enhance the quality and increase choices as regards the current and future development of healthcare and in this way increase the rights of the consumers.

Recommendation: Future Perspectives for the EEA

Co-rapporteurs: Ms Katrín JÚLÍUSDÓTTIR (Social Democratic Alliance, Iceland) and
Ms Bilyana RAEVA (ALDE, Bulgaria)

As a follow-up to its Working Paper on the Future Perspectives for the EEA (discussed and agreed at the previous EEA JPC in Strasbourg Nov. 2007) and in light of the adopted Treaty of Lisbon, the EEA JPC agreed on a Recommendation requesting national parliaments in the EEA EFTA States, the European Parliament, the European Commission, and the EEA EFTA States to

provide input to the Committee's future work on the functioning of the EEA Agreement. More specifically, the national parliaments were asked to provide their opinion on the effects of the Treaty of Lisbon and on its future cooperation with national parliaments, including the national EEA EFTA parliaments on EEA related matters; the European Commission was asked to consider whether new legislative proposals of EEA relevance which will be sent to the national parliaments in the EU also be sent to the national EEA EFTA parliaments; and, finally, the EEA EFTA States were asked to provide a comprehensive analysis of the implications of the Treaty of Lisbon on the EEA cooperation.

Ambassador Jozef DROFENIK, representing the Slovenian Presidency in-office of the EEA Council, Ms Elisabeth WALAAS, Norwegian State Secretary of Foreign Affairs, representing the EFTA President of the EEA Council, Mr Matthias BRINKMANN, representing the President in-office of the EEA Joint Committee, Ambassador Oda H. SLETNES, the EFTA President of the EEA Joint Committee, and Mr Per SANDERUD, President of the EFTA Surveillance Authority briefed the JPC on the functioning and development of the EEA Agreement and exchanged views with the Committee members. Members of the Swiss Parliament attended the meeting as observers.

At the 31st meeting, Members of the European Parliament and Parliamentarians from Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein met in Brussels on 4 November 2008 for the 31st meeting of the EEA Joint Parliamentary Committee (EEA JPC).

Under the Presidency of Ms Bilyana RAEVA (ALDE, Bulgaria, President of the EEA JPC and the Vice-President Mr Svein Roald HANSEN (Labour Party, Norway), the Joint Parliamentary Committee adopted unanimously 2 resolutions on the following topics:

Future Perspectives for the European Economic Area

Co-rapporteurs: Ms Katrín JÚLIUSDÓTTIR (Social Democratic Alliance – Iceland)
Ms Bilyana RAEVA (ALDE - Bulgaria)

In the resolution on Future perspectives on the European Economic Area the EEA JPC welcomed the positive endorsement of the Lisbon Treaty by the European Parliament and hoped for a positive conclusion of the ratification process of the Lisbon Treaty which respects the democratic will of all EU member states. The Committee recognised that the EU has become a more heterogeneous interlocutor, making it less able to accommodate special concerns of the EEA EFTA States through adaptations, exceptions, and transition periods in the EEA. It also questioned whether the EEA EFTA States could continue to deal with the rapidly growing number of legal acts and policy initiatives that are relevant to the EEA but also include elements that are not covered by the EEA Agreement on a case by case basis. To this end, the Committee encouraged a reinforced and coordinated approach among the EEA EFTA States. Moreover, the Committee noted that a lack of knowledge in the EU institutions of the rights and obligations contained in the EEA Agreement created problems for EEA EFTA inclusion and participation in EEA relevant initiatives and committees as mandated by the Agreement. Finally, the EEA JPC urged even more active participation by the EEA EFTA national parliaments in EEA matters with regard to strengthening bilateral relations with the European Parliament and the European Parliament political party groups.

Research and Education Programmes: The EEA and the EFTA States

Co-rapporteurs: Ms Hanne DAHL (IND/DEM - Denmark)

Mr Øystein DJUPEDAL (Social Left Party - Norway)

In this resolution the EEA JPC welcomed that the new generation of EU programmes had been included in the EEA Agreement in 2007, which opened up a wide variety of opportunities for EFTA citizens to cooperate in diverse policy areas such as youth, culture, health, environment, civil protection, energy and gender equality. The Committee also underlined that the EFTA countries' needs should be taken into account in all new initiatives that are established for further developing European Research Areas. Moreover, the Committee emphasised that with the Executive agencies being intrinsically linked to the EU programmes, which are incorporated in the EEA agreement, the EEA EFTA States should have full access to the recruitment procedure as with all other activities of the agencies. It highly regretted the decision in July 2008 to block the employment of EEA EFTA citizens in these agencies and strongly urged that this decision would be reversed as soon as possible.

In addition to the debates on the two resolutions, the Committee discussed Iceland and the International financial crisis, an item which was raised on behalf of the Icelandic parliamentary delegation. The fruitful discussions which lasted almost two hours involved parliamentarians and representatives from the EU Council, the European Commission, the EFTA Surveillance Authority and the EEA EFTA States. Moreover, the Committee discussed the item Swiss contributions to the economic and social cohesion of EU which was introduced with a statement by Mr Claude Wild, Deputy Head of the Swiss Mission to the EU. The third additional item which was on the EEA JPC agenda was cross-border health in the EEA which was a follow up to resolution passed at the 30th EEA JPC meeting in Iceland in April this year. The EEA JPC co-rapporteur Mr Svein Roald HANSEN, introduced his work and Mr Bernard Merkel from DG SANCO briefed the Committee on latest developments as concerned Patient's rights in cross-border health care.

Prince Nikolaus von LIECHTENSTEIN, the President in-Office of the EEA Joint Committee and representing the President in-Office of the EEA Council, Ms Natasha BUTLER, representing the EU President of the EEA Council, Mr Alan SEATTER, the EU President of the EEA Joint Committee, and Mr Per SANDERUD, President of the EFTA Surveillance Authority briefed the JPC on the functioning and development of the EEA Agreement and exchanged views with Committee members.

Members of the Swiss Parliament attended the meeting as observers.

Member of the European Parliament and Parliamentarians from Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein met in Strasbourg on 25 and 26 March 2009 for the 32nd meeting of the EEA Joint Parliamentary Committee.

Under the Presidency of Mr Harry Quaderer (Patriotic Union, Liechtenstein) President of the EEA JPC, and Ms Bilyana Raeva (ALDE, Bulgaria), Vice-President, the Joint Parliamentary Committee adopted unanimously a resolution on:

Resolution: The Annual Report on the Functioning of the EEA Agreement in 2008

Co-rapporteurs: Mr Svein Roald Hansen (Labour Party, Norway), and
Ms Bilyana Raeva (ALDE, Bulgaria)

In the resolution the EEA JPC emphasised that the EEA Agreement needed to be taken seriously by all stakeholders and that it needed to be the focus of constant efforts so that outstanding differences are solved promptly and that the good functioning of the EEA is not put at risk. The Committee regretted the outstanding issues on the EEA EFTA States' agency and programme participation and called for these to be solved promptly as EEA EFTA participation in EU programmes constituted an important and vital part of the EEA agreement. The Committee also called on the EEA Joint Committee to pay specific attention to the extraordinary circumstances created by the financial crisis and to have a continuous focus on the challenges this may pose to the good functioning of the EEA Agreement. Moreover, the Committee called on the European Commission to provide the national parliaments of the EEA EFTA States with legislative proposals which are sent to the national parliaments of the EU Member States for consultation, in cases where these regard matters of the Internal Market.

The Committee also debated a report on Labour Market Issues in the EEA: Posted Workers and the Freedom to provide Services (co-rapporteurs Mr Steinar Gullvåg, Labour Party, Norway, and Ms Marie Panayotopoulos-Cassiotou (EPP-ED, Greece)). The adoption of the draft resolution was postponed to the next meeting. A working paper on the EEA and the Global Financial Crisis: The Case of Iceland (co-rapporteurs, Ms Katrín Júlíusdóttir, Social Democratic Alliance, Iceland, and Ms Diana Wallis, ALDE, UK) was also considered by the Committee.

During its 32nd meeting the EEA JPC provided the venue for a high-level forum on Security of Energy supply and the impact on the Financial Market. The Committee's Special Rapporteur on Energy policies, Mr Paul Rübiger (EPP-ED, Austria), introduced the topic and speakers included: Ms Benita Ferrero-Waldner, Commissioner for External Relations, Mr Andris Piebalgs, Commissioner for Energy, Mr Ole Morten Geving, State Secretary from the Norwegian Ministry of Finance, and Mr Geir Westgaard, Vice-President in StatoilHydro and Head of EU Affairs. The high-level forum provided for a rich debate on these highly topical issues.

Another additional item on the agenda was the discussion on Trade in Seal products, which was introduced by Mr Steinar Gullvåg and Ms Diana Wallis.

Ms Alice Soukupova, representing the President-in-Office of the EEA Council, Mr Stefán Haukur Jóhannesson, Ambassador, EFTA President of the EEA Joint Committee and representing the EFTA President of the EEA Council, Mr Matthias Brinkmann, the European Commission, representing the President-in-Office of the EEA Joint Committee, and Mr Per Sanderud, President of the EFTA Surveillance Authority briefed the JPC on the functioning and development of the EEA Agreement and exchanged views with Committee members.

Members of the Swiss Parliament attended the meeting as observers.

The next EEA JPC meeting is scheduled to take place in Norway during the last week of October 2009.

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