



**EUROPEAN ECONOMIC
AREA
Council of the EEA**



Brussels, 27 May 2008
EEE 1605/08 (Presse 151)

**Conclusions of the 29th meeting of the EEA Council
Brussels, 27 May 2008**

1. The twenty-ninth meeting of the EEA Council took place in Brussels on 27 May 2008 under the Presidency of Mr. Matjaž Šinkovec, State Secretary at the Office of the Prime Minister of Slovenia. The meeting was attended by Ms. Elisabeth Walaas, State Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway, by Ms. Rita Kieber-Beck, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Liechtenstein, by Mr. Grétar Már Sigurðsson, Permanent Secretary of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iceland, by Members of the Council of the European Union and by a Representative of the European Commission.
2. The EEA Council noted that within the framework of the Political Dialogue, the Ministers discussed Kosovo, Middle East and Afghanistan.

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3. The EEA Council noted that the Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs has entered into a more focused phase with integrated guidelines for growth and jobs, recognising that the renewed Strategy has already yielded results. The EEA Council welcomed the new cycle of the Strategy starting in 2008, following its endorsement at the Spring European Council.
4. The Ministers stressed the importance of the proposals in the Third Energy Market Package submitted on 19 September 2007 for effective, fully-functioning and interconnected European Electricity and Gas Markets. The Ministers agreed that the further legislative processes in this Package are now approaching a decisive phase and underlined the necessity and feasibility of finding appropriate solutions to the issues at stake.
5. The Ministers welcomed the comprehensive approach of the Energy and Climate Change Package launched on 23 January and endorsed at the Spring European Council. The Package is currently under consideration within the EEA - EFTA States. The Ministers stressed the importance of continuous close co-operation between the EU and the EEA - EFTA States, inter alia, in promoting energy technology, increased use of renewable energy resources (e.g. geothermal energy), and carbon capture and storage (CCS) alongside other technologies. They underlined the importance of supporting early and environmentally safe demonstration of CCS, and expressed interest for EEA - EFTA States' CCS projects to participate in the EU project network for early movers. They recognised the need to address the concern represented by the risk of carbon leakage in certain sectors such as energy intensive industry particularly exposed to international competition.
6. Furthermore, the Ministers noted proposals on the introduction of new sectors into the Emission Trading Scheme and took note of the need to take into account the special circumstances of the EEA - EFTA States.

7. The Ministers expressed their appreciation for the continued progress concerning the EEA Financial Mechanism and the Norwegian Financial Mechanism, with a current portfolio of almost 500 committed projects and block grants supported across Central and Southern Europe, and for the direct co-operation between bodies in the beneficiary States and in the EEA - EFTA States through partnership projects. The EEA Council expressed its satisfaction with the fact that calls for individual project proposals have been held in all beneficiary States. In addition to the € 887 million made available to individual projects by 1 April 2008, more than 40 block grants have been established within the beneficiary States to channel over € 145 million in grants to groups such as non-governmental organisations (NGOs), students and researchers. By 1 April 2008, the EEA - EFTA States had approved applications totalling € 569 million. The EEA Council also noted the further positive effects to be gained from the dedicated efforts of both the donor and the beneficiary States for the successful and timely implementation of the selected projects.

8. The EEA Council noted the Progress Report of the EEA Joint Committee and in particular:
 - Welcomed the participation of the EEA - EFTA States in EEA-relevant EU Programmes for the period 2007 - 2013. This participation is co-financed by the EEA - EFTA States. It also welcomed the EEA - EFTA States' active participation in the new generation of Programmes, thus promoting common interests, towards a more competitive and innovative Europe;

 - Welcomed the on-going trade negotiations between the European Community and Iceland in processed agricultural products within the framework of Protocol 3 to the EEA Agreement and the possible inclusion of Article 19 products into these negotiations. It equally welcomed the continued negotiations between the European Community and Norway on further liberalisation of trade in agricultural products on the basis of Article 19 of the EEA Agreement and noted the review process between the European Community and Norway within the framework of Protocol 3 to the EEA Agreement;

- Welcomed the incorporation of the EU Chemicals Regulation – *REACH* - into the EEA Agreement, including the participation of the EEA - EFTA States in the new European Chemicals Agency. The Ministers agreed that a good foundation for further co-operation in this important area had thus been established.
- Welcomed the follow-up of the new EU Innovation Strategy, in particular the emphasis on the Lead Markets Initiative and the establishment of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology;
- Welcomed the follow-up of the Integrated Maritime Policy and underlined the importance of the close involvement of the EEA - EFTA States in further developments;
- Underlined the importance of EEA – EFTA contribution to the follow-up of the Single Market Review;
- Welcomed the second review of the Better Regulation Initiative and underlined its relevance for the whole of the EEA;
- Acknowledged the EEA - EFTA stake in the efforts to establish an improved general framework for services in the Internal Market;
- Welcomed the EEA - EFTA contributions to the decision-shaping process of EEA-relevant EC legislation and programmes through i.a. participation in relevant Committees and Expert Groups, and by submitting EEA - EFTA Comments.

9. The EEA Council held an orientation debate on Maritime Policy.

10. The Ministers underlined the importance for the Contracting Parties to ascertain that relevant actors throughout the European Economic Area remain well informed about the EEA Agreement.
11. The EEA Council recognised the importance of inviting EEA - EFTA Ministers to attend relevant informal EU Ministerial Meetings and Ministerial Conferences on the basis of 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 Parties in troika format and expressed its appreciation to the incoming French Presidency for the continuation of this practice.
12. The EEA Council noted the Resolutions of the EEA Joint Parliamentary Committee adopted at its 30th meeting in Reykjavík, Iceland on 29-30 April 2008 on The Annual Report on the Functioning of the EEA Agreement in 2007 and on Health services in the EEA.

The EEA Council also noted the Resolutions of the EEA Consultative Committee adopted at its 16th meeting in Svalbard, Norway on 14-16 May 2008 on Transport and Life-long Learning.
