

EEE 1604/26

DRAFT CONCLUSIONS

Subject: Draft Conclusions of the 62nd meeting of the EEA Council (Brussels, 27 May 2026)

1. The sixty second meeting of the European Economic Area Council took place in Brussels on 27 May 2026 under the Presidency of Mr. Michael Damianos, Minister of Energy, Commerce and Industry, representing the Presidency of the Council of the European Union. The meeting was attended by Mr Espen Barth Eide, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Norway; Ms Sabine Monauni, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Environment and Culture of Liechtenstein; and Mr Martin Eyjólfsson, Permanent Secretary of State of Iceland's Ministry for Foreign Affairs as well as by representatives of the European Commission and the European External Action Service.

The members of the EEA Council discussed the overall functioning of the EEA Agreement and held an orientation debate on Ensuring competitiveness and green growth in the Internal Market.
2. The EEA Council underlined the continued and growing importance of the EEA Agreement as a fundamental basis for relations between the EU and the EEA EFTA States. The Agreement bolsters the shared values and principles of democracy, the commitment to a rules-based international order, individual freedoms, the rule of law and fundamental rights.

3. Building on these shared values and principles, the EEA Council emphasised that upholding the rules-based international order also requires a united response to global security challenges.

The members of the EEA Council reiterated their unwavering support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders. They will continue to contribute to peace efforts notably through the Coalition of the Willing and in cooperation with the United States, and to provide, in coordination with like-minded partners and allies, comprehensive political, financial, economic, humanitarian, military and diplomatic support to Ukraine and its people, including by intensifying their global outreach. They also expressed their support for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace, based on the United Nations Charter and international law.

4. The EEA Council welcomed the political dialogue, at ministerial level between the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the foreign ministers of Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, where the participants held an informal exchange of views on current foreign policy matters of mutual interest. It underlined the importance of continuing the practice of inviting officials from the EEA EFTA States to political dialogues held in conjunction with EU Council working parties.
5. The EEA Council underlined, that in a time of geopolitical uncertainty, it is crucial to enhance the security, resilience, strategic autonomy and competitiveness of all 30 states that are part of the Internal Market and deliver tangible results for European citizens and businesses. It underlined the importance of a strong and well-functioning Internal Market, based on the four freedoms and equal and fair conditions of competition for businesses preventing harmful practices and fostering conditions for economic growth and new jobs throughout the EEA.
6. The EEA Council underlined that the EU and the EEA EFTA States share a mutual interest in preserving the integrity of the Internal Market and maintaining a level playing field as new policies and initiatives evolve to cope with ongoing geopolitical challenges.

7. The EEA Council underlined the substantial benefits offered by the Internal Market and the importance of close cooperation between the EU and the EEA EFTA States, and recognised in this context the positive valuable contribution made by the EEA EFTA States to the decision-shaping process of EEA-relevant legislation and programmes. It stressed that this contribution supports our mutual interest in transparent and well-prepared policies. The EEA Council further underlined the importance of inviting EEA EFTA Ministers to relevant informal Ministerial meetings and conferences. It expressed its appreciation to the Cyprus Presidency and incoming Presidencies for the continuation of this practice.
8. The EEA Council recognised the ongoing challenges in international trade at a time when global supply chains are under strain, and reconfirmed its commitment to open, fair and sustainable trade and underlined the importance of the rules-based trade system. The members of the EEA Council agreed to closely work together to achieve meaningful results to follow up on the outcome of the 14th World Trade Organisation Ministerial Conference (MC14), held in Cameroon, in March.
9. The EEA Council recognised the necessity of pursuing the ongoing work to reduce the number of EU acts awaiting incorporation into the EEA Agreement, in order to guarantee the legal security and the homogeneity of the EEA in line with Article 102 of the EEA Agreement. At the same time, it noted that the backlog remained high and stressed the need to intensify efforts and maintain close cooperation towards quick incorporation of long-outstanding files to ensure legal certainty and homogeneity in the EEA and to ensure the proper functioning of the Internal Market. The EEA Council also underlined the importance of ensuring the timely transposition of the *acquis* into national legal system.

10. The EEA Council underlined the importance of close cooperation between the EU and the EEA EFTA States in strengthening economic security and resilience. While acknowledging that the EEA Agreement does not include external trade and customs policies, the EEA Council welcomes continued discussions on close cooperation on policy areas outside the scope of the EEA Agreement, including on how to best approach such matters to ensure competitiveness and preserve the integrity of the Internal Market.
11. To strengthen the Internal Market's competitiveness, the EEA Council highlighted the importance of providing a business-SME and innovation-friendly environment and reducing strategic dependencies in sensitive sectors. It welcomed efforts to simplify rules and reduce administrative burdens through the Omnibus proposals without undermining predictability, policy goals, high standards or the integrity of the Internal Market, as well as the ambitions of the Clean Industrial Deal to turn decarbonisation into a driver of growth for European industries. At the same time, the EEA Council welcomes calls for further ambitious omnibus and simplifications initiatives.
12. The EEA Council emphasised the importance of continued close cooperation between the EU and the EEA EFTA States in achieving their respective climate and biodiversity targets and upholding the objectives of the Paris Agreement and the Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.
13. The EEA Council recognised the critical importance of safe, secure, affordable, sustainable and low carbon energy supplies and defending European energy infrastructure against hybrid and other threats. It underlined that a comprehensive strategy for decarbonisation and competitiveness should offer predictability for the industry and strive to attract, scale-up and maintain businesses within Europe. The EEA Council also stressed the need to fully harness the significant potential of low-carbon energy sources that are safe and sustainable within the EEA, in particular by deepening market integration and continued cross-border cooperation, thereby contributing to the global objective of tripling renewable energy capacity and strengthening Europe's energy security.

14. The EEA Council underlined the key role of carbon pricing in the clean transition and the continued cooperation between the EU and EEA EFTA States in the development of the EU Emission Trading System, and noted the upcoming evaluation of the air connectivity of islands, outermost regions and remote territories, including consideration of competitiveness and carbon leakage as well as environmental and climate impacts. It welcomed the ongoing work on the inclusion of the EEA EFTA States into the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism and the objectives and acts on the clean transition of the transport sector in the Fit-for-55 Package.
15. The EEA Council took note of the Military Mobility Package, and underlined the importance of ensuring close cooperation regarding aspects of the package that concern the EEA EFTA States and the EEA Agreement.
16. The EEA Council underlined the importance of a competitive, fair and resilient digital transformation, and for Europe to strengthen its position in the area of strategic digital technologies. It highlighted that safeguarding media freedom and pluralism, editorial independence and protecting journalists are of fundamental importance for a well-functioning democratic society in the digital age. The EEA Council underlined the importance of the upcoming incorporation of the Digital Services Act (DSA) and the Digital Markets Act (DMA) into the EEA Agreement. The EEA Council also noted the importance of strengthening cybersecurity and increasing coordination, protecting people, institutions and critical infrastructure against hybrid threats.
17. Recognising the potential economic, environmental and societal benefits of artificial intelligence (AI), the EEA Council underlines the importance of incorporation and effective and coherent implementation of the AI Act, while at the same time unlocking Europe's full AI potential, as envisaged in initiatives such as the Apply AI Strategy, the AI Continent Plan and the European Data Union Strategy. In this context, the EEA Council emphasises the need to foster innovation-friendly conditions, ensure access to high-quality data and computing capacity, and strengthen Europe's AI ecosystem in order to enhance competitiveness and resilience.

18. The EEA Council underlined the importance of the social dimension in the EEA Agreement, covering issues related to labour law, health and safety at work, and gender equality. It welcomed the progress made on the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, a framework aiming at a more inclusive, resilient and competitive Europe. The EEA Council also recognised the importance of closer cooperation in the field of health. In this context, the EEA Council underlined the importance of fostering innovation in the health and life sciences sectors in Europe, for the benefit of patients and healthcare systems. The EEA Council looked forward to implementation of the EU pharmaceutical legislation and the European Health Data Space as well as to closer cooperation on health preparedness and response.
19. Without prejudice to the ongoing negotiations at EU level of the Multiannual Financial Framework, the EEA Council called for continuous dialogue on preparations for EU programmes for the next financial period (2028-2034) with the aim of ensuring early incorporation of new programme regulations into the EEA Agreement, taking into account the right to participation of the EEA EFTA States as provided for in the EEA Agreement.
20. The EEA Council recalled that the EEA Agreement provides for the participation in the Internal Market and in this context it also recalled that the EEA EFTA States contribute to the reduction of social and economic disparities within the EEA through the EEA and Norwegian Financial Mechanisms to the benefits of the Contracting Parties, with a view to promoting a continuous and balanced strengthening of trade and economic relations between all Contracting Parties to the EEA Agreement in accordance with Article 115 of the EEA Agreement. The EEA Council welcomed the conclusion of the bilateral memoranda of understandings and programme agreements between the EEA EFTA States and most of the Beneficiary States in order to set a clear framework and timeline for an effective and timely implementation of the funds. The EEA Council looked forward to the swift conclusion of bilateral memoranda of understanding with all Beneficiary States as soon as possible.

21. The EEA Council stressed that the Contracting Parties shall review the need, in the light of Article 10 in Protocol 38D to address economic and social disparities within the EEA and shall, based on the assessment, start future negotiations on the next Financial Mechanisms well in advance of the ending of the Financial Mechanisms 2021 – 2028 in order to avoid implementation gaps and to allow for efficient and effective programming of the future funding perspective.
22. The Members of the EEA Council underlined the high importance of constructive and inclusive cooperation on fisheries matters which should be balanced and mutually beneficial, notably concerning the sustainable management of stocks of common interest in the North East Atlantic. They acknowledged the importance of continuing to address with a view to resolve joint outstanding fisheries policy issues while recognising the importance of bilateral dialogues in fisheries management. Furthermore, the Members underlined the need to take measures to curb illegal and unsustainable fishing in the North-East Atlantic.
23. The members of the EEA Council noted with regret the severe deterioration of the North-East Atlantic mackerel stock and understood the importance of reaching in a timely manner a comprehensive and fair sharing agreement among all coastal States.
24. The EEA Council reaffirmed the commitments laid out in Protocol 9 to the EEA Agreement on trade in fish and other marine products.
25. The EEA Council recalled the commitment of the Contracting Parties, in accordance with Article 19 of the EEA Agreement, and called on the parties to pursue the dialogue with a view to reviewing the conditions of trade in agricultural products in order to achieve progressive liberalisation within the framework of their respective agricultural policies. The EEA Council encouraged the Contracting Parties to conduct a new review of the trade regime for processed agricultural products within the framework of Article 2(2) and Article 6 of Protocol 3 to the EEA Agreement, in order to further promote trade in this area.