EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AREA
Council of the EEA

Brussels, 11 November 2026
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EEE 1608/26

DRAFT CONCLUSIONS

Subject:	Draft Council conclusions of the 63rd meeting of the EEA Council (Brussels, 17 November 2026)

1. The sixty third meeting of the European Economic Area Council took place in Brussels on 17 November 2026 under the Presidency of Ms Sabine Monauni, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Environment and Culture of Liechtenstein. The meeting was attended by Mr Thomas Byrne, Irish Minister of State for European Affairs and Defence of Ireland, representing the Presidency of the Council of the European Union; Ms Þorgerður Katrín Gunnarsdóttir, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iceland; Mr Espen Barth Eide, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Norway 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 harnessing digitalisation for the Internal Market's competitiveness and growth**.**

2. The EEA Council underlined the continued and growing importance of the EEA Agreement and its full application and timely implementation 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 condemned Russia for systematically and deliberately targeting Ukraine's civilian and energy infrastructure, and called for the immediate cessation of all military activities endangering nuclear safety and security in Ukraine. They reiterated their unwavering support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders as well as for the further increase of pressure on Russia. 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. They called on Russia to show genuine willingness regarding peace, agree to a full, unconditional and immediate ceasefire, and engage in meaningful negotiations towards a just and lasting peace.

4. The EEA Council welcomed the political dialogue, at ministerial level between Irish Minister of State for European Affairs and Defence of Ireland on behalf of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, and the foreign ministers of Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. The participants held an informal exchange of views on current foreign policy matters of mutual interest including Ukraine/Russia, Arctic matters and the Middle East. 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, preserving the integrity of the Internal Market, further strengthening it and maintaining a level playing field is even more crucial to enhance the security, resilience, strategic autonomy and competitiveness of all 30 states that are part of the Internal Market. It underlined the substantial benefits offered by the Internal Market and the tangible results for European citizens and businesses. It stressed 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 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, reflecting the mutual interest in transparent and well-prepared policies. The EEA Council further underlined the importance of inviting the EEA EFTA Ministers to relevant informal Ministerial meetings and conferences. It expressed its appreciation to the Irish Presidency and incoming Presidencies for the continuation of this practice.

7. The EEA Council recognised the geopolitical and geoeconomic challenges facing international trade and global supply chains, and reaffirmed its commitment to open, fair and sustainable trade. Stressing the importance of the rules-based trade system, the members of the EEA Council agreed to work closely together at the WTO with a view to progressing towards meaningful reform before the next WTO Ministerial Conference.

8. The EEA Council emphasised the importance of maintaining the balance of rights and obligations under the EEA Agreement. It stressed the necessity of rapidly pursuing the ongoing work to reduce the number of EU acts awaiting incorporation into the EEA Agreement and of ensuring timely incorporation of EU legal acts falling within the scope of the EEA Agreement, in order to guarantee the legal security and the homogeneity of the EEA in line with the obligations in Article 102 of the EEA Agreement.

It welcomed the intensification of efforts to reduce the backlog, which remains high, and stressed the importance of incorporation of long-outstanding files and timely lifting of constitutional requirements to ensure legal certainty and homogeneity in the EEA, and thereby 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 systems.

9. 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 welcomed 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.

10. 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, the integrity of the Internal Market. At the same time, the EEA Council welcomed the "One Europe, One Market Roadmap" and calls for further ambitious Omnibus and simplification initiatives.

11. 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.

12. The EEA Council recognised the critical importance of safe, secure, affordable, sustainable, renewable and low carbon energy supplies and defending European energy infrastructure against hybrid and other threats, including physical and cyber 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 renewable and low-carbon energy sources that are safe and sustainable within the EEA, in particular, by deepening market integration and continued cross-border cooperation through rapidly advancing on the energy backlog. This will contribute to the global objectives of tripling renewable energy capacity, doubling energy efficiency and to strengthening Europe's energy security.

13. The EEA Council underlined the key role of carbon pricing in the clean transition and welcomed the proposal for a targeted revision of the EU Emissions Trading System in support of Europe's decarbonation and industrial competitiveness towards 2040, and looked forward to the continued cooperation between the EU and EEA EFTA States in the development of the System. It 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 incorporation of the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism into the EEA Agreement and the objectives and acts on the clean transition of the transport sector, including in the Fit-for-55 Package.

14. As transport represents a large source of emissions in Europe, the EEA Council reiterated the importance of the EEA States working together towards a sustainable, competitive and resilient transport sector, in line with common objectives and the transport acquis. While an important focus should be maintained on green shipping and green aviation, as well as airport and port infrastructures, close cooperation is key across all transport modes.

15. The EEA Council underlined the importance of the Military Mobility Package, since the cross-border dimension of military mobility requires a coordinated European-wide approach. It recognised the necessity 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. 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, promoting the implementation of the UN Framework of responsible State behaviour in cyberspace, protecting people, institutions and critical infrastructure against hybrid threats, notably foreign information manipulation and interference, alongside enhancing the resilience of critical digital infrastructure and cross-border connectivity.

17. The EEA Council further highlighted the importance of strengthening Europe's digital sovereignty and resilience by reinforcing competitiveness and capacities in critical technologies, data and digital infrastructure in an open manner, reducing critical dependencies while preserving close cooperation with trusted partners in line with the aim of achieving European strategic autonomy. In this context, it took note of ongoing initiatives and proposals, including the Tech Sovereignty package and the Digital Networks Act, as well as the European Data Space for Cultural Heritage to advance secure digital preservation and digitization, aimed at reducing dependencies, promoting innovation and enabling Europe to realise its full potential in the digital and technology ecosystem. Recognising the potential economic, environmental and societal benefits of artificial intelligence (AI), the EEA Council underlined the importance of the incorporation and effective and coherent implementation of the AI Act, and welcomed the adoption of the Digital Omnibus on AI by the EU, which clarifies important elements of the regulatory framework. The EEA Council also recognized the potential economic and societal benefits of data access and data use while maintaining fundamental rights and digital sovereignty. To that effect the EEA Council acknowledges current EU initiatives such as the Digital Omnibus which amends and harmonizes provisions into a single new Data Act and Data Governance Act as well as the European Data Union Strategy.

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 the envisaged 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 all the bilateral memoranda of understanding between the EEA EFTA States and the Beneficiary States and looked forward to their effective and timely implementation. It recalled the importance of maintaining close cooperation between the Beneficiary States and the EEA EFTA States, in the spirit of equal partnership.

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. Although fisheries policy and management falls outside the scope of the EEA Agreement, 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, in all relevant fora concerning the sustainable management of stocks of common interest in the North-East Atlantic. They acknowledged the importance of continuing to address and 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 address unsustainable fishing and illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) 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 and encouraged the Contracting Parties to further promote the objectives of fair competition and level playing field in this sector.

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.