

EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AREA

STANDING COMMITTEE OF THE EFTA STATES

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EEA EFTA COMMENT

EEA EFTA Participation in EEA relevant EU programmes under MFF 2021-2027

1. The EEA EFTA States (Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway) welcome the new programme proposals under MFF 2021-2027. They note with satisfaction that the Commission proposals clearly state that the EEA EFTA States shall enjoy full participation rights in the programmes as provided for in the European Economic Area (EEA) Agreement as has been the case since the entry into force of the Agreement in 1994.
2. The EEA Agreement extends the Internal Market of the EU to Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein. It also provides a legal basis for cooperation beyond the four freedoms, such as in the fields of education, research and the environment. Participation in EU programmes is a key instrument for cooperation in these fields.
3. Given the numerous actors involved in the implementation of the programmes at different levels and for sake of clarity and transparency, the EEA EFTA States would like to remind relevant parties that EEA EFTA participation in EU programmes is regulated in the EEA Agreement in accordance with the following provisions:
 - Where cooperation takes the form of participation by EEA EFTA States in an EU framework programme, specific programme, project or other action, the EEA EFTA States shall have access to all parts of the programme¹.
 - At the project level, institutions, undertakings, organisations and nationals of EEA EFTA States shall have the same rights and obligations in the EU programme or other action in question as those applicable to partner institutions, undertakings, organisations and nationals of EU Member States². The EEA EFTA States, their institutions, undertakings, organisations and nationals shall also have the same rights regarding dissemination, evaluation and exploitation of results as those applicable to EU Member States, their institutions, undertakings, organisations and nationals³.

¹ Article 81(a) of the EEA Agreement.

² Article 81 (d) of the EEA Agreement.

³ Article 81(e) of the EEA Agreement.

- When a decision to participate in an EU programme has been taken, the EEA EFTA States contribute financially to the programme through annual payments towards the relevant budget lines of the Commission budget, as determined by the EEA EFTA proportionality factor⁴.
4. In 2018 the financial commitment and contribution of the EEA EFTA States to the EU programmes amounted to 2.37% of the total EU budget towards the programmes in which they participate, equivalent to 369 million Euro. Over the 2014-2020 MFF period, the programme commitments by the EEA EFTA States are estimated to amount to a total of 3.22 billion Euro.
 5. EEA EFTA participation in EU programmes is a key instrument for the EEA EFTA States' cooperation with EU institutions and Member States. It is therefore essential that these abovementioned provisions are well known by all actors involved in the implementation of the programmes.
 6. The EEA EFTA States are concerned that some of the EU programme proposals contain provisions⁵ that may, in implementation, limit the scope of EEA EFTA State participation and contradict the terms set out in the EEA Agreement. It is essential that when the EEA EFTA States contribute financially to an EU programme in accordance with the provisions of the EEA Agreement, their rights to full access to the programme is also in accordance with the Agreement.

⁴ Article 82.1(a) of the EEA Agreement; *EEA EFTA proportionality factor* = $\frac{\text{EEA EFTA GDP}}{\text{EEA EFTA GDP} + \text{EU GDP}}$

⁵ Such as article 18.5 of the Horizon Europe Proposal, COM(2018) 435.