

Establishment of the EEA Review Committee

In line with the Government's policy platform of 7 October 2009, the Government is establishing a broad-based committee to undertake a thorough, research-based review of the EEA Agreement and its consequences for all aspects of Norwegian society.

Mandate

The committee is to carry out a comprehensive and thorough review of the political, legal, administrative, economic and other social consequences (including its implications for welfare and regional policy) of the EEA Agreement.

Particular emphasis is to be placed on assessing the impact developments in the EU and the EEA since the conclusion of the EEA Agreement have had on the scope and functioning of the Agreement. Examples of areas to be examined are regional policy, democracy at all levels of governance, the business sector, the labour market and working conditions, and environmental and natural resources management. The committee's work is to include a review of Norway's experience of the Schengen Agreement and other cooperation arrangements between Norway and the EU.

The committee is to focus on describing and assessing the importance and functioning of the EEA Agreement and other agreements/cooperation arrangements between Norway and the EU. It is also to review the work of the bodies that were set up to monitor the functioning of the EEA Agreement.

The chair of the committee is responsible for organising and conducting the review. The committee is, within the limitations set by its budget, free to commission studies from relevant experts and institutions in Norway and abroad. The committee should draw on research from the South.

The composition and work of the committee

The committee's work is to be research-based and led by researchers who enjoy a high degree of professional credibility. The review process should allow for broad, critical assessment of the various areas. In order to ensure a broad knowledge base, the committee's members are to include resource persons who have expertise and personal experience of the EU/EEA.

The committee will be assisted by a secretariat consisting of three persons with a background in research.

The committee will have the following members: the chair, who is to represent the research community, a deputy chair and 10 members with research-based expertise and/or practical knowledge of the EU/EEA. One of them should be a foreign national or a national of another Nordic country. The plan is that the committee should submit its report in the autumn of 2011.

A key objective for the committee's task is to facilitate knowledge-based debate on Norway's European policy. The committee is to facilitate an open and inclusive process by means of seminars, debates and other activities. With a view to securing inclusive and broad participation, the committee is to involve the full range of stakeholders in the EEA Agreement. This is important in order to ensure the committee's legitimacy. A broad-based reference-group, , which will be free to provide input to the committee's work at its own discretion, will be established. The reference group will also be free to propose themes it considers important to examine, for example in the form of studies of specified topics, provided that they fall within the committee's mandate and do not come in conflict with its professional independence.

The committee's work will be presented in an official report, which will be subject to public consultation. The report will also form part of the basis for a white paper to the Storting.