

## **EEA EFTA Statement**

***Statement on the occasion of the EEA Council meeting on 24 November 2021.***

Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway reiterate the importance they attach to the European Economic Area (EEA) Agreement, which establishes a solid basis for a privileged relationship with the European Union.

This relationship is based on proximity, long-standing common values and European identity. It constitutes a vibrant contribution to the construction of a Europe based on peace, democracy and human rights.

Through the EEA Agreement the EEA EFTA States: Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, and the EU are equal partners in the Internal Market.

A well-functioning Internal Market is important for the prosperity and wellbeing of its citizens and for the global competitiveness and resilience of Europe. It is also key to ensuring a strong recovery and achieving a green and digital transition which is fair. High ambitions, collective effort, and urgent action are needed to speed up the transition to a sustainable, climate-neutral and environmentally-friendly future.

We express our full commitment to stepping up global efforts to tackle climate change, pursuing sustainable energy transition, and protecting the environment. We emphasise the importance of continued close cooperation between the EU and the EEA EFTA States on these issues. They include renewable energy, hydrogen and carbon capture and storage and mineralisation. Among key priorities are also decarbonising all modes of transport and developing a sustainable and resilient transport industry.

The particularly close cooperation between the EU and the EEA EFTA States has been valuable during the pandemic. Our close cooperation continues to prove essential in areas such as procurement and distribution of vaccines and for the ongoing response to the pandemic with exchange of data, experience, and views in relevant fora. The Internal Market has been tested during the pandemic. It withstood the tests and has been strengthened through common resolve and timely measures, in conjunction with those taken within the framework of Schengen and other agreed frameworks.

We recognise the importance of strengthening the EU's health security response capacity and better equipping authorities to prevent and address future pandemics in a coordinated manner. We look forward to the continued close involvement of the EEA EFTA States to further enhance cooperation on these matters.

The incorporation of the EU programme regulations into the EEA Agreement and our foreseen participation marked an important milestone to deepen further our collaboration and deliver new solutions to address environmental, digital, health, social and innovation challenges. It is recognised that this cooperation will represent a substantial financial commitment from the EEA EFTA States towards a green, digital, inclusive and resilient society.

While it was regrettably not possible to adopt formal EEA Council conclusions in today's meeting, we underline the good functioning of the EEA Agreement together with the high quality of our cooperation, which were the object of an in-depth stock-taking and confirmed at our meeting.