



What is the EEA? Ten facts

1. What does EEA stand for?

EEA is short for the European Economic Area.

2. Who are members of the EEA?

The EEA includes the 27 EU Member States as well as the three EEA/EFTA States, Liechtenstein, Iceland, and Norway. Switzerland is the only EFTA State not participating in the EEA.

3. What exactly is the EEA?

Through the EEA Agreement, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein are equal partners in the internal market, on the same terms as the EU member states. This includes having access to the internal market's four freedoms, the free movement of goods, persons, services and capital. In addition, the Agreement covers cooperation in other important areas such as research and development, education, social policy, the environment, consumer protection, tourism and culture.

4. When was it established and when Liechtenstein became a full member?

The EEA Agreement was signed in Porto (Portugal) on 2 May 1992. Liechtenstein became a full member of the European Economic Area (EEA) on 1 May 1995.

5. How many EU legal acts apply in Liechtenstein on the basis of the EEA Agreement?

In 2023, a total of 620 EU legal acts were incorporated into the EEA Agreement. The total number of EU legal acts incorporated into the EEA Agreement was 12,708 as of the end of 2023. By comparison, the EEA Agreement included approximately 1,500 EU legal acts in 1992.

6. Who is responsible for the EEA in Liechtenstein?

The EEA Coordination Unit (established in July 1995) is responsible for the EEA in Liechtenstein.

7. What is not covered by the EEA Agreement?

The EEA Agreement does not cover the EU common agriculture and fisheries policies, the customs union, the common trade policy, the common foreign and security policy, justice and home affairs or the monetary union.

8. Are the EEA EFTA states connected to the EU in any other ways?

Yes. The EEA EFTA States participate in many EU programmes and agencies. They are also members of the Schengen cooperation, which abolishes border controls between members.

9. Does the EEA have its own institutions?

Yes. Common bodies such as the EEA Council and the EEA Joint Committee administer the EEA Agreement. Moreover, because the EEA EFTA states are not members of the EU, they are constitutionally not able to accept direct decisions by the European Commission or the Court of Justice of the European Union. Separate EEA EFTA bodies have therefore been set up that correspond to these EU bodies: The EFTA Surveillance Authority (ESA) and the EFTA Court.

10. Can the EEA Agreement be amended?

The EEA Agreement is dynamic in character. This means that it is continuously updated and amended to incorporate new internal market legislation in order to maintain common rules across the EEA.