

# The Storting and the EEA Agreement

Fact sheet from the Storting Library

Updated July 2019

## Milestones in the Storting

1 December 1989

The Storting gives the Government a mandate to negotiate with the EC on cooperation and adaptation to the EC's internal market.

16 October 1992

The Storting sanctions the EEA Agreement. 130 MPs vote in favour and 35 vote against.

19 November 1992

The Storting resolves by 104 votes to 55 to apply for EU membership.

1 January 1994

The EEA Agreement enters into force.

8 December 1994

The first meeting of the Storting's European Consultative Committee.

28 November 1994

52.2 per cent vote "No" to Norwegian membership of the EU in an advisory referendum.

9 June 1997

The Storting sanctions the Schengen Agreement. An extension of the agreement is adopted on 26 April 1999.

17 December 1998

The Storting endorses the Veterinary Equivalency Agreement.

13 February 2007

The Storting adopts measures to strengthen its work in EEA matters.

8 June 2010

The Storting considers the white paper on Norwegian refugee and migration policy in a European perspective.

9 April 2013

The Storting considers the white paper on the EEA Agreement, which builds on the report "Outside and Inside – Norway's agreements with the European Union".

13 June 2016

The Storting approves Norwegian participation in the European Financial Supervisory Authorities.

22 March 2018

The Storting approves Norway's incorporation of the EU's Third Energy Package into the EEA Agreement.

17 June 2019

The Storting agrees to approve legal acts that are part of a mutual climate agreement with the EU on joint emissions goals for 2030.

## How extensive is the EEA Agreement?

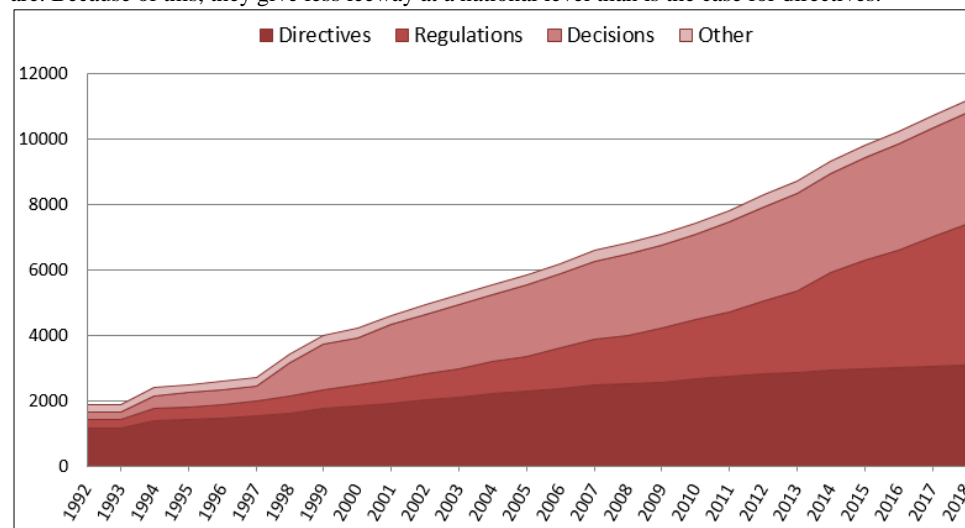


### 12,200 legal acts – «five a day»

When the Storting endorsed the EEA Agreement in 1992, it contained 1,875 legal acts (directives, regulations, decisions and recommendations). A further 530 legal acts were added in 1994. Since then, approximately 400 legal acts have been incorporated annually. To date, a total of 12,200 legal acts have been incorporated, of which slightly over half are still in force.

"Five a day" is the term that has been used to describe how extensive the EEA Agreement is. The expression refers to the fact that on average five new legal acts have been integrated into the EEA Agreement for each day there has been a sitting in the Storting.

The figure below portrays the rise in the number of legal acts from 1992 to 2018 (with the exception of those that have been adopted by simplified procedure). The proportion of directives has fallen, while the proportion of regulations has risen considerably. Regulations must be implemented as they are. Because of this, they give less leeway at a national level than is the case for directives.



### Three-quarters integrated

The Official Norwegian Report "*Outside and Inside – Norway's agreements with the European Union*" (NOU 2012:2) examined Norway's overall relations with the EU. It concluded that Norway has "incorporated approximately three-quarters of all EU legal acts compared with the EU states that have incorporated everything, and has implemented them more effectively than many of the EU states. A small number of sectors are less Europeanized in Norway than in the EU, in particular agriculture. The Norwegian political and administrative system is also much less closely interwoven in European decision-making processes than the national authorities in the member states. That said, it appears clear that Norwegian society has also become considerably Europeanized in the period 1992 – 2011."

### Norwegian laws; local authority decisions

The NOU concluded that approximately 30 per cent of Norwegian law has been adopted or amended in order to adjust to EU law. Most EU EEA law is implemented by the government and public administration in the form of regulations.

Half of the matters dealt with by local authorities at a municipal and county level are directly affected by the EEA Agreement. This is the conclusion in a 2018 report from the Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research.

## Improving the Storting's work

In its recommendation of 2006-2007 (*Innst. S no. 115*), a unanimous Foreign Affairs Committee put forward a series of measures for strengthening the Storting's work within the field of the EEA Agreement. Among the results are:

- The Government must now make six-monthly statements to the Storting on European policy.
- The Storting's other standing committees participate more regularly in the meetings of the European Consultative Committee.
- Involvement in EU/EEA interparliamentary cooperation has increased.
- The European Commission sends the Storting, via the EFTA Secretariat, legal acts that are considered relevant to the EEA. The Storting's administration gives information about these in a newsletter.
- The Storting has set up an office in Brussels, with office space in the European Parliament.
- The Storting's administration puts together briefings for meetings of the European Consultative Committee and the Government's statements on European policy.
- The Storting Library publishes a weekly EU/EEA newsletter.
- The Storting arranges an annual study trip in Brussels for MPs.

## Interparliamentary cooperation

### European Parliament

Once a year, the Storting's [Delegation for Relations with the European Parliament](#) meets a corresponding delegation from the European Parliament. The objective is to debate and discuss issues of current interest.

### EFTA and the EEA

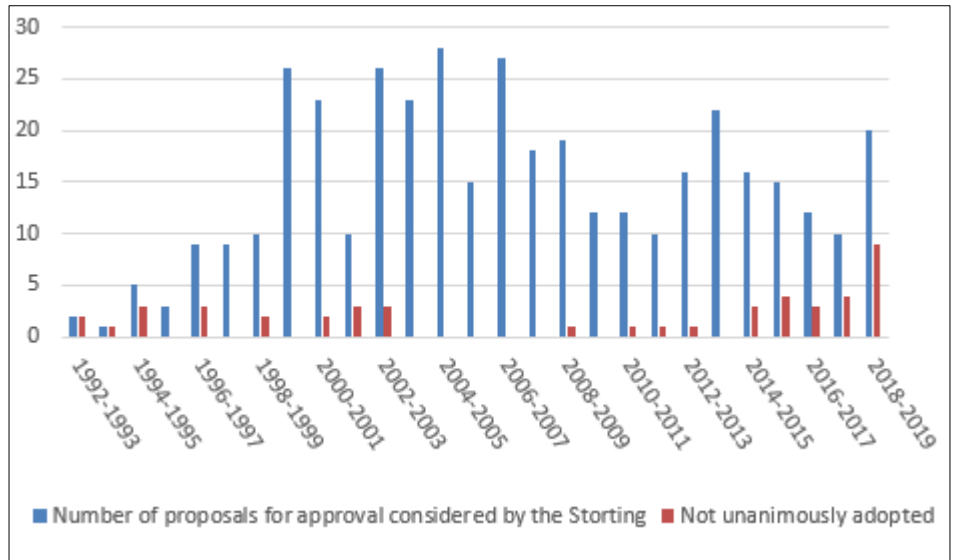
The Storting's [Delegation to the EFTA and EEA Parliamentary Committees](#) has an advisory role towards the EFTA Council of Ministers and the EEA Council, and liaises with the other EFTA countries' national assemblies.

## Number of matters in the Storting

The EEA Joint Committee is responsible for incorporating new EU legal acts into the EEA Agreement. In each case, there must be unanimous agreement between the three EEA EFTA states and the EU for this to happen. Certain legal acts are conditional on the approval of the Storting. This is the case if the legislative act:

- requires there to be an amendment in existing legislation
- has consequences on the budget
- is of special importance

Since 1992, the Storting has dealt with approx. 400 so-called proposals for approval, where the Storting agrees to incorporate a legislative act into the EEA Agreement. Of these matters, 46 were not passed unanimously.



Which parties have voted against the propositions in the matters where there has not been unanimous approval? The Centre Party has voted against in 39 of the 46 matters, while the Conservative Party has never voted against such a proposal. The Socialist Left Party has voted against 33 times, the Red Party 11, the Christian Democrats 9, the Progress Party and the Green Party four times each, the Liberal Party three times and the Labour Party once.

## Meetings in the European Consultative Committee

[The European Consultative Committee](#) is the Storting's consultation body with the Government on EU/EEA questions of current interest. The committee comprises members of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, and members of the Storting's Delegation to the EFTA and EEA Parliamentary Committees. In general, meetings are arranged to take place before meetings of the EEA Joint Committee, the object being that the Storting must be consulted on legal acts that are to be incorporated into the EEA Agreement.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs is the government minister responsible for informing the committee about matters of current interest. Other government ministers take part as required. Since 2005/2006, at least one other government minister has taken part in roughly three out of four meetings. The Storting's standing committees are also invited to attend when matters within their remit are on the agenda. A committee may decide to submit a written statement to the European Consultative Committee on a matter that the committee is due to consider. To date, this has happened only once.

The European Consultative Committee has had 184 meetings – an average of 7 meetings a year – since its formation in 1994. Unless otherwise decided by the Committee, the minutes of these meetings are publicly available.

## The Storting's scrutiny of European policy

Since 1994, the Government has published four white papers on Norway's relations with the EU and on EEA cooperation:

*Norway and Europe at the Dawn of a New Century* (white paper no.12 (2000-2001))

*EEA Cooperation 1994-2001* (white paper no.27 (2001-2002))

*The Implementation of European Policy* (white paper no.23 (2005-2006))

*The EEA Agreement and Norway's other agreements with the EU* (white paper no.5 (2012-2013))

The Storting's two most important means of scrutinizing the Government are meetings of the European Consultative Committee and the debate on the Government's six-monthly statements on European policy. MPs can also use oral and written parliamentary questions to examine the work of the Government.

“*Outside and Inside – Norway's agreements with the European Union*” describes the Storting's scrutiny of the Government's European policy as “very modest”.