

European Free Trade Association (EFTA) – Committee on Trade Facilitation
June 2013

Questions	Answers for EFTA
Background	
What is the official name of the trade facilitation coordination mechanism?	Committee on Trade Facilitation
What motivated the establishment of the TF working group?	The Committee on Trade Facilitation replaced a former Group of Experts on Trade Facilitation underlining the growing importance of this subject in the EFTA's network.
What year was it established?	2010
Do you have other national bodies dealing with WTO issues and/or with TF?	See answers of the individual Association States.
Was the working group based on a previously existing multi-agency group/committee (for example a trade and transport facilitation committee)?	Group of Experts on Trade Facilitation.
What is the current status of the working group (running, pilot phase, study)	It is a regular Committee established by the EFTA's Association Council.
Institutional Framework	
Has the working group been set up as an ad hoc group, or a legal entity/organization?	It is a Committee listed under Annex S of the EFTA Convention.
What specific documents were necessary to institutionalize the group and which body and at which level made the decisions?	Decision N° 1 adopted by the EFTA Council at its 4 th meeting on 17 May 2010.
What is the scope/mandate of the working group?	<p>The functions and mandate of the Committee are identical to the functions and mandate of the Group of Experts on Trade Facilitation as provided for in the Council's Decision N°3 of 2009.</p> <p>The function of the Group is to exchange information, review developments and advise Members or the Council on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Trade Facilitation proposals related to Free Trade Agreements negotiated by EFTA; b) Measures to monitor and strengthen the implementation of trade facilitation commitments by Free Trade Agreement partners of EFTA, including related technical assistance, training and other cooperation; c) Matters relating to the policy of the European Commission or practice affecting trade facilitation policy or efficient trade procedures of the EFTA countries; d) Other matters relating to trade facilitation; e) Matters that the Council may refer to it.
Does the working group have terms of reference?	No
Which is the coordinating agency	There is no coordinating agency.

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What is the structure of the group (Chair/co-chair, sub-groups etc.)?	The Committee is headed by a Chair, normally elected for one year and seconded by the EFTA's Secretariat.
Do you have a permanent technical secretariat?	EFTA Secretariat in Brussels.
Funding	
Do you have a formal budget for the operations of the working group?	No
If yes, what major items are covered by it?	-
What are the sources of funding?	-
Objectives / Focus	
What are the objectives of the working group?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reducing costs caused by inefficient border procedures, while balancing trade facilitation with the increasing requirements for safety and security measures in the international supply chain. ▪ Ensuring that the work on trade facilitation is in line with the essential interests of the EFTA Members and the improvement of common actions, especially related to the negotiations of Free Trade Agreements.
Does the working group have a working plan?	No
How do you monitor progress in implementing the working group?	The monitoring role is done by the Committee or Member States.
How often, and in which form and to whom is the working group reporting?	The Committee is issuing a report after each meeting.
Membership / Composition	
What public or quasi-public agencies participate in the working group?	The Committee frequently invites other international organisations and bodies dealing with trade facilitation for exchange of views such as: European Commission (Directorate General for Trade and Directorate General for Taxation and Customs Union), World Customs Organisation (Compliance and Facilitation Directorate), private sector (EconomieSuisse, Business Europe, Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise) and International Trade Centre (ITC) in Geneva.
What private associations or entities participate?	See above
What is the level of seniority of the participants?	Officers and senior officers
Participation	
Does the working group meet regularly?	At least once a year, but normally twice a year or even three times a year.
What is the level of participation in each of the meetings?	Around 10 participants
Do you use different meetings formats (such as focus groups, brainstorming, Citizen jury's etc?)?	No
Promotion / Communication	
How do you keep all stakeholders	Publication of the agendas, working papers and reports of

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informed of the working groups' meetings and new documents, upcoming events etc?	the Committee on the EFTA's Extranet and individual distribution by the Member States.
How does the group interface with other working groups / committees working on similar issues?	The Committee cooperates with other relevant bodies in EFTA (Third Country Committee and the Committee of Origin and Customs Experts, the Commission and other relevant international bodies such as the World Customs Organisation, the World Trade Organisation, the World Bank and UN/CEFACT.
Do you undertake special information session for the general public or particular stakeholders?	No
Benefits	
What was the impact of the work of the group?	Elaboration of a Model Text on trade facilitation for the EFTA's negotiations on Free Trade Agreements.
How does it benefit your countries' responsiveness to the WTO negotiation process?	Exchange of views and information of trade facilitation issues with the other partners.
Have there been concrete operational outcomes?	Model text on trade facilitation as a proposal for bilateral or regional trade negotiations with partners towards the sign of Free Trade Agreements.
Lessons learned	
What are the crucial success factors?	Ability to convince our partners to endorse a comprehensive chapter on trade facilitation in Free Trade Agreements.
What are the greatest obstacles?	Reluctance of counterparts in Free Trade Agreements to adopt trade facilitation provisions.
What are the main lessons learned?	Small steps in the right direction may in the end give appealing results.
Future plans	
What are the plans for further development of the working group?	The Committee is currently discussing the utility to broaden the scope of cooperation to other organisations (such as the OECD).
Contact information	
Please indicate the contact details of the chairman, president or secretariat of the Committee	<p>Mr. Jean-Pierre Lattion State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) Chair, EFTA Committee on Trade Facilitation (for the year 2013/2014) Holzikofenweg 36 CH-3003 Bern jean-pierre.lattion@seco.admin.ch Tel : 0041 31 323 11 22 Mr. Walter Stocker</p> <p>EFTA Secretariat Rue Joseph II, 12-16 1000 Brussels Belgium wst@efta.int Tel: (+32) 2 286 17 46</p>