

EFTA (European Free Trade Association) till 1992.

INTERVIEW IN THREE STEPS

Students are divided into groups of three.

Each of them receives three texts.

1. Students should read the texts.
2. Students need to agree which text will be theirs to work on it.
3. Students need to select who is going to be the representative of the group.
4. After reading texts students need to reread their own text, write notes about it and mark the words or phrases they are not familiar with.
5. After that, the first student interviews the other, while the third one the student puts notes on questions and answers. They do so until the circle is closed.
6. When they are finished the students will discuss the notes they have written and they will find the responses about the unknown words or phrases with other students in the group.
7. They will paraphrase texts by making a digital poster about EFTA using their notes.
(*suggestion for the digital tool - <https://www.canva.com>*)
8. While leaving the classroom students are making :) or :(on the prepared paper on the wall or billboard, depending on how they felt.

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1. Text

The History

The European Free Trade Association (EFTA) was founded on the premise of free trade as a means of achieving growth and prosperity amongst its Member States as well as promoting closer economic cooperation between the Western European countries.

The origin of EFTA is well-anchored in the overall context of European integration. The seven founding members – Austria, Denmark, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom – began exploring the idea of a free trade agreement amongst themselves in early 1959, in response to the formation of the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1958.

The resulting EFTA Convention was agreed in Stockholm in November 1959. It entered into force on 3 May 1960.

The Stockholm Convention established a framework with certain guiding principles and a set of minimum rules and procedures to be applied, with details focused on provisions for tariff reductions and the elimination of quantitative restrictions, as well as on rules of origin. Within this framework and in line with a similar process taking place in the EEC, tariffs on industrial goods traded between the EFTA countries – with few exceptions – were abolished from 1967.

Quantitative restrictions were removed in 1965. In 1999, the EFTA Ministers decided to initiate an updating of the Stockholm Convention to reflect the increasing importance in the global economy of trade in services, foreign direct investment and intellectual property rights.

EFTA has seen several changes in membership. Finland became an associate member in 1961 and a full member in 1986.

Iceland joined in 1970 and Liechtenstein in 1991.

Denmark and the United Kingdom left EFTA to become members of the European Communities (EC) in 1973.

Portugal joined the EC in 1986 as did Austria, Sweden and Finland in 1995.

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2. Text

EFTA-EC Relations

In parallel with the EC accession of Denmark and the United Kingdom, a series of bilateral free trade agreements were negotiated between the other EFTA States and the EC in the early 1970s, most of which came into force in 1973. These ensured that by mid-1977, duties on virtually all trade in industrial products between EFTA and the EC were eliminated.

In response to concerns relating to European competitiveness in the early 1980s, a first meeting at Ministerial level between the EFTA States and the EC was held in Luxembourg in 1984 to explore possibilities for further enhancing economic cooperation in Western Europe.

The resulting Luxembourg Declaration laid down a programme for the development of future European economic cooperation which would become the largest free trade system in the world.

In January 1989, in a speech before the European Parliament, Jacques Delors, the then President of the EC Commission, proposed “a new, more structured partnership, with common decision-making and administrative institutions” with the EFTA States.

The EFTA States declared themselves ready to initiate negotiations with the Community leading to “the fullest possible realization of free movement of goods, services, capital and persons, with the aim of creating a dynamic and homogeneous European Economic Space”.

Negotiations began in 1990 on the renamed European Economic Area (EEA). The Agreement was concluded in 1992.

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3. Text

EFTA's Free Trade Network

EFTA's trade strategy vis-à-vis third countries has progressively evolved, moving beyond the European continent to comprise today one of the world's largest networks of free trade relations.

The first free trade agreement negotiated by the EFTA States as a group was with Spain. This entered into force in 1980 and came to an end in 1985 upon Spain's accession to the EC.

In 1990, in response to initiatives by the EC to conclude agreements aiming at free trade in industrial goods with the transition countries of Central and Eastern Europe, EFTA Ministers decided to build EFTA's own network of free trade agreements in parallel to the EC.

In a first phase, the EFTA States entered into agreements with Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, and the Czech and Slovak Republics. Negotiations were also launched with Israel and Turkey.