

TTIP?

A TTIP-ping Point for Democracy?

Demystifying and Shaping the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP)



The challenge

Talks on an EU-US Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, ongoing since July 2013, have provoked strong public debate. Advocates speak of TTIP's significant contribution to 'growth and jobs' during austerity, whilst detractors decry it as a threat to democracy and hard-won social and environmental protections, viewing the proposed 'horizontal' regulatory cooperation chapter as an unacceptable constraint on governments' ability to regulate if seen to inhibit transatlantic trade.

The impact

Hitherto, much of the public debate on TTIP has struggled to make sense of these often highly technical and opaque negotiations. At the heart of this project is a desire to both demystify TTIP, and shape the course and content of ongoing negotiations. TTIP is an important 'tipping point' for the politicisation of trade policymaking, hence the urgent requirement to establish a network of scholars, policymakers, political actors and civil society organisations who will together help determine the future direction of global trade governance.

Our researchers – Gabriel Siles-Brügge and Nicolette Butler – have sought to catalyse this process of knowledge exchange via:

- Attendance at TTIP negotiating rounds in the US and EU.
- The facilitation of workshops bringing together academics and practitioners to examine the impact of TTIP on public policymaking (including a roundtable on trade agreements at US Consumer Rights organisation Public Citizen's offices in Washington, DC)
- Supporting capacity-building for project partners, in the analysis of TTIP and associated trade agreements.

The project has been documented via regular blog commentaries on the state of the talks, and scheduled policy briefings following each major negotiating round. The project team have been invited to participate in numerous policy-centred events, including:

- A discussion on 'TTIP and its Effects on Health Systems' at the Demeter International/EPHA policy conference 'TTIP – Increased Trade for Better Living?' in Brussels.
- The 'TTIP: For Better or Worse' panel at the annual 'Peoples' Festival' (Denmark).
- A Hansard society discussion on 'TTIP and its Impact for Aberdeen', sponsored by the European Parliament's UK and Scotland Offices.

The project team have also worked with the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats in Europe (ALDE) in the European Parliament on the 'Employment and Social Aspects of TTIP'. This engagement fed into the European Economic and Social Committee's resolution on TTIP, alongside participation in a February 2015 meeting that informed the Committee's Opinion (published 27th May 2015).

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Our research

This project, funded via the University of Manchester's ESRC Impact Accelerator Account (ESRC IAA) brings together researchers with expertise in the politics (Siles-Brügge) and law (Butler) of international trade and investment agreements, with civil society organisations in the UK and EU who actively campaign around these issues (Global Justice Now and the European Public Health Alliance).

In building upon existing research into the economic, social and political impacts of TTIP, this work explores:

- How econometric modelling used by TTIP advocates overstates the likely economic benefits of the agreement, while downplaying potential effects on social, environmental and public health regulation.
- The extent to which the TTIP's provisions on Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) and regulatory cooperation – allowing foreign investors to sue states in independent tribunals if they breach their investor rights – might impinge on states' 'right to regulate' in the public interest, leading towards a 'race to the bottom' in standards.

- Civil society mobilisation on TTIP, alongside allied trade and investment issues, and how this might be understood and supported through academic engagement.

Our research highlights that the controversy surrounding TTIP is a predominantly European phenomenon, and initial optimism that negotiations could be completed within two years has proven unrealistic. While the US and the EU have yet to make significant progress on a common text, this is less due to disagreement on principles and more a matter of domestic regulatory politics on both sides. It is within this policy arena that this project continues to operate.

Key people

- Dr Gabriel Siles-Brügge
- Dr Nicolette Butler

Project Partners

- The European Public Health Alliance (EPHA)
- Global Justice Now

Media coverage

- (10th March 2015) '**TTIP must not allow companies to sue EU countries for environmental laws, say MPs**', *The Guardian*.
- (31st March 2015) '**No Evidence That TTIP Will Help EU**', *Information* (Denmark).
- (2nd June 2015) '**Experts: New Trade Agreement Does Not Guarantee More Jobs**', *Ugebrevet A4* (Denmark).
- (3rd June 2015) '**Free Trade Agreement TTIP: No Time for Criticism**', *De Groene Amsterdammer* (the Netherlands)