



YOUNG EUROPEAN SOCIALISTS

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Young European Socialists asbl

Rue du Trône 98

BE 1050 Brussels, Belgium

tel. +32 2 548 90 86

<http://www.youngsocialists.eu/>

EU-USA TRANSATLANTIC TREATY: AN ALTERNATIVE IS POSSIBLE

Proposed by JUSOS Germany and MJS France

Negotiations have begun between the European Union and the United States of America in order to set up the biggest free trade zone ever in 2015. This global agreement would remove tariff barriers and regulatory « constraints » for trade between countries. Several months away from the European Elections, this treaty celebrates liberalism and capitalism in its most deregulated aspect, while the living conditions of workers are worsening day by day and need a radical political redirection.

A bilateral negotiation made behind the backs of the people

An antidemocratic treaty in its adoption process

The negotiations are ongoing with complete indifference due to the lack of democratic debate. There is no control by the citizens; the European Parliament is confined to an advisory role and the European Commission has full power to negotiate. A unanimous vote of the Council is needed for "trade, social services, education and health", but no State has expressed reservations yet. As asked by certain socialists, culture was finally excluded from the negotiations: Hence, the redirection of this treaty is still possible and it is necessary for the left in 2014 to propose an alternative vision of international trade: support multilateralism, recognize the role of the UN, of public norms, instead of the increasing invasion of private norms in trade policies

Firms' interests above public regulations

This treaty provides an « efficient mechanism » in order to solve conflict between States and Investors: multinational companies could get compensations, if a state takes a decision that might go against the interests of a company. In addition to that, this agreement aims a « regulatory convergence » in order to abolish « unnecessary » or « non-reasonable » norms that exist or that could be adopted, thus completely overruling the democratic sovereignty of European peoples. Big companies will produce at a lower cost and will increase margins, but for the sole benefit of their shareholders, whose remuneration already exploded. At the same time, workers, whose working conditions are the adjustment variable of shareholders, won't see any social harmonisation to the top.

The European Commission continues to advocate for a principle we fight: the free functioning of the market would enable the optimum allocation of resources. This not only caused the crisis, but has also let emerge dumping practices, we see in Europe today.

The questioning of the whole "European acquis"

The United States allow practices that are not tolerated by European regulation or by some European states : on GMOs or hormone treated cows for instance. The lowering of food safety standards would be catastrophic for farmers and consumers. With such an agreement nothing would impede pressure groups to allow the exploitation of shale gas in Europe and public investments towards renewable energies might be disallowed in the name of "free market".

Deepening our European social model, democracy and the ecological transition

As Young Socialists, we cannot accept to see the currently negotiated transatlantic treaty jeopardize our social model or the perspective of a further political integration. We believe that it is an imperative to establish fair trade measures in our external and trade policy. The EU should be at the forefront on social and environmental questions, and end its policy of constant free trade agreements. Measures to be taken again to take up our march towards progress could be: to establish a social and environmental taxation in Europe to disadvantage firms that will not respect decent working conditions or that would not respect our common environmental norms.

Deepening our social model and our European democracy includes the strict regulation of industrial lobbies, a European minimum income, investments in green energies, a European corporate income tax, or a financial transaction tax in order to increase the European budget that could be partly used for international solidarity. This is already enough difficult to achieve in a 28 states Union, it will simply be impossible in this ever bigger free trade zone to come.

We want an ambitious European Union that opposes this neoliberal wave and offers a social, environmental and democratic alternative.

For us, the following points are essentially important:

- The negotiations will take place under the democratic participation of parliaments and the civil society with utmost transparency. Even after the end of the negotiations, the agreements and the operationalization of the contract should be exposed to constant democratic control.

- There will be no areas of public services compromised. Liberalization or privatization of public spaces, especially in the public procurement may not be facilitated or allowed, the possibility to determine the criteria for public procurement must not be restricted. Also, more deregulation of the financial sector must not be part of this agreement.

- Workers' rights must be preserved and strengthened.

- Social and environmental objectives have to be equally important as economic interests.

European labor, environmental, consumption and health standards should not be compromised.

- The agreement may not contain any provisions on investment protection, especially if workers' rights or governmental regulation will be possibly touched.

- The precautionary principle retains its full validity.

- Democratically legitimized rules and decisions on the federal, state and municipality level may not be subordinated or limited by the interests of foreign investors

As, in the current state, all of these points are not, or only inadequately, considered in the negotiations, we as Young Socialists oppose strongly against the planned transatlantic trade and investment agreements and we demand of our elected representatives to use their influence and advocacy to end the negotiations. They should only be resumed when the above-mentioned points are the basis for action.