

## POLICY BRIEFING

# THE TRANSATLANTIC TRADE AND INVESTMENT PARTNERSHIP

### Abstract

The EU has signed, or is negotiating, several trade agreements with countries and regions around the world, among which the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), a free trade agreement with the US. The aim is removing or reducing customs tariffs in bilateral trade so that companies in each country can access each other's markets more easily. One possible consequence of trade harmonisation could be a boost for commerce, since a range of industries would be affected by the deal, from pharmaceuticals, energy and clothes to food and finance. The only sector formally excluded from negotiations - as requested by the French government - is the film and music industry. In these terms, such a deal could be very positive considered that the economic relationship between the EU and the US is the most integrated in the world, accounting for 40% of global GDP.

This enormous volume of transatlantic trade and investment could promote economic prosperity on both sides of the Atlantic and in the other countries that trade with the EU and US. So, on the one hand, TTIP has been defined as a high-standard trade and investment agreement that would provide significant benefits in terms of promoting international competitiveness, jobs, and growth.

On the other hand, there is a high level of criticism about the possible effects of the trade deal on the environment as well as on people health and rights' defence. Among many worries, the main are about the impact on the food sector, where in many cases the EU has stricter regulations than in the US, with the fear that these will be overlooked in order to encourage a higher volume of economic exchanges.

Another important concern is about the so called ISDS, the mechanism which allows businesses to sue a government if they feel that trade tariffs constitute an unfair obstacle to commerce. By contrast, many claim that often such trade barriers act as a protective shield of citizens rights, especially when trading countries have not the same standards to certify goods, and in case companies are able to overcome such tariffs there will be no one to protect consumers interests.

Beyond all the debates about TTIP, still today, after 15 rounds of negotiations which started in 2013, the situation is stable without conclusion since the end of 2016, after the change of Administration in Washington. For this reason, TTIP is considered by some as a 'dead-end' road because of the lack of agreement regarding some points of the deal between the negotiating parts and the consequent change of strategy of both the US and the EU which now is focusing more on a treaty with Canada (CETA), and on an economic agreement with Japan.

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Today, for instance, the US and the EU have different regulations testing the safety of products that imposes additional costs on exports. One possible consequence of harmonisation could be a boost for commerce. In these terms, such a deal could be very positive considered that the economic relationship between the EU and the US is the most integrated in the world, accounting for 40% of global GDP<sup>3</sup>.

In addition, total US investment in the EU is three times higher than that in all of Asia and the EU investment in the US is around eight times that in India and China together. So, this enormous volume of transatlantic trade and investment promotes economic prosperity on both sides of the Atlantic and in the other countries that trade with the transatlantic partners<sup>4</sup>.

So if concluded, TTIP could set the terms of standards and regulations for the rest of the world.

Moreover, TTIP will also give to the EU the opportunity to diversify its sources of energy supply, avoiding as much as possible problems related to energy cuts off due to supplier countries' geopolitical strategies. For instance, instead of being heavily dependent on Russian gas and oil, the EU might rely more on the American one, considering also the positive perspectives in the American energy sector thanks to the implementation of shale oil and gas extraction.

In short, all what TTIP is about is creating the world's largest free-trade zone between the US and the EU.

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### 3 When did it start?

TTIP talks started in 2013, and since that moment there have been 15 rounds of negotiations. Every negotiating round has taken place behind closed doors and consultations with civil society and stakeholders meetings have been regarded as little more than content-free formalities. Still today TTIP entire package of documents is unavailable. Considered the amount of complaints from both citizens and politicians, a long list of negotiating documents, which had been previously kept secret, has been published on the EU Commission website. However, by the time they were released, such documents were frequently out of date. On the other side, US negotiators have disclosed almost nothing at all. Only thanks to GreenPeace, which in May 2016 succeeded in making available 248 pages of TTIP documents, a clearer idea of the US position (which has been always more confidential than the EU one) has been caught by the public. What is more, even members of the European Parliament and national parliamentarians, who will vote to adopt or reject the final agreement, have only a limited access to the negotiating texts. In fact, MEPs may get access to a few more documents in the parliament's reading room than those present in the EU Commission's website. Moreover, although there are thousands of pages of documents, readers are not allowed to take any notes. About the secrecy in which the trade deal had been negotiated, critics argue that bargaining behind closed doors unfairly shuts out the voices of advocacy groups and non-involved countries. On the contrary, defenders argue that private negotiations are the only way to reach a deal, since third parties often reduce the probability of an agreement being reached.

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### 4 What would be the economic advantages?

According to an in-depth study by the European Commission Directorate-General for Trade<sup>5</sup>, TTIP could bring significant economic gains as a whole for the EU (€119 billion a year) and the US (€95 billion a year) once the agreement is fully implemented. This translates on average to an extra €545 in disposable income each year for a family of four in the EU. Overall, the bilateral trade between the two blocs, together with their increased trade with other partners, would represent a rise in total EU exports of 6% and of 8% in US exports. Potential gains would come from cutting costs imposed by bureaucracy and regulations, as well as from liberalising trade in services and public procurement.

However, an economic study by Jeronim Capaldo of the Global Development and Environment Institute at Tufts University predicts a net fall in EU exports, declining GDPs for EU member states, a fall in Europeans' personal income and at least one million job losses in

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<sup>3</sup> TransatlanticTrade&InvestmentPartnershipAdvisoryGroup, Meeting Report 9 March 2017, European Commission

<sup>4</sup> <https://ustr.gov/countries-regions/europe-middle-east/europe/european-union>

<sup>5</sup> European Commission's Memo, Independent study on the benefits of EU-US trade agreement, Brussel 12 March 2013

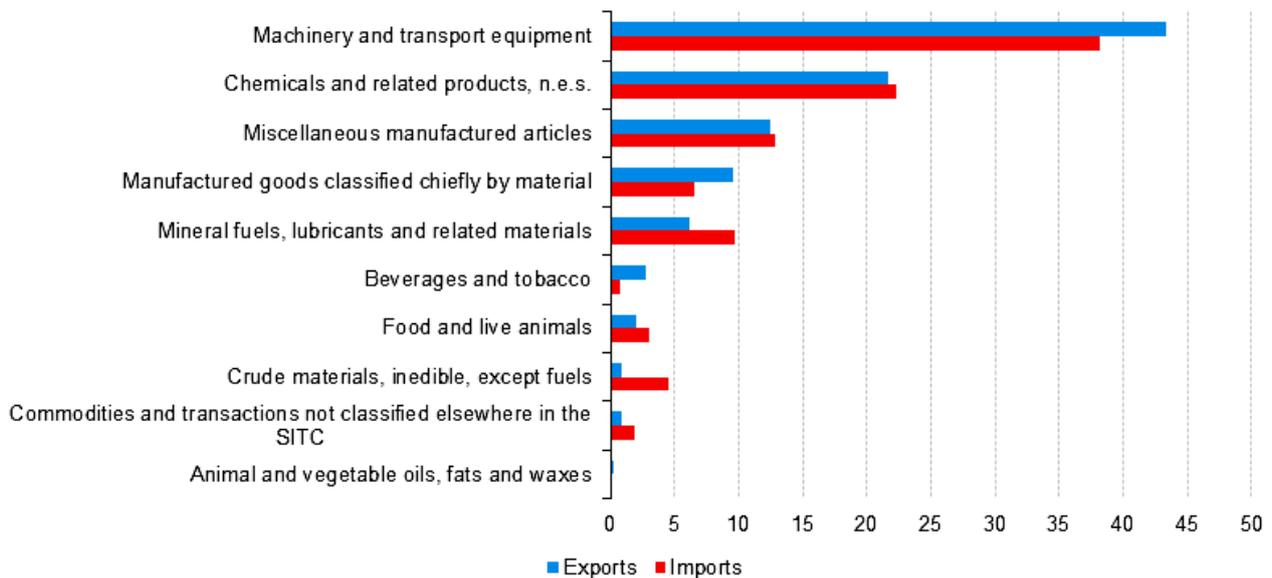
the EU and US as a result of TTIP. Something similar happened when millions of jobs were lost in the US as a result of the NAFTA (the free trade agreement between the US, Canada and Mexico).

Additionally, many people consider TTIP a major threat to living standards and the environment, and fear that underestimating these consequences would bring to considerable social and economic costs.

## 5 Which sectors could it affect?

A range of industries would be affected by the deal, from pharmaceuticals, energy and clothes to food and finance. The only sector formally excluded from negotiations - as requested by the French government - is the film and music industry. According to a European Commission study on the benefits of TTIP<sup>6</sup>, those which are likely to gain most thanks to the deal are metal, food, chemicals, manufactured goods, transport equipment and vehicles sectors.

Figure 2: Trade in goods EU-US, by product (SITC level 1), EU-28, 2013



source: Eurostat, [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:Trade\\_in\\_goods\\_with\\_the\\_US,\\_by\\_product\\_\(SITC\\_level\\_1\),\\_EU-28,\\_2013.png](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:Trade_in_goods_with_the_US,_by_product_(SITC_level_1),_EU-28,_2013.png)

### 5.1 FOCUS ON FOOD SECTORS: Consumers could be exposed to US farming practices banned by the EU

According to the European Parliament<sup>7</sup> a well-designed agreement with the US can raise EU GDP by 15-20% within 2020, since European firms will potentially deal with 850 million of customers. At the same time high standards of consumers' interests protection must be assured, as far as personal data, health and security are concerned. For this reason, the EU negotiators have been asked to suggest a specific clause according to which it could be possible to close markets of particular products when the imports of them could damage the 'domestic' food production. Particularly, the EU food standards should be protected in case the American one are remarkably different, as happens for chemicals substances, GMO and other food regulations.

In order to investigate the TTIP impact on the European agribusiness the international NGO Friends of the Earth Europe, supported by Fairwatch for Italy, published a report in 2016 contemporarily in 17 different European countries and in the US, showing some official studies about the issue<sup>8</sup>. In reference to this report, TTIP will raise imports from the US while it will bring considerably less advantages for European producers in the industrial, agricultural and farming sector. In some cases, it has even been predicted a decrease in the European GDP with a consequent loss of jobs in such sectors. This can be explained with the fact that if consumers have to choose between American cheaper products and European high-quality

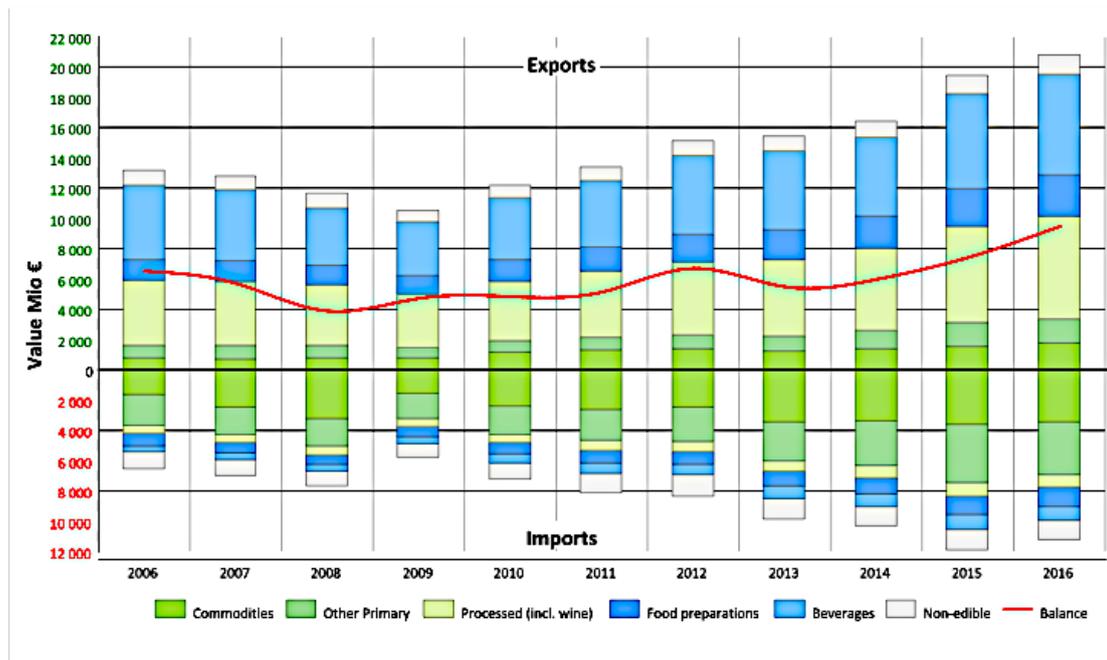
<sup>6</sup> European Commission's Memo, Independent study on the benefits of EU-US trade agreement, Brussel 12 March 2013

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/it/headlines/priorities/20150202TST18313/20150528IPR60432/ttip-riformare-sistema-protezione-investimenti-salvaguardare-gli-standard-ue>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2016/04/28/ttip-importeremo-carne-americana-trattata-con-gli-ormoni-e-addio-made-in-italy/2678344/>

and high-priced ones, they are likely to choose the former, even if the quality is lower, in order to save some money. As a consequence, European producers will have to choose between adopting the American standards in the production of food to remain competitive in the market by offering products with a similar quality and price or offering a niche product which, because of its higher price, will be chosen only by those who can afford it.

Figure 3: Structure of EU Agri-food trade with USA, 2006 - 2016



source: European Commission, Agriculture and Rural development, [https://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/sites/agriculture/files/trade-analysis/statistics/outside-eu/countries/agrifood-usa\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/sites/agriculture/files/trade-analysis/statistics/outside-eu/countries/agrifood-usa_en.pdf)

For this reason, citizens in Europe have loudly opposed TTIP, which is considered to impose the US “Big Food” model, the majority of which is based on the use of:

- PESTICIDES

Eighty-two pesticides are banned in the EU on health and environmental grounds, because considered carcinogen, suspected endocrine disruptors and capable to affect the immune system, with the risks of birth defects. However, this does not happen in the US. A US-EU trade deal will open the door to imports of American foods grown using these pesticides.

- GM FOOD

Derivatives of GM maize and soya are in thousands of processed foods in the US. American consumers’ demands to see them labelled have been suppressed by big biotech companies’ lobbying. Instead, in the EU foods made using GM ingredients must be clearly labelled. Currently, EU states have the right to ban the import of GM food, but this wouldn’t be possible in case the trade deal is approved, where farmers on both sides of the Atlantic might argue that GM products labelling and bans are discriminatory barriers to trade.

- FOOD ADDITIVES

Processed foods in the US typically contain many more additives and hi-tech ingredients than their counterparts in Europe. Several food additives banned in Europe are allowed in the US, such as petroleum-derived food colourings, and other chemicals that have been linked to specific human diseases like asthma, gastrointestinal disorders, etc.

- **CHLORINE CHICKEN AND ACID-WASHED MEAT**

In the US it's legal to "wash" butchered chicken in strongly chlorinated water and to spray pig carcasses with lactic acid. These procedures are adopted to reduce the spread of microbial contamination from the animal's digestive tract to the meat. However, these practices aren't allowed in the EU, and the dominant European view is that, instead of reducing contamination, they could increase it.

There are also concerns that such "washes" would be used to make meat appear fresher than it really is. It is to be underlined that these practices are not pointed out on products' packaging because they would count as "processing aids", which do not need to be labelled.

- **HORMONE AND ANTIBIOTIC GROWTH PROMOTERS**

The EU has a general ban on the use of synthetic hormones in farming because the European Food Safety Authority says that there isn't enough data to fully assess potential human health risks, such as increased cancer, and early puberty.

In the US, beef cattle and dairy cows are often implanted with synthetic hormones to make them grow faster or to make them produce more milk. Pigs are also treated with these drugs. Generally, there is increasing awareness that the overuse of antibiotics in animals causes the emergence of bacterial infections, both in animals and humans, that are resistant to key groups of these vital drugs. Once a EU-US trade deal was signed, these imports would not have to underline the country of origin of individual ingredients, and so there would be no certainty of avoiding products processed according to US standards.

- **ANIMAL BYPRODUCTS FED BACK TO LIVESTOCK**

Powerful US meat and grain corporations want the EU to drop restrictions on animal byproducts (abattoir offcuts and waste) in animal feedstuffs, arguing that it is a barrier to trade aimed at protecting European internal market, which has caused a 62% drop in US exports. However, such a practice can result in several diseases: swine fever, foot and mouth disease and mad cow disease.

Why all these practises aren't adopted by European food producers?

Because of the protective umbrella of REACH, the European Regulation on Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals, that requires companies to prove their chemicals are safe to human health and the environment before they can be sold, following the "precautionary principle". It affects a wide range of sectors and requires from companies new forms of cooperation and communication along the supply chain about the substances involved, to ensure a high level of protection for human health and the environment<sup>9</sup>. Specifically, in the food sector the EU Commission has adopted an integrated approach to food safety which covers all stages of the food supply chain, "from farm to fork", including feedstuff, food processing, storing, transportation and selling<sup>10</sup>.

This simply doesn't work in the US which relies on Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA). In fact, in the US a company can sell its product unless someone claims health problems which are believed to have been caused by the product.

Consequently, the subject has to provide some scientific evidences that the health problem is really related to the product, before that can be removed from the market.

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## 6 What do generally supporters and opponents say?

According to the US Trade Representative Office<sup>11</sup>, TTIP is an ambitious, high-standard trade and investment agreement that would provide significant benefits in terms of promoting US international competitiveness, jobs, and growth. The study of the European Commission<sup>12</sup> also talks about the fact that TTIP will benefit the EU and US labour markets, both in terms of overall wages and new job opportunities for high- and low-skilled workers.

Additionally, according to Aspen Institute<sup>13</sup>, the biggest advantage of TTIP will regard the service sector, which counts for three quarters of GDP both in the US and EU, thanks to the mutual recognition of professions. However, according to the European Parliament position<sup>14</sup>,

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<sup>9</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/chemicals/reach\\_it](https://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/chemicals/reach_it)

<sup>10</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/topics/food-safety\\_it](https://ec.europa.eu/info/topics/food-safety_it)

<sup>11</sup> <https://ustr.gov/countries-regions/europe-middle-east/europe/european-union>

<sup>12</sup> European Commission's Memo, Independent study on the benefits of EU-US trade agreement, Brussel 12 March 2013

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.aspeninstitute.it/aspensia-online/article/i-meriti-del-libero-commercio-tra-ue-usa-il-momento-giusto-un-nuovo-patto>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/it/headlines/priorities/20150202TST18313/20150202STO18324/ttip-un-opportunita-per-tutti>

although TTIP has the potential to encourage economic growth and the creation of new jobs on both the Atlantic sides, each part has its own market peculiarities and values that must be defended.

For instance, among the main critics one is about the proposed Investor State Dispute Settlement (ISDS), which could bypass national laws by allowing businesses to sue governments if they believe their investments and profits are unfairly restricted by state regulations. This risks leading to the law of commerce predominating over democracy since the interests of citizens will be overcome by those of business, with no one safeguarding people rights. Another big worry is that the main goal of TTIP is removing food stricter regulations that prevent citizens from being poisoned, killed or subject to increasing pollutants and chemical substances, so that more profits can be made by corporations on both sides of the Atlantic.

#### 6.1 FOCUS: NON STATE ACTORS PROTESTS

Figure 4: Giant Trojan horse protests against EU-US trade deal



source: <http://www.foeeurope.org/giant-trojan-horse-protests-EU-US-trade-deal-090914>

Precisely for all the suspected negative effects that TTIP could have for people and the environment, pressure groups, charities, environmentalists on both sides of the Atlantic and NGOs such as Friends of the Earth, GreenPeace and the Pirate Parties of Greece, Germany, Slovenia and the Netherlands, have heavily campaigned against TTIP in the last years. The huge self-organised European Citizens Initiative (ECI), which was launched in 2014 against TTIP and CETA, the immense work done by more than 500 civil society groups and activist movements has resulted in the collection of three million signatures against TTIP across all Europe. This, according to Friends of the Earth, has been an unprecedented success in the battle against the corporate-led agenda of EU trade negotiations. Friends of the Earth Europe's giant inflatable Trojan horse (the symbol of the threats posed by TTIP) has toured over 20 countries in countless towns and cities, accompanied by an incredible number of events organised by local communities to promote citizen-led alternatives to free-trade agreements. Friends of the Earth volunteers have also joined thousands of people on the streets and mobilising online in a united rejection of the trade deal. In Berlin, over 250,000 people joined a massive protest in 2015, while over 7,000 took the streets of Amsterdam, Copenhagen and many other major European cities. Such levels of public awareness, interest and engagement have significantly impressed EU trade officials who are used to deciding on trade deals behind closed doors.

Even more, as mentioned in Slow Food website<sup>15</sup>, in January 2017 The European Court of Justice has recognised the validity of ECI, which in July 2014 asked the European Commission to register a proposal for a campaign called 'Stop TTIP', with the intention of blocking the trade deal. At that time, the European Commission denied the request, but now the ECJ has annulled the Commission's decision, meaning that the proposal can be submitted again, respecting the principle of democracy and allowing citizens to participate to the public life of the EU. In order to calm the more and more visible public fears, the European Commission has firmly underlined that TTIP would mean increasing the exportation of products previously sanctioned by additional tariffs. But as Slow Food underlines<sup>16</sup>, while there

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.slowfood.com/slowlife/en/stop-ttip-the-european-court-of-justice-recognizes-the-validity-of-the-citizens-initiative/>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.slowfood.com/slowlife/en/free-trade-investment-treaties-no-thanks/>

can be important economic gains from the exportation of goods like cars and technology, with food this theory simply does not stand. Longer and more distant supply chains means more distance between producers and consumers, less transparency in the management of our limited environmental resources and fewer local economies. Following the words of the US Slow Food Executive Director, people must have the right to choose the food they eat and to oppose to any attempt of deregulating its production.

The European business community is also far from united in backing the deal. A growing number of small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) have joined coalitions opposed to TTIP raising concerns that such an agreement would discriminate against SMEs. Mario Ohoven, Head of the European SME alliance, has strongly criticised the so-called ISDS, allowing foreign investors to sue governments if they feel their investments are unfairly restricted by regulations. Similar provisions in other treaties have allowed, for example, tobacco conglomerate Philip Morris to sue Uruguay and Australia for enacting anti-smoking legislation. Concerning this issue, M. Ohoven argued that ISDS, instead of supporting SMEs, would be at the advantages of big corporations, which can afford to sue governments.

The German association of judges has also raised “serious doubts” about ISDS, stating that courts allowing firms to sue countries were unnecessary and had “no legal basis”. With ISDS challenges would not be heard by national courts, but by special courts made up of private lawyers. There would be no right of appeal, but the court’s decision would be legally enforceable at national level. Consequently, national and EU courts could be bypassed to protect the financial interests of corporations, and an indirect effect would be to discourage public authorities from enforcing public interest safeguards for fear that they could be challenged by the ‘power of big money’.

Support for TTIP is also falling in the US, where the ALF-CIO, the umbrella federation for US trade unions, said that they would be unable to support any trade agreement unless it is well-balanced, stimulates the creation of good jobs, protects the rights and interests of working people and promotes a healthy environment. In fact, Europeans are not the only ones at risk from TTIP because of the lower American food and environmental standards. In fact, in some cases, US standards are higher than in the EU; for example, the US has somewhat stricter financial regulation than in the EU. TTIP also threatens the powers of US states to regulate independently of the federal government. For example, it would make it more difficult for states to adopt rules to safeguard healthy food and farming standards.

Finally, an interesting part about TTIP stood out when the misunderstandings between the US and the EU have been unveiled by a massive leak of documents made available by GreenPeace, revealing “irreconcilable” differences on consumer protection and animal welfare standards. Moreover, it seems that any reference to environmental protection have been overlooked<sup>17</sup>. This is what the NGO points out after the publication of 248 pages of TTIP negotiating texts. GreenPeace stated that the omission of this regulation suggests that both sides are creating a regime that places profit ahead of human, animal, plant life and health. This also means that climate protection will be harder under TTIP, although trade should not be excluded from actions to make the climate situation better. Even worse, some proposals would be about regulating the import from the US to the EU of CO<sub>2</sub> intensive fuels such as oil from Tar Sands which is not a very environmental-friendly energy solution. Given these evidences, GreenPeace have warned people who care about democracy, environmental protection, health standards and working conditions to get aware of what’s at stake, claiming that TTIP is not really about trade, but about putting trade privilege ahead of public services and people and environment protection. This is why GreenPeace has called on the US and the European Commission to protect citizens interest and put an end to these negotiations.

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## 7 What happens next?

The deal has to be ratified by the Council and the Parliament of the EU<sup>18</sup> and the Congress<sup>19</sup> in the US. However, from the very beginning of the negotiations there were some state leaders who were very skeptical about the deal and some others who had already declared not to approve it. Today, following 15 rounds of negotiations, the situation is stable without conclusion since the end of 2016, after the change of Administration in Washington. For this reason, TTIP

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<sup>17</sup> <http://www.greenpeace.org/international/en/press/releases/2016/Leaked-TTIP-documents-confirm-major-risks-for-climate-environment-and-consumer-safety/>

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/it/headlines/priorities/20150202TST18313/20150528IPR60432/ttip-riformare-sistema-protezione-investimenti-salvaguardare-gli-standard-ue>

<sup>19</sup> [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=EPRS\\_IDA\(2016\)577999](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=EPRS_IDA(2016)577999)

has been declared by some as a 'dead-end' road because of the lack of agreement regarding some points of the deal between the negotiating parts and the consequent change of strategy of the EU which now is focusing more on a treaty with Canada (CETA), or Japan. In fact, according to the joint public report issued in January 2017 by the European Commission and the former US Administration<sup>20</sup>, although good progress had been made in all areas, significant differences remained on agricultural market access, procurement and geographical indications. There are some in Brussels who believe that negotiations of the TTIP have ground to a halt, and the prospect of reviving them is in "deep freeze", undermining expectations that the EU would be ahead of the UK for an agreement with Washington.

The perspective of a stagnation in trade talks has emerged despite Wilbur Ross, US Commerce Secretary, commented in April that the US was "open" to resuming negotiations with Brussels. However, neither Donald Trump nor European officials mentioned the possible resumption of talks during the US president's visit to Brussels in May 2017.

So, what happens to the fate of TTIP?

Barely half a year ago the TTIP was on life support. Europe backed TTIP not just to create jobs and growth, but also to strengthen the transatlantic alliance and set mutual standards that much of the rest of the world would have been forced to follow.

At the same time TTIP has been opposed by NGOs and consumer groups, and rejected by some politicians. Negotiations started getting stranded after the 15<sup>th</sup> negotiating round, at the beginning of October 2016, and the situation became even worse after the US presidential elections. What are the main reasons behind this inverse change?

On the American side, Mr. Donald Trump. In fact, since the very first moment he was very skeptical about the deal and, above all, Trump complains about Germany's currency and trade surplus. He is convinced that Germany is using a "grossly undervalued" euro to "exploit" its trading partners in Europe and in the US. In addition, Trump is considered to have exploited public anger over TTIP to put an end to it. He spoke of the devastation caused by TTIP's forerunner, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which radically encouraged corporations to "offshore" jobs to Mexico, leading to a huge loss of jobs in the US. So, it may appear that he considers trade agreements with other countries more as an economic loss rather than opportunity. The truth is that TTIP was already dead on the public opinion side, because of the millions of European and American activists who, for the last three years, have protested against it and the power of big money, at the expenses of democracy, the environment and the citizens' health. Furthermore, P. Navarro, the Head of Trump's National Trade Council and an architect of many of the Administration's trade policies, declared the US preference for bilateral trade deals, which he, Trump and other advisers believe give the US more leverage in trade negotiations. Instead, according to them, those with the EU seems more a 'multilateral deal with many countries under one roof'.

On the European side, the main reason creating disapproval has been Trump neo-mercantilist campaign, with the intent to impose duties on more than 90 products «Made in Eu», from the typical French cheese to the Italian Vespa. Even the euro has been criticised as too 'weak' in comparison to the US dollar to make deals. Given that, now it seems likely predictable that Trump could be more interested in a deal with post-Brexit UK.

So, in order to counter the American offensive the EU can appeal to WTO rules, which instead Trump would like to overcome in order to protect the 'American jobs'.

In addition, the European Commission is trying to strengthen commercial alliances with other partners. It is the case of the deal with Canada (CETA) and that with Japan (the world's third-largest national economy) whose negotiations started in 2013 and got finalised on 8 December 2017.

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<sup>20</sup> Transatlantic Trade & Investment Partnership Advisory Group, Meeting Report 9 March 2017, European Commission

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## 8 Conclusions

In the light of what above mentioned, it can be stated that still today a clear opinion about TTIP isn't easy to find. There are some who were and still are enthusiastic about the deal, others who have changed their initial positive opinion, and others who definitely reject it. Both the negotiating parts of the EU and US have stressed in several studies the benefits that TTIP could bring to both corporations and consumers, such as the opportunity to boost economy with more products choice and better value for shoppers and consumers, to secure jobs and to set rules for a better and fair global economy. Moreover, according to some economic thinking, generally, trade agreements would be the solution to help states counter economic crises. In reference to Jeremy Rifkin's essay '*La società a costo marginale zero, L'internet delle cose, L'ascesa del commons collaborativo e l'eclissi del capitalismo*', today, because of technological innovation and the growing productivity and efficiency, there is the possibility to satisfy consumers' needs with less resources (including labour force) and thus with a lower GDP or to satisfy more needs with the same amount of resources and so without generating a higher GDP. This leads to a decrease in consumers' purchasing power and consequently to a decrease in the request for goods and services. In such a way the capitalistic system loses the possibility to take advantage of consumers' dependence on products, and so on the ability to establish the prices in the market. A possible solution to such a situation may be trade agreements, like TTIP, that would be able to open the supranational markets, where to find consumers to whom offering goods and services in case in the domestic context there are some difficulties, thus generating an incentive to commerce. In these terms TTIP could be a good solution to deal with the still present effects of the general economic crisis begun in 2008.

However, an important question has to be considered: is it possible to sacrifice the rights of citizens and environment for the sake of ensuring a well functioning economy? Perhaps not, because even if there is a surplus of goods and services thanks to efficient economic exchanges there won't be the addresses of such surplus. In fact human and environment health are the foundations of our society. The former is essential to secure a place where to live and where to find all the natural resources which man uses to feed himself and to produce things. The latter, obviously, is indispensable as well because people are the main addresses of the economic activity and without consumers any economic system would be pointless. With regard to this issue, and focusing more on the food sector, as stated by the EU Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety, the provision of safe, nutritious, high quality and affordable food to consumers is the central objective of the EU food policy. On the one hand, the EU commits itself in helping farmers to produce sufficient quantities of food respecting EU norms on sustainability, environmental rules, animal welfare, traceability, etc, while on the other it tries to facilitate the global trade of food with other entities, except for those which could jeopardise the high level of consumers' safeguarding promoted by EU policies. Moreover, the EU could be proud of itself for having established the so called 'REACH', which according to the European Commission, 'shifts the responsibility from public authorities to industry with regards to assessing and managing the risks posed by chemicals and providing appropriate safety information for their users'. Thanks to this mechanism, theoretically, consumers can trust the quality of the products they find in the market, since if a company does not prove its product is safe, then it cannot be sold. Precisely for this strict regulation European farmers are used to work in a clear manner which, on the other side could require longer timings and higher costs of production, yet for the right reason. After all, that would be the same food that they themselves, and their families will eat every day. Furthermore, we shall consider that some people, especially in smaller and rural communities, still deliberately choose to dedicate their entire life to work in the food sector, considering it as a kind of 'cultural value' such as securing the delivery of healthy food and preserving the farming and agricultural traditions of their specific area. Unfortunately, especially these people, who prefer quality to quantity, will be affected negatively by the establishment of trade agreements which instead aim exclusively at the quantity. And today, thanks to the economy of scale it is not so difficult to create huge quantities, cutting costs and time and squeezing small scale competitors out of the market. This issue is currently even more important, since it is now completely clear that there is a close connection between uninspected food and serious health diseases. What is more, even small producers, who have been considered by many studies to be those who could profit more from the deal thanks to the widening of the public, have heavily campaigned against TTIP, objecting mass production without an added value.

In fact, many believe that the process of conversion from local community-based food production to large-scale, export-oriented and mono-cultural production has provoked the decline of traditions, cultures and pleasures associated for centuries with food production, affecting the enthusiasm of tasting food grown by local hands. Economic agreements should mean knowledge and share of different cultural approaches to food, not the rejection of all of them. For this reason, if there is someone who still believe in the idea of defending people rights to a safe food, which respect both the animal treatment, the intensive labour of the local farmer, the development of rural communities and the health of consumers, it should oppose commercial treaties which threaten all this.

In addition, objections to the any system favouring the interests of big multinationals at the expenses of consumers rights are needed. In fact, in a fair society each individual should be enabled to express its own opinion, and when these contrast, to fight on equal terms. It is not acceptable the idea that those with more money, and thus with more influential power, could overcome the laws safeguarding citizens interests. Corporations should be subject to the same rules and courts as citizens and governments and trade agreements must serve first of all the public interest. Precisely for this reason, in case trade partners have lower goods' standards, the EU should not forgo the protective umbrella of REACH, instead it should stand up for it and promote it, making it a prerequisite for every trade agreement in order to continue protecting the health of its citizens and of the environment, becoming an example for all the other entities.

To sum up, the idea of opening the market to foreign consumers in order to boost competitiveness and innovation is not wrong, if it takes into consideration consumers' rights and environmental rules. In fact the removal of unnecessary 'barriers' to trade should take place to guarantee clean water and healthy food, safe and renewable energy, or decent working conditions. Trade should not be promoted to guarantee profits for multinational corporations but to improve living conditions and create jobs.

So, to conclude, considered that trade agreements are supposed to be signed in order to bring benefits to the citizens of the countries involved, they should be built starting on the defence and improvement of their essential rights, and then, after this conditions are satisfied, it will be possible to discuss about economic efficiency and profits.

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