

Five Reasons Why the TTIP Talks Are Looking a Bit Wobbly. Mounting Opposition to “Free” Trade and Investment

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The twelfth round of negotiations for the TTIP, the biggest trade deal of them all, starts today in Brussels. The impacts of TTIP are disturbing and well documented elsewhere on this site, but we are seeing signs of panic setting in on the pro-TTIP side of the fence. They're right to panic.

- A. TTIP is hugely behind schedule. It should have been signed off by now, and well into the 'legal scrubbing' stage where the lawyers tie up the legal loose ends and smooth of the rough edges. These negotiations are not open ended. Every delay, every extra month taken up at this stage is a threat to the entire project. We have the US elections looming, two of the frontrunners are against the new generation trade deals like TTIP and the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). There is no secret about the desperation of the Obama machine as they try to get the deal done and signed off before he vacates the White House at the end of the year. Obama is due to visit Germany in April to plead with all concerned to get a move on with the project. It is not impossible for the ratification vote in the European parliament to be held in 2019, after the next elections. That would make ratification in Europe very uncertain indeed.
- B. There is a huge crisis over the proposals of corporate courts or 'ISDS' as it is often known. As the most contentious part of TTIP, it has attracted huge criticism and upset amongst members of the European parliament and in the public domain as well. [In 2014, 150,000 responded to a European consultation on the issue and 97% of those responses were very negative.](#) Since then, the trade commissioner in Brussels has dreamt up the Investor Court System as a proposed alternative. It has been made very clear that ICS is not alternative, more a repackaging of the dangerously flawed ISDS. Earlier this month, [the largest association of German Judges completely slammed the ICS idea](#) as undemocratic and undermining the sovereignty of domestic courts. Slowly, our representatives in Brussels are beginning to realise this. We need to keep shouting about this
- C. You might have noticed, but there is going to be a referendum on membership of the EU in the UK in June. Everything is up for grabs. If the UK votes to leave the EU, TTIP will probably still apply to us. In

the horse-trading and arguments that will rage between now and the day of the vote, there will be concessions and deals struck – maybe, just maybe, TTIP could become a casualty. And in the run up to the referendum, the very idea of Brussels politicians signing off on such a far-reaching corporate power grab is adding a whole lot of fuel to the Brexit fire.

- D. Procurement at all levels of government, both sides of the Atlantic is proving to be a sticking point. The EU wants access to state level procurement in the US – that’s a huge market to access. And at country level in the EU there’s an almost equally lucrative market to exploit for US corporations. The trouble is, this isn’t a deal being negotiated at state or nation state level. The US Trade Representative and the DG Trade in Europe are doing their utmost to keep scrutiny and influence at that level to a minimum, but agreeing stuff that is essential to their underlings at local level is part and parcel of TTIP and is inflaming opposition. Local authorities [across the EU](#) and [in the UK](#) are declaring their opposition to TTIP and CETA. [In the States](#), there’s a similar move afoot. It was recently announced that the EU and USA were going to swap procurement market access offers at the end of this month and then hold a special intercessional meeting to discuss them.
- E. And finally, one thing that cannot be ignored, is the growing movement of ordinary people across the EU & the US gaining knowledge and understanding about the deals (despite the best efforts of our governments and media). From the 3.2 million people who signed their opposition in the European Citizens’ Initiative last year, to the trade unions and community organisations saying ‘no’ to the deals, we are building a force that will be hard to resist. We can win this fight if we continue to step up the pressure.

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