



## EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Directorate-General for Trade

Directorate E - Neighbouring countries, USA and Canada  
**USA and Canada**

Brussels,  
USA and Canada

### Flash report: Conference in Slovenia: TTIP: what's in for consumers?

Dear All,

I attended a TTIP conference in Ljubljana: **"TTIP: what's in for consumers?"**  
organised by the **Slovenian Consumers' Association (ZPS)**

#### Participants

##### Opening panel:

- Mrs Breda Kutin, ZPS president
- Art. 4.1b, DG Trade
- Mrs Monique Goyens, BEUC director
- Mrs Mirjam Zdovc, Senior Advisor in the sector for internationalization,  
Ministry of Economic Development and Technology

##### Active participants in the round table:

- Mrs Breda Kutin, ZPS president
- Art. 4.1b, DG Trade
- Mrs Monique Goyens, BEUC director
- Mrs Mojca Prelesnik, Information Commissioner
- Mr Alojz Grabnar, Director of the Chemical office of the Government of  
Slovenia
- Art. 4.1b, Slovenian Chamber of Commerce
- Mirjam Zdovc, Senior Advisor in the sector for internationalization, Ministry  
of Economic Development and Technology
- Art. 4.1b, Umanotera environmental NGO and the representative of  
the coalition against TTIP
- Mr. Igor Šoltes, MEP, opposition Greens

#### Main points

##### From the Government:

- Conditional support of TTIP and of the work of the Commission provided that: 1. The EU doesn't lower European standards in particular with respect to SPS matters: food (GMOs, hormones beef, chlorinated chicken), health etc; 2. No ISDS in TTIP: clear opposition to ISDS (the Government has sent a position paper to the Commission). The government representative said that they didn't see the need for ISDS in TTIP.
- Very positive intervention from the Director of the Chemical office of the Government of Slovenia who explained that no substances will be sold in the EU

without complying with the REACH requirements regardless of whether they can be marketed or used in the US.

- The representative of the Chamber of Commerce was also very supportive of the agreement and he highlighted the benefits of TTIP for the business and Slovenia.
- Arguments against critics: the Commission is well aware of the red lines of these negotiations and of the concerns expressed by the Slovenian Government. We have no intention of lowering our standards or putting at risk the health of our consumers for commercial benefits. On ISDS: the Commission is working on a proposal that would reform the existing system. We are pursuing an in-depth reform of the system because we believe it is necessary. We believe that ISDS provisions are needed even with commercial partners like the US who has amongst the most sophisticated domestic legal systems in the world because they are often found to have failed to respect their international obligations.

#### **From BEUC and ZPS:**

- Supportive of trade in general. Supportive of TTIP? To be seen!
- Questioning rather than criticizing TTIP because the negotiations are still on going and they have to be closely monitored. Expressed deep concerns about the risks for the consumers that TTIP represents in particular with respect to SPS matters: food, GMOS etc. Labelling of GMOs specifically raised: consumers need to be aware of what they buying – with TTIP there is a risk that consumers might end up buying GMOs without knowing it! Electronic labelling has also been raised.
- Transparency: admission of the efforts of the current Commission to become more transparent; however not enough because there is no access to the consolidated texts because of the refusal of the US to make public their positions. Comparison with ACTA which failed in part because the negotiations were not transparent. Big debate about the reading rooms.
- Very clear opposition to ISDS in TTIP: we don't need ISDS in TTIP!
- Stressed that the US is very demanding with respect to agriculture and expressed concerns that the Commission 'might give in' because of our offensive interests like market access on public procurement.
- Critical towards regulatory cooperation.
- However recognition of some benefits of TTIP for consumers like for example: more choice, lower prices, more jobs.
- TTIP instead of supporting good practices and improvement of competition raises a thousand and one fears. However if one asks critical questions this does not mean that one is against.

#### **From the opposition to TTIP (Igor Šoltes, MEP, Art. 4.1b, Umanotera, NGOs, the audience):**

- Credibility of the Commission: How can we trust you on GMOs and or other issues if the negotiations are not totally transparent?
- TTIP as catalyst for a wider debate: Many people are sceptical about the US and the direction in which Europe is heading. It wasn't about the content of TTIP as such, but about environment, health, food etc.
- As a problem area it was highlighted the problem of chemicals and stressed that it was as one of the barriers to trade in the negotiations in TTIP. REACH provides high standards in the field of chemicals on the old continent and this is not the case for the US.
- Concerns that endocrine disruptors could be part of TTIP negotiations and that the on-going work within the EU on this matter is influenced by the US.

- MEP Igor Šoltes: No ISDS in TTIP. However after I explained the work that the Commission is currently doing to reform the system Mr Šoltes was confident that the “new ISDS” , which could be close to that one of a court system and based on the WTO model, could be eventually acceptable for the Greens.

### **Summary:**

The discussions were focused mainly on TTIP. However on this occasion the Slovenian Consumers’ Association (ZPS) also celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

The debate was conducted in a friendly atmosphere. The main criticism circulated around expected issues of GMOs (very important issue in Slovenia), ISDS, secrecy, chemicals and the 'little Europe' syndrome, i.e. the fear of competition with huge and powerful American companies. Each of the 4 opening panellists had 10 minutes presentation followed by a debate among the panellist and the audience.

The debate was very balanced with arguments in favour and against TTIP. I explained what TTIP is and what it isn't and I stressed the potential benefits of TTIP for the consumers and Slovenia in particular. To the question 'who is behind this agreement and if someone is imposing TTIP on us/them' I explained that the Commission is negotiating on behalf of the MS on the basis of a mandate that was given by the Council and which is public. The Commission remains accountable to the EP and to the Council and keeps them informed about the progress and the challenges of the negotiations. Once the negotiations concluded, the agreement has to be ratified by the EP and the MS, if it is a mixed agreement, and the vote can be equally in favour or against if the agreement is not good.

The government representative was in principal supportive (support conditioned by the exclusion of ISDS and the Commission respecting the red lines concerning GMOs, health, food), while the ZPS president was balanced highlighting certain dangers as well as positives. The representative of the Chamber of Commerce and the Director of the Chemical Office of the Slovenian Government were in favour of TTIP and highlighted the benefits for the business and Slovenia.

The discussion with the public was friendly. Almost all the questions were addressed to me to explain how regulatory cooperation would work, how can we be sure that there will be no GMOs, why do we need ISDS, etc. All in all, I think this was useful to explain how TTIP negotiations work and how they are conducted, but more communication is needed. This reassured the audience, but big scepticism remained, especially about ISDS and the impact of the agreement on consumers: how consumers can be sure that they know what is in their plates? Do we really need TTIP?