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NOTE TO THE FILE

Subject: Minutes of workshop “TTIP myths debunked - What’s really in it for consumers?” held in Brussels on 31 March 2015

On 31 March I attended the workshop “TTIP myths debunked - What’s really in it for consumers?” on invitation by the Transatlantic Consumer Dialogue. The event took place at the premises of BEUC and gathered around 25 participants, including representatives from US and European consumers associations, staff from Member States permanent representations as well as from the US mission to the EU.

The first part of the workshop was dedicated to discussing the economic gains from TTIP. The introductory remarks were delivered by Monique Goyens (director-general at BEUC) who set the scene by saying that many doubts persist on whether this agreement will bring any actual benefits to consumers while there are concerns about potential negative effects on employment. These were followed by two presentations. The first speaker was Rhoda Karpatkin (president Emeritus at Consumers Union) who voiced some frequent criticisms to TTIP (ISDS, threats to consumer protection, potential for reducing the civil society participation in rule making) and made the point that these concerns should weigh more than promises of more variety and lower prices. The second speaker was Professor Art. 4.1 b from the University of Ghent who criticised TTIP and the CEPR (2013) analysis along three main ideas: i) the benefits of the agreement are small (and unevenly distributed), ii) their quantification is based on unrealistic assumptions (referring in particular to the fixed labour market closure used in the CGE simulations), iii) the TTIP simulations feature unrealistic scenarios for NTB cuts. I was given the opportunity to react and insisted on the importance of the gains coming out from the CEPR (2013) analysis especially considering that they are delivered by a single policy initiative. I also pointed out that the CEPR (2013) analysis is based on well-tested methodologies and that its results are in line with others (while the studies that adopted less conventional techniques have actually put forward considerably higher gains). I also called the attention to the transparency of the analysis as it offers an insight of the impact of TTIP under several possible scenarios.

The second part of the workshop was dedicated to discussing whether there is scope for mutual recognition of technical product standards in TTIP. The session was structured along three presentations: one by Art. 4.1 b (CEN/CENELEC), another by Dr. Art. 4.1 b (former CPSC commissioner, Consumer Reports technical director and ANSI Board) and a third one by Art. 4.1 b (ANEC). An important part of these presentations was

dedicated to clarifying the difference between the EU and the US very complex systems for standard development and implementation. Two challenges in particular were brought up by several participants: the risk that any harmonisation effort could carry in terms of loss of accountability and the difficulties in assessing equivalence of standards. Given the complexities at play many argued that the only way forward is to follow a case-by-case approach in the negotiations.

Art. 4.1 b

(e-signed)

Cc: S. Ratso, I. Garcia-Bercero, Art. 4.1 b
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