



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Directorate-General for Trade

Directorate E - Neighbouring countries, USA and Canada
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Meeting Report

More on TTIP events in Germany -this time State of Hessen, Business, civil society and Government

Below a quick read-out of meetings I had in Frankfurt and Wiesbaden (state capital of Hessen) yesterday. As a general comment, some of the pro TTIP interlocutors thought that it was not too late to turn around public opinion in Germany with a sustained communications effort. Commission and CM were lauded for increased transparency.

1. Public debate organised by the Hessen Business Federation, Frankfurt

Well attended (150 participants, local press, other speakers Amb Emerson, and the CEO of a top German Company (Fresenius). Further speakers included Thilo Bode, outspoken TTIP critic and President of the NGO Foodwatch who has written a book on TTIP called the "Free Trade lie".

Noteworthy some nice support from two SMEs who informed about their niche products and the problems to get them certified in the US (SDoc vs UL for the initiated). Amb Emerson trying to reinstate more trust in the US, and along his usual lines (geopolitics, value added of ISDS).

Most interesting the comments from Bode which were partly simply wrong but show how the arguments used by the critics are evolving. His main argument against TTIP no longer is that we would endanger the EU protection standards. He acknowledged that no politician in the EU (or the Commission) would try something "so stupid". But according to Bode the real danger is that we could not introduce higher standards in the future. Either because equivalence had been "fixed" or because ISDS would be used to prevent higher standards. (Comment: we might need to reinforce the point that this is nonsense and that equivalence is not a straight jacket, in our Communication).

2. Meeting State Secretary Weingarten (CDU).

Hessen is governed by a Christian Democrats-Greens coalition. The State secretary nevertheless said that the Green Minister of Economy knew what was at stake in TTIP and Hessen in the current political constellation would not be an obstacle in the second German Chamber. More problematic in his view were the red-green coalitions in some Laender as in those cases there was no "balancing" possible (he mentioned Germany's most populous state North Rhine-Westphalia as an example).

3.Meeting civil society

This meeting was dominated by the concerns of church groups active in Hessen, and the effect of TTIP an other Mega regionals on the developing world. No concerns voiced on standards or labour (for once).