

Next generation trade and investment agreements: challenges for public services



(29 November 2019) We should aim for “*private sufficiency and public luxury*”. These were opening remarks at the EPSU workshop on public services and trade, organised jointly with AK EUROPA, ÖGB Europabüro and ETUC on 19 November 2019 in Brussels. As the scope of trade and investment agreements expands into ever more areas of life, they exert more and more pressure on public services and regulatory frameworks that protect the general interest.

Experts explained how these negative impacts come about in practice, drawing on recent trade and investment agreements, including CETA. They also pointed to new emerging risks posed by negotiations on public-private partnerships (PPPs) and concessions, State-Owned Enterprises (SoEs), as well as on digital trade (e-commerce), and on conformity assessments.

The workshop underlined the ongoing need for an extensive and legally sound model clause for the protection of public services, as developed in the recent joint

EPSU / AK Europa study. The workshop came at a timely moment when the EU is launching a New Green Deal. Experts and participants agreed that growing concerns about climate change should lead to a greater role for public services and to more general interest regulation in order to ensure an effective and socially fair transition. In this context it is important to keep up the pressure to change the direction of current trade policy so that it supports, and not hampers, this shift towards 'people and planet over profit'.

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