

Unions demand transparency and an end to secrecy in the EU-Japan trade negotiations



(26 June 2017) Last week 23 June Greenpeace leaked a number of documents www.trade-leaks.org from the EU Japan (JEFTA) trade negotiations. This was the first time that concrete information became available about what our representatives are trading away. And about what they do not negotiate. Like with CETA, the JEFTA negotiations are not about protecting workers or the environment.

EPSU says that the EU needs to change the way the EU conducts its trade policy. Transparency is urgent as trade and investment agreements increasingly focus on areas outside the traditional remit of trade, i.e. tariffs. As trade negotiations encroach on regulatory and standard-setting functions carried out by democratic institutions and procedures - including social dialogue and collective bargaining - transparency is the absolute minimum.

Many actors have voiced the need to end the secrecy. They have called for more democratic oversight by the European and national parliaments and full consultation with and involvement of social partners and civil society organisations.

The European Commission and Member States indicated that there would be a more open approach after the public outcry over CETA and TTIP negotiations. For

example in the TTIP negotiations a special Advisory Committee was set up to better inform stakeholders. The overall practice of the EU however has not changed. JEFTA throws all of this sharply into relief.

To improve transparency we need:

- A public discussion of the objectives of negotiations before they start.
- An open debate about the mandate that the Council gives to the European Commission. This debate should give a central place to the social partners and the impact on workers' and fundamental rights
- The mandate to be made public.
- Transparency in the preparation of the Sustainability Impact Assessments (SIAs) so that the Assessments are better able to identify potential economic, social, human rights, and environmental impacts of ongoing trade negotiations.

The secrecy of the JEFTA and other trade and investment negotiations currently underway is not only questionable in democratic terms, it also poisons efforts to build engagement of citizens in Europe. It flies in the face of the credibility of the proposals of the European Commission to harness globalisation. Workers and people want to know what is going on.

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