

## How can public service unions better combat CETA?



(8 March 2016) Timely discussions took place in a training workshop organised by EPSU and the European Trade Union Institute last week (2-4 March) on the EU-Canada Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA). The workshop, held in Unison's London offices, took place just after the announcement by the European Commission that a revised text on investor state dispute has been included in the CETA agreement.

The [European Commission's press release](#) said that the text represented a clear break from the much criticised Investor-State Dispute Settlement - or ISDS. However EPSU and the European Trade Union Confederation still see many problems with the revised text and also consider that no special rights for investors are needed between countries with such developed legal systems as the EU and Canada.

Experts at the workshop, Thomas Fritz from the German NGO PowerShift and Oliver

Prausmueller from the Austrian Arbeiterkammer shared their knowledge of CETA and other trade agreements. During the two and a half days EPSU participants considered the threats to public services and workers rights posed by CETA - and TTIP and TiSA - as well as possible responses.

Larry Brown from the Canadian union NUPGE gave an update of developments in Canada.

Participants also exchanged views with a representative from the UK Government on UK trade policy. Amongst issues raised were negative listing of commitments and the effects of ratchet and standstill clauses, as well as necessity tests. In the UK there are many concerns about the impact of these provisions on the NHS in particular.

The workshop concluded that even an 'improved' ISDS cannot make up for the other major shortcomings of CETA, which is weak on sustainable development and fails to exclude many public services from its scope. EPSU believes that CETA risks undermining the goal of quality public services and quality work for all.

EPSU will be urging Member States and the European Parliament to reject CETA for these reasons.

For a critique of investor state protection, see "[The zombie ISDS](#)" from [Corporate Europe Observatory](#).

For more on public services and trade see EPSU's joint publication, "[Public Services Under Attack](#)"

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