



## Statement on the free trade agreements

### The representatives of public sector's trade unions from the Slovak Republic, the Czech Republic and Austria

There was a meeting of the public sector trade unions representatives from Slovakia, Czech Republic and Austria, which re affiliated in the European federation of public services. The meeting took place in Topolčianky Castle on March, 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> 2016. These people meet annually to discuss thorny themes that resonate in society and relative to public services employees. This time the organizers were Slovak trade unions - Slovak TU of Health and Social Services, Firefighters TU, Gas TU, TU of forests, water and waste, Energy and chemical TU, Metalworkers TU and TU of civilian employees of the army.

Trade unionists expressed the need for transparency in the negotiations during lectures and discussions, no threat to workers' rights and liberalize services. The trade unions reject the privatization of public services and the introduction of tenders and procurement to provide public services. If a TTIP agreement is signed, it definitely should be ratified by all national governments. The trade unions justified the TTIP disadvantages which especially strengthens the positions of large enterprises, limiting the space of governments for negotiating. It is estimated loss of approximately 600,000 jobs and limiting the powers of nature and the rights to education.

The trade unions say also NO to ISDS because there will rise the claims for the alleged loss of future profits and large corporations are thus against the governments. TTIP undermines democracy, it destroys jobs and occurs worried about food safety. Overall, it is a diversion from the EU social model and there is the need for further discussions.

Slovak, Czech and Austrian trade unions agree with the essential requirements of EPSU regarding TTIP, which are:

- **No deregulation of standards** which safeguard and serve the public interest: EU standards need to be respected and not harmonised down to the lowest common denominator. These include social and labour standards, consumer and public health protection, care for the environment including regeneration of our natural resources, food safety standards and environmentally sustainable agricultural practices, access to information and labelling, culture and medicine, financial market regulation as well as data protection, net neutrality and other digital rights. Mutual recognition is not acceptable in as far as it undermines democratically-agreed standards and strong safeguards. The precautionary principle must be widely applied.
- **No further deregulation and privatisation of public services.** We demand guaranteed access to high quality education, healthcare and other public services and the right to choose government procurement that promotes local jobs and local economies, local content, social entrepreneurship, sustainable economics, social considerations and serves the public interest.
- **Public authorities must keep the political power** and structures necessary to protect certain sensitive sectors and safeguard standards important to our quality of life. Internationally-agreed labour and environmental standards must be respected and enforced. The continuous violation of labour standards should be addressed by imposing monetary fines.
- **No restrictions on international and European human rights standards.**

- **No ISDS:** any provision containing Investor State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) mechanisms must be taken permanently out of the negotiations and no other mechanism introduced (including indirectly via other pre-existing or subsequent trade agreements) which grants privileged rights to foreign investors.
- **No regulatory cooperation council:** all regulation must be fully in the hands of democratically controlled bodies and processes.
- **Transparency now:** all documents relating to the TTIP negotiations, including draft consolidated texts, must be made public to allow for an open and critical public debate on the TTIP.
- **A democratic process** to allow for the scrutiny and assessment of the negotiation texts and which would ensure that policies are in the public interest; involves the EU Parliament and debates in national parliaments; and which includes civil society organizations, trade unions and stakeholder groups.

Trade union representatives of Slovak Republic, Czech Republic and Austria

March 2016