

TTIP 'nightmare' will lead to 'European disintegration'

Written by Tiziana Beghin on 29 April 2015 in Opinion
Opinion

TTIP will result in one million European citizens losing their jobs and a lowering of EU health and environment standards, warns Tiziana Beghin.



When I took up office in July, I listened to the discussions about the transatlantic trade and investment partnership (TTIP) in parliament's international trade committee, and I had the impression everything was set in stone, that the ratification of TTIP was certain and that there was nothing I could do to stop it. It seemed to me like I was trying to halt a train that was launched at full speed. Nevertheless, I kept voicing my dissent and my firm belief that TTIP is the biggest scam Europe has seen in decades.

I do not oppose TTIP because I am protectionist or anti-American; the US is a key strategic partner and I am convinced that trade can and must be used as a tool for development and for increasing our prosperity, but frankly speaking, TTIP has nothing to do with trade.

TTIP is an attack on the legislation and standards that protect us. The commission says it will be good for citizens and small and medium-sized enterprises, but those that support this deal the most are multinational corporations.

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Some of these companies are now richer than entire countries and need new markets and customers, and the only obstacles standing in their way are the national laws that are meant to protect citizens' health and the environment.

For them, TTIP is a once in a lifetime opportunity to remove the barriers that limit profit. Not in their wildest dreams could CEOs think of private courts or regulatory councils that agree on new standards together with regulators. TTIP will turn this into a reality and it will be a nightmare – our nightmare.

As if this wasn't bad enough, all studies agree that TTIP would reduce European internal trade by more than 30 per cent. The EU was born from the ashes of war and has laid the foundation of its success on trade between countries that were once enemies. Why should we destroy the very basis of our unity?

I see the irony here, a member of the most Eurosceptic group, speaking of European unity, but unfortunately I find unconditional support for TTIP among the main groups. They believe themselves to be the 'guardians' of the European project, yet they refuse to acknowledge that TTIP will mean European disintegration.

TTIP will make us poorer. EU businesses will go where it costs less to produce, where employment and social standards are lower and where energy is cheaper. They will delocalise to the US and we won't be able to stop them. Will TTIP at least make us grow?

Not really, because even under the most ambitious scenarios, TTIP only will lead to a mere 0.05 per cent GDP growth per year and even worse, under the same scenarios, there will be a 0.6 per cent decrease in labour, meaning one million Europeans will find themselves without a job. How will governments and MEPs justify this to their citizens?

I could go on speaking of geographical indications, genetically modified organisms, clones, beef and so on. But I feel I have made my point. Europe must say no to TTIP and I believe it will. I spend every day I am not in Brussels explaining TTIP to citizens, and opposition to it is growing among civil society and MEPs. I will not lower my guard, I still feel like I am trying to stop a train, but I know I am not alone and, little by little, I feel this train is losing momentum.

About the author

Tiziana Beghin (IT) is parliament's EFDD group shadow rapporteur on recommendations to the European commission on the negotiations for the transatlantic trade and investment partnership (TTIP)

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