

PRESS RELEASE

EU TRADE MUST BE MORE DEMOCRATIC, SAY 162 ORGANISATIONS

Brussels, February 1 – 162 organisations from across Europe have today called for European trade policy to be made more democratic. [1]

Their statement was handed over to European Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmström at the first meeting of a newly established expert group on EU trade agreements. [2]

The organisations representing civil society, trade unions and farmer groups argue that a profound change in the EU's approach to trade negotiations is necessary to restore trust and establish democratic accountability.

“Only a democratic and transparent process from its inception, both at the European and Member States level, has the potential to ensure that trade and investment agreements will benefit all and hence gain broad endorsement,” they write.

The calls comes after widespread public opposition to corporate trade agreements like TTIP and CETA, and argues that a radical change in the way the EU negotiates trade agreements would signal that citizens' voices have been heard.

The signatories propose steps that should be taken to establish democratic scrutiny over the negotiation and conclusion of trade and investment agreements. The proposed steps include:

- Public consultation on and parliamentary approval of new negotiating mandates;
- Balanced participation of stakeholders in the negotiation process;
- A much stronger role for parliaments to steer negotiations;
- Full transparency of the negotiation process, including the publication of consolidated texts;
- Time limits for and a comprehensive evaluation of concluded agreements.

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[1] Civil Society statement - EU Trade and Investment Policy must be democratised: http://www.foeeurope.org/sites/default/files/eu-us_trade_deal/2018/civil_society_statement_eu_trade_investment_democratised.pdf

[2] The expert group on EU trade agreements was established in December 2017 and holds its first meeting on 1 February 2018. Its members are listed here: http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2017/december/tradoc_156487.pdf