

## Press Release

### Teacher unions demand education be excluded from TTIP talks

*Ireland's teacher unions have called on ministers and MEPs to ensure education is excluded from the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) negotiations.*

The presidents and general secretaries of the four teacher unions in Ireland have expressed grave concern about the significant threat to Ireland's high quality public education system if education is not excluded from the TTIP negotiations and have written to leading Irish and EU politicians to make known these views.

According to the unions, inclusion in the talks would limit the future capacity of the Irish state to frame public education policy in a way that best serves the public good. They argue that new trade rules could lock-in and intensify pressures to privatise and commercialise education and restrict the ability of Ireland and other EU member states to promote high quality standards, to limit entry and regulate the quality of private and for-profit schools and institutions.

Education is an increasingly controversial issue in TTIP talks. Unions in several EU countries had demanded the exclusion of education from the TTIP negotiations. However, the EU Commission has thus far refused to do so arguing that carving out the entire education sector is neither warranted nor necessary. The Commission has stated that while it is aware of the sensitivities of the sector it is confident that it can safeguard the relevant elements of the education sector with existing means.

The teacher unions have rejected the Commissions argument and called on Irish politicians to support the exclusion of education.

The Irish unions have also expressed alarm that Ireland was among a number of countries that sought the inclusion of the investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) in the TTIP negotiations. Describing this as a retrograde step the unions argue that it will severely limit sovereign,

democratic decision-making by the Irish government and Oireachtas, especially in relation to regulatory standards.

All four unions are concerned that the inclusion of the ISDS would also potentially expose the Irish taxpayer to socialisation of debt if claims were to succeed through an ISDS mechanism.

Arguing that the ISDS clause places the interests and profit-generating capacity of private corporations ahead of the interests of citizens and society the unions believe that the courts are where such disputes should be settled.

Teachers have called for binding provisions to ensure that core conventions of the International Labour Organisation are adopted and enforced and demanded that TTIP not constrain national and local choices about the provision of public services, such as education.

ENDS///

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