

Most successful European Citizens' Initiative ever challenges proposed trade treaty

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Almost three million people have signed a European Citizens' Initiative to 'Stop the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP)', more than any previous petition to the EU, according to the Irish Federation of University Teachers (IFUT) who have called on the Irish government to reject the proposed trade treaty.

The petition will be handed to the European Commission on Oct 7<sup>th</sup> next as part of a campaign called 'Let's TTIP the scales.' It warns of serious economic and cultural threats as a result of the draft provisions.

IFUT General Secretary, Mike Jennings, says that for the first time education is being included in the Treaty proposals, relating to trade between the US and EU. "The TTIP proposals would effectively prevent regulation of 'for-profit' schools and institutions on the basis that it would represent a disguised barrier to trade.

"Education has always been generally excluded from the various trade agreements. The new proposals would allow private education companies the right to challenge measures that they feel interfere with their profits. The Irish state could be liable to hand over millions of euro in compensation. Profit-driven ventures, substantially discredited in the US, are now seeking to enter the Irish and European markets, with potentially disastrous consequences for our students and education.

"A US Congressional Report in 2012 was damning of the 'for-profit' education sector there. The two year study reported "substandard academic offerings, high tuition and executive compensation, low student retention rates and the issuance of credentials of questionable value.

"This explains the very genuine fear and concern now among educationalists at EU level," Mike Jennings says.

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