



EPSU Circular LC N° 20 (2020)

To the EPSU public services network

To the EPSU trade contacts

Cc for information to all EPSU affiliates

Ref: PC/ak

Contact Person: Penny Clarke

29 April 2020

**“on-line meeting on securing the public interest in global trade
in services negotiations”**

Joint AK EUROPA / ÖGB Europabüro / EPSU workshop

15 June 2020 (13:00 – 16:00)

Dear colleagues,

We are pleased to invite you to an on-line meeting on 15 June, from 13h00 to 16h00 on “GATS reloaded: securing the public interest in global trade in services negotiations”, organised by EPSU, AK EUROPA and ÖGB Europabüro.

The meeting aims to support a better understanding of the controversial issue “domestic regulation in services” in deep trade agreements and the agenda behind the more recent “Joint initiative on Services Domestic Regulation” at the level of World Trade Organisation (WTO). The intransparent nature of these negotiations makes a risk assessment by critical scholarship, trade unions and other civil society organizations even more important. What are the issues at stake? Where does the “unfished business” of these negotiations stand now? And how to ensure timely a reliable protection of public interest regulations? What are lessons from past negotiations and which future policy interventions are needed?

The upcoming 12th WTO Ministerial Conference is expected to advance discussions. The Ministerial was planned for June 2020 – but due to the Covid19-crisis it is expected to be postponed until late 2020 or early 2021. Moreover, it remains to be seen how business interests for making regulations first and foremost responsive to “market needs” may unfold in other trade fora (like e.g. bilateral trade agreements of the EU or a reloaded Trade in Services agreement like “TiSA”).

The controversial issue of “enhanced regulatory disciplines” on domestic regulation goes back to the unfinished business of WTO’s General Agreement on Trade in Services on-going agenda (GATS) that included a built-in agenda (GATS Article VI) to develop “disciplines” (rules) to restrict public interest regulations and domestic policy space in favour of commercial interests (like e.g. the especially controversial issue like the imposition of so called “necessity tests”). In the negotiations for a plurilateral Trade in Services Agreement (TiSA) – that were frozen in December 2016 - and in recent bilateral trade and investment negotiations we have seen similar pushes for a more ‘business-friendly’ environment through introducing restrictions on public interest regulations. Business organisations like the European Services Forum e.g. already pushed the new European Commission to support the resumption of TiSA “when the time is ripe”.

At the meeting Professor Markus Krajewski will give an overview of the issues at stake and will present the outline of a draft paper that he is preparing to support EPSU and AK to address the Joint Initiative, the agenda on enhanced regulatory disciplines on services in trade negotiations and to answer questions you may have.

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EPSU is a member
federation of the ETUC
and represents
PSI in Europe

The meeting will be in English only.

All information and documents related to this meeting will be available on the EPSU website at <http://www.epsu.org/event/joint-ak-europa-gb-europab-ro-epsu-meeting-trade>.

If you are interested to participate please send an email to Anneke Krijger, EPSU (akrijger@epsu.org), at the latest by 5 June 2020.

Further information and connection details will be sent to registered participants.

Yours sincerely,
Jan Willem Goudriaan
EPSU General Secretary

Enclosures:

- reading list: Introductory issues & background material EPSU Trade Update September 2019