

International Conference

„EU Trade Policy at the Crossroads: between economic liberalism and democratic challenges”

4 – 6 February 2016, Vienna/Austria

Organizers: ÖFSE – Austrian Foundation for Development Research, EAEPE – European Association for Evolutionary Political Economy, and EuroMemo Group, with financial support from Rosa Luxemburg Foundation Brussels, and Arbeiterkammer Wien.

International trade, and in particular TTIP, the Transatlantic Trade and Partnership agreement between the EU and the US, has recently become a hotly debated policy field in the EU, juxtaposing a coalition of EU institutions and the corporate sector against a large coalition of civil society organisations. TTIP stands out as the prime example of new generation free trade agreements aiming at deep economic integration. Besides tariff elimination, its primary aim is to focus on a very comprehensive set of regulatory issues and rules, with a view to dismantling and harmonizing these in areas such as agriculture, food safety, product and technical standards, sectoral regulations in services, the protection of intellectual property rights, and government procurement. In addition, investment liberalization and protection are central issues, with the proposed investor-to-state-dispute-settlement mechanism (ISDS) being particularly controversial.

The debate on TTIP has also triggered a renewed academic interest on trade issues. The academic discourse is characterized by a dual challenge: firstly, there exists a lack of knowledge about the likely impacts of the new trade agreements upon the well-being of EU societies. Many of the impacts of regulatory change on e.g. food safety, consumer protection, the natural environment or working conditions are not well-known. Secondly, there exists no alternative vision of what the role and contribution of international trade to social welfare in the current environment of multiple crises would possibly entail, and what kind of changes to the politics of EU trade would be needed.

Upon this basis, the conference wants to contribute to the trade policy debate by promoting (i) a trans- and interdisciplinary analysis of the current trade regime and policies in the EU and its likely economic, social and political impacts, and by facilitating (ii) a multi-stakeholder debate on alternative conceptualizations of trade and trade policy in the EU.

Thus, contributions from a variety of academic disciplines, such as e.g. economics, political science, law and sociology are encouraged. Similarly, the conference is open to a variety of theoretical and normative positions in the social sciences. In addition, the conference seeks to bring together researchers from academic as well as other research organizations with policy-makers and political activists from political organizations, NGOs and social movements.

The submission of papers in the following thematic areas is encouraged:

- Analysis and assessments of the economic, social and environmental impact of trade liberalization, with a particular focus on recent EU trade agreements
- The politics of trade in the EU, with a particular focus on transparency, democratic accountability and participatory modes of governance
- The regulatory agenda of EU trade policy, with a particular focus on both conceptual and empirical analyses, the latter investigating specific policy fields and regulatory areas
- The geopolitics of EU trade policy, with a particular emphasis on the impact of EU trade policy on the Global South
- Alternative conceptualizations of trade policy and proposal for a different EU trade agenda

The deadline for submission of paper proposals is 30 September 2015. Please send an abstract (max. 500 words) to tradeconference2016@oefse.at. Decisions on accepted papers will be made in early October 2015. In case of acceptance, full papers are due by 31 December 2015, to be posted on the conference web page. The conference language is English.

Registration forms for the conference and information on the keynote lectures and plenaries will be made available online via the conference webpage (www.oefse.at/en/events/eu-trade-policy-conference/). Further enquiries may be directed to the conference organizers Werner Raza and Melanie Wolf at: tradeconference2016@oefse.at

Scientific committee of the conference: Marija Bartl (Univ. of Amsterdam), Ferdi de Ville (Ghent University), Jean-Christoph Graz (Univ. Lausanne), Ronan O'Brien (EuroMemo Group), Werner Raza (ÖFSE), Christoph Scherrer (Univ. of Kassel), Gabriel Siles-Brügge (Univ. of Manchester), Sabine Stephan (IMK/Hans Böckler Foundation), Pasquale Tridico (Univ. Roma Tre), Rudi von Arnim (Univ. of Utah/US).

