
MALMSTRÖM CONCERNED ABOUT PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF TTIP

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EurActiv

Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmström has admitted she is worried about the increasingly negative attitude in the EU towards the trade talks with the United States.

Malmström says it bothers her that the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) talks, which began three years ago, are facing intense criticism in member states, despite the fact that the negotiations have a mandate from the EU-28.

Last week, for example, a poll showed that 70% of Germans believe that a TTIP deal would bring mostly disadvantages, up from 55% in a similar poll in June 2014, with almost 80% of those questioned mentioning consumer rights as being the biggest worry.

Ultimately, TTIPs negative reputation in the EU comes down to heads of state not showing responsibility and defending the trade negotiations at home, according to Malmström.

In this area, I dont think they are doing enough, Malmström said in an interview with Radio Sweden on Monday (9 May).

Criticising Hollande

The Commissioner lashed out at the French President François Hollande, who openly criticised the TTIP negotiations last week, stating that France would not accept the deal as it stands today. Hollande mentioned that an agreement could endanger Frances agricultural sector as well as undermine environmental principles. French Trade Minister Matthias Fekl meanwhile accused the US of not wanting to compromise.

I note that its the beginning of a general election campaign in France and then its always fashionable to hit trade issues, Malmström said.

But the French government has not in any way asked us to suspend the negotiations. This criticism was never brought to us in any way, she added.

Last week, Greenpeace published 248 leaked pages from the latest trade negotiations in New York, revealing the US position.

EU health and consumer rights organisations told EurActiv.com afterwards that the leaks showed that the American negotiators don't appear to respect the EU's precautionary principle in risk management.

This would make regulatory cooperation more difficult, they said, unless the bloc agrees to water down a lot of its own safety standards and legislation on consumer rights, food safety and public health.

Malmström, on the other hand, defended TTIP on her blog and insisted that, No EU trade agreement will ever lower our level of protection of consumers, or food safety, or of the environment.

BACKGROUND

Negotiations between the United States and the European Union on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership began in July 2013.

The guidelines stated that the EU should seek to include provisions on investment protection and investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) in the proposed agreement.

If the treaty is signed, it will affect almost 40% of world GDP. The transatlantic market is already the most important in the world.

The deal could save companies millions of euros and create thousands of new jobs on both sides of the Atlantic. The average European household could save €100 per year and European GDP could increase by nearly 0.5%.

Kaynak/Source: