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News | 29.01.2014

TTIP Washing

Commission makes mockery of Sustainability Impact Assessment of TTIP

The decision by the European Commission (EC) to contract a firm behind a report that over-states the benefits of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) for an Impact Assessment makes a mockery of the whole process. The firm previously produced a study that gave a rosy evaluation of the economic benefits of eliminating "behind the border" barriers to trade. By contracting the same firm for the Sustainability Impact Assessment of TTIP, the Commission is entering into the muddy waters of self-referential science and quotation cartels that ensure that dissenting voices are kept out.

The Dutch firm, Ecorys, produced a study in 2009 containing figures for GDP gains through the elimination of "behind the border" trade barriers. These figures have been at the base of the official Economic Impact Assessment of TTIP carried out by the Centre for Economic Policy Research (CEPR) in London and cited repeatedly by European Commissioner for Trade Karel De Gucht when arguing only the benefits of the deal. This study presented a similarly rosy picture of the GDP gains but also broke them down to a misleading and headline grabbing per household level. The lead author of this study is now part of the Ecorys team that will conduct the Trade Sustainability Impact Assessment.

It is feared that such a closed loop of authors will only lead to a report that closely mirrors that of the previous Ecorys and CEPR studies. The Commission continues to cite headline grabbing figures about the benefits to GDP but has not once mentioned any potential negative impacts of the deal. TTIP has the potential to greatly impact social, environmental and democratic norms, but these impacts are not mentioned. Instead, we hear the same economic figures from the same sources. This alone must call into question the reliability of those figures.

Contracting self-referential studies calls into question the desire of the Commission to hear dissenting voices when it comes to TTIP. The announcement last week by De Gucht of a public consultation on TTIP was a step in the right direction, but such EC consultations have a history of being dominated by industry representatives and views, crowding out citizens and civil society. What we need now is full transparency in the process and a willingness to listen to dissenting voices and have their views taken on board. We will continue to call for this and support groups that are not being heard.

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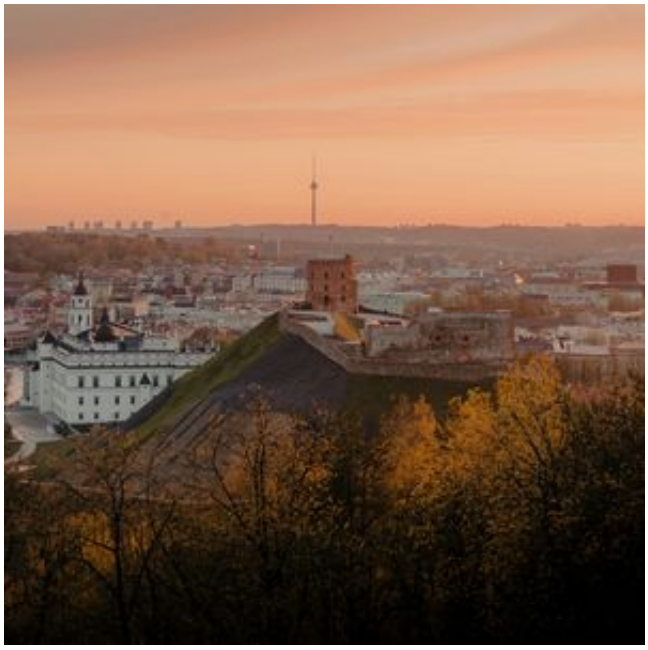
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