

The US/EU Free Trade Agreement and the NHS

The US/EU TTIP - Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (called the Transatlantic Free Trade Agreement in the US) was launched at the G8 meeting on 17 June 2013. It is not about reducing tariffs, it is about

- **liberalisation** - opening investment opportunities to transnational companies and increasing their legal rights while reducing the rights of governments to control them
- **'regulatory harmonisation'** - so that the EU and US become more similar, 'harmonising' standards eg on environment and food safety, to the lowest and most corporate-friendly.

International trade agreements are promoted by transnational corporations for their own benefit. The UK, acting for City of London-based transnational financial service firms, those firms themselves, as well as the US Chamber of Commerce are powerful movers in Brussels over EU trade agreements. As corporations gain power, democracy loses.

The UK Health and Social Care Act brought compulsory competitive tendering into all areas of the NHS, opening the door to private transnational healthcare providers. In an NHS harmonised with the US health system in this way, protecting corporate profits will dominate over safeguarding an honestly and openly run public health service.

When the TTIP is signed, corporations will have internationally-guaranteed rights to challenge any moves to make the NHS the 'preferred provider' of health services based on patient needs. Corporations will be able to sue the government for the loss of any future profits, making privatisation irreversible.

For further information

See Open Democracy website - Our NHS
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Produced by **Keep our NHS Public Greenwich**
www.keepournhspublic.com

What is Liberalisation?

- *Since the 1980s, successive UK governments have liberalised both the private and the public sectors, that is opened them to transnational investors.*
- *So in the private sector, most UK enterprise is now overseas-owned.*
- *Public sector privatisations in whatever form - as sell-offs (eg water, rail), private contracting (eg waste collection, hospital cleaning) or PFI schemes - are always simultaneously liberalised*
- *Right now it is the NHS that is at stake. As the NHS is being carved up and privatised, overseas investors are entering the newly-created UK market in state-funded health care.*
- *This is **potentially permanent**. Once transnational companies are involved, it is very difficult to reverse liberalisations, and, crucially, to reverse the privatisations underpinning them.*
- *With international trade agreements, corporations gain legal rights to future profit making - precisely the 'investor security' purpose of trade agreements.*

Whatever promises are made now, future governments will not be able to restore our health service. We need action now.

David Cameron has already ducked out of plain cigarette packaging legislation because of international trade implications. This is the future under trade deals.

Exempt the NHS from the US/EU TTIP

David Cameron has insisted that **'everything is on the table'** for the TTIP – **including our NHS.**

France has obtained 'special case' status for audio-visual services for the moment in the TTIP, though not a formal exemption.

Canadians have so far managed to exempt their national health service from trade agreements, though are now under EU pressure to liberalise their public procurement (all government spending at all government levels) in negotiations on a Canada/EU trade agreement (CETA).

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We need the NHS to be formally and fully exempted from the trade deal with the US.

What You Can Do

- **Sign the 38 degrees petition**
www.38degrees.org.uk/page/s/Protect_our_NHS_Petition
- **Write to your MP** about the effects of the TTIP on the NHS, spread this information about what the TTIP will really mean and contact the media.
- **Join Keep Our NHS Public (KONP)** and get involved.
www.keepournhspublic.com