



Making Trade Benefit Workers by Reforming Trade Agreements

11 December 2017, 11:00 – 12:30, Room 511, CCK Cultural Centre, Sarmiento 151, Buenos Aires, Argentina

To ensure that the benefits of trade are more equally shared, special attention needs to be given to decent work in global value chains (GVCs). The asymmetric power relationship in GVCs leads to downward pressure on wages and working conditions as suppliers in developing countries have virtually no control over price-setting by multinational retail companies. No effective international rules exist to prevent such a race to the bottom. One way of addressing this and ensuring a level playing field are trade agreements. However, on the multilateral level soon after the foundation of the WTO, the responsibility for decent work in international trade has been confined to the ILO who lacks the instruments to enforce it in cross-border situations.

Whereas it remained an absolute no-go in WTO trade negotiations, social clauses or labour provisions were established in bilateral and regional trade agreements, but so far also “lack the teeth” to make any significant contribution to remedy the situation described above. Within the EU, a discussion on the reform of the labour or sustainability chapter of EU trade agreements has started. As a contribution to this discussion a [Model Labour Chapter for EU Trade Agreements](#) has been commissioned by FES which will be presented during this session.

Based on this model chapter, our speakers and audience are invited to discuss the pros and cons of such a reformed labour chapter which includes new complaints and sanction mechanisms as tools to better ensure the promotion, compliance, and enforcement of labour standards in trade relations. We will also debate how such new labour provisions could be multilateralized.

WELCOME & INTRODUCTION

Hubert René Schillinger, Director, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Geneva Office

SPEAKERS

Bernd Lange, MEP and Chair of the Committee on International Trade (INTA), European Parliament

Patrick Abel, PhD Candidate and Research Fellow, Institute of International and European Law, University of Göttingen

Pradeep S Mehta, Secretary-General, CUTS International

Georgios Altintzis, Trade Policy Officer, International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC)

MODERATOR

Andrea Schill, Program Officer Trade and Development, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Geneva Office