



## The Health and Trade Network

STRATEGY 2016 - 20121

Protecting our right to health and the healthcare services we chose to use

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### Context

Spanning three continents and involving hundreds of countries, the EU-Canada Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), the Trade in Services Agreement (TiSA) and the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) represent the current wave of trade agreements aimed at increasing trade liberalisation. How governments manage our healthcare services, provide treatment, regulate against health harmful products and the practices of health harmful industries will be affected.

These trade agreements are changing the face of international trade and quite possibly leading to a break away from the World Trade Organisation's multilateral negotiations which, although highly criticised for giving developing countries a bad deal, at the very least included them in the negotiations. Concerns about the impacts on health from trade liberalisation in the WTO rounds are now also being felt with regards to CETA, TiSA, TPP and the TTIP. Ahead of the WTO 10<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference in Nairobi in December 2015, the UN Special Rapporteurs stated that ['If trade is to work for human rights and development it should contribute to the realization of the rights to adequate food, to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.'](#) The statement goes on to express deep concern that the mega-regional agreements pose a threat to poverty alleviation and will start a race to the bottom of regulatory standards through 'toxic' investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) and regulatory cooperation chapters. With particular regards to health, the Health and Trade Network is especially concerned about:

1. The impact of increasingly liberalised health and social services on procurement quality standards, labour rights and treatment outcomes in developed and developing nations
2. The impact of the TPP, TTIP and other trade agreements on developing countries' policy space to implement measures needed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular SDG3
3. Restrictions on changes to existing and future legislation on:

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- Tobacco
  - Alcohol
  - Environmental health
  - Antimicrobial resistance protection
  - Food safety and marketing,
4. The cost of medicines and the way that pharmaceutical companies can influence governmental and trade policy for outlandish profits.

### The Health and Trade Network

Established only in 2015, the Health and Trade Network (HaT) is a membership network of 10 founding members and 6 regular members. Our members come from academia and the NGO sector and include experts on health and trade, trade policy, pharmaceutical policy, tobacco control, alcohol control, health equity, women's rights and NGO management.

#### Our Mission: To Protect our Right to Health

The Health and Trade Network aims to put health and the public interest on an equal footing with commercial goals in trade when investment agreements are negotiated in order to ensure that our right to health, as enshrined in the UN Universal Declaration on Human Rights, is not hindered or regulation for health and the public interest compromised.

#### Our Vision: A world of healthy trade agreements

Our vision is no less than a world where trade agreements are designed to support strong health and social protection measures. They should include the right to regulate in the interests of health and public interest without fear of being sued or legally threatened for such measures; as well as increasing the economic and social well-being of all people.

#### Our Values

As a network with members from public health and academia who are highly critical of the WTO and the mega-regional trade negotiations, we believe that there is not enough evidence to guarantee that the way that trade agreements are currently negotiated and implemented will not damage our health or access to universal health care. On the contrary, we see international trade policy as it is currently developed as symptomatic of a neoliberal agenda which creates a political economy more interested in maximising profit than keeping people healthy or returning them to good health at an affordable price.

Tariff reductions, investment state disputes and regulatory cooperation are threats to high standards of care and primary prevention. Similarly, there are many civil society concerns about the impact of the WTO on poverty alleviation, social inclusion, equity and public health.

The Health and Trade Network takes a position that there is no current evidence that the existing trade agreements can legally provide watertight protections for public health. We



believe that policy makers should go back to the drawing board to recreate trade agreements in collaboration with all sectors of society that uphold the highest levels of human health and social protection.

Given the secretive, undemocratic and non-transparent nature of ISDS, and the number of cases of ISDS by tobacco and mining companies against health protection measures, the Health and Trade Network is against ISDS and any form of investment court based on its principles.

#### Thematic Goals 2016 to 2020

1. To ensure full and comprehensive carve-outs of all healthcare and social services from all trade agreements and that policy space for government procurement is protected.
2. To ensure that **pharmaceutical policies** in trade agreements do not negatively affect access to or the cost of treatment in developed or developing countries
3. To ensure that trade agreements fully allow for the control of **tobacco, alcohol and unhealthy food**
4. To prevent the risk of lowering of **food safety standards** and restriction of measures aimed at decreasing **anti-microbial resistance**
5. To mitigate the impact of trade agreements on the **Sustainable Development Goals**, especially SDG3, in all countries and middle and low income countries in particular.
6. To understand and minimise the impact of trade policies on the lives of women and to mainstream **gender equity** into trade policy

Other areas of concern include the impact of trade agreement measures on climate change legislation, the implementation of human rights conventions and the Codex Alimentarius. In this strategic period it is arguably beyond the scope or capacity of HaT to work on these areas as well. Instead, we will aim to be alert to future opportunities or the need to add our voice to these areas.

#### Approach

The Health and Trade Network members are a mix of academics, NGOs and concerned individuals who between them have extensive knowledge of human rights, trade, public health, health and trade and civil society activism. This diverse membership is united by the drive to achieve the overarching mission and vision of the organization through two key pillars of the network: a think tank where trade's impact on health can be researched, debated and documented, and a more traditional NGO branch of activism and campaigning. Activities and campaigns will be undertaken by working in partnership with other organisations, outlined below in the section on organizational development.



## **Health and Trade Think Tank**

All members and associate members in the network will provide the cornerstone of evidence, debate and policy recommendations for campaigns, policy papers and advice for dissemination by members, associate members and collaborating partners. By conducting research, holding conferences and communicating ideas, the think tank will be the first of its kind, in the EU at least, to focus solely on health and trade, especially from such a critical perspective. The topics covered by the think tank will correlate with the specific objectives mentioned above and all its outputs and deliverables should contribute to achieving the strategic goals, mission and vision of the network. Ideally, these should also be used in support of the HaT NGO members' campaigns and any campaigns HaT undertakes as a network.

## **Health Trade Campaigns and Activism**

Many of the HaT members already organize advocacy activities on trade at national and international levels (EU, Asia Pacific, for example) around specific trade agreements such as the TTIP, TPP and RCEP. HaT will aim to support its' members through information sharing, collaboration, fundraising and developing joint actions to achieve the network goals. These campaigns will be rooted in the evidence base provided for by the Health and Trade Think Tank and be designed so as to complement, rather than compete with, existing member campaigns.

Backed by evidence and policy recommendations, HaT and its members aim to be wherever trade deals are negotiated: in the European Commission, at the WTO, in USTR, and eventually supporting the actions of national campaigns in Africa, Asia and South America as well as the EU and the US.

### [Organisational Goals 2016 to 2021](#)

1. To create an effective global network capable of transnational and transcontinental advocacy to combat the negative impacts of free trade on people's lives.
2. To build sustainable relationships between the health community and other civil society organisations (representing the public interest) that support our campaigns.
3. To develop the capacity of the public health community, healthcare and social workers to understand and negotiate better terms in free trade agreements.



### **Developing Partnerships**

In order to strengthen our internal work and widen our impact, the Health and Trade Network will join or participate in international initiatives that are relevant to our objectives. Partners will be chosen who can provide invaluable sources of expertise, advocacy and fundraising opportunities.

### **Fundraising**

Potentially the most difficult part of establishing an effective and impactful organization will be to raise the funds necessary for operations and advocacy. A fundraising strategy will be developed by the Treasurer and Programmes Advisor in collaboration with the Founding Director and other interested board members and members. Initially, fundraising efforts should focus on supporting the projects designed to meet the Thematic Objectives and organizational goals. Potential sources of income include:

- Public Money
- Foundations
- Research institutes
- Crowd sourced donations

Grants or donations from the private sector will not be sought or accepted unless there are exceptional circumstances. Guidelines for ethical fundraising will also be developed by the Founding Director in 2016. Projects with the pharmaceutical industry, tobacco and alcohol companies, big food and the energy sector should never form any part of HaT's income.



The Health and Trade Network Scope and Depth

