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## Issues paper Communicating on TTIP – Areas for cooperation between the Commission services and Member States

On 22 November 2013 in Brussels, the Commission is organising an informal meeting with Member States representatives to discuss issues related to communication on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership. The meeting is intended to explore possibilities for greater cooperation and coordination of respective communication activities around TTIP. The present paper provides additional background for this discussion. It highlights a number of key issues to be discussed at the meeting.

### I. Context

Strong political communication will be essential to the success of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), both in terms of achieving EU negotiating objectives and of making sure that the agreement is eventually ratified. So far, the negotiations have experienced an unprecedented level of public and media interest. No other negotiation has been subject to a similar level of public scrutiny. Communicating on TTIP and engaging with stakeholders is therefore crucial when taking the negotiations forward.

There are three main communication challenges:

1. Making sure that the broad public in each of the EU Member States has a general understanding of what TTIP is (i.e. an initiative that aims at delivering growth and jobs) and what it is not (i.e. an effort to undermine regulation and existing levels of protection in areas like health, safety and the environment).
2. Managing relations with third countries, as the agreement will affect also our other trading partners, in particular the multilateral level, our neighbourhood and major partners like China.
3. Supporting our negotiating objectives vis-à-vis the US negotiators, in particular in areas not falling under the direct responsibility of USTR. This may be the case with federal regulatory agencies and state-level authorities where there will be a need for the EU to help persuade these decision makers to also engage.

In order to be successful in these areas, the Commission services and the Member States will need to work closely together and to collectively manage and coordinate our communication and outreach strategies.

The Commission, on its side, has put in place a dedicated TTIP communications operation, an approach that has already delivered results. However, the negotiations are just beginning and considerable challenges lie ahead. The communications effort is led by a Head of Communications in DG Trade with support of other Commission services, namely DG Communications and the Spokespersons Service. It is coordinated across the Commission, with Commission representatives in Member States and, through the EEAS, with EU Delegations.

### II. The current approach

The overall approach is holistic, uniting media relations, outreach and management of stakeholders, social media and transparency. The approach will need to further localise our communication effort at Member State level in a radically different way to what has been done for past trade initiatives, in addition to deploying efforts in Brussels, in the US and around the world, providing clear, factual and convincing arguments on all aspects of the negotiations.

The aim is to define, at this early stage in the negotiations, the terms of the debate by communicating positively about what the TTIP is about (i.e. economic gains and global leadership on trade issues), rather than being drawn reactively into defensive communication about what TTIP is not about (e.g. not about negotiating data privacy, not about lowering EU regulatory standards etc.). For the approach to be successful it needs to be both proactive and quickly reactive, involving monitoring of public debate, producing targeted communications material and deploying that material through all channels including online and social media.

So far, this has allowed us to:

- produce and disseminate communication materials on the narrative of the negotiations as a whole, as well

as more focused material on specific issues: e.g. the strategic, third country impact, the regulatory cooperation/convergence element, a detailed defence of the economic analysis behind the TTIP and a detailed rebuttal document on why the agreement is not ACTA.

make clear that transparency will be a key part of the EU approach to the negotiations by publishing the EU's initial position papers on key aspects of the negotiations, holding early stakeholder engagement meetings, committing to closer than usual consultation with the European Parliament, communicating directly with members of the public through a dedicated TTIP Twitter account with a considerable message-multiplying effect.

- keep a handle on the mainstream media narrative on the negotiations, where there is broad support for the logic and intended substance of the agreement.
- achieve traction in national media, at least in some Member States,
- reach out to influential third parties to secure their public support for the negotiations.

With the substance of the TTIP negotiations still to come, and an intensive ratification debate to follow, there is much more work to be done but the systems and approach we have now put in place provide a firm basis for future action. This needs support from and coordination with the Member States.

### III. Key issues to watch

1. Anxiety around the potential impact on the European social model and approach to regulation: We need proactive, early and widespread communication on the reality of what is under discussion in sensitive areas and on the EU's strong record in international negotiations. While still respecting the confidentiality required for the negotiations to succeed, the process also needs to be transparent enough to reduce fears and avoid a mushrooming of doubts before the deal is even concluded. This messaging needs to be accompanied by clear communication about the benefits of the TTIP.

2. Challenges arising from the institutional characteristics of the EU: The huge interest in the process means that there will be many moments of intense public pressure around the negotiations. At such moments, and indeed throughout the process, it is vital that the EU speaks as much as possible with one voice. The election campaign for the European Parliament will be an important factor in this context. It seems clear that given the salience of the negotiation political groups in several Member States will position themselves around different aspects of the negotiations.

3. The strategic dimension of TTIP (impact on third countries and multilateral): We need to provide a clear, reasonable definition of the real strategic potential of TTIP. This is obviously more than just another FTA, if only because its scale. It's bigger, broader and potentially deeper. As a result it will allow the EU and the US to show leadership on world trade, setting global precedents (e.g. in regulatory areas) that can help form the basis for future global trade negotiations in new areas. Single transatlantic rules, where possible, also offer benefits to third countries, whose exporters will find compliance less burdensome.

4. Making clear that this is a negotiation between equals: Many of the fears about what TTIP may represent are linked to a perception that the EU is not in a sufficiently strong position to engage with the United States. Some of this also stems from the fact that the EU is currently in a weaker economic position than the US and that therefore we need TTIP more than they do. We need to make clear that this is not the case, that despite the crisis the EU remains the world's largest market and is as such an indispensable partner for any trading economy (i.e. both sides have major economic interests in these negotiations). We must also make clear that we have as strong a track record as the US in trade and other negotiations, including with the US itself.

5. Transparency & stakeholder communication: Given the breadth of the issues under discussion, which cover much broader elements of policy-making than traditional trade agreements, expectations of transparency from stakeholders are higher than in previous trade negotiations. The complexity of the potential deal also means that negotiators have a greater need for stakeholder input during the process to make sure that proposed solutions to difficult issues are effective. At the same time negotiations demand a degree of confidentiality if they are to succeed.

### IV. Possible questions

What are the key communication challenges for TTIP in respective Member States?

What activities are currently undertaken at Member State level to communicate about TTIP?

Who are the main stakeholders to be addressed? Do we have adequate tools?

In which areas could Commission services and Member States work closer together?"