

## Council of the EU: Approves USA/EU Free-Trade Talks Excluding Audiovisual Services

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On 14 June 2013, the Council of the European Council (Council) adopted a mandate for the European Commission (Commission) to negotiate a comprehensive trade and investment agreement with the United States, the "Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership" (TTIP). The mandate is made up of a decision of the Council and a decision of the representatives of member states that authorise the opening of negotiations and directives for the negotiation of the agreement. These directives foresee an agreement made up of three key components: market access, regulatory issues and non-tariff barriers and rules.

The Council has agreed that audiovisual services will not be covered by the mandate, as the EU legislation in this area is still in development. In light of this, the European Commission has only recently invited stakeholders to comment on the future of the audiovisual media landscape (see IRIS 2013-6/5). The exclusion of audiovisual services from the mandate is a notable alteration considering the fact that the Commission had adopted a draft mandate on 12 March 2013 authorising the opening of negotiations that would include cultural and audiovisual services (see IRIS 2013-5/25). The Commission will nevertheless have the opportunity to make recommendations on additional negotiating mandates at a later stage. According to the mandate text, "[t]he Commission will, in a spirit of transparency, regularly report to the Trade Policy Committee in the course of negotiations. The Commission, according to the Treaties, may make recommendations to the Council on possible additional negotiating directives on any issue, with the same procedures for adoption, including voting rules, as for this mandate".

The EU is now ready to launch negotiations with the US. The Commission will negotiate on behalf of the EU and its member states, keeping the Trade Policy Committee and the European Parliament regularly informed and updated. Information related to the negotiations is regularly updated on the Commission's website. When completed, the TTIP will be the biggest bilateral trade deal ever negotiated. The Council will conclude the final agreement after the European Parliament has given its consent and member states have ratified the text.

***Press release: Council approves launch of trade and investment negotiations with the United States, Luxembourg, 14 June 2013, 10919/13, PRESSE 255***

[http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/137485.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/137485.pdf)

***Press release: Member States endorse EU-US trade and investment negotiations (MEMO/13/564 of 15/06/2013)***

[http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_MEMO-13-564\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-13-564_en.htm)

