

Africa Europe Faith and Justice Network (AEFJN)

AEFJN - A Bridge Linking Africa and Europe

AEFJN is a faith-based International Network present in Africa and in Europe, established in 1988.

AEFJN promotes economic justice between the European Union and sub-Saharan Africa so that the people of Africa may look forward to a better future.

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AEFJN works on food sovereignty (land grabbing), exploitation of natural resources, access to quality medicines, small arms control, trade agreements, and climate change.

AEFJN and EPAs

- ◇ AEFJN is concerned with the victims of the current trade system, particularly the African people.
- ◇ The action of AEFJN is oriented to a more just people-oriented trade system which contributes to the dignity of every human being, to the reduction of poverty and to a just distribution of wealth.
- ◇ AEFJN is working for a better deal for Africa in the current EPA negotiations.
- ◇ AEFJN is deeply concerned that EPAs will worsen the current agricultural crisis that African farmers already face and increase poverty.
- ◇ AEFJN believes that the proposed EPAs do not ensure the protection of the rights of citizens or the sovereignty of states.
- ◇ AEFJN calls for an EU-Africa partnership that will protect African producers in domestic and regional markets, reverse the pressure for trade liberalization, allow for the necessary policy space and support for African countries to pursue their own development strategies.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- ◇ Find and share information.
- ◇ Raise awareness about EPAs in your local parish/community.
- ◇ Get involved, form a group on EPAs or join an existing one.

FIND OUT MORE

- <http://www.aefjn.org/index.php/trade-349.html>
- <http://www.ecdpm.org/great>
- <http://www.bilaterals.org/>
- <http://www.tralac.org/>



Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) Trade Away Africa's Future

Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) are trade agreements that are being negotiated between the European Union and Africa. The rules contained in EPAs, like all rules governing current international trade and trade agreements, are made by the rich countries in the West, while poor countries in Africa have them imposed upon them. In many African countries, the international trade system is impoverishing the people by taking away their livelihood.

EPAs were foreseen in the Cotonou Agreement between the European Union and African countries. The conditions of the previous Lomé Conventions were no longer compatible with international trade rules.

EPAs and Trade in Goods

In Cameroon, poultry farming is an activity, traditionally carried out by middle and small scale farmers or just backyard holders. Poultry farming contributed to the country's economic development and the well-being of the families. Then, massive imports of frozen chicken pieces began. As they could not be sold in European supermarkets, these chicken pieces were shipped to Cameroon and were sold at a lower price than the locally produced chicken. This pushed local producers out of the market and into bankruptcy.

With EPAs, African countries will have to liberalise trade in



goods. This means that locally produced goods will be competing with imported goods. These imported goods often originate from developed countries, where producers have the capacity to produce large quantities cheaply. As a result local producers will end up finding themselves pushed out of the market.

EPAs undermine the future development possibilities of African economies

EPAs in Services

According to the European Commission, final EPAs should include an agreement on trade in services. 'Services' includes a wide array of activities ranging from the provision of clean water, energy supply, education, health care and telecommunications to business services such as banking, law and accountancy.

The inclusion of services and other trade related matters, such as intellectual property rights, is not necessary for a trade agreement to be in line with the international trade rules of the World Trade Organization (WTO). An agreement in goods only is entirely sufficient to be WTO compatible. However, once the two parties agree to include trade in services into the agreement, this has to be done in a WTO compatible manner, meaning that a large part of the service sector needs to be liberalised.

Opening up the services sector means that a country can no longer limit the investments of foreign companies.

Liberalisation of the Health Sector



Liberalising the health sector makes it impossible for governments to control the sector any longer. It means that the public sector has to compete with the private sector. As the private sector can pay higher wages it will drain the most qualified medical personnel from the already fragile public sector, thus weakening the national health system further.

There are clear commercial interests behind the EU's wish to see the health sector in Africa liberalised. Health is one of the faster growing sectors in the world economy. The consultancy office McKinsey projected the market for private health care in Africa at \$21 billion a year by 2016.

The privatisation of the health sector is dangerous as it denies access to those who cannot afford to pay. The experience of 44 middle-and-low-income countries suggests that higher levels of private-sector participation in primary health care lead to higher overall levels of exclusion of poor people from treatment and care.

EPAs and Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs)

In recent years, the EU has been trying to strengthen the protection of intellectual property rights (IPRs) in trade agreements such as EPAs. Rigid IPRs benefit the pharmaceutical monopolies and impede access to generic medicines.



In developing countries, where health insurance is scant and most health services are paid in cash, prices of medicines directly

Competition from generic medicines could lead to a drop in prices of 40-80 %.

affect the level of health care. The high cost of medicines weaken the health systems that are already underfunded. The current patent system and other forms of intellectual property protection delay competition from low-cost rivals, leaving the prices high.

Our Faith Leads Us to Action on EPAs

As Christians we have to measure the consequences of trade in the perspective of the Kingdom of God and His justice.

The law of love that is at the heart of Christianity includes Justice, siding with the poor.

The Social Teaching of the Church puts human beings at the centre of any policy - trade should therefore be at the service

of people. This is just the opposite of the current system where people are made to serve anonymous market rules and regulations.

2nd African Synod Proposition 17 "The Synod Fathers have pleaded for an economy in service to the poor and strongly denounced an unjust economic order which has led to the perpetuation of poverty".