

DG Trade State of Play reveals EU's ambitions for IP protection in FTAs

The EU will not be changing its aggressive approach to IP protection in bilateral trade agreements, according to the updates that representatives from the European Commission gave at a [State of Play meeting with civil society](#) on June 27, 2011. Despite years of opposition and outrage by the global public health community, the EU continues to pursue high IP standards in trade deals with developing countries. Representatives from DG Trade stated that the EU will pursue ambitious IP standards in ongoing free trade agreement negotiations with India and Mercosur.

Apart from India and Mercosur, the EU is currently negotiating a trade deal with the Ukraine, where the need for medicines to treat such as HIV/AIDS is currently unmet. Aggressive IP protection introduced through the EU-Ukraine FTA could further restrict access to affordable ARVs, thwarting any initiative to slow the progression of this life threatening disease.

Evidence has shown that these ambitious IP provisions are detrimental to public health in countries with large poor populations because these policies have a negative impact on generic competition. Limited competition in the pharmaceutical market keeps prices high and hinders widespread access to medicines. In the [Trading away access to medicines](#) report (2009), [HAI](#) and Oxfam highlighted the problems of strict IP protection in the context of global health.

Even within the EU, an investigation into the EU pharmaceutical sector revealed a array of strategies used by companies to prolong the market dominance of their product, resulting in high prices for consumer and health care systems. (See [HAI Europe response](#))