



Education International
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Global teacher unions say 'no' to Trans-Pacific Partnership

Led by Education International, teacher unions are urging their governments to carve-out education from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade agreement on the eve of the official signing.

As partner countries plan to sign the wide-reaching trade pact that covers 40 percent of the global economy on February 4, in Auckland New Zealand, teacher trade unions are making a final push to keep education off the table.

Education International (EI) affiliate organisations in the 12 countries involved – Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, United States and Vietnam – have written their governments demanding to carve education from the deal.

"Governments must be reminded that education is a human right and a public good, and that they have a responsibility to enforce and uphold these principles," said EI General Secretary Fred van Leeuwen. "The TPP partner governments are signing up to legally binding and enforceable trade rules that lock-in the level of liberalisation and thereby prevent governments from bringing education back to the public sector in the future,"

Education International and its affiliates are concerned about the potential impacts of TPP for the education sector based on an analysis of the text. Firstly, there is no explicit exclusion of education, which exposes the sector to greater risks of privatisation and commercialisation and threatens free, public, high-quality education.

The TPP also places new restrictive rules on intellectual property, and includes the controversial Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) mechanism that gives foreign investors exclusive rights to challenge domestic laws and regulations, which they feel are unfavourable to their business, before private arbitration panels.

"The corporatized court system of ISDS allows big multinationals to sue governments for quality, performance and accreditation requirements and standards that are crucial in ensuring high-quality education, on the basis that such standards constitute so-called 'disguised barriers to trade' or are 'more trade burdensome than necessary'," said van Leeuwen.

As the largest professional federation, EI represents 400 teacher organisations and unions in 171 countries with more than 32 million members.

For further details or if you have any questions, please contact Media and Communications Coordinator Andrew King at Andrew.king@ei-ie.org.