Do Labour Provisions in EU Trade Agreements Improve Workers' Lives and Working Conditions Around the World?

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"Labor rights as special cases of the sustainability chapters – how to strengthen their enforceability?"

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The "Working Beyond the Border: European Union Trade Agreements and International Labour Standards" Research Project

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• Labour Provisions in EU Trade & Sustainable Development

Chapters SUBSTANTIVE COMMITMENTS PROCEDURAL COMMITMENTS . Core labour standards (CLS) as embodied in the · Dialogue and cooperation between the Parties ILO fundamental conventions Transparency in introducing new labour standards domestically ILO Decent Work Agenda · Monitoring and review of sustainability impacts of the FTA Upholding levels of domestic protection on labour standards INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS This diagram represents the institutional model set up in the South Korea-EU FTA. Other agreements vary slightly. COMMITTEE ON TRADE AND DOMESTIC ADVISORY GROUPS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT A DAG each for South Korea and the EU, Senior officials from the EU and with representatives of 'civil society' South Korea oversee the overall including trade unions, NGOs, businesses implementation of the TSD chapter and academia. DAGs advise on the and report to the Trade Committee. implementation of the TSD chapter. MECHANISMS OF THE TSD PANEL OF EXPERTS CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM CHAPTER Independent experts nominated by the Annual exchange of dialogue between Parties to be called upon to examine and the two DAGs and other civil society make recommendations on matters not representatives on the sustainable dressed satisfactorily by other development aspects of trade relation mechanisms in the TSD chapter between the Parties.

Research Design and Methodology

- Three country/FTA case studies
 - South Korea (FTA 2011)
 - CARIFORUM/Guyana (Economic Partnership Agreement 2008)
 - Moldova (DCFTA/Association Agreement 2014)
- Sectoral/value chain focus in major export sectors
 - Automotives (South Korea)
 - Sugar (Guyana)
 - Clothing (Moldova)
- Contrastive case studies involving just under 200 key informant interviews and focus groups

Summary Research Findings

- Civil society mechanisms hampered by a range of operational failings: resourcing, lack of meetings, difficulties with representation in trading partners, insufficient substantive discussions, lack of awareness and information-sharing, lack of independence from government
- Monitoring and assessment of 'sustainability' impacts has not been properly operationalised: relevant provisions are lacking specificity (open to interpretation); little evidence that vigorous monitoring has been conducted; no appropriate mechanism is in place to ensure that negative effects of the FTA on labour standards are adequately remedied
- Dispute resolution process is insufficient. TSD chapters are exempt from the general dispute settlement mechanism of EU FTAs. Panels of experts process has not been utilised and lacks a credible enforcement mechanism
- Working conditions are impacted by a range of factors including the forms
 of global value chain integration in the dominant export sectors in each
 country, and specific political contexts (e.g. "lead firm" contracting
 pressures and poverty pay in Moldovan clothing sector). Limited reach of
 ILO core labour standards to address real labour issues
- Diversity of sectoral and country experiences illustrates the limits of a "one size fits all" approach to labour provisions in trade agreements in dealing with labour conditions in global value chains

Thank you!

To find out more about our research:

http://www.geog.qmul.ac.uk/research/beyondtheborder/