

Prioritise and protect Access to Medicines in Central America

Alianza LAC UE
por el Acceso a los
Medicamentos

19 February 2010



The eighth round of negotiations towards a European Union - Central America free trade agreement (FTA) is taking place next week in Brussels. In light of the EU's customary ambitions for intellectual property (IP) in trade agreements, we are very concerned about the potential damage to access to medicines in Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua from overreaching IP provisions.

The EU's demands on intellectual property (IP) have proved highly controversial in other EU FTA negotiations, such as those with India, and the Andean countries. Overreaching IP provisions restrict and delay generic competition, representing a barrier to access to medicines. The new European Parliamentary Working Group on Innovation, Access to Medicines and Poverty-Related Diseases has highlighted the necessity of coherent EU policies that promote access to affordable medicines, and over the past few weeks, some Members of European Parliament have voiced concerns in parliamentary questions about the inclusion of TRIPS *plus*¹ measures in the EU-India FTA.

Following the recent publication of impact studies showing how the EU's IP proposals could harm public health in Peru and Colombia,² and the joint Oxfam International/ Health Action International (HAI) Europe report on the EU's trade agenda and access to medicines;³ European Commission negotiators can no longer plead ignorance of the consequences of rigid IP regulations.

"We have not yet seen a text, but we hope that the EU's negotiators will abandon any plans to include IP provisions that will threaten access to medicines," said Sophie Bloemen, from HAI Europe.

She added,

"The impact studies conducted in Peru and Colombia revealed the potentially devastating consequences of the EU's IP provisions, with implications for national health budgets. Central American countries must guard against such provisions in this FTA."

The cumulative impact of the EU's trade policies compels developing countries to place the interests of European pharmaceutical companies above their national public health priorities, in contradiction with the EU's long history of commitment to development. As negotiations continue, the LAC-EU Alliance for Access to Medicines⁴ calls on the EU to prioritise its development commitments and protect access to medicines in Central America.

*For more information on this or other HAI Europe campaigns, please contact
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¹ Measures that go further than the standards established in the World Trade Organization's Agreement on Trade-related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS)

² IFARMA. *Impact of the EU-Andean Trade Agreements on Access to Medicines in Peru*. October 2009.
[http://www.haiweb.org/11112009/ReportIFARMAImpactStudyPeru\(EN\).pdf](http://www.haiweb.org/11112009/ReportIFARMAImpactStudyPeru(EN).pdf)

³ Oxfam International/ Health Action International (HAI) Europe. *Trading Away Access to Medicines: How the European Union's trade agenda has taken a wrong turn*. October 2009.

<http://www.haiweb.org/20102009/OxfamHAIReportTradingAwayAccesstoMedicines.pdf>

⁴ The Latin American –European Alliance for Access to Medicines is a coalition of European and Latin American civil society organisations

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