

Against the Transatlantic Trade Deal: Protesters slam TTIP in Germany ahead of Obama visit

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There's deep public skepticism in Germany towards government-backed trade deal.

HANOVER, GERMANY — Tens of thousands of TTIP opponents took to the streets here Saturday in a pre-buttal of sorts to President Barack Obama, who will arrive in Germany Sunday to visit the world's largest industrial trade show and try to rally new support for the U.S.-EU trade negotiations.

The protest underscored the deep public skepticism in Germany towards the transatlantic pact, which is supported by the government.

Protestors demonstrated in the city's main public squares and choked off traffic in Hanover's downtown as tractors carrying speakers followed citizens carrying signs in a litany of languages. "Trading Trust Immoral Profit," was just one example.

The police estimated the crowd at 35,000, according to several news outlets. Lori Wallach, director of the U.S.-based Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch and a speaker at the event, said that German civil society groups organizing the afternoon of anti-trade deal festivities thought that the crowd was closer to 90,000 people.

Obama and Chancellor Angela Merkel will officially launch the Hannover Messe, a massive trade show, tomorrow afternoon, and also hold a press conference before dining with German and American business leaders. TTIP supporters see it as an opportunity to jumpstart negotiations with a goal of wrapping up a deal while Obama is still in office.

But Germany is a hotbed of public opposition to the deal.

"We're against companies like Monsanto. We're against their greed," said Diane Hosell, who is originally from Anaheim, but has lived in Germany for 14 years, between hearty blows on a whistle.

Jörg Isegrei, who owns a small German business that makes piping for food manufacturers, worries about how U.S. health care companies might affect the coverage he currently receives from the government.

Many sat on the cobblestones of the Hanover's Opernplatz drinking bottles of beer as the loudspeakers alternated between German bands and speakers deriding deals like TTIP and a recently completed trade agreement with Canada. Some carried rubber chickens—a reference to chlorine-water-washed American chickens that many fear they'd be forced to eat under TTIP.

Wallach came away impressed by how engaged the Germans were on complicated subjects like ISDS. "Next time I come back," she said, "I want [the organizers] to explain to me how they've

gotten the larger German public to care about these issues.”

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P.S.

* Publico. 4/23/16, 11:02 PM CET:

<http://www.politico.eu/article/protesters-slam-ttip-in-germany-ahead-of-obama-visit/>