

# “Free Love – Not Free Trade”: With Obama En Route, 90,000 March Against TTIP

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*Tens of thousands march in city of Hannover, Germany on Saturday ahead of visit by U.S. president*

On the eve of a visit by U.S. President Barack Obama, tens of thousands of people took to the streets in Germany on Saturday to voice emphatic opposition to the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership agreement (TTIP), a deal they argue benefits global capitalism and corporate elites at the expense of the public good and local democracy.

With a 1960's "Summer of Love" theme informing the march, many participants grooved under banners reading "Freie Liebe – Statt Freihandel" (Free Love – Not Free Trade) as organizers estimated 90,000 people in attendance.

With Obama arriving to meet with German Chancellor Angela Merkel on Sunday to push for the deal, the expression of dissent in the city of Hannover matches [recent reporting](#) explaining how support for the TTIP has fallen on both sides of the Atlantic.

 (Photo: DPA/J. Carstensen)

On Thursday, a YouGov poll showed only 17 percent of Germans support passage of the deal, down from 55 percent just two years ago.

"We are not demonstrating against Obama but against TTIP," [said](#) Christoph Bautz, head of the campaign group Campact, which helped organize the march. "TTIP is deeply un-American and anti-European because it endangers our shared value: democracy."

With a focus on Obama's arrival, one group dropped a large banner in the city reading "Yes We Can — Stop TTIP!" – utilizing the president's famous 2008 campaign slogan.

[#StopTTIP](#): 90,000 take to the streets in Hannover against [#TTIP](#) & [#CETA](#) trade deals. Democracy is not for sale! [pic.twitter.com/cskrM0LtHl](https://pic.twitter.com/cskrM0LtHl)

— Greenpeace EU (@GreenpeaceEU) [23 April 2016](#)

On Friday, Obama was in the UK where he pressed upon his host, Conservative Prime Minister David Cameron, the need for European leaders to rally behind the deal.

Though Merkel has expressed her support for TTIP, her office has acknowledged that public opposition remains strong.

"TTIP was never going to be an easy undertaking," government spokesperson Steffen Seibert told reporters Friday. The deal, he added, "is still a very important one if you are interested in seeing prosperity in Europe grow. Our goal is to wrap up the negotiations this year and the chancellor will underline this in the talks with President Obama in Hannover."

But opponents in the streets of Hannover on Saturday said they are determined to make sure that never happens. As *Agence France Presse* [reports](#):

As the whistle-blowing crowd moved through Hanover in unseasonably cold weather, one banner reading "Don't give TTIP a chance" featured the image of a bull tagged "privatisation" and a cow branded "democracy".

A mock coffin was emblazoned with the words "Democracy killed by money".

Dieter Berlin, a 73-year-old pensioner, attended the rally with his wife Hanna, waving a banner reading "No GMOs on our plates" in a reference to genetically modified foods.

Berlin said he had turned out over fears of a race to the bottom with free trade.

"We want to keep our educational standards, not adopt the American educational system. And we want to hold onto our environmental standards too," he said.



Opponents of the proposed transatlantic trade deal (TTIP) at a protest rally on the eve of US President Barack Obama's visit to Hannover, on April 23, 2016 (AFP Photo/John Macdougall)[www.attac.de](http://www.attac.de)

His friend Heino Kirchhof, 73, said TTIP would widen the gulf "between poor and rich — that is going to threaten the stability of the world."

Another demonstrator, 38-year-old Ladislav Jelinek of the Czech Republic, said he worried that pollution and food safety protections could be hollowed out by the treaty.

"There is no need to damage the environment more than we already did," he said. "European society doesn't need to progress at the expense of animals, water and the air."

Opponents of the TTIP, including many attending the march in Germany on Saturday, continue to use the [#StopTTIP](#) hashtag on Twitter:

[#StopTTIP Tweets](#)

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