

Texte 20/2003

Umweltforschungsplan des Bundesministeriums für Umwelt, Naturschutz und
Reaktorsicherheit

Forschungsbericht 200 19 154

The General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) and current GATS-Negotiations

by

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Summary

GATS – trade in services will be liberalised

Aspect of the current GATS negotiations and their potentially far reaching implications for domestic policy choices to social and environmental objectives

GATS is a widely unknown token – it marks an international agreement on trade in services and aims to improve conditions of trade and investment by multilateral rules, to stabilise trade relation by political commitments based on most-favoured-nation treatment and to attain a further liberalisation by following rounds of negotiation. Presently, the agreement is anew negotiated within the world trade organisation (WTO): new sectors like water, energy and transport, where the public sector and state supervision plays a prominent role so far, shall be part of the agreement now. This is accompanied by far-reaching implications for the environment, the provision with public goods and the perspective of development for southern countries. The new study “The General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) and current GATS Negotiations” reviews existing literature and conducts a first environment-related analysis of current key GATS provisions and new negotiating proposals. Based on this analysis, it aims to highlight currently identifiable environmental policy implications and problems of the GATS and to suggest some preliminary policy recommendations from an environmental perspective. The study has been compiled by Peter Fuchs, World Economy, Ecology and Development (WEED) e.V., Berlin, and Elisabeth Tuerk, Centre for International Environmental Law (CIEL), Geneva. It is part of the project “Integration of criteria for environmental and sustainability in the new WTO-negotiations” of the environmental research plan and has been conducted on behalf of the Federal Environmental Agency.