

International Geneva

Directory of Geneva Global Health Actors

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION | WTO

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BACKGROUND AND MISSION

The World Trade Organization (WTO), established in 1995, is successor of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). It is the only global international organisation dealing with the rules of trade between nations, and its mission is to help producers, exporters and importers of goods and services to conduct their business. WTO is run by the member state governments and acts as a forum for negotiations, agreements and dispute settlement. There are currently 164 member states, and the number is rising as more and more countries decide to join and benefit from the membership.

AREAS OF INTEREST

- trade opening
- international trade agreements and negotiations
- intellectual property rights and trade
- trade dispute settlement
- development and building of trade capacity

HEALTH-RELATED ACTIVITIES

The mandate of WTO focuses on treaties, agreements and negotiations, and its health-related activities reflect this. Several agreements have direct or indirect impact on health, most visibly in relation to intellectual property rights of medicines and medical equipment. The agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures also directly deals with human, animal and plant health, setting standards for products regarded safe for human consumption as well as regulating the amount of pesticides and other chemicals in food stuff, produce and other commodities intended for human use. Furthermore, several of the more generic trade agreements apply to trade in health goods and services. In addition, WTO together with WIPO and WHO cooperates trilaterally on the topic of trade, intellectual property and public health.

GOVERNANCE AND STAFF

The director general of WTO is Roberto Azevêdo who started in the role in 2013. The WTO secretariat in Geneva employs 628 staff members.

FUNDING SOURCES AND BUDGET

Majority of the WTO budget is funded by member state contributions. For 2017, this was over CHF197 million. Additionally, WTO manages trust funds which enable developing countries to participate and gain more from the WTO system and negotiations.

PUBLICATIONS

See: www.wto.org/english/res_e/publications_e/publications_e.htm

Last update: 01.08.2018