

Why have poor countries signed if the deals on the table were so bad? Why didn't they refuse to sign?

Ultimately, poor countries were left with no choice. The whole process for negotiating EPAs could not be further from the spirit of 'partnership'. Poor countries voiced their concerns many times throughout the negotiation process but the EU failed to respond. Instead the EU exerted huge pressure, even reportedly threatening to make poor countries' aid conditional upon signing.

Many poor countries also faced the additional threat of huge increases in EU taxes on their exports if they refused to sign. Under the previous trade arrangements, poor countries could export freely to the EU, supposedly without barriers such as quotas or taxes on most of their products. This allowed them to build up some successful export industries like fresh vegetables from Kenya or cocoa from Ghana.

Countries were faced with losing this market access if they didn't sign an EPA and being hit with tax increases that would make their goods uncompetitive. It was mainly this threat and the resulting collapse of key export industries that persuaded many countries to sign an EPA against their will.

However poor countries did manage to negotiate an interim agreement that excluded part of the agenda set out by the EU.

- [Back to index](#)
- [Next: What happens to the countries who haven't signed?](#)