



ASSEMBLÉE DES RÉGIONS D'EUROPE
ASSEMBLY OF EUROPEAN REGIONS
VERSAMMLUNG DER REGIONEN EUROPAS
ASAMBLEA DE LAS REGIONES DE EUROPA
ASSEMBLEA DELLE REGIONI D'EUROPA

Nyon, 26th October 2000

Press release

The Regions plead in favour of regional diversity in Europe

At the First European Conference of Regional Ministers of Culture, organised by the Assembly of European Regions (AER) on 25th and 26th October 2000 in Nyon (Vaud-CH), 140 regional cultural Ministers and representatives from 75 Regions and over twenty countries adopted a declaration in favour of regional diversity in Europe.

Faced with the globalisation of the economy and the standardisation which accompanies it, regional decision-makers expressed the concerns of their populations regarding the weakening of their regional identities and their cultures. They therefore stressed the need to coordinate the action of the Regions of Europe in order to ensure that negotiations taking place within the World Trade Organisation (WTO) do not lead to the suppression of public co-financing in the field of culture at European, national, regional and local level. *"In order to allow Europe to keep its diversity and pluralism, the legislative and financial competences of the Regions in the field of cultural policies must urgently be included in international law"* stated Mr Claude Ruey, State Councillor for the Canton of Vaud and host of this Conference.

Participants also debated another issue of great importance for the Regions, i.e. the current reform of the European institutions in view of the enlargement of the Union. Regions from federal countries which have large competences in the field of culture (in Germany, for example, local authorities finance 95% of the total budget for cultural policies) fear losing their autonomy in this field with the change from the current unanimous voting system to majority decisions. *"With reference to this reform, the European Regions, members of the Assembly of European Regions, must work towards obtaining a clear definition of the competences of each level of decision-making (EU, States, Regions and Communes)"* pleaded Luc Van den Brande, AER President. *"Without this definition, the change to majority voting represents the danger of centralising cultural policies in Europe, on the contrary to the principle of subsidiarity and we must fight against this"* specified Mrs Liese Prokop, Vice-Minister President of Lower Austria, President of the AER Culture Committee and instigator of this Conference.

The regional decision-makers, just like the representatives of the European Commission and the Council of Europe, also insisted on the importance of interregional intercultural dialogue and cross-border cooperation, in particular in this field, as an instrument of peace and stability in Europe. The positive role of adapted cultural policies was stressed in particular in the reduction of ostracism and a better integration of immigrants.

Conference participants committed themselves to contributing to the spread of regional and minority languages, in particular over the year 2001 which has been declared European year of languages by the EU and the Council of Europe.

The AER is the political movement of the Regions of Europe, committed since 1985 to the promotion of regionalism in Europe and the development of interregional cooperation.

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