



ASSEMBLÉE DES RÉGIONS D'EUROPE
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PRESS RELEASE

EU/GATS/Cultural Diversity: Regions rally behind Jacques Chirac

Strasbourg, 4/02/2003 - The Assembly of European Regions (AER) supports the recent proposal of French President Jacques Chirac, who argued for the adoption of an international Convention on Cultural Diversity. For the South-Tyrolean Minister Bruno Hosp, chairman of AER's Culture and Education Committee, the French initiative reiterates the demands of the 2002 Brixen Declaration of European Regional Ministers in charge of Culture and Education. *"The Regions are strongly opposed submitting culture, media and education to unlimited commercial interests and liberalisation as pursued by GATS."*

The Regions insist on exclusion of these sectors, predominantly public services, from the ongoing GATS-negotiations and are critical of the EU-Trade Commissioner's pressure on the member states for more offers and requests for liberalisation. The AER is also prepared to fight against attempts by the Commissioner Viviane Reding which would make culture more than a "matter of assistance" (domaine d'appui) of the European level.

Bruno Hosp also called on the members of the EU-Convention to resist all attempts to introduce qualified majority voting in the decision making on culture, media and education in the new Constitutional Treaty... The Regions see in the unanimity vote as an effective safeguard against further commercialisation of culture and education. Bruno Hosp concluded: *"The exclusive competence for culture, media and education should remain the prerogative of the member states or, as it is in some cases, of the regions. This competence and the principle of unanimity vote should be comprehensive and not be restricted simply for matters of international commercial Agreements such as GATS."*

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