



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

## Press Release

### **AER warns that Convention articles endanger diversity in culture and education**

Strasbourg, 7<sup>th</sup> May 2003

The President of the AER, Vice Minister-President of Lower Austria Liese PROKOP, expressed to the European Convention the firm opposition of the European Regions against any move that gives the European Union exclusive competence when negotiating and concluding agreements on trade in cultural and educational services, in the context of the common commercial policy.

President Prokop expressed "*deep disappointment*" that the new article 24 (Part II), that would replace article 133 of the Nice EC Treaty, practically submitted the sensitive sectors of culture and education to the same treatment as ordinary commercial commodities.

Referring to the strong opposition of the Regions and the Regional Culture and Education Ministers against any further liberalisation of the aforementioned service sectors under GATS, she stressed that "*only the existing provisions prevent the EU from pushing forward further liberalisation in the present round of negotiations.*"

In a letter to President of the French Republic, Jacques Chirac, she called on him and his government to maintain their "*firm position in defending cultural diversity*".

Further points by President PROKOP:

- deplores the removal of the requirement for common accord and joint conclusion of negotiations as it could lead to harmonisation of the internal policies of the Member States;
- stressed the importance of preserving unanimity voting under Article 151 EC, as an important safeguard against the erosion of the principle of cultural diversity;
- highlighted the significance of protecting and supporting public radio and television, European films and the wider spectrum of the European cultural infrastructure.

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