Cultural industries

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Myrsini ZORBA (PES, GR) on cultural industries. It stressed the right to culture of all citizens and the need to safeguard democratic access to cultural goods, and said that Europe's cultural industries reflected its diversity and thus represented an added value to European identity. However, the report pointed to the lack of a global industrial EU strategy and ensuing policy encompassing the cultural industries, including inter alia the book industry and music sectors. It therefore urged the Commission to bring up to date its working papers on culture, taking account in particular of EU enlargement and greater emphasis on the public-private partnership aspect. It also called on the Commission to examine the effects of increasing concentrations in a number of cultural industries, which posed a threat to the transparency of the market and could lead to the disappearance of independents as well as to increasing uniformity in production and distribution. Acknowledging the importance of television and other mass media in the process of democratic opinion-forming, with a view to ensuring and enhancing diversity of opinion and pluralism, MEPs called for the Television without Frontiers directive, together with the Media Plus Programme and the i2i Initiative, to continue to boost European audio-visual production and to improve the circulation of European works within the EU market. The committee also urged the Commission and the Member States to provide greater support for cultural industries in Structural Funds projects for the economic development of regions and cities. Amongst its other recommendations, the report said that consideration should be given to putting in place mechanisms to improve the circulation of non-national European works and that steps should be taken to promote the showing and broadcasting of movies in their original version in order to make spectators familiar with the reality and desirability of a multilingual environment and hence to improve the knowledge of languages. MEPs also asked the Commission and Member States to support efforts to develop the proposed UNESCO Convention on Cultural Diversity and to consider joining the Global Alliance for Cultural Diversity, launched by UNESCO in 2002, with the aim of uniting partners from public, private and non-governmental sectors, to work on projects that foster growth in local cultural industries. Lastly, the committee reiterated its call to the Intergovernmental Conference for an extension of qualified majority voting for internal Union policies to facilitate support for EU measures to promote the development of the cultural sector. However, it was in favour of maintaining the current rule requiring unanimity in the area of external trade.