Enlargement, cultural diversity: role of European regions and of international organisations

2002/2269(INI) - 14/01/2004 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution based on the own-initiative report drafted by Christa PRETS (PES, Austria) stating that culture was a fundamental dimension of human development. The resolution was adopted with 369 votes in favour, 15 against with 68 abstentions. (Please see the summary of 02/12/03.) Cultural diversity implies the recognition, promotion and development of local cultures, cultural industries, public policies on culture, openness towards other cultures and the protection of indigenous and national institutions and achievements, including the rich variety of languages, indigenous knowledge, traditions, lifestyles, artistic and cultural forms of expression, media pluralism and the diversity of educational systems. Parliament asked the Commission to actively engage in the promotion of cultural diversity within EC development and cooperation policies through the enhancement of cultural co-operation actions and programmes with third countries, in particular to develop the cultural expression capacity of developing countries. Parliament stated its concern concerning the treatment of minority populations and minority languages, including indigenous languages, in the context of the enlarged Europe. There should be multilateral institutions, including regional ones, to protect and guarantee the rights and freedoms of all peoples, particularly in the context of a multipolar world made up of regional units. Cultural services and products and education are not merchandise or consumer goods like any other, and must therefore be made subject to special conditions in the light of their dual nature as economic and cultural goods. These conditions must take account of the fact that the market cannot be the measure of all things, and must guarantee in particular diversity of opinion and pluralism. Parliament reaffirmed the importance of public service broadcasting in safeguarding cultural diversity and identity, democratic dialogue, media pluralism and access for all citizens to quality content and knowledge for their successful participation in the information society. The EU must place an unmistakable stress, in the context of the WTO and GATS, on the nature of cultural services and products as cultural goods, and exempt them from trade liberalization. In view of the twofold significance of cultural, audiovisual and education services in economic and cultural terms, no negotiations should be opened in the context of GATS on liberalisation of these services. The protection of support instruments, and thus of cultural diversity, cannot be achieved in the context of the WTO and GATS, but can only be promoted by negotiating a Convention within the framework of UNESCO.