



COALITIONS EUROPÉENNES POUR LA DIVERSITÉ CULTURELLE
EUROPEAN COALITIONS FOR CULTURAL DIVERSITY

**M. Barroso
President
Rue de la Loi
European Commission
B- 1049 Brussels**

Paris, 27 February 2011

Dear Mr President,

In the name of the European Coalitions for Cultural Diversity which group the professional cultural organisations representing the whole spectrum of cultural professionals in thirteen European countries, I would like to draw your attention on the treatment of audiovisual and cultural services in the negotiation by the European Commission of a Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) with Canada.

We have been informed that the European Commission is challenging the Canadian request for a cultural exception and is trying to integrate cultural and audiovisual services into the agreement with the aim to pursue the liberalization of a few Canadian cultural services.

The European Coalitions for Cultural Diversity would like to express their deep concerns on the European trade negotiators' attitude.

First, it represents a violation of the Council's mandate of April 2009 which expressly excludes the audiovisual and cultural sectors from the scope of the agreement.

The Council's mandate is motivated by the recognised fact that the integration of culture and audiovisual services into a trade agreement jeopardises the specific nature of cultural goods and services and existence of the cultural policies they benefit from. It denies the specific value of these goods and services and reduces them to mere bargaining chips in the global trade-off.

Therefore, the UNESCO Convention on the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions adopted in 2005, ratified by the European Community and celebrated on December 2010 for its 5th anniversary, was called on by both the European Union and Canada to protect culture from trade negotiations and liberalisation which run counter to cultural policies.

To include cultural and audiovisual services into the CETA negotiation with Canada would disown the strong commitment of the European Union in favour of cultural diversity.

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We are deeply concerned with what looks like doublespeak from the European Commission which on the one hand proudly announces its action in favour of cultural diversity in cultural arenas (Agenda for Culture in 2007, commitment to a strategy on Cultural Cooperation Protocols in 2009, celebration of the 5th anniversary of the Convention in 2010) and which on the other hand totally ignores these policies and commitments when time comes to negotiate trade agreements.

Canada and the European Union are the two main leaders for a better recognition of the importance and benefits of cultural diversity in our societies. Therefore it would be unacceptable for the European Commission to pursue trade liberalization in cultural and audiovisual Canadian services and to challenge a cultural exception in order to obtain Canadian commitments in other sectors.

The European Coalitions count on your active support and personal intervention to preserve cultural policies and diversity from trade liberalization in this important agreement with Canada.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Santschi', with a small dot at the end of the line.

Beat Santschi
Vice President for Europe
International Federation of Coalitions for Cultural
Diversity

Cc :
Mr. Karel De Gucht, Commissioner for Trade
Mrs Androulla Vassiliou, Commissioner for Culture