

# Procedure file

Basic information		
RSP - Resolutions on topical subjects	<a href="#">2003/2522(RSP)</a>	Procedure completed
Resolution on the General Agreement on Trade in Services GAtS within the WTO and the cultural diversity		
Subject		
3.30.01 Audiovisual industry and services		
6.20.01 Agreements and relations in the context of the World Trade Organization (WTO)		

Key players	
European Parliament	

Key events			
12/03/2003	Decision by Parliament	<a href="#">T5-0087/2003</a>	Summary
12/03/2003	End of procedure in Parliament		
10/03/2004	Final act published in Official Journal		

Technical information	
Procedure reference	2003/2522(RSP)
Procedure type	RSP - Resolutions on topical subjects
Procedure subtype	Resolution on statement
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 132-p2
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed

Documentation gateway					
Motion for a resolution		<a href="#">B5-0159/2003</a>	10/03/2003	EP	
Motion for a resolution		<a href="#">B5-0161/2003</a>	10/03/2003	EP	
Motion for a resolution		<a href="#">B5-0164/2003</a>	10/03/2003	EP	
Joint motion for resolution		<a href="#">RC-B5-0159/2003</a>	10/03/2003		
Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects		<a href="#">T5-0087/2003</a> OJ C 061 10.03.2004, p. 0151-0289 E	12/03/2003	EP	Summary

Resolution on the General Agreement on Trade in Services GAtS within the WTO and the cultural diversity

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The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the General Agreement on Trade and Services within the WTO, and cultural diversity. It pointed out that the EU is the world leader in the services sector, due, in part, to its openness to competition. Whilst open markets can lower prices for consumers and business, the GATS agreement has given rise to widespread concern. This is due to lack of transparency in the negotiating process and in relation to its possible impact on public services and the regulation of services in general. Firstly, Parliament called for full access to EU negotiating documents for all Members of the European Parliament, subject to the European Parliament's rules on confidentiality. It welcomed the efforts made by the Commission to improve transparency, but wanted to see the extensive information on the EU requests and offers, so as to allow for an informed public debate before any offer is made to the WTO. The Commission is asked to suggest to the WTO that requests and offers by all Member States should be made public. Parliament welcomed the Commission's initial offer on GATS as a positive signal to the WTO members that the EU supports a non-discriminatory, regulated system. It insisted, however, that developing and least developed countries should not be pressured to liberalise services, in particular public services. It also welcomed the Commission's announcement that no offers of liberalisation are proposed in the health, education and audio-visual sectors, and calls on the Commission to maintain this position throughout the GATS negotiations and to ensure that no circumvention of this right can take place. Each WTO member has the right to regulate public services and services of general interest, and to uphold the principle of universal service obligations. In this connection, Parliament wanted to see a clarification of the right to regulate, with a view to ensuring that it cannot be undermined by the application of trade-related criteria such as the necessity test or the requirement to be as 'least trade-restrictive' as possible. It recognises that the ability of some developing and least developed countries to regulate service sectors, which were previously under public control or ownership, may be limited. The Commission is asked to act sensitively in areas in which the developing country concerned has genuine development-based objections. Water and sanitation, have a special status in developing and least developed countries, as they have a direct and dramatic impact on people's daily lives. They require special treatment. On the question of cultural diversity, Parliament supported the Commission in maintaining the possibility for the Community, its Member States and its regions to preserve and develop their capacity to define and implement policies in the cultural and audio-visual sectors, in order to preserve their cultural diversity.?