

**14.10.16****Decision****of the Bundesrat (Upper House of the German Parliament)****Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council: Towards an EU strategy for international cultural relations****JOIN(2016) 29 final**

At its 949th session on 14 October 2016, the Bundesrat adopted the following position pursuant to Sections 3 and 5 of the Act on Cooperation between the Federation and the Länder in European Union Affairs (EUZBLG):

1. The Bundesrat welcomes the presentation of an initial joint EU strategy for international cultural relations. This Communication highlights some important aspects of international cultural relations. The Bundesrat notes, however, that the individual initiatives do not yet amount to a coherent overall approach.
2. It emphasises that the Commission and the EEAS can only act in close cooperation with the Member States when implementing an international EU cultural policy strategy. It rejects any exercise of direct control by the EU over institutions in the Member States.
3. The Bundesrat calls for the proposed strategy to strike a better balance, with less emphasis on culture as a means to an end. Instead, there should be a greater focus on the exchange of cultural professionals, in particular. Promoting the mobility of artists and of cultural content are key EU cultural policy tasks that create added European value. The Bundesrat is surprised to see that these areas of activity are underrepresented in this proposed strategy.

Official document 382/16 (decision)

4. The Bundesrat regrets that the strategy makes no mention of the important cross-cutting issue of external cultural policy and external trade. The Bundesrat notes that the areas in which regional diversity is of paramount importance must be clearly defined in future EU free trade agreements, so that standardisation is not imposed on them in trade regimes. This includes the cultural sector in particular, as the Bundesrat has repeatedly stated. In this context, the Bundesrat recalls its opinion in Bundesrat official document 500/15 (decision).
5. It believes that the idea of 'European Culture Houses' in selected partner countries is worth considering, but emphasises that the contents and funding of such plans still need to be specified. Their funding should not be at the expense of existing programmes and initiatives.
6. The Bundesrat has noted with concern that the Communication on a possible future EU strategy for international cultural relations was made available in German only after a long delay, despite the fact that it has a considerable impact on Member States' competences. It therefore calls for important documents of this kind to be published promptly once again in all official EU languages and transmitted to the Member States in future.
7. The Bundesrat is submitting this opinion directly to the Commission.