



## EUROPEAN COMMISSION

*Brussels, 20.12.2017  
C(2017) 8506 final*

*Dear President,*

*The Commission would like to thank the Bundesrat for its Opinion concerning the Communication on School development and excellent teaching for a great start in life {COM(2017) 248 final}.*

*Investing in young people, in general, and through education, in particular, are key priorities on the European Union agenda. The quality of education is decisive for young people's prospects and life chances. School education lays the foundations for personal development and active citizenship. It is the starting point for a successful professional career and the best protection against unemployment and poverty. High quality education for all will help Europe achieve its economic and social objectives and fuel Member States' competitiveness and innovation.*

*The Commission is therefore committed to supporting Member States in devising and implementing reforms to their school education systems with a view to achieving high quality learning for all young people. To this end, the Commission outlined in its Communication how and where European Union assistance can be most effective.*

*The Commission fully acknowledges that the responsibility in the field of education resides with the Member States (Article 165 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union). Its proposals for action at European Union level respect these competences and responsibilities. They outline how the European Union can complement, support and assist Member States in their actions.*

*The Commission wishes to reassure the Bundesrat that it regards the diversity of education systems in Europe as an asset and strength, and that its proposals for European co-operation fully build on this. The reference to diversity must not be understood as an implicit or even explicit criticism of this diversity.*

*The Commission also wishes to stress that the actions proposed are voluntary for Member States and that the Commission is focussing on fields where European Union support can create most added value. This includes contributions to a better evidence base for policy-making, opportunities for the exchange of experiences and mutual learning on shared policy challenges.*

*Mr Michael MÜLLER  
President of the Bundesrat  
Leipziger Straße 3 - 4  
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*The Commission shares the Bundesrat's view that education has an intrinsic value and that in many ways its complexity defies simple quantification. However, it is also of the view that, in an area which stands for approximately 10% of public expenditure, it is important to address questions of effectiveness and efficiency of spending and to engage in exchanges that could help Member States improve in this respect.*

*The Commission has taken due note of the views expressed by the Bundesrat in its Opinion. In response to the more technical comments in the Opinion the Commission would like to refer to the more detailed observations in annex.*

*The Commission hopes that these clarifications address the issues raised by the Bundesrat and looks forward to continuing our political dialogue in the future.*

*Yours faithfully,*

*Frans Timmermans  
First Vice-President*

*Tibor Navracsics  
Member of the Commission*

## ANNEX

*The Commission has carefully considered the issues raised by the Bundesrat in its Opinion and would like to offer the following observations grouped by topic.*

### **I. Financing of different measures through Erasmus+**

*Ad §4: The Commission would like to refer the Bundesrat to the upcoming Call for Proposals of Erasmus+ for 2018 which will make the participation of schools in co-operation and mobility activities easier. This includes, notably, the new specific format of "School exchange partnerships".*

*Ad §5: The Commission would like to underline that Erasmus+ does not solely serve the purpose of supporting mobility, but consists of three Key Actions (KA) supporting the learning mobility of individuals (KA1), co-operation for innovation and good practice (KA2) and support to policy reforms (KA3).*

### **II. Use of country-specific data in co-operation with partner organisations**

*Ad §7 (on the Bundesrat's inquiry about the proposal to 'further develop synergies with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to produce joint comparative data on school staff, including through more efficient, joint data collection by Eurydice and the OECD on teachers and school leaders'):*

- *This action is part of efforts to strengthen the evidence base in this field and to increase the efficiency of data collection while reducing the reporting burden on countries. This exercise is voluntary and builds on the positive experience with an existing joint data collection between the European Commission (Eurydice) and the OECD on instruction time in school education.*
- *Both the Network for the Collection and Adjudication of System-Level Descriptive Information on Educational Structures, Policies and Practices (NESLI) of the OECD and the European Union's Eurydice network have been collecting data on the salaries of school staff for several years. In order to reduce the burden of two parallel data exercises at the national level, countries which are part of both networks have agreed to a joint data collection on teachers' and schools' heads salaries and allowances as of 2017.*
- *Under this arrangement, rules on data handling are respected. No data is transferred to third parties as participating countries will complete one questionnaire that they deliver to both organisations at the same time. Both Eurydice and the OECD will continue publishing the analysis of the data collected through their respective publications. The next Eurydice report is expected for October 2018.*

### **III. Points relating to specific initiatives**

#### ***Ad §10 (Policy guidance on teachers' and school leaders' careers and professional development):***

- *The Commission would like to reassure the Bundesrat that this action will follow the usual approach applied within the Strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET2020), based on peer learning and the exchange of good policy practice among Member States and European stakeholder organisations. They jointly develop broad policy guidance that is valid across differences in education systems. The resulting guidelines are of a non-binding nature and take full account of the diversity of systems and conditions in Member States.*
- *The topic of these activities (the careers and professional development of teachers and school leaders) is based on priority No 4 for European co-operation ('Strong support for educators') outlined in the 2015 Joint Report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the ET2020 framework. It implements the more specific thematic issues ('Concrete issues') indicated in the same report.*

#### ***Ad §10 (Development of online communities and resources for teachers and school leaders):***

- *As above, these activities are based on the shared European Union priorities and issues identified under the Strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (including 'Supporting initial education and continuing professional development of educators [...], including through EU tools such as eTwinning, the School Education Gateway and the ePlatform for Adult Learning in Europe (EPALE)').*

#### ***Ad §11 (Mainstreaming eTwinning)***

- *With regard to the added value of mainstreaming participation in the eTwinning community, the Commission makes reference to impact studies and monitoring surveys<sup>1</sup> of eTwinning. These have underlined the beneficial impact of eTwinning on pupils, teachers and schools, and in particular on cross-curricular competence development and on building a sense of European citizenship within the school (besides its more direct benefits for teachers' competences, teaching practice and professional development). The Commission would also like to underline the decentralised and user-driven nature of this Europe-wide community which receives European Union support through the Erasmus+ programme.*

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<sup>1</sup> Commission Study (2012) of the impact of eTwinning on participating pupils, teachers and schools: <https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/ec23d4e3-e305-4d1c-83da-1989d35ec7e0>; Kearney, C. (2016). Monitoring eTwinning Practice: A pilot activity guiding teachers' competence development. Central Support Service of eTwinning - European Schoolnet, Brussels: <https://www.etwinning.net/eun-files/report2016/eTwinning-report-2016.pdf>.

*Ad §12 (Support improvements in school education in science, technology, engineering and maths subjects)*

- *The Commission agrees with the Bundesrat on the importance of bottom-up approaches to supporting school education in the science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) subjects. Member States have had different experiences with the development of national coalitions in this field. Through the proposed activities the Commission is planning to offer support at Union level to the development of such national coalitions through peer learning and the exchange of good practice.*