



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

*Brussels, 8.2.2018
C(2018) 727 final*

Dear President,

The Commission would like to thank the Bundesrat for its Opinion on the Commission Communication on "Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture" {COM(2017) 673 final}.

The Commission would like to point out the specific context in which the Communication was presented. As the first item on the new "Leaders' Agenda", education and culture have been addressed at the Leaders' meeting that took place on 17 November 2017 in Gothenburg during the Social Summit for fair jobs and growth. The Communication was the Commission's contribution to the Leaders' meeting for their discussion in the overall context of the debate on the future of Europe. The Commission would like to underline that the Communication is a contribution to a reflection process, setting out possible ways forward.

Following the Social Summit for Fair Jobs and Growth in Gothenburg, the European Council of 14 December 2017 called on the Member States, the Council and the Commission to take the work forward in line with their respective competences. The Commission trusts that the bodies in charge of education and culture will continue to lead the follow-up actions, as called for by the Bundesrat.

The Commission concurs with the Bundesrat on the fundamental role of education and culture for individuals and the society at large, and welcomes that these issues are now being placed high on the policy agenda and given greater visibility. The Commission also agrees with the Bundesrat on the intrinsic value of education and culture which does not contradict and is not incompatible with the importance of education and culture for economic development.

The Commission agrees with the Bundesrat that doubling the number of participants under the Erasmus+ programme is an ambitious objective. Given that Erasmus+ is one of the most successful initiatives of the European Union and a tried-and-tested programme, the Commission is of the view that this objective is worthwhile to be pursued.

*Mr Michael MÜLLER
President of the Bundesrat
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As regards the question of subsidiarity, the Commission would like to underline that the Communication stresses that "the competences for education and culture lay primarily with Member States at national, regional and local level" and that the "Union's competences are limited to encouraging cooperation, supporting and complementing national actions".

Concerning the question of competences, the Commission is of the view that the Communication is in line with the relevant provisions of the Treaty and would like to recall that the Communication does not contain any suggestion for any sort of harmonisation measure. As regards the issue of benchmarks, the Commission agrees with the Bundesrat that they cannot be set on the basis of a top-down-approach or without prior technical examination.

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*