



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

*Brussels, 11.7.2018
C(2018) 4219 final*

*Mr Michael MÜLLER
President of the Bundesrat
Leipziger Straße 3 - 4
D – 10117 BERLIN*

Dear President,

The Commission would like to thank the Bundesrat for its Opinion on the proposal for a Council Recommendation on promoting common values, inclusive education and the European dimension of teaching {COM(2018) 23 final}.

This proposal is part of a wider initiative to strengthen European identity through Education and Culture and also responds to the European Council Conclusions of December 2017¹. It demonstrates how education can help promoting the common values set out in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union: the respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and the respect for human rights. The Council of the European Union has meanwhile adopted this Recommendation on 22 May 2018².

The Commission agrees that challenges such as populism, xenophobia, divisive nationalism, discrimination, disinformation and radicalisation are multi-faceted and have many root causes. This is why they are being tackled through a number of policy and funding instruments, including Commission Communications, Council Recommendations and Council Conclusions on issues as varied as radicalisation³, integration⁴, inclusion⁵, fake news and online disinformation⁶ to name a few. The Recommendation seeks to present how education can contribute to tackling these challenges.

¹ <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/32204/14-final-conclusions-rev1-en.pdf>.

² <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-8015-2018-INIT/en/pdf>.

³ Commission Communication on supporting the prevention of radicalisation leading to violent extremism COM(2016) 379 final.

⁴ Commission Action Plan on the Integration of Third-Country Nationals (COM(2016) 377 final); Council Conclusions on building on the Commission Communication of 12 April 2017 on the protection of children in migration (10085/17).

⁵ Council Conclusions on inclusion in diversity to achieve a high quality education for all (2017/C 62/02); Commission Recommendation on Investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage (2013/112/EU).

⁶ Council Conclusions on developing media literacy and critical thinking through education and training (2016/C 212/05).

Similarly, the Commission agrees that bringing about a European dimension of teaching will not, by itself, create a feeling of belonging to Europe. However, through education young people can increase their awareness and understanding of the European Union as well as the social, religious and cultural diversity, the heritage, traditions and political realities of the different Member States. This awareness is essential for mutual respect, understanding and cooperation.

The Commission welcomes the Bundesrat's support for bringing together inclusive education and common values. The Commission shares its views that an inclusive approach to education is an excellent way of exemplifying common values.

The Commission acknowledges that the content of curricula, the organisation of education systems and teacher training are within the competence of the German Länder. This is why the Commission proposed a Council Recommendation, where national and regional authorities can decide themselves how to follow it up. It should be stressed that the Commission proposal refers to the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education merely as a useful guiding resource. There is no suggestion that its reports and publications should be binding.

The Commission intends to undertake a number of activities, including drawing up and regularly reviewing practical reference tools and guidelines and supporting stakeholder engagement in filling knowledge gaps. These actions do not impinge on the competence of national and regional authorities. An example of such reference tools is the elaboration of elements for a policy framework in the context of the Education and Training 2020 Working Group on Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education. As far as stakeholder engagement is concerned, the Commission intends to support stakeholders in raising awareness of the issues addressed by the recommendations and involve stakeholder experts in peer learning activities organised through this Working Group. This should help them to share their experience and enhance the European dimension of teaching.

As regards assessing measures taken in response to the Recommendation, the Commission does not intend to carry out formal evaluations of national and regional initiatives. Rather, the Commission seeks input from national and regional authorities on activities going on within their territories that could be usefully to share with others in the context of peer learning activities and exchanges of best practices.

Finally, concerning more school mobility and less administrative burden, these are two of the central objectives of the Commission's proposal for an Erasmus+ successor programme, adopted in May 2018⁷.

⁷ COM(2018) 367 and SWD(2018) 276.

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

Yours faithfully,

*Frans Timmermans
First Vice-President*

*Tibor Navracsics
Member of the Commission*