



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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Dear President,

The Commission would like to thank the Bundesrat for its Opinion on the Communication ‘A New European Agenda for Culture’ {COM(2018) 267 final}. The Bundesrat's Opinion constitutes an important contribution to the ongoing debate on strengthening European Union cooperation in the field of culture and offers valuable areas for reflection.

For the first time in the area of European cultural policy, Heads of Government and State gave clear guidance on their vision at the Social Summit in Gothenburg and the European Council in December 2017. The Leaders reaffirmed that education and culture are key to building inclusive and cohesive societies, and to sustaining our competitiveness. They have also expressed a willingness to do more in these areas, in which the European Union plays an important supplementing and supporting role. They called in particular on Member States, the Council and the Commission, in line with their respective competences, to take the opportunity of the European Year of Cultural Heritage to increase awareness of the social and economic importance of culture and cultural heritage.

The New European Agenda for Culture is the Commission's response to the call of Leaders. It is a strategic document that in full respect of subsidiarity outlines an ambitious vision for the European dimension of culture by harnessing the potential of culture for social progress and economic growth in Europe. Respecting and promoting cultural diversity remains a key objective of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and will therefore also remain the pillar of the European Union's action in the field of culture.. However, at the same time the New Agenda also aims to better harness the potential of culture in building a more inclusive and fairer Union, supporting innovation, creativity, sustainable jobs and growth and in reinforcing the external relations of the European Union while fully respecting artistic freedom. Based on experience and the results from broad stakeholder consultations, the New Agenda

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provides a new framework, including a range of actions supporting increased Union collaboration on culture.

The Commission fully acknowledges the competence of Member States in the field of education and culture and the fact that European culture is deeply rooted at national, regional and local levels. That is why the actions in the New European Agenda for Culture have been drafted in full respect of the subsidiarity principle and with regard to their European added value. To ensure the full respect of national and regional competences the Commission will implement actions in close cooperation with Member States and stakeholders in the field. In this context, regular contacts with the German Bundesrat and Länder will be of the highest importance.

The Commission appreciates that the Bundesrat shares its views on the importance of Europe's rich and diverse culture for European integration and identity as well as the significance of Europe's cultural heritage as a basis for peaceful and respectful relations among the people living in Europe.

The Commission also confirms its willingness to use the momentum of the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018 to put more focus on the promotion of culture across the Union. In this regard, the Commission wishes to clarify that follow-up actions on the European Year of Cultural Heritage will build on the results of the 10 European initiatives and will be developed in full respect of subsidiarity.

Furthermore, the Commission wishes to underline that the inherent value of culture and the need to promote a rich and high-quality cultural offer continues to be deeply embedded in its considerations. The Commission shares the Bundesrat's view that a rich cultural offer contributes to a rich social life.

The Commission is pleased to note the Bundesrat's positive opinion on a number of specific areas covered in the New Agenda, including the need to tackle challenges relating to part-time work or double taxation of artists; to promote mobility; to reach out to regional and local actors; to reinforce the role of culture in the European Union's external relations policies; and to increasingly open up the European structural and investment funds for culture.

The Commission likewise welcomes the Bundesrat's agreement on the importance of horizontal actions regarding cultural heritage and digital technologies. Regarding Europeana, the Commission is pleased to inform the Bundesrat that the evaluation is close to finalisation and that the report is expected to be published in the autumn. On the digital development of the sector and considering the desired cultural participation of a wider European public, the Commission remains open to discuss a close involvement of cultural institutions operating predominantly in the public domain, such as libraries or museums.

The Commission also notes the Bundesrat's views on the new working methods proposed in the New Agenda. The decision on future working groups in the next Work Plan for Culture will lie with the Member States. The Commission believes that the structured dialogue in the field of culture while fully respecting the Union's competences and

objectives in this area would make a significant contribution to cross-fertilisation with other areas.

Regarding the “duration” of the New Agenda, the Commission wishes to clarify that the Agenda has no end date.

Finally, the Commission has taken note of the concerns expressed by the Bundesrat on the Guarantee Facility. In this regard, the proposal for a Regulation on the future InvestEU Fund {COM(2018) 439 final} identifies as eligible areas for financing and investment cultural activities run by small and medium-sized enterprises, as well as cultural activities with a social goal. The latter shall benefit from the ‘Social investment and skills Window’, offering also to smaller actors in the cultural and creative sectors new opportunities for loans (micro financing or micro-credits).

The Commission hopes to have responded to the issues raised in the Bundesrat’s Opinion and looks forward to continuing the political dialogue in the future.

Yours faithfully,

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First Vice-President*

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Member of the Commission*