



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

*Brussels, 30.01.2019  
C(2019) 632 final*

*Dear President,*

*The Commission would like to thank the Bundesrat for its Opinion on the proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the Rights and Values Programme {COM (2018) 383 final}.*

*This proposal forms part of the post 2020 Multiannual Financial Framework package that the Commission put forward in May 2018. The Commission proposed a new Justice, Rights and Values Fund whose overarching aim is to sustain open, democratic and inclusive societies. This Fund underpins two funding programmes: the Justice programme and the Rights and Values programme. The Justice programme will contribute to the further development of a European area of justice based on the rule of law, on mutual recognition and mutual trust. The Rights and Values programme will contribute to empowering citizens and to sustain open, democratic and inclusive societies through protecting and promoting rights and values as enshrined in the European Union Treaties. The Commission has further proposed a Regulation on the protection of the Union budget in case of generalised deficiencies as regards the rule of law in the Member States. All these proposals show the Commission's concrete commitment to put the European Union values at the forefront of the future Multiannual Financial Framework.*

*Within the above context, the Commission is pleased that the Bundesrat shares the view that action at Union level, as envisaged in the proposal for a Rights and Values programme, is required to promote and protect equality and rights, to promote citizens engagement and participation in the democratic life of the Union and to fight against violence.*

*The Commission is pleased to have this opportunity to provide a number of clarifications regarding its proposal and trusts that these will answer the issues raised by the Bundesrat.*

*Daniel GÜNTHER  
President of the Bundesrat  
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*The proposed Rights and Values programme will promote civic and democratic participation under its citizens' engagement and participation strand, including through a dialogue with programme stakeholders.*

*The general objective of the programme is to protect and promote rights and values as enshrined in the European Union Treaties; in accordance with Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union, these include the rule of law. This programme will be implemented in synergy with the Justice programme, which will further promote the rule of law and a well-functioning independent judicial system to ensure the further development of a European area of justice.*

*As regards the specific objectives proposed, the Rights and Values programme will fund policies dealing with non-discrimination and equality, anti-racism and the fight against violence and for cultural diversity, freedom of expression, citizens' participation, cultural heritage and identity and European remembrance and memory. It will have close synergies with several Union policies and instruments including the future European Social Fund, Erasmus and Creative Europe programmes, while respecting the specific objectives and features of each programme. In this context it has to be stressed that social cohesion is an objective of the European Social Fund, while young people will be the specific target group of the future Erasmus programme. However, it is expected that the Rights and Values programme can contribute to social cohesion and that young people can also be among beneficiaries of the programme and that some activities could also be targeted at them.*

*The promotion of equality and rights and the fight against violence are two specific objectives/strands of the proposed Rights and Values programme and a budget has been earmarked for these two specific objectives together, as they are interlinked. In that respect, the Commission has reconfirmed its firm commitment to continue to work on these very important topics, also keeping their visibility through two dedicated strands.*

*The Commission attaches great importance to the objectives pursued by the programme and therefore has proposed to protect European Union spending in this area from budget cuts despite the overall pressure to achieve savings given the current budget circumstances. Furthermore, the Commission has conducted a thorough spending review and impact assessments which have been the basis for the proposed budget allocation. The proposed budget, together with the expected synergies with other programmes and funds, should allow achieving positive results.*

*The proposed Regulation allows taking benefit of all possibilities provided by the new Financial Regulation, which includes a number of novelties making access to funding much easier. For instance, the new rules would allow for taking into account the value of volunteer's work as eligible - a long-standing request of the civil society.*

*As indicated in the Annex of the proposed Regulation, the Commission has the intention to set up a network of national contact points for the Rights and Values programme, based on the positive experience of the Europe for Citizens programme 2014-2020.*

*Discussions concerning the proposal between the co-legislators, the European Parliament and the Council, are now underway and the Commission remains hopeful that an agreement will be reached in the near future.*

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

*Yours faithfully,*

*Frans Timmermans  
First Vice-President*

*Věra Jourová  
Member of the Commission*