



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Brussels, 6.5.2021  
C(2021) 3342 final

*Dear President,*

*The Commission would like to thank the Bundesrat for its Opinion concerning the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on achieving the European Education Area by 2025 {COM(2020) 625 final}.*

*The Commission welcomes the general support of the Bundesrat to the Communication on achieving the European Education Area by 2025 (“the Communication”) and to the holistic, cross-sectoral approach to education and training, as well as to the six dimensions presented in the Communication. The Commission appreciates that the Bundesrat concurs with the need to give particular attention to decoupling educational attainment from socio-economic background.*

*The Commission would like to reassure the Bundesrat that the implementation and progress monitoring of all the initiatives proposed in the Communication would be carried out in full respect of Articles 165 and 166 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union in terms of the principle of subsidiarity, and with particular focus on delivering European added value.*

*The Commission welcomes the support to the Erasmus+ Teacher Academies. These projects aim at creating networks and communities of practice of existing teacher education providers. They will offer teachers with learning opportunities on common issues, such as promoting inclusion, digital learning and supporting effective teaching on sustainable environment. The Erasmus+ Teacher Academies projects are also expected to organise learning mobility, thus bringing added value to national teacher education systems, whilst respecting the national approaches and practices to teacher education.*

*The Commission welcomes the Bundesrat’s support for the European Universities initiative. The European Universities alliances can act as role models for higher education transformation, and can inspire the wider higher education sector in Europe. The Commission confirms that further policy developments at the European level will be undertaken only where there is a European added value, fully in line with the principle of*

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*subsidiarity, and respecting the diversity of the European higher education landscape and the institutional autonomy of higher education institutions.*

*The Commission welcomes the support of the Bundesrat on the achievements of the Bologna Process through the establishment of the European Higher Education Area. The progress under the European Education Area with the Member States can act as an engine for the Bologna process, inspiring and supporting other member countries of the European Higher Education Area to benefit from a similar path.*

*Progressively, more higher education institutions, as well as other education and training providers, are proposing short learning courses leading to micro-credentials<sup>1</sup>. However, the value of these micro-credentials is not always clear, due to a lack of standards for quality and transparency in a very diverse landscape. This is precisely where the European Union could add value. The European Union could propose a common definition and European standards, which address minimum requirements for quality, transparency, cross-border comparability, recognition and portability. This could be implemented independently from the body awarding the micro-credential, and building on existing tools, such as Bologna tools, as far as possible.*

*The Commission would like to thank the Bundesrat for its support for a more inclusive Erasmus+ programme. The Commission is introducing dedicated inclusion measures in the Erasmus+ programme aimed at better promoting social inclusion and improving outreach to people with fewer opportunities in the fields of education, training, youth and sport. These planned inclusion measures range from dedicated financial mechanisms for participants and organisations, to targeted communication, awareness raising activities and easier-to-access activity formats. As highlighted in the opinion of the Bundesrat, additional funding will be provided for people with fewer opportunities.*

*Based on the proposal of the Commission, Member States have agreed on a coherent set of seven relevant targets for monitoring education and training in Europe, as presented in the Council Resolution of 18 February 2021 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030)<sup>2</sup>. The targets are set at European Union level and should not be considered as binding targets at country level; Member States respond to them in different ways, depending on the country specific situation.*

*Concerning the issues raised by the Bundesrat on the participation in early childhood education and care, the Commission would like to clarify that the Council adopted an EU target to ensure that at least 96% of children between the age of three and the starting age for compulsory primary education should participate in early childhood education and care, by 2030. The Council set a share of early leavers from education and training at less than 9%, and the target on tertiary level attainment at 45%, by 2030.*

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<sup>1</sup>[https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/european-education-area/a-european-approach-to-micro-credentials\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/european-education-area/a-european-approach-to-micro-credentials_en)

<sup>2</sup>[https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:32021G0226\(01\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:32021G0226(01))

*With a twofold Europe 2020 headline target on tertiary educational attainment and on the share of early leavers from education and training, education and training have played a key role in the European Semester process in recent years. All Member States in 2019 and 24 Member States in 2020 received a country specific recommendation in the field of education and skills. However, no financial sanctions or formal control is linked to these recommendations. On the contrary, Member States are invited to focus European Union funds under the Recovery and Resilience Facility and the Structural Funds to handle the challenges identified in the country specific recommendations. In 2021, the European Semester has largely focussed on the Recovery and Resilience Facility process with no country reports or country-specific recommendations issued. The voluntary cooperation in the field of education and training should support Member States in implementing country-specific recommendations and make effective use of European Union funds through peer learning and mutual exchange.*

*The Working Groups and other mutual learning arrangements under the European policy cooperation in education and training (ET 2020 framework)<sup>3</sup> have provided valuable support to Member States and regional authorities in their reform efforts. The Commission welcomes the request of the Bundesrat to keep these mutual learning arrangements under the next cooperation cycle, as proposed in the Communication, and agreed in the Council Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond. The establishment of a European Education Platform as announced in the Communication will significantly contribute to improving dissemination of the results of European cooperation in education and training.*

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

*Yours faithfully,*

*Maroš Šefčovič  
Vice-President*

*Mariya Gabriel  
Member of the Commission*

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<sup>3</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/european-policy-cooperation/et2020-framework\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/european-policy-cooperation/et2020-framework_en)