

## SHORT PROFILE

### GERMANY

**Expert authors:** Ulrike Blumenreich

**Date:** December, 2020

---

#### 1. Fact and figures

<b>Political system:</b>	Federal parliamentary republic
<b>Population:</b>	83 166 711 (2020)
<b>GDP per capita in PPS Index (EU-27=100):</b>	121 (2019)
<b>General government expenditure (in % of GDP):</b>	45.2 (2019)
<b>Official language:</b>	German

#### 2. Cultural policy system

##### *Objectives*

The New Cultural Policy of the 1970s and 1980s broadened the scope of the concept of culture and included – particularly in the context of changes of social values – also the culture of everyday life. The concepts of “culture for everyone” (Hilmar Hoffmann) complemented by “culture from everyone” (Hermann Glaser) became programmatically guidelines for cultural policy. This included policy on issues related to cultural identity, cultural heritage, cultural diversity and participation in cultural life.

Today, one of the main cultural policy objectives in Germany is enabling as many people as possible to participate in arts and culture. During the last years, this objective incorporated various aspects, such as as interculture / transculture, diversity in a broader perspective (gender, age, religion, capacities), digitalisation, audience development and cultural education, cultural infrastructure in urban and rural areas, and sustainability. In 2020, the main focus has been to support the cultural sphere during the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences.

The priorities of the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media for the current legislative period (2017-2021) are: women in culture and media (asserting equal opportunities), cultural education and integration, art in exile, dealing with cultural assets from colonial contexts and film promotion.

Cultural relations and education policy is considered as the third pillar of foreign policy in Germany. In the current coalition agreement, the German government emphasized the relevance of cultural relations and education policy and sets new priorities for it: to strengthen Europe, to protect the freedom of artists and researchers, and to promote innovation.

### *Main features*

Germany is a federally organised country with three tiers of government: the Federal Government, the federal states (Länder) and the municipalities. German cultural policy is therefore based on a federal model and governed by the principles of decentralisation, subsidiarity and plurality. Within this federal and highly decentralised system, there are a number of bodies which formulate and implement cultural policy: legislative or self-governing bodies (i.e. parliaments, councils), government administrations (i.e. ministries or departments for cultural affairs), or consultative bodies (i.e. expert committees).

The responsibilities and competencies of each governmental tier in the cultural field are stipulated by the Basic Law. According to Article 30, the main public actors in the cultural field are the federal states, responsible for setting their own policy priorities, funding their respective cultural institutions and for supporting projects of regional importance. Hence, all the 16 federal states have their own cultural policies and ministries responsible for culture. When it comes to matters of cultural policy of supra-regional importance (with the aim of forming a common opinion, as well as representing common concerns vis-à-vis the Federal Government), the ministries of culture (often combined with other departments) from different federal states are collaborating through the Conference of Ministers of Culture, that has started work in 2019.

In the field of arts and culture, the Federal Government is responsible for: representation of the state as a whole, establishing a regulatory framework for the development of art and culture, promoting cultural institutions and projects relevant to the state as a whole, preserving and protecting cultural heritage, foreign cultural policy, fostering historical awareness and promoting Berlin as a capital city. The representative for cultural affairs at the federal level is the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media, whose work is supervised by the Committee on Cultural and Media Affairs, and by the Federal Foreign Office for foreign cultural policy resp. cultural relations and educational policy

In Germany, the financing of culture is primarily based on the subsidiarity principle. The main role in financing public cultural activities and institutions is assigned to municipalities, followed by the federal states (Länder). Only when the scope or nature of a cultural policy task is beyond the community's resources does the state step in for funding (see [chapters 1.1, 1.2. and 7.1. of the country profile](#)).

### *Background*

#### **1871-1918**

The German Empire (Reich), founded in 1871, was made up of many independent feudal states and city republics with distinct cultural traditions. Hence, the constituent states were responsible for their own cultural policies, while the Reich government was responsible for foreign cultural policy. Supported by a strong civic commitment to arts and culture, municipalities' special autonomy was extended to cultural affairs.

#### **1919-1933**

The decentralised cultural policy system continued under the new constitution of the Weimar Republic. Public responsibility and support for arts and culture was divided among the Reich government, the governments of the federal states (Länder), the city and municipal councils.

#### **1933-1945**

The cultural diversity cultivated over the course of centuries was suspended by forced centralisation during the National Socialist regime. The civic commitment was suppressed and the culture was instrumentalised and abused to serve the goals of the Regime.

#### **1949-1990**

After World War II 1945, the German Reich was divided into Western and Eastern occupation zones that evolved to the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic (GDR). Following a brief period of co-operation between the two German states, cultural policy evolved independently and developed along different lines.

The GDR broke with tradition of cultural federalism and established, in 1954, the Ministry of Culture at the head of the state-controlled cultural sector. The ruling Socialist Unity Party (SED) proposed the "working class" as both participants and drivers of cultural life in the GDR. This type of "popular culture" was based on a one-sided view of the traditional workers' movement which resulted in cultural work of worker's unions and social and cultural institutions being funded by the state and orchestrated by the SED.

On the other hand, the government of the Federal Republic of Germany, had a limited role in the field of cultural policy, due to the former abuse of arts and culture by the National Socialist regime. At first limited to the promotion of traditional art forms and cultural institutions, the

scope of culture policy got broadened to other “socio-cultural” areas in the 1960s, following the youth and civic protest movements and social modernisation. In the 1970s, as a part of a general democratisation process, the New Cultural Policy emerged with an aim to expand cultural activities and make arts accessible to everyone. The cultural policy objectives changed in the 1980s, when culture was seen as a factor enhancing Germany's attractiveness as a location for business and industry.

### **1990-2000**

With the unification of Germany, the federal states (Länder) were reestablished in the former GDR and the administrative structure of the “old” Federal Republic was adopted. Respectively, the cultural landscape went through restructuring and radical changes were introduced.

### **2000-2020**

In the early years of the following decade, cultural policy in Germany stabilised in comparison to the changes of the 1990s. However, cultural policy still faces great challenges and requires a constant re-orientation. One of the main issues is financing of culture which requires structural changes such as readjustment of the relationship between the state, market and society through public-private partnership models and a stronger integration of civic commitments, among other methods. Those discourses focused on the role of the state are reflected in the discussions about the concepts of the “activating cultural state” and “activating cultural society” as well as on debates of integration of culture as a national objective into the Basic Law. In addition, the conceptional basis of past cultural policies has been challenged by migration processes, rapid media development and a change in the composition of audiences (a decreasing total population and an increasing number of older people) (see [chapter 1.1. of the country profile](#)).

## **3. Current cultural affairs**

### *Key developments*

In the past five years, discussions and actions in the field of cultural policy have focused on: support for culture institutions and actors during COVID-19; cultural diversity; culture and sustainability; provenance research and repatriation of unlawfully seized cultural assets and the reappraisal of the colonial history within the commemorate culture; culture and digitalization; copyright issues; (attacks on) freedom of arts; gender; European Cultural Capital; culture within rural areas and culture and home(land); Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP); design of the cultural infrastructure; and concept-based cultural policy in the federal states (Länder) (see [chapter 2.1. of the country profile](#)). A few of these topics will also be discussed in further detail below.

## Key themes

### Support for culture during COVID-19

The closure of cultural institutions and (cultural) education, the cancellation of cultural events as well as the annulment of art and cultural projects, pose enormous challenges for all cultural actors. In order to support artists, cultural associations, cultural institutions and companies, a variety of support measures have been developed – at federal level, in the federal states and in some municipalities. These measures consist of a set of direct financial benefits (grants, loans), indirect financial benefits (tax relief) and the broadening of access opportunities and grant provisions as well as coaching advice. There are general and culture-specific instruments. Civil society also supports creative artists and cultural institutions with donations and funds.

In June, a “rescue and future package” called “New Start Culture” was launched by the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media. The programme made a total of around one billion euros more available for the cultural sector in 2020-2021. The programme is divided into four parts:

- Pandemic-related investments (up to 250 million euros)
- Strengthening the cultural infrastructure (up to 480 million euros)
- Alternative, including digital, cultural offerings (up to 150 million euros), and
- Compensation for pandemic-related revenue losses and additional needs at federally funded institutions and projects (up to 100 million euros).

COVID-19 functions as a burning lens and raises debates regarding the economic and social situation of artists, the need of transforming the cultural field, digitalisation (taking into consideration the variety of new create digital and hybrid formats), funding of culture (considering the implications of current borrowing for future budgets of local authorities), and the freedom of arts.

### Cultural diversity

Cultural diversity has become increasingly important in Germany in recent years, thus focussing on different aspects: interculture / transculture, gender equality, inclusion and digitalisation. This can be seen in a variety of publications, studies, programmes, events and projects by cultural institutions on this topic.

One emphasized sign of this development is the initiative [DIE VIELEN](#) (THE MANY) which was launched in 2017. Its goal is “to promote international attitudes, tolerance in all areas of culture and international understanding, and the promotion of popular education. THE MANY wants to strengthen communication and opportunities for action among artists, ensembles and actors .. This applies in particular to artists for whom theatre and art provide means to work on a society that is composed of people of all skin colours and gender variations, sexual orientations, needs and abilities, from religious and not religious.” The initiative has launched a *Declaration of the*

*Many*, which has now been signed as a declaration by more than 4 000 cultural institutions and cultural actors as a signal for an open society against racism, discrimination and national authoritarianism.

Gender equality in art, culture and media became a key issue of the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media. This objective, also a component of the coalition agreement, applies to leadership positions, appointments to juries and committees, and decisions about grants and funding. A set of instruments was implemented: a round table was established in 2016; various data reports were commissioned; a project office "Women in culture and media" was established; mentoring programmes were offered; the independent help desk "Themis" for issues of sexual violence in the culture and media sector was launched; and during Germany's EU Council Presidency 2020 the issue was focused on EU level.

Following the paradigm that the participation of as many people as possible is a fundamental basis for social cohesion in Germany, the federal government supports the cultural education and outreach work of various initiatives, networks and institutions. People with migration backgrounds are given special attention through pilot projects, guidance documents for cultural institutions or one-site coachings.

The policy of diversity also focusses on inclusion to facilitate access to art and culture and the development of creative talents for people with disabilities, e.g. via the network "Culture and inclusion", projects and reports.

In 2020, the Chancellor established a Cabinet Committee for the battle against racism and right-wing extremism, including also the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and Media and the Federal Foreign Office. In November, it has drawn up a catalog of 89 concrete measures of the different federal ministries. The Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and Media emphasizes, for example, prevention projects in historical-political, (inter-)religious and (inter-)cultural education and mediation work; and the development and expansion of the promotion of Jewish culture in Germany in cultural institutions. The Federal Foreign Office focuses on international research projects, youth exchange, coming to terms with colonialism and expanding cultural programme work, among other things. Both will continue the implementation of their diversity strategies. The German government intends to make more than one billion euros available for these projects between 2021 and 2024.

### **Sustainability**

Since the turn of the century, the discussion about a sustainable and environmentally friendly cultural policy has intensified in Germany. The ecological deficit of cultural policy is being deplored and a new understanding of nature-related culture is in demand. Sustainability, conservation of resources and deceleration are called forth as key objectives of cultural policy. A key document in this regard is the "Declaration of Tutzingen" by the Kulturpolitische Gesellschaft

in 2001, that establishes the cultural dimension besides the economic, the ecological and the social one.

Currently, the call for federal, state and local cultural policy to meet the criteria of sustainability is growing. Specifically, there is a rising demand for programmes that enable cultural institutions to adapt to the climatic conditions that are expected to appear in the upcoming decades. Moreover, such programmes should provide incentives that encourage institutions to generate ideas for a change of direction and encourage them to communicate these new ideas proactively. The creation of sustainable equipment and a management of cultural infrastructure are regarded as further tasks to be tackled.

The Federal Chancellery established the Council for Sustainable Development (2001) and provided a Sustainability Culture Fund (since 2016) "to support the transformation of our everyday culture". The German Cultural Council (Deutscher Kulturrat), the umbrella organisation of German cultural associations, has also put the issue at the top of its agenda. With the support of the German Council for Sustainable Development and in cooperation with the German Environmental and Nature Conservation Association, it launched a campaign in September 2018 to build a bridge between the sustainability discourse in the natural and environmental sector and cultural policy debates.

Recently, various initiatives from diverse cultural actors can be recognized at local, regional and federal level. From cultural institutions (particularly social cultural centres and libraries) and their associations, from cultural administrations (e.g. Dresden) and cultural policy or from cultural industries (e.g. film), networks are establishing.

An example is the new action network "Sustainability in Culture and Media" that was launched in September 2020, funded by the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media. To anchor aspects of environmental and climate protection more firmly in the entire culture and media sector, the network includes a variety of stakeholders from the cultural sphere as well as from administrations, Chambers of Commerce, agencies of energy from Germany and abroad. The network functions as a central, cross-sector point of contact for the topic of operational ecology in culture and media. It exchanges relevant experiences and initiates future cooperations in the field.

Another example of the increasing importance of the interlinking of culture and sustainability was the launch of the first "Sustainability Report 2020" by the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media. The report provides an overview of the broad spectrum of the Commissioner's activities aimed at achieving the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

## **Commemorative culture**

The topic of remembrance culture has experienced an increase in importance in recent years, from different perspectives.

### *Provenance research/repatriation of unlawfully seized cultural assets*

In January 2015, the German Lost Art Foundation (Deutsches Zentrum Kulturgutverluste) was established as an institution of the Federal Government, the Federal States and the municipalities. The central coordination office for lost cultural property, the office for provenance research, the temporary Task Force Schwabinger Kulturfund and the office of the Limbach-Commission are united under its roof in Magdeburg. The new institution focuses thematically on Nazi "looted art" as well as the loss of cultural assets under Soviet occupation and in the GDR. In 2018, the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and Media developed a guideline for the handling of collected objects from colonial contexts. In July 2019, the Federal Office for Foreign Restitution became part of the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and Media.

### *Reappraisal of the colonial history within the commemorate culture*

One part of ignition of this debate was the Humboldtforum in Berlin – as a place for dialogue between the world culture. Since about four years, colonial history was recognized as a "blind spot" within the commemorate culture. Various actors are now taking the responsibility by highlighting related issues through different activities. For example: dealing with cultural assets from colonial contexts became a priority of the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media at the current legislative periode (2017-2021); the federal association of museums published a guideline for museums (2018, 2019); the German Lost Art Foundation established a new pillar of funding for colonial history (2019); the new president of the Goethe-Institute prioritizes work on colonialism and commemorate culture (2020); large collaborative projects like the Berlin-based "Decolonized – commemorate culture in the city"; and several conferences took place and books were published.

### *Protection of cultural assets*

In 2016, a new law on the protection of cultural property came into force. This brought German law into line with EU and international standards, especially the UNESCO Convention of 1970. It comprises regulations on the areas of protection against emigration, import controls, trade in and the return of cultural property (restitution). Furthermore, guidelines and databases are offered.

## ANNEX

### I. Organisational organigram

Levels of public cultural policy (structures and competences) <sup>1</sup>	Federal (national) level	Federal States (Länder) (regional) level	Municipal (local) level
Bodies/institutions and self- coordination procedures	Federal Government, German Parliament (Deutscher Bundestag), Bundesrat (Länder representatives) Committee on Cultural and Media Affairs in the Bundestag Committee on Cultural Affairs in the Bundesrat Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media; Federal Foreign Office, Federal Ministry of Education and Research and other ministries	16 federal states governments and Länder parliaments committees on culture in all federal states parliaments Ministries of culture	Municipal administrations and council assemblies (ca. 10,800) / county councils (294) Cultural affairs committees in larger cities Cultural affairs departments, as a rule in combination with other functions, including: cultural affairs offices, cultural institutes
Competencies	General legislation as a framework for cultural and artistic creation (e.g. tax and social law); special legislation in the artistic field (e.g. copyright law, film promotion); technical competence, especially in foreign cultural policy	Primary cultural competence (cultural sovereignty) of the federal states according to Article 30 of the Basic Law; legislation in individual sectors with special areas (e.g. Saxony's Cultural Areas Act, library laws, heritage protection laws, further education laws)	No legislative competence, but: constitutionally guaranteed right to "regulate all matters of the local community in its own responsibility" (§ 28,2 Basic Law), enactment of funding guidelines, fee regulations, target agreements, etc., also: cultural development planning
Joint institutions and cooperative arrangements	Inter-ministerial cooperation between the competent directorates-general/divisions of the federal ministries	Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Culture of the federal states(KMK + KM Kultur) with a Committee on Culture and specialised department	German Association of Cities, German Association of Towns and Municipalities, Association of German Counties, in some cases with a cultural affairs committee and a specialised division, also: local authority associations
(Co)ownership and Funding of cultural activities Facilities / Programmes	(Co-)funding of cultural institutions within the framework of capital city cultural promotion, Federal Cultural Foundation, intermediary organisations in foreign cultural policy, Deutsche Welle	Federal states museums, Federal states theatres, Federal states libraries, Federal States Archives	Municipal theatres, museums, music schools, libraries, concert halls, sponsors of independent institutions (= "basic cultural services")
Joint institutions and cooperative arrangements	Foundations as operators of cultural institutions and funding programmes (e.g. Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation, Federal Cultural Foundation, Cultural Foundation of the Länder); cultural institutions under joint sponsorship (e.g. Art and Exhibition Hall of the Federal Republic of Germany)	Joint operations of cultural institutions and programmes (e.g. state theatres) as well as institutions for the funding of culture (e.g. Cultural Secretariats of North Rhine-Westphalia)	
	Federal, state and local authorities as responsible bodies, e.g: German Literature Archive Marbach, Ruhr Festival Recklinghausen, Bayreuth Festival, Industrial Garden Kingdom Dessau / Wörlitz		

## II. Governmental expenditure on culture

**Table 1. Public cultural expenditure by level of government, 2017**

Level of government	Total expenditure in billion EUR*	% share of total	Total expenditure per capita in EUR
State (central, federal)	1.9404	16,96 %	23.44
Regional (Länder, federal states, etc.)	4.44263	38,68 %	53.46
Local (municipal, incl. counties)	5.0761	44,36 %	61.31
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11.4428</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>138.21</b>

**Source:** Statistische Ämter des Bundes und der Länder (2020): Kulturfinanzbericht 2020, Wiesbaden

\* At the date of expenditure