

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2538/01
by Hans Modrow (GUE/NGL)
to the Commission

Subject: Protection of minority rights

In the Free State of Saxony, it appears to be the intention of the Land Government to close a Sorbian secondary school, a measure which would violate the right of the Sorbian people to promote their Slavic language and to protect their identity.

1. The Commission has asked countries applying for accession to resolve their minority problems. What are the specific criteria according to which the Commission assesses the position as regards minority rights in the applicant countries?
2. Do those criteria also apply to current Member States? What form of penalties does the Commission impose for violations and infringements thereof?
3. Are there plans, at the next intergovernmental conference, to deal in a concrete way with the issue of minority rights, for example in the form of the drawing up of a binding Charter on the rights of ethnic minorities and small peoples laying down the collective right to linguistic and cultural institutions such as schools?
4. How does the Commission regard, from the point of view of minority rights in Europe, the fact that, in the German federal Land of Saxony, the home of the autochthonous Sorbian minority, Sorbian-speaking schools are being closed against the express wishes of parents, Sorbian communities and Domowina, the body representing the Sorbian people?