

WRITTEN QUESTION P-2828/07
by Alessandro Battilocchio (NI)
to the Commission

Subject: The problem of Sonderschulen (special schools)

Germany has for some time operated a school system that provides for students as young as 10 (depending on the federal Land) to be assessed and, on the basis of a subjective judgment made by teachers with no qualifications in psychoeducation, sent to different educational institutions: humanities-oriented schools, vocational schools and Sonderschulen (i.e. special schools for children with learning difficulties). This assessment is not actually binding, as it is possible to appeal against the decision by making a formal written request and agreeing to sit an additional exam (which, however, is sat only by the student appealing the decision and not by all students). Given the scarcity of information (very few students are aware of the possibility of appeal) and the difficulty of this further exam, the percentage of students who make positive use of this possibility is very low. Furthermore, the earliness of selection has many negative consequences. Attending a Sonderschule carries a stigma that stays with a young person for their entire school (they cannot enrol at a university etc.) and professional life and has an impact on their later social and economic integration as adults.

1. Does not the Commission believe that the high percentage of foreign students (Italians, Turks, Greeks, Spaniards etc. – data from the Statistisches Bundesamt Deutschland [German Federal Statistical Institute]) at Sonderschulen results in part from assessments based on students' imperfect command of the language? Does the Commission not consider that this type of system represents a form of linguistic discrimination, which, in this case, has inevitable repercussions on students' futures, reducing their chances of professional and economic fulfilment and limiting their social mobility, as indicated by the rapporteur to the United Nations in Geneva on 21 March 2007?

2. What measures does the Commission intend to take to reinforce the 'information policy' directed at students and their families with regard to the possibility of appealing against assessments? What measures does it intend to take to guarantee the right to proper education without distinction on the grounds of race or language and respect for children's wishes to decide their own lives on the basis of their professional aspirations and inclinations, enshrined in Article 14 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and in Articles 28 and 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child?