

WRITTEN QUESTION P-5054/08
by Beniamino Donnici (ALDE)
to the Commission

Subject: The right to study and entrance tests for Italian universities

Many Italian universities now operate a *numerus clausus*, with a selection process based on multiple-choice tests, which the opinions of numerous experts and *ex post* course evaluations suggest do not select the best students in qualitative terms, while in purely organisational terms they likewise fail to ensure a proper and transparent procedure. This is clear from a number of disturbing episodes, some of them recent, which have necessitated intervention by the legal authorities.

For example, given the looming shortage of doctors (the professional bodies believe that in a few years' time Italy could have a shortfall running into tens of thousands), it is difficult to understand how keeping the *numerus clausus* can be justified, unless it be on the grounds of the highly profitable nature of the tests, involving as they do, according to certain sources, sums well in excess of EUR 10 m.

In order to pass the selection hurdles, Italian students are obliged not only to pay an ad hoc fee, but also, in practice, to acquire costly manuals published and marketed by the same firms as administer the tests and organise expensive pre-test seminars.

To restrict access to education is, surely, a violation of human rights.

At the same time, the principles of the equivalence of academic qualifications and the free movement of professionals call for uniform rules on access to higher education throughout the Union.

1. Can the Commission provide information on whether the management and organisation of university entrance tests in Italy are in the hands of a single private firm, and, if so, whether this does not constitute a serious conflict of interests?
2. Can the Commission specify what initiatives it intends to take to make the rules on access to higher education uniform throughout the EU, thus guaranteeing the citizens' right to study?