

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-001844/24
to the Commission
Kostas Papadakis (NI)
(26 September 2024)**

Subject: New school year is marred by grade/year group section mergers and acute problems

Major problems are once again clouding the start to the new school year as parents and pupils face unacceptable grade/year group section mergers. The mergers come at a time when, as is known, there are serious shortages in teaching and other school staff (cleaning, catering and infirmary staff) and parents are having to dig deep into their pockets again this year to pay for the necessary back-to-school supplies.

The 1 000 or so mergers are supposedly a solution to provide more teachers at a time when Greece faces a shortage of around 60 000 teachers. Only 10 000 have been hired and they were forced to accept on the condition that they will have to undergo an evaluation.

In view of this, what is the Commission's position concerning:

1. The unacceptable school situation that is taking shape in 2024, whereby teachers, parents and pupils are confronted with 'streamlining' efforts — as the Government described the merger in question — that are moving the educational process backwards and are creating two-speed schools based partly on EU cost-cutting guidelines?
2. The fact that each grade/year group section will now have only one special educational needs teaching assistant to support children who have been diagnosed as having learning difficulties, regardless of how many such pupils there are, forcing parents to turn to private tutors and therapists to support their children?
3. The dangerous situation that is developing as a result of a lack of school maintenance and inspections, forcing pupils and teachers to attend lessons in classrooms that are unsuitable in every respect, pedagogically and in terms of safety, with private sponsors being 'drafted into' schools that are becoming increasingly commercialised?

Submitted: 26.9.2024

**Answer given by Ms Ivanova on behalf of the European Commission
(26 November 2024)**

Article 6 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) ⁽¹⁾ limits the role of the EU in the area of education to supporting, coordinating or supplementing Member States' actions. Article 165(1) TFEU stipulates that Member States remain solely responsible for the content of teaching and organisation of their education systems.

Based on this, the EU supports Member States with funding through the Erasmus+ programme ⁽²⁾, the European Social Fund Plus ⁽³⁾, the Recovery and Resilience Facility ⁽⁴⁾ and the European Regional Development Fund ⁽⁵⁾.

The Commission presents an annual analysis of how education and training systems evolve across the EU in the Education and Training Monitor ⁽⁶⁾.

The publication brings together the latest available data and updates on national policy measures for all levels of education. Another annual publication, Investing in Education ⁽⁷⁾, analyses the financing of education across the EU. The 2024 edition ⁽⁸⁾ shows that investment in education fell during the pandemic and has not returned to pre Covid levels.

The Council recommendation of 22 May 2018 ⁽⁹⁾ on promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching includes a specific reference to learners with disabilities in terms of ensuring effective equal access to quality inclusive education.

The Commission is not in a position to comment on the appropriateness of the education infrastructure in Member States. Nevertheless, the Commission agrees that adequate education infrastructure is a basic condition to ensure high quality education.

⁽¹⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:12012E/TXT>

⁽²⁾ <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/>

⁽³⁾ <https://european-social-fund-plus.ec.europa.eu/en>

⁽⁴⁾ https://commission.europa.eu/business-economy-euro/economic-recovery/recovery-and-resilience-facility_en

⁽⁵⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/funding/erdf_en

⁽⁶⁾ <https://education.ec.europa.eu/about-eea/education-and-training-monitor>

⁽⁷⁾ <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-editions?>

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⁽⁸⁾ <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/b172797d-3752-11ef-b441-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

⁽⁹⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32018H0607%2801%29>

On this, the Commission published in 2022 a study on investments in education infrastructure with the aim to identify good practices ⁽¹⁰⁾.

⁽¹⁰⁾ <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/01ea6b48-d266-11ec-a95f-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>