

## **Creationist Beliefs Persist in Europe**

“News coverage of the creationism-versus-evolution debate tends to focus on the United States, where surveys consistently show that less than half of Americans accept the theory of evolution. But in the past 5 years, political clashes over the issue have also occurred in countries all across Europe. In Italy, Silvio Berlusconi’s government briefly tried to halt the teaching of evolution in schools in 2004. In 2006, a deputy Polish education minister called the theory of evolution “a lie.” In 2007, the education minister of a major German state courted controversy by advocating that creationism and evolution be taught together in biology classes. (...)

A survey of 1228 German students planning to become teachers (which was reported by Dittmar Graf) that evaluated their knowledge of and attitudes toward evolution. The results of the 108- question study—part survey, part quiz— revealed surprising gaps. Twenty percent of those studying to teach biology, for example, thought that evolution could be explained in part by Lamarckism, or the idea that traits acquired during a parent organism’s life can be passed on to his or her offspring. And less than a third were able to answer basic questions about the role of reproductive fitness in evolution.

The survey also probed the students’ belief in creationism, and Graf reported that the most likely predictor of creationist thinking wasn’t religious belief but a lack of confidence in science, followed closely by a poor understanding of scientific principles. “What surprised me wasn’t that religion correlated with antievolutionist thinking but that the correlation between a failure to understand science and not believing in evolution was very strong,” Graf says. (...) Compared with Germany, where about 20% of the public holds creationist beliefs, creationism is even more deeply entrenched in the Muslim world

**Citation from:** ANDREW CURRY “Creationist Beliefs Persist in Europe”, **SCIENCE VOL 323 p. 1159** , 27 FEBRUARY 2009 Andrew Curry is a freelance writer based in Berlin

## **New Texas Standards Question Evolution, Fossil Record**

New science standards for Texas schools strike a major blow to the teaching of evolution, say scientists and educators who last week tried unsuccessfully to block the adoption of last-minute amendments aimed at providing an opening for the teaching of creationism. The standards incorporate talking points from the intelligent design literature, including doubt that the fossil record provides convincing evidence of evolution. Supporters of the new standards, who prevailed on 27 March by a vote of 13 to 2, say the next step will be to press publishers to modify biology textbooks. (...)

Because Texas is the second-largest textbook market in the United States, publishers have a strong incentive to be certified by the board as “conforming 100% to the state’s standards,” says Dan Quinn of the Texas Freedom Network in Austin, which has campaigned to keep creationism out of the science classroom.

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