

Press Release

Kölner Arbeitskreis demands: Politicians must finally ensure binding, clear and standardised guidelines for children with reading and dyslexia and dyscalculia

Cologne, 04.12.2023 No other federal state has such outdated school law requirements with regard to LRS as NRW. The ‚Kölner Arbeitskreis LRS & Dyskalkulie e.V.‘ is calling on the NRW state government to finally update the NRW decree from 1991 and make it binding for all schools in NRW. For better promotion and support for affected children and families and more equal opportunities and certainty of action for schools and teachers.

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Reading, writing and arithmetic are important cultural skills that are required in all subjects at school and in everyday life. It is the school's task to teach children to read, write and do maths. Approximately 5-7 children per class have reading and spelling difficulties. Their assistance and support in NRW is regulated by a completely outdated decree from 1991, which is hardly known to school administrators and teachers and is often considered to be a CAN provision. To date, there are no school regulations for dyscalculia in NRW.

The consequences: A jumble of regulations that leaves both those affected and teachers helpless. Parents often struggle from teacher to teacher and from school year to school year to ensure that the legal requirements are implemented. Only in rare cases are children and young people supported with special programmes. Teachers are often unsure how to correctly implement the legal requirements because the topic of dyslexia is not part of their training. The decree is interpreted differently from school to school. Sometimes a medical certificate is required, sometimes not. According to the association's experience, 80 - 85 % of schools in NRW act in contravention of the legal requirements.

Without encouragement and support, affected pupils often fall into a vicious circle of frustration, school anxiety and fear of failure. The consequences can be massive: a learning disorder often goes hand in hand with a lack of self-esteem and even psychological problems. Affected children often do not achieve a school-leaving certificate that matches their potential.

In November, the Federal Constitutional Court ruled that dyslexia is a disability: "In the case of dyslexia, the deficits in reading and writing are based on a medically measurable neurobiological brain dysfunction and thus on a physical condition that is contrary to the rules. The symptoms of this dysfunction, namely a significant slowdown in reading, writing and text comprehension and spelling skills that are well below average, persist over the long term, regularly even for life. The associated restrictions on an individual and self-determined lifestyle are significant." (judgement

22.11.2023, 1 BvR 2577/15, 1 BvR 2579/15, 1 BvR 2578/15)

There are now even more question marks for all those involved.

Tanja Budke (spokesperson of the ‚Kölner Arbeitskreis LRS & Dyskalkulie e.V.‘) demands: "Action must now follow! For years, we have always received the answer from the Ministry of Schools and Education that they are waiting for the judgement of the Federal Constitutional Court before adapting the dyslexia decree and creating school regulations for dyscalculia. We finally expect equal opportunities and educational justice for affected children and young people. We fear that the ruling will cause even more confusion and that affected pupils will be even more stigmatised. Even the ZP 10 ruling for 2024 (ruling for the central final examination) still violates school law requirements. Our calls for rectification are being ignored and not answered." Dieter Budke adds: "The ruling must not lead to affected pupils foregoing compensation for disadvantages and grade protection for fear of stigmatisation due to the note in the report card."

The ‚Kölner Arbeitskreis LRS & Dyskalkulie e.V.‘ therefore urgently demands that

- The regulations of the dyslexia decree must be amended so that they apply to all school types and levels, from primary school to vocational college.
- The requirements of the dyslexia decree must be anchored in school legislation, especially with regard to scientific findings and, for example, digital possibilities.
- School regulations must also finally be created for dyscalculia.
- Grade protection and compensation for disadvantages must be implemented for every affected child and guaranteed in all (examination) situations.
- Every school must develop support concepts for dyslexia and dyscalculia and appoint a representative for dyslexia and dyscalculia who can be trained accordingly and train the teaching staff.
- The ZP 10 regulation must be adapted to the training and examination regulations for lower secondary level before the examinations are held in 2024.

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About the "Kölner Arbeitskreis LRS & Dyskalkulie e.V.": Founded in May 2015, the working group supports affected parents with information so that children receive the best possible support, especially at school. The working group also cooperates with schools and teachers who want to further optimise their approach to dyslexia and dyscalculia. The working group organises information evenings for parents, teachers and therapists at regular intervals. Parents can also exchange ideas at regulars' table evenings. The "Kölner Arbeitskreis LRS & Dyskalkulie e.V." works on a voluntary basis. It is not commercially orientated in any way and is not linked to any therapy facilities.