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## Identifying special needs in Flanders (BE): putting a new learning support framework to the test

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Dynamic Assessment of Functioning  
Oriented at Development and Inclusive  
Learning



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## I. Background

- International trend towards inclusive education
- Practice of SEN in separate schools in BE
- Problems with testing paradigm
- New Learning Support Framework proposal

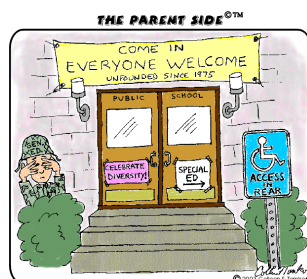
## Wide disparity in SEN definition

Table 4.1 Provision for pupils with SEN <sup>a</sup>

	Number of compulsory school aged pupils	Percentage of pupils with SEN	Percentage of pupils in segregated provision <sup>b</sup>	Year of reference
Austria	848,126	3.2%	1.6%	2000/2001
Belgium (F)	680,360	4.0%	4.0%	2000/2001
Belgium (NL)	822,666	5.0%	4.9%	2000/2001
Denmark	670,000	11.9%	1.5%	2000/2001
Finland	583,945	17.8%	3.7%	1999
France	9,709,000	3.1%	2.6%	1999/2000/2001
Germany	9,159,068	5.3%	4.6%	2000/2001
Greece	1,439,411	0.9%	< 0.5%	1999/2000
Iceland	42,320	15.0%	0.9%	2000/2001
Ireland	575,559	4.2%	1.2%	1999/2000
Italy	8,867,824	1.5%	< 0.5%	2001
Luxembourg	57,295	□ 2.6%	□ 1.0%	2001/2002
Netherlands <sup>d</sup>	2,200,000	2.1%	1.8%	1999/2000/2001
Norway	601,826	5.6%	0.5%	2001
Portugal	1,098,303	7.0%	< 0.5%	2000/2001
Spain	4,541,489	3.7%	0.4%	1999/2000
Sweden	1,062,735	2.0%	1.3%	2001
Switzerland <sup>e</sup>	807,101	6.0%	6.0%	1999/2000
UK	9,994,159	3.2%	1.1%	1999/2000

Source: European Agency for Special Needs in Education [www.special-agency.org](http://www.special-agency.org), 2003

## Separation-inclusion in EU



Mixed Messages

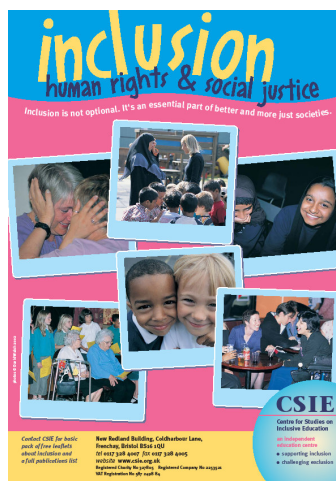
Table 4.2 Percentage of pupils with SEN in segregated settings <sup>a</sup>

< 1%	1-2%	2-4%	> 4%
Greece	Austria	Finland	Belgium (F)
Iceland	Denmark	France	Belgium (NL)
Italy	Ireland		Germany
Norway	Luxembourg		Switzerland
Portugal	Netherlands <sup>b</sup>		
Spain	Sweden		
	UK		

Source: European Agency for Special Needs in Education [www.special-agency.org](http://www.special-agency.org), 2003

## International Developments toward Inclusive Education

- 1989: UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- 1993: UN: Standard Rules for Equal Opportunities for people with disability
- 1994: Unesco: Salamanca conference  
Special needs in the classroom
- 2006: UN Convention on rights of people with disability



## Some historic information on the way to inclusive education in Belgium

- 1970: Law on Special Education; 8 types
- 1977: GON (Integrated Education)
- 1991: OVB (Educational Priority Policy) for children from ethnic minorities
- 1993: “Zorgverbreding” (Learning & Care), measures for at risk and disadvantaged pupils
- 1998: Council of Education Document on Inclusive Education

## Some historic information on the way to inclusive education in Belgium

- 2002: “Equal Opportunities in Education Bill”
- 2005: first concept of Learning Support Framework
- 2007: Concept Learning Support Framework approved by Government
- 2008: test of LSF withing PSS (Pupil Support Services)

## Learning Support Framework: answer to the present educational challenges

1. Parents – request inclusive education; the right to “reasonable adapation”, the right to participation; but the call for special education remains equally strong, because mainstream schools remain exclusive & frustrating
2. Typology of Special Education is not adequate
3. Too many referrals to Special Ed : x 1,5 in the past 16 years
4. Schools request “labelling disturbances”
5. No decrease in referrals to Special Ed despite inclusive measures
6. GON is only for intellectually normal children
7. All support remains confined within Special Ed system

Ref. Van Rompu, W., Mardulier, T., De Coninck, C., Van Beeumen, L., Exter, E. (2008), *Leerzorg in het onderwijs*, Antwerpen: Garant

## Learning Support Framework

- Answer to the central question: “how can a school provide education which is adapted to each pupil’s specific educational needs in an inclusive way?”

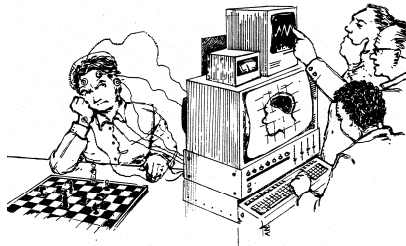


## Learning Support Framework Basic principles



- Learning problem = a matching problem between environment and specific learning needs
- Learning Support Level = an adaptation in the educational environment
- Cluster = child characteristic

## Problems with testing children with SEN



- Standardized
- Individual (not collective)
- Static (non-interfering)
- Non-contextual (only the child)
- List of deficiencies
- Impairment-based
- Medical model of disability
- Too pessimistic
- Labelling
- Leading to exclusion

## II. Participants & methods

## Definition of SEN

Spectrum of needs:

- Able to follow basic goals of regular curriculum but need for adaptations curriculum: differentiation, dispensation, compensation
- Or need for individually adapted curriculum
- Need for assistive technology or materials
- Need for personal assistance
- Need for extra therapeutic assistance (e.g physio, speech, occupational, educational psychologist,...)

Assessment of SEN: new system	Cluster 1 no diagnosis	Cluster 2 Impairment in academic learning	Cluster 3 intellectual /motor/ sensory impairment	Cluster 4 behavioural/emot. Disturbance or pervasive Develop. Dist.
<b>Learning support I</b> Common curriculum + prevention, differentiation remediation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>learning support II</b> common curr. + compensation, dispensation, extra objectives	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	D E F Y	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>learning support III</b> Individualized curriculum + orthopedagogical+ Therapeutic intervention		A B X	C D E F Y	G H Z
<b>learning support IV</b> ind. curr. + intensive orthopedagogical & therapeutic intervention + care & assistance			C D E F Y	G H Z
<b>learning support V</b> Not able to participate in school		<input type="checkbox"/>		

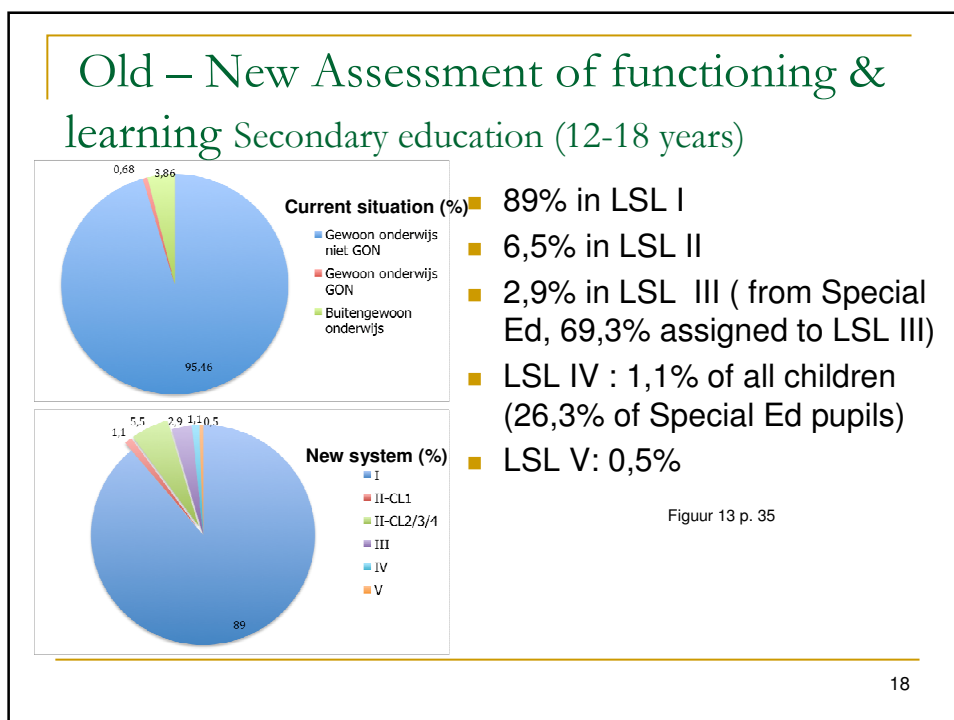
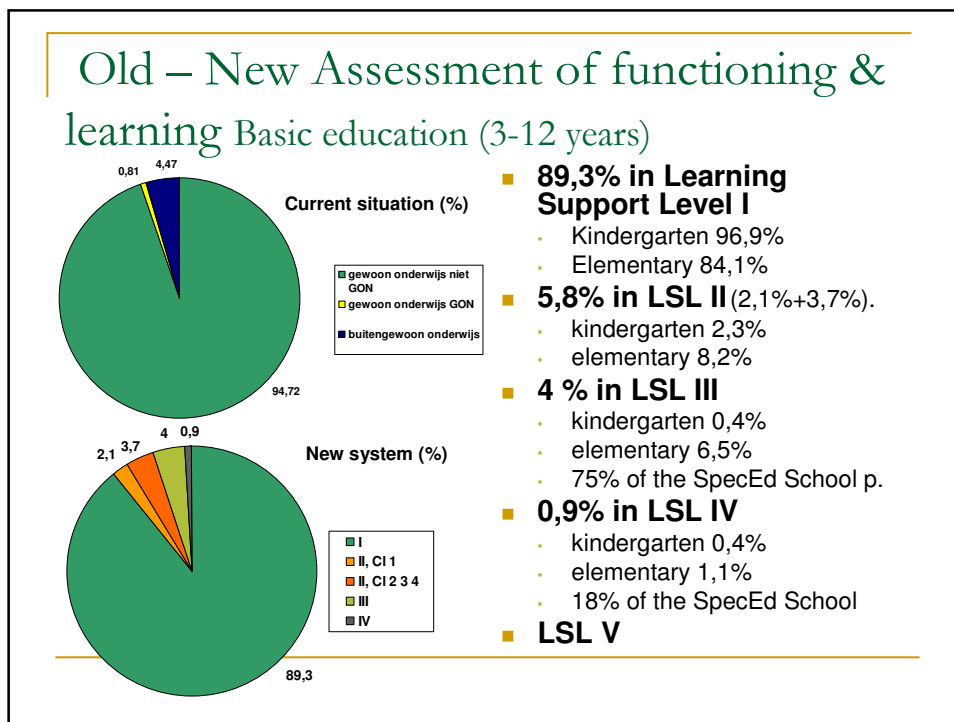
A: mild intell.imp., B: Spec.Learning Imp, C: moder/serious/profound intell.imp. D: motor. imp., E: visual imp., F: auditive imp.G: emot.behav. Dist. H: pervasive develop.dist.; X, Y & Z: does not belong to impairment group but to cluster

## Participants & methods

- 2008, survey in sample of 8600 children, different sub-samples
- 3-18 years
- 73 PSS, 150 assessors (psychologists & MD)
- Regular and SEN children
- Web-based application + online handbook
- Training sessions + online helpdesk
- first SEN needs level, then impairment cluster

Lebeer, J., Struyf, E., et al. (2008), <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/leerzorg/onderzoek/>. English summary available in Euronews N°19 [www.special-agency.org](http://www.special-agency.org)

## III. Results



## Frequency of children with diagnosed impairment

Primary school (6-12)						
	Cluster					
	1	2	3	4		Total
LSL	%	%	%	%		%
I	79,3%	3,9%	,4%	,5%		84,1%
II	2,7%	3,7%	,3%	1,4%		8,2%
III	-	4,9%	,7%	1,0%		6,5%
IV	-	-	,7%	,4%		1,1%
V	-	-	-	-		,0%
Total	82,0%	12,5%	2,1%	3,3%		100,0%

## Frequency of children with diagnosed impairment

Primary school (6-12)						
	Cluster					
	1	2	3	4		Total
LSL	%	%	%	%		%
I	84,0%	3,0%	,4%	1,5%		89,0%
II	1,1%	4,0%	,4%	1,0%		6,5%
III	-	1,9%	,5%	,5%		2,9%
IV	-	-	,7%	,4%		1,1%
V	-	-	-	-		,5%
Total	85,2%	8,9%	2,0%	3,4%		100,0%

## IV Conclusions & discussion

### Discussion & conclusions

1. New LSF is - on the whole – a valid system
2. Definition of SEN: not based on individual medical disability model (disturbances), but on real educational needs & ICF
3. Much more SEN (20%) than if only disturbances are counted
4. Shift to emotional/behavioural disturbances
5. Assessment should be contextual, dynamic, progress-oriented, functional, potential-oriented (“needs-based assessment” – Pameijer)
6. Training needed of PSS staff as well as teachers to look differently at learning and SEN

## Thank you!



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