

International Conference on the Evolution towards an Inclusive Education System

Brussels, 8-9 October 2018

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I. PROGRAM

Monday 8 October 2018 – Building Residence Palace, Room POLAK

Moderator: Ms. Suzanne Bosman, UN Human Rights Office (OHCHR)

09:00 - 09:30	Registration & welcome coffee	
09:30 - 09:40	Welcome and introduction Mr. Patrick Charlier, director Unia	
09:40 - 10:00	The challenge of an Inclusive Education System Ms. Nadia Hadad, European Disability Forum, member of the Board of Directors and member of our Inspiration Group	
10:00 - 10:10	Run through of the agenda and introduction of the speakers (Moderator)	
10:10 - 11:15	Session 1 - Inclusive Education Systems in practice Prof. Dr. Mel Ainscow, Manchester University (45')	Respondents Mentimeter Mr. Jean-Jacques Detraux, Inspiration Group & Ms. Sophie Jakovleski, CEFES-ULB (20')
11:15 - 11:45	Coffee Break	
11:45 - 12u50	Session 2 - How to build an inclusive education system in which teachers feel competent and motivated? Prof. Dr. Srikala Naraian, Columbia University (45')	Respondents Mentimeter Ms. Kika Carpentier, Inspiration Group & Mr. Geert Maeckelbergh, Koninklijk Instituut Woluwe (20')
12:50 - 14:00	Lunch	
14:00 - 15:05	Session 3 - Smart ways of distributing and allocating resources to improve inclusive education Dr. Amanda Watkins and Dr. Cor Meijer, European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (45')	Respondents Mentimeter Mr. Alfons Timmerhuis, Inspiration Group & Ms. Wendelien De Baere, Onafhankelijk Leven vzw (20')
15:05 - 15:20	Short Break	
15:20 - 16:25	Session 4 - The transition towards an inclusive education system Prof. Dr. Julie Allan, University of Birmingham (45')	Respondents Mentimeter Mr. Dolf Van Veen, Inspiration Group & Mr. Frank Sioen, ENIL (20')
16:25 - 16:40	Reflection on the first day and expectations for the second day Mr. Dick Houtzager, Member of College, College Voor de Rechten van de Mens	

Tuesday 9 October 2018 – Building Residence Palace

09:15 - 09:30	Registrations			
09:30 - 13:15	Parallel Sessions to discuss the four themes (including coffee break)			
Group 1 Room Passage	Group 1 - Dutch and Flemish sign language - Room Passage Moderator: Mr. Dick Houtzager (CRM). Rapporteur: Mr. Gert Backx (Unia)			
	Vision on an Inclusive Education System	People management	Smart use of the budget	Moving from A to B
Group 2 Room Salon	Group 2 - French - Room Salon Moderator: Ms. Véronique Ghesquière (Unia). Rapporteur: Ms. Carole Van Basselaere (Unia)			
	Vision on an Inclusive Education System	People management	Smart use of the budget	Moving from A to B
Group 3 Room Maalbeek	Group 3 - English - Room Maalbeek Moderator: Mr. Frank Sioen (ENIL). Rapporteur: Ms. Marijke De Pauw (Unia)			
	Vision on an Inclusive Education System	People management	Smart use of the budget	Moving from A to B
13:15 - 14:30	Lunch			
14:30 - 15:30	Presentation by the rapporteurs Moderator: Mr. Dick Houtzager (CRM)			
15:30 - 15:55	Reflection on the outcomes of the conference from an Italian perspective Mr. Marco Lombardi, Ghent University			
15:55 - 16:10	Conclusions and next steps Ms. Els Keytsman, director Unia			

II. BACKGROUND NOTE

PROJECT INFORMATION

Article 24 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) provides that States have the obligation to ensure an inclusive education system. It is subject to the principle of progressive realization. It can be implemented gradually, yet imposes an obligation on States to move as expeditiously and effectively as possible towards that goal.¹

The education system in Belgium and the Netherlands is not inclusive yet. In both countries, the current system is the result of years of developing “special education” for children with disabilities. Special education was initially an important step forward as it constituted a way to ensure access to education for children with disabilities. Today, however, we need to take it a step further and ensure the right to *inclusive* education. Both countries have been modifying their education systems, but have so far made little progress in becoming inclusive.

This conference takes place within the Inclusive Education Systems project, which aims to identify the stumbling blocks the Belgian and Dutch Governments come across within the process of moving towards inclusive education. It will facilitate a discussion of these obstacles and serve to overcome them by providing inspiration and practical examples. Overcoming these obstacles, will enable Governments to develop a clear vision on an inclusive education system, and a strategy to effectively implement this vision.

The project consists of a close partnership with the Inspiration Group, a group of experts from Belgium and the Netherlands, including policy makers, academics, education professionals, DPO’s and persons with disabilities. The Inspiration Group prepared this conference and will use its outcomes to gather inspiration and formulate ideas on how to move to an inclusive education system in practice.

CONTEXT

In the Netherlands and the three Belgian communities, recent legislative and policy developments have taken place as regards education for children with disabilities. Different steps have been taken at different paces in an attempt to move towards more inclusive education.

Although steps have been taken towards more inclusive education, in practice these recent developments have brought about situations of integration, rather than inclusion. Children with disabilities do not yet enjoy their right to inclusive education on an equal basis with others. In addition,

¹ Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, general comment No. 3 (1990) on the nature of States parties’ obligations, para. 9.

there currently exists a sense of chaos among stakeholders, caused by continued insecurity and a lack of clarity about what an inclusive education system is and how to move towards such a system at policy level and in practice. The fact that not all available resources are invested in an inclusive education system and the sustaining of both mainstream and special education complicates the situation even further.

This insecurity and lack of vision has in its turn resulted in opposition to inclusive education. There is significant criticism as well regarding the steps that have been taken towards inclusion so far, some arguing things are moving too fast, others claiming things are not moving fast enough.

It remains unclear what the most effective way of transition is: preparing for an inclusive education system and abolishing special education altogether at a certain moment, or allowing for both education systems to coexist throughout the transition? Due to this continued debate and controversy, the necessity and added value of inclusive education is continuously put into question at the political level and in the field.

BARRIERS

Previous discussions within the project's Inspiration Group have resulted in the identification of 4 main barriers in the realization of an inclusive education system: (I) Vision and long-term strategy; (II) Personnel; (III) Budget; and (IV) Transition. The presentations at the conference (day 1) and parallel sessions (day 2) are organized around these four barriers.

1. VISION AND LONG-TERM STRATEGY

The first topic seeks to clarify what an inclusive education system entails in practice. It is difficult for Government officials as well as the broader public to conceptualize inclusive education in a way that is in conformity with Article 24 CRPD and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. We therefore need inspiration on what an inclusion education system is, what its characteristics are and how it is organized. We are looking for a more concrete view of inclusive education, with specific examples that take into account the four fundamental characteristics put forth by the CRPD Committee (availability, accessibility, acceptability and adaptability).

2. PERSONNEL

The second topic relates to personnel management and the role of teachers in an inclusive education system. We need inspiration on, *inter alia*, what the role of teachers should be, which training they require and whether and how an interdisciplinary school team can contribute to inclusion. In addition, we aim to clarify how teachers can be supported in an inclusive education system by exploring existing methods of support, such as co-teaching and potentially creating new functions. It should also be

discussed whether rethinking career paths in an inclusive school can benefit all professionals involved in educating and supporting children with disabilities.

3. BUDGET

Governments have an obligation under the CRPD to use all available resources for inclusive education. It remains unclear, however, what the most effective way is to use and allocate financial resources in the transition towards an inclusive education system and thereafter. To provide them with inspiration in this regard, we aim to gather examples and good practices. Within this theme we want to discuss, *inter alia*, the different types of funding systems (input, output & throughput), at which level to provide funding, and how to organize education funding across Government departments and legislatures.

4. TRANSITION

This fourth and final theme aims to discuss the transition from the situation we are in today to a truly inclusive education system. There is a tradition of special education, which continues to be defended by a part of society. Due to social and political pressure, Governments will not easily choose for inclusive education and the transition towards such a system from one day to the next. We therefore need inspiration on what the best way is to take the step from two parallel education systems to one inclusive system. We want to discuss how other countries and regions went through such a transition and what we can learn from them.

III. PRACTICAL INFORMATION

CONFERENCE VENUE

The Conference will take place at Residence Palace, in the heart of Brussels:

Rue de la loi 155
1040 Brussels, Belgium
<https://residencepalace.be/en>

The venue is only a three-minute walk from both Schuman metro-stop and Schuman train station. Below you may find a map of the Brussels metro system.



When leaving the metro station, look for the exit sign as pictured below. The name of the venue – Residence Palace – will be clearly indicated.



MENTIMETER

During the first day of the conference we will provide access to the Mentimeter (www.mentimeter.com). This software allows the audience to ask questions and submit comments online. Please bring a laptop, tablet or smartphone if you wish to do so.

TRANSLATION

The conference will take place in English, with translation provided in Dutch, French and International Sign Language. For the parallel sessions during the second day, we will organize a session in Dutch and Flemish Sign Language, French and English.

For any further questions regarding location and accessibility, please do not hesitate to contact us at marijke.depauw@unia.be

With thanks to our partner organizations:

