



Together is better, A collaboration toolbox to build a school for all.

Deliverable: The Flemish Educational System

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The Flemish educational system

Sources of information

<http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/English/>

[Education in Flanders: a presentation \(ppt, 70 slides, 9,8 MB\)](#)

<http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/onderwijsstatistieken/>

The general system

In Belgium there are 3 communities: the French-speaking, the German-speaking and the Flemish Community (Dutch-speaking). The communities are in charge of education. Education is organized in the form of state schools, official schools and free schools (mostly catholic schools, 62% in primary-75% in secondary of all pupils attend catholic schools). In 2012-2013 elementary and secondary education counted a total of 1,127,802 pupils. The Flemish system of education is segregated in mainstream education and special education.

To understand this situation better some general basics should be stated.

In Belgium, the confederate state, the Constitution guarantees **freedom of education**. This means that every natural or legal person has the right to organize education and establish institutions for this purpose. Legally, governing bodies or school boards, as an association establish and manage the schools.

There are 3 educational networks. GO! Which centralizes State schools. There is a network of publicly funded, publicly run education where provinces or communities administer schools. And finally there are publicly funded, privately run schools (e.g. catholic education).



40 % of the Flemish budget has been spent on education as an average. The funds are for costs of schools i.e. staffing costs which are paid by the Ministry of Education and Training and operating costs that occur through financing or funding of schools.

Another, not in the least, important feature of Flemish education is the parental freedom of choice of schools.

All these aspects create a situation where in mainstream education neighbouring schools compete to attract pupils and special schools are scattered in a rather illogical way. The administration actually examines organization on a larger scale.

Legal obligations

Education is compulsory from ages 6 to 18. Either education is provided in a school system or parents give proof to inspection that they foresee education that lives up to legal obligations. Schooling is to be full-time until ages 15 to 16, until the age 18 schooling is confined compulsory only part-time. This part-time system is organized in an alternance training system.

The educational structures

Elementary Education

In the year 2012-2013 elementary education contained 688,809 pupils.

Elementary education starts with preschool and kindergarten at the minimum age of 2.5 year old. Primary school starts at the compulsory starting point of 6 years and lasts until the age of 12. These are mainstream school conditions. Elementary special education ends at the age of 13.

Special vs. Mainstream primary

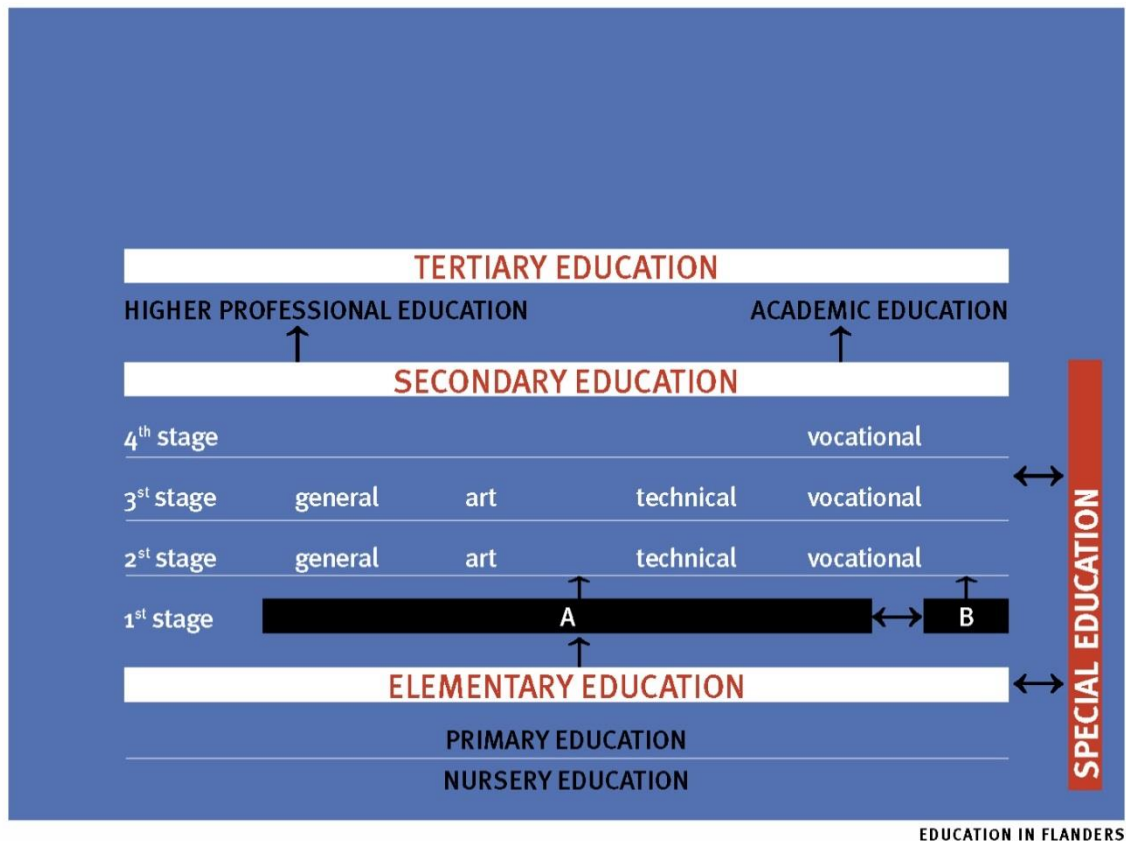
Special primary schools are being organized in small groups with a classification according to special needs. The main feature is the individualized approach.

In mainstream primary school classes contain approximately 20 to 30 pupils. The classification is based on age and the approach is standard focused.

Secondary education

In the year 2012-2013 secondary education comprised 438,994 pupils

Mainstream full-time secondary education is composed of 3 stages. The first stage is supposed to be a broad and general stage wherein pupils experience what they can decide or choose from the next stage on. From the second stage onwards there has to be chosen between general secondary education, technical secondary education, art secondary education and vocational secondary education. Completely segregated Special Needs Education is being organized in other schools. Efforts to realize more inclusive education i.e. to keep students with special needs in mainstream schools, are being made on a variety of levels. The legal obligation of inclusive education is being examined and put into definite bills right on this actual moment (end of 2013).



EDUCATION IN FLANDERS

The first steps towards inclusion in mainstream schools.

The ratification of the UN-convention (13th of december 2006) was executed in 2009. This convention states the right for students with special needs to reasonable modifications and adjustments. Some STICORDI-measures are already implemented to a larger or smaller extent. **Stimulation** can be realised by encouraging and emphasizing positive aspects. **Compensation** admits the use of technical aids. **Remediation** gives adapted and individual support. **Differentiation** meets different learning needs by multiple means of presentation of the curriculum. The most contested and controversial part is **dispensation**: eliminate certain parts of the curriculum and replace it by an equivalent.

Special Needs Education

Students with SEN attend both mainstream and special schools. This depends on a variety of conditions.

A number of students with SEN are integrated in mainstream schools: the GON system (12,305 = 1.09%).

Students with SEN in general attend special schools (4,5%). This happens temporarily or permanently. As stated before the organization is realized in small class groups. Learning is based on individual educational plans. Specialized personnel help out a team of teachers who themselves normally have a degree in special education. Pupils with special needs obtain the right to special education through admission by the Centre for pupil guidance = CLB.



Pupils with special needs are classified medically deficit-based in 8 types:

1. Light mental disability (is aimed to be transformed in the future into a basic offer as transition to mainstream education)
2. Severe mental disability
3. Behavioural and emotional problems
4. Physical problems
5. Chronically ill students
6. Visual problems
7. Auditory problems
8. Learning disorders (only in elementary education, is aimed to be transformed in the future into a basic offer as transition to mainstream education)
9. The future: For ASD a type 9

Special Needs Education on secondary level (BuSO) exists in 4 forms (possible until the age of 21), with different objectives.

Form 1 foresees social training with the objective of integration in a protective environment.

Form 2 organizes general and social training with the objective of integration in a protected work and life environment.

Form 3 means social and vocational training with the objective of integration in a normal work environment and participation in a normal society in life. Different programs are proposed as the vocational training aims at occupation in the normal economical circuit.

Form 4 prepares for vocation or further education (same curriculum as mainstream education) and indeed here the impairment of the student demands a segregated setting.