

# **International developments in inclusive education: major challenges, trends and opportunities**



# Presentation Team

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# The Agency

- National networks in 28 European countries:  
Austria, Belgium (Flemish and French speaking communities), Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales)
- Secretariat based in Odense, Denmark and Centre of Activity in Brussels, Belgium
- 17th year of operations, funded by Member Countries and EU Commission
- One of 6 organisations funded via an operating grant from the European Commission

# Focus

- The Agency's main focus is upon inclusive education as a systemic approach – that is dealing with learner difference and diversity in all educational settings as a quality issue. The Agency's work is essentially concerned with how the achievement of all learners at all levels of inclusive lifelong learning can be improved in a meaningful way that enhances their life chances and opportunities for actively participating in society



# Collaboration as a lever for change – ground rules

- All countries are at different starting points and have different ‘histories’ in terms of education generally and inclusive education specifically
- No-one has all the answers. Many countries have examples of good ‘work in progress’
- Concepts, ideas and approaches cannot be ‘transplanted’ from one country context to another
- Learning from diversity must be a principle for collaborative work, as well as for inclusive education



# International Policy Context

At all times, the Agency works to guiding principles as outlined in:

- Council Resolutions concerning inclusion of children and young people with disabilities into mainstream systems of education
- UNESCO Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action in Special Needs Education (1994)
- UN Convention on Rights of People with Disabilities (2006)



# UN Convention on Rights of People with Disabilities (2006)

- Article 24 - Education
- “States Parties recognise the right of persons with disabilities to education. With a view to realising this right without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity, States Parties shall ensure an inclusive education system at all levels ...”
- “... The full development of human potential and sense of dignity and self-worth, and the strengthening of respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and human diversity...”
- Signatories and ratifications:  
<http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/maps/enablemap.jpg>



# Key Principles - Policy

In the 2009 publication, seven inter-connected areas for policy are highlighted:

1. Widening participation to increase educational opportunity for all learners
2. Education and training in inclusive education for all teachers
3. Organisational culture and ethos that promotes inclusive education
4. Support structures organised so as to support inclusive education
5. Flexible resource systems that promote inclusive education
6. Policies that promote inclusive education
7. Legislation that promotes inclusive education





# Challenges for inclusive education

- Academic achievements (output) versus meeting individual needs
- Preparing all teachers for inclusive education
- Over 2% of pupils are being educated in separate settings (schools and classes) across Europe



# Developments - Policies

- Increasing focus on the rights of learners with disabilities and their families – this relates to access to compulsory education; access to specialist support and services; access to mainstream, inclusive education
- Changes in concepts and language used in policies – SEN to SNE to inclusive education
- Flexibility within policies and systems that encourage innovation and change
- Devolution of responsibilities to local and/or regional level bodies and organisations



# Developments - Infrastructure

- A re-focussing of the role of special schools as a resource for the mainstream sector
- Improving frameworks and structures of provision –capacity building for inclusive education within mainstream provision
- Promoting specific tools and approaches within provision – i.e. personalised learning approaches
- End user participation in local decision-making
- ‘Inter’-disciplinary support structures



# Developments – Shared Value Systems

- Leadership at all levels with a clear vision of inclusive education as a quality approach for all learners
- All stakeholders hold the view that diversity in education is beneficial
- Reflective practice in teaching
- ‘Formalising the informal’



# Key Principles – Practice, 2011

*The focus of inclusive education must be upon widening participation and on promoting access and achievement for all learners*

Lisbon Hearing 2007:

‘We have the right to the same opportunities as everyone else, but with the necessary support to meet our needs. No one’s needs should be ignored’



# Learners' voices and those of family and advocates should be heard, when decisions are made that affect their lives



# All learners are entitled to be active participants in the life of the school community



# All teachers should have positive attitudes towards all learners





# All teachers should develop the skills to meet the diverse needs of all learners



# Every school should have access to the support of a multi-disciplinary service and relevant community services



# Inclusive education as a means to...

- ... realise the right to an equitable high quality education without discrimination
- ... advance towards more democratic and fair societies
- ... learn to live together and build our shared identities
- ... improve the efficiency and cost-benefit relationship of education systems

*Inclusive education as a normative approach*



# And the starting point?



The focus is often on practical things (like buildings) – but inclusive education is mostly in people's minds. Everybody must have the habit of thinking about different disabilities, not discriminating or dividing

We need to remove barriers in the widest sense; we must change people's mentalities



# ‘Inclusive education is mutually beneficial to us and to the others’



We see a lot of benefits in inclusive education: we acquire more social skills; we live more experiences; we learn about how to manage in the real world; we need to have and interact with friends with and without special needs



# More Information

The Agency offers various information resources, which can all be accessed via the website

[www.european-agency.org](http://www.european-agency.org)

- Thematic Reports
- Thematic Databases
- Newsletters and Electronic Bulletin

Agency publications can be downloaded in up to 22 member languages



**Lizanne DeStefano,  
Professor, University of  
Illinois at Urbana-Champaign,  
USA**



# United States Perspective on Inclusion

- Almost 40 years since the passage of P.L. 94-142
  - Free and appropriate public education
  - Least restrictive environment (integration)
  - Individualized Education Plan
- Impact
  - Closure of most public institutions and segregated schools
  - Vast majority of students with special needs receive most of their education in regular schools and classrooms
  - Outcomes of special needs students are included in accountability systems (2% rule; assessments)
  - Emphasis on academic rather than practical outcomes for students with disabilities





# Current trends and challenges

- Regular education teachers must be prepared and supported to meet the needs of broad range of students.
  - Paraprofessionals
  - Specialists/consulting teachers/co-teaching
  - Blended teacher education programs
  - Class size/Compensation
- Academic expectations for special needs students and student achievement have increased.
- Social outcomes are still poor.
- Postsecondary and workforce participation is lower than general population.
- Districts are challenged to meet costs of special education services.



**Ulf Janson, Professor,  
Stockholm University,  
Sweden**



# CIS/CEE preschool & school tradition

- Good coverage
- Professional, well-educated staff
- Strong achievement orientation, measurable outcomes, monitoring
- Preparation for later career
- Conduct important, courtesy, orderliness
- Preschool play, peer relations, socialization in relatively 'controlled' forms
- No inclusion, no recognition of diversity



# Defectological provisions of special education

- Diagnosis based needs
  - Specific categories of disability/special need
- Matching educational provisions with different degrees of segregation
  - Special groups
  - Special classes
  - Special day-time schools
  - Residential homes/social orphanages
- Need related support tied to the system, not to the child
- No special needs support in mainstream education



# Political-economic transition creates challenges

- Difference in CIS/CEE-EU background to and prerequisites for inclusive education
  - inclusion basically perceived and evaluated as special educational provision
  - NGOs in initiating role but seldom in strong political position
- Traditional system by many perceived as well-functioning
- Professional resistance
  - defectological training
  - employment conditions
- Transition has not resulted in gains in health and education sectors
  - increased inequality in general population
  - increased public health problems
  - decrease in relevant resources



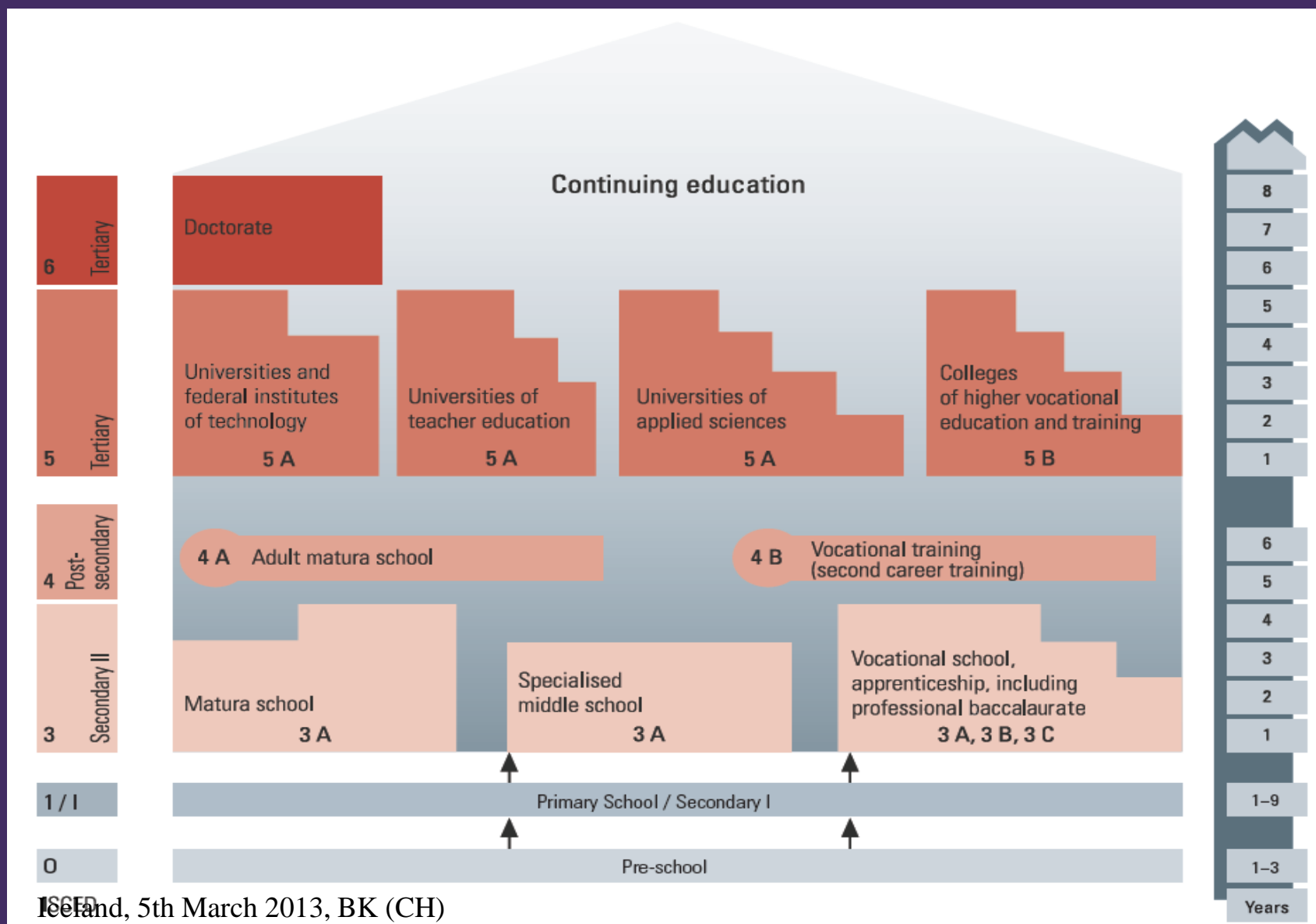
# Constitutional rights - but few options

- In most CIS/CEE countries
  - Constitutional rights for parents to choose education
  - Ratification of CRC, CRPD
- Administration and training conservative factors
  - No experience of diversity management in mainstream schools
  - No tradition of cooperation mainstream-spec ed
  - No/few spec ed training opportunities with inclusive orientation
  - Pedagogical-medical-psychological commissions as 'sorting hat'
- Barriers to special support to SEN in mainstream
- School leaders can deny admittance of SEN pupils
  - Negative influence on average school result
  - Lack of resources for special support
  - Negative attitudes among other parents
  - Creates obstacles for other pupils

**Beatrice Kronenberg,  
SZH/CSPS (Swiss National  
Centre for Special  
Education), Switzerland**



# Swiss Education System

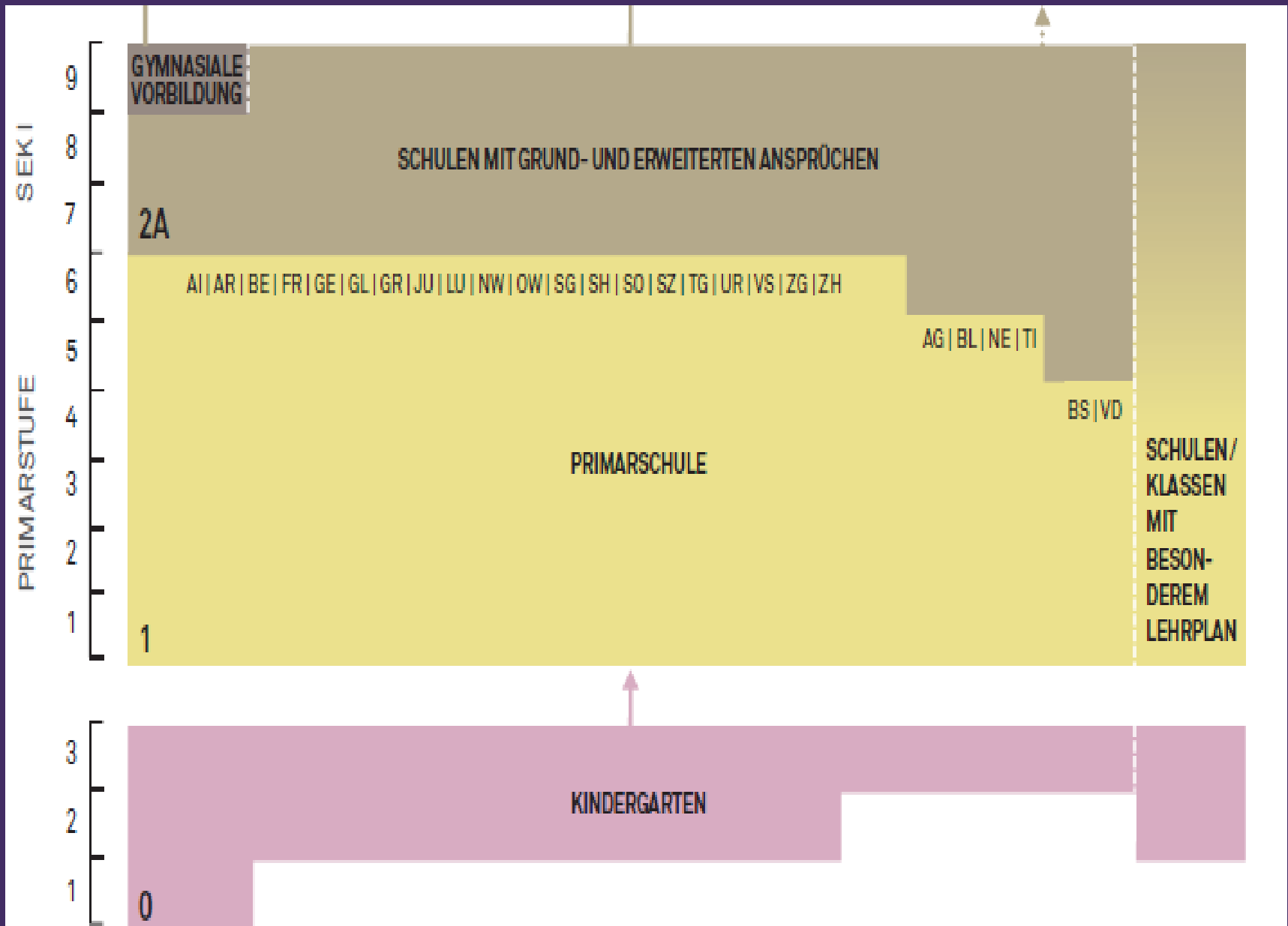


ISCED, Switzerland, 5th March 2013, BK (CH)

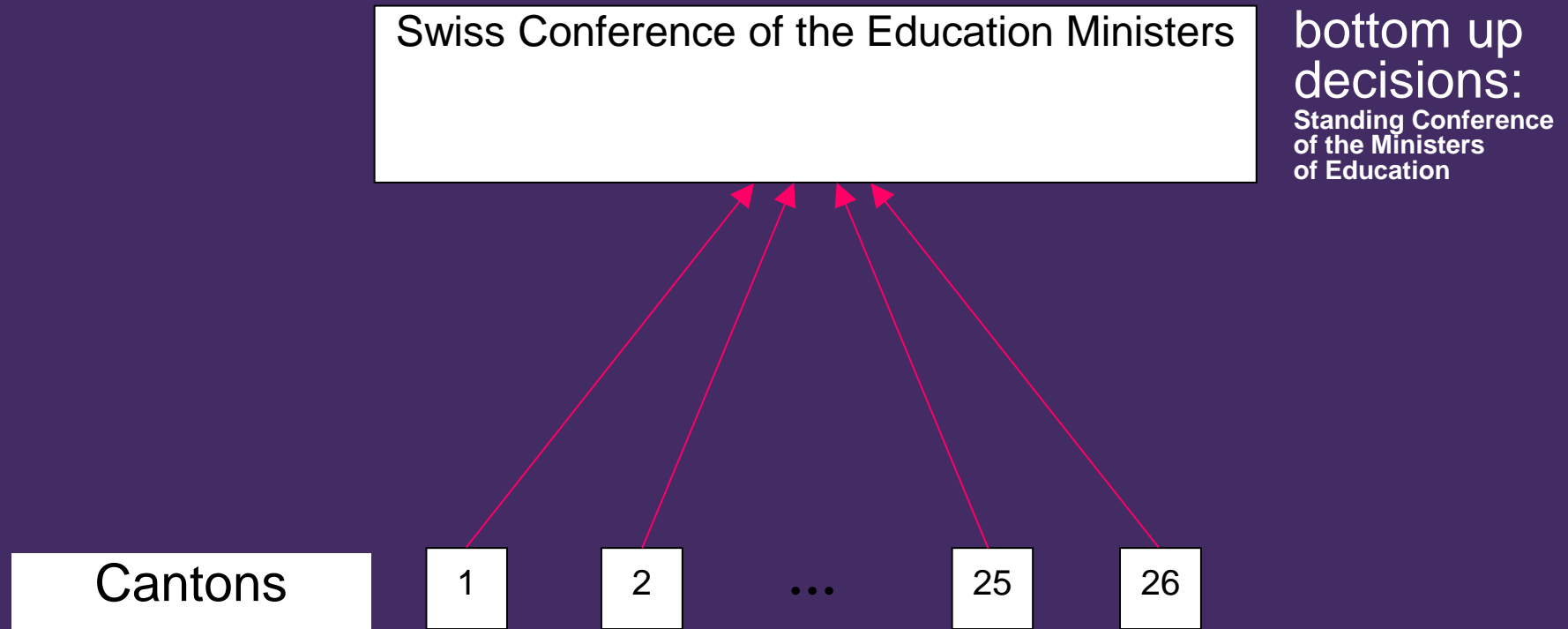


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# Decentralised Swiss Education System



# Challenges

- There is one national inclusion policy, but many differences between the cantons
- Opposition to inclusive education from some directions e.g. of parent and professional associations
- Media (?)
- Lack of know how of professionals how to teach in inclusive settings
- Allocation of resources
- Increasing number of integrated students as well as of students in special schools

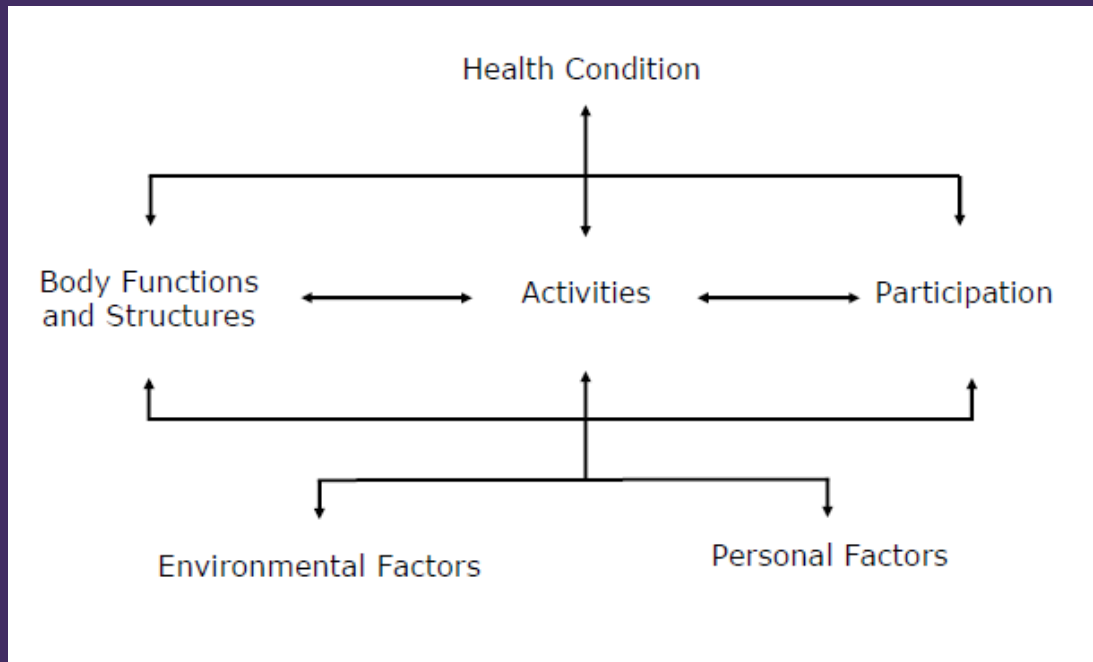


# Opportunities

- Intercantonal agreement
- Standardized eligibility procedure
- Decreasing number of students in segregated settings



# Opportunities: The Swiss Standardized Eligibility Procedure (SEP)



**Educational and developmental goals**

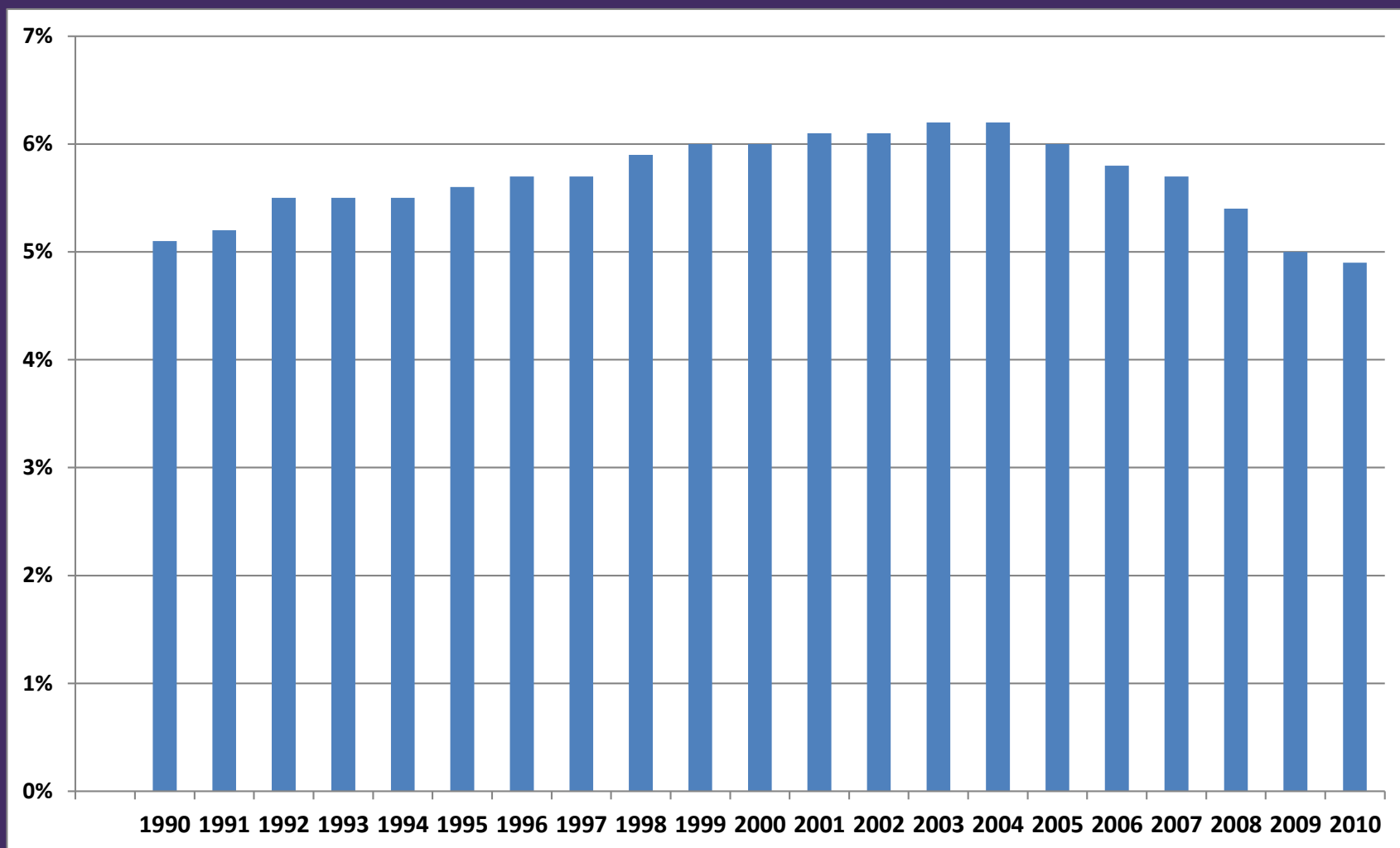
**Methods, provision and services**

**Vision of responsible, happy and healthy citizen with capabilities, competence and the ability to adjust to the challenges of society**

SEP developed by Judith Hollenweger and Peter Lienhard

[www.sav-pes.ch](http://www.sav-pes.ch)

# Challenges and Opportunities: Statistics: Level of Segregated Settings (Special classes and schools)



# Filomena Pereira, Ministry of Education, General Directorate of Education, Portugal



# Where we come from

**70 's**

Special schools build up by parents associations

**60's**

Charity Institutions under the responsibility Ministry of the Social Security.

**90's**

Law 1991  
Extended compulsory education to children with disabilities.

**80's**

Turning point:  
Fundamental Law on Education: Ministry of Education responsible for policy coordination and development of special education.

**2000's**

Law on Accessibility (build environment) (2006)

Law on Inclusive Education (2008)

Law on ECI (2009)

National Strategy for Disability (2011-2013)





Signed: 30 march 2007

Signed Protocol: 30 march 2007

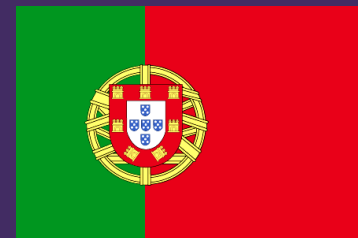
Ratification: in process



Signed: 30 march 2007

Ratified: 30 july 2009

Ratified Protocol: 30 July 2009



# Article 24

- Signatory nations to assure opportunities for “appropriate” and “inclusive” education for students with disabilities.
- One more factor in complex mix:
  - Law,
  - Policy
  - Practice

that makes the education of students with diverse learning needs a controversial issue.



Our theme ...

No Excuses



# Our goal ...

- Better schools
- Schools for all
- Schools that are inclusive
- Schools that focus support on students
- Schools that enable and empower teachers & other school staff



# Controversy ...

- Parents demand one thing.
- A school offers something else.
- Sometimes the demand is for more special services.
- Sometimes for more access to regular education.
- The public is confused by the term “inclusion”.



# Controversy ... Why?

- A common sensibility among both in public and educators that pupils/students with some types of disabilities do not benefit of what happens in a regular classroom.
- A variety of points of view on a sensitive issue: where can individual children with SEN better develop?
- The concerns of some parents about whether and how the needs of their children are met in a mainstream school.



# Controversy ... Why?

- This belief is partly caused by a lack of understanding about the inclusive education aims and the ways students with different abilities can be successfully skilled in the same environment.
- It may also reflect the belief that inclusion weakens overall educational outcomes.
- There is still some general undervaluing of people with disabilities (particularly cognitive disabilities).



# A No-Excuses strategy ...

- educational leaders and policy makers “Showing the way”;
- “clean” our educational system from segregation and discrimination based on a diagnosis or on a clinically based label;
- exceptions to inclusion “justly exceptional”;
- these “exceptions” need to be restricted to “individuals” in the local school, not to groups based on clinical labels.
- a new wave of a school reform based on principles.





# What is inclusive education?



**Why is this a critical and  
controversial issue?**



# What is wrong with traditional special education?



# What do we need to do to move the inclusive education agenda foreword?



# What do we need?

Strategies to move ahead:

- Sound policy
- Effective practices
- Funding policies
- Law consistent with human rights



**Let me list a few of the critical steps  
needed to implement this approach**

...



# We Need ...

1. To make a **plan for transition and change**
2. To invest in **training** for existing teachers and school leaders as well as for new teachers.
3. To understand that teachers need **support** to accept and meet this challenge.
4. To start by creating **positive models of success**
5. To identify a “**pool of leaders**” at all levels and assist them in building networks.
6. To identify and share the “**best practices**”, from research and knowledge already available, and that can be enhanced by local experience.
7. To understand that innovation and changes that will make a difference will require resources. This means **money and people**



## For the future ...

- Inclusion as one of the sustaining pillars of public education in the 21st century.
- To educate ALL our children, and to do it well, we need to ensure that every school is both effective and inclusive.





No Excuses!

Let's just do it!



# Contact us

[www.european-agency.org](http://www.european-agency.org)

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