

# COFACE

**Back-to-school WEBINAR – 14th September 2020**  
**Hilde Timmermans, Gezinsbond, Belgium (Flanders)**



## About Gezinsbond (Belgium, Flanders)

Independent Flemish family organization

members: more than 200,000 families

13,000 volunteers in local communities

180 professional staff

We work for **all families**

Values: non-discrimination, inclusion, solidarity



## Our activities

- We **lobby** for the interests of families at different levels (local, Flemish government European, Belgian federal government, European Union). Our goal is to create a child- and family friendly society
- We organise **activities** at the local level to bring families together
- We **support** families with several services (babysitter service, educational magazines, saving card,...)



## Inclusive education Flanders:

- M-decree (M= reasonable measures in regular education)
- Support networks : teachers/experts on special education support teachers in regular schools
- Right to inclusive education? Depends on the strength/capacity of schools
- Problems : lack of expertise, lack of support, lack of **shared vision**



# Levers for inclusion

Inclusive education : clash between believers and non-believers?

Gezinsbond: focus on what works according to parents

Search for 'small' measures with great effect

300 parents share 'levers' for inclusion (2019)



### **Communication is the key word : at any time, with everyone, about everything**

- start, course and evaluation of the process
- (care) teachers, management, parents, support teams, external care workers, and pupils/students
- about measures, approach, well-being, learning process, atmosphere,...
- open, transparent communication (vulnerable, trust needed)



## **Inclusive education = learning process!(trial and error)**

No standard list of measures, flexible

Each student is unique

Needs of pupils change over time

Approach must be supported by everyone

What works gives energy, what doesn't work consumes energy



### **Classmates as 'buddies': a secret weapon?**

- Involvement of classmates avoids exclusion and misunderstanding
- Student decides if/how classmates are informed/engaged
- Spontaneous, voluntary buddy system
- Open classroom atmosphere, anti-bullying policy
- Sometimes measures make sense for every child! Design for all!





## **‘ondersteuners’ (support teams from special needs education)**

- encourage communication between school and parents
- recognition of parents as partner
- tips and tricks at home
- experience/training regarding special needs
- parents need continuity in support (trust, expand knowledge)
- care as much as possible on the classroom floor



# Parents : no leading role in care pathway!

- many parents are key figures in the care process (search for diagnosis or extracurricular assistance, home support, coordination at school, transfer measures to next year...)
- knowledge, time, money: unequal educational opportunities
- parents are parents : experts on their child's wellbeing, not teachers
- care during school hours and within school walls ⇔ 'shadow education'



## Want to know more?

You can find the study, articles and videos with parents on <https://www.goedgezind.be/algemeen-gezinsnieuws/gezinspolitiek/hefbomen-voor-inclusie/>

