

Welcome to the latest newsletter of the Atoms & Co project as part of the Erasmus + Strategic Partnerships programme.

Atoms&Co final seminar - Brussels, 13 September 2019

The final seminar of the Atoms&Co project on the theme of building an alliance between families, schools and social welfare actors (AMO, SAS, etc.) in the fight against school dropout took place in Brussels on September 13th 2019 at C.I.V.A.

After almost two years of activities, the final seminar aimed to present the different productions of our project but also to provide a reflection and an exchange of ideas on policies to fight against early school leaving and the inclusion of families in these policies and practices.

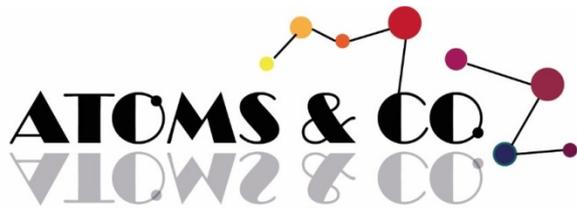
The seminar began with a presentation of the Erasmus + programme by **Donatienne de San** Erasmus+ Programme manager, AEF Agency. **Diane Englebert**, project coordinator and coordinator of the youth services department (Fissaaj), then presented the Atoms&Co project.

The project's productions were then presented:

- The transnational report, an inventory of the involvement of families in the problem of dropping out of school for their children, was presented by **Alessandro Tolomelli**, Assistant Professor Department of Educational Sciences, University of Bologna.
- The school hanging device set up as part of the project was presented by **Maria Grazia d'Alessandro**, Project manager and **Massimo Perron**, Director of Ciofs Fp Emilia Romana and Manager of the Project department (Gio Net).

A testing phase of the device was planned from the beginning of the project. In addition to strengthening the development of the system, the testing phase aimed to involve families in the project activities and in particular in the design and validation of the device aimed at strengthening the partnership between families, schools and social welfare actors. Family members involved in Spain and Italy shared their experiences in the Atoms&Co project.





One of these speakers and father of a boy attending a school in Bologna, **David Abbati** shared with the audience the 3 questions that were raised at a world café organized by Gio Net following the training on the device that took place in Tournai in December 2018.

1. On what grounds would families not feel involved in the school?
 - Lack of time (work and family constraints)
 - A feeling of little integration of families into school activities (unequal relationship between family and school. Parents do not feel as they are listened to and feel like they are in front of an administrative rather than an educational service).
2. How to attract families who are not involved in the school
 - Creating a listening place
 - Creating an attractive environment open to playful activities or informal meetings between teachers and parents/children;
 - Providing time slots suitable for both parties;
 - Bringing parents together through technology;
 - Accepting a pact at the time of the child's enrolment so that parents can be part of an inclusive school curriculum.
3. What are the limits and resources to be put in place to improve the SCHOOL/FAMILY ratio? What are the obstacles and what should be anticipated?
 - Brakes: Too much bureaucracy, outdated school programmes, little teacher empathy and little time available, school programme too intense and too disparate.
 - To be promoted: - Proactive, involved and idea-creating school; Tutor acting as a link between teacher/parent; listening desk.

In conclusion of the various meetings, it emerged that in order to ensure respect for the roles of each party (parents/teachers), the school must be modernized and open to the needs of families and students, without losing sight of the goal of both parties, namely to ensure the development and education of students.

The morning continued with the round table discussion on "What priorities and policies to combat early school leaving and what place for families? ».

The round table opened with a presentation by Mrs **Elena Iacucci** IU Manager Qualification, Innovation and Development of the educational and training offer of the Municipality of Bologna.

In 2019 the Municipality of Bologna set up meetings to exchange good practices promoting dialogue between all territorial actors in charge of the family and education (families, schools, social and cultural services, training centres, etc.) in order to improve the education provided today and fight against school dropout.

In addition, the Municipality has signed a protocol with schools over the past three years allowing 30 educators in the districts of Bologna to act as reference points between schools, adolescents and



families in order to discuss and solve problems relating to the school careers of pupils with academic difficulties.

Following the experience of the Erasmus+ projects ATOMS+ and ATOMS&CO, the Municipality of Bologna has set up three SAS in the Metropole of Bologna in order to provide students who have dropped out of school with a service that can help them to return to the traditional school curriculum. These are SAS Ciofs, Cefal and Map.

The Municipality of Bologna will carry out, with its partners, an evaluation of the work accomplished by these 3 experiments in order to extend the SAS system to the entire Bologna Metropolitan Area.

The next intervention was that of Mr **Xavier Chavarria**, Chief Inspector of Education of the Generalitat of Catalonia.

Until two years ago, it was only in possession of figures for "active progression", i.e. people between the ages of 18 and 24 who had not obtained any compulsory higher education qualifications in Catalonia. To remedy this problem, they had to create a database that includes school drop-out figures in the Barcelona region. More precisely, by selecting a sample of students born in the same year to find out how they are evolving, until reliable indicators are obtained.

From there, they were able to identify and bring together professional actors who could be involved in the fight against school dropout.

He also explained what educational policies were in place to combat early school leaving:

- Combating absenteeism
- Evolution of educational provision
- Transition support
- External support mechanisms
- Strengthening school guidance
- Loyalty program for students in vocational training
- Strengthening tutoring
- Participation in European programmes such as Atoms&Co
- Plan against school segregation

He then discussed the new challenges and opportunities that he believes should be developed in the fight against school dropout:

- Establish better opportunities for active collaboration with families;
- Remove legal obstacles to promote the continuity of students' academic careers;
- Establish specific programs for at-risk groups (pregnant teenagers, sick students, students in detention, etc. ;)
- Change the criteria for access to vocational training.

Following this, **Anne Hellemans**, Deputy Director of the Directorate General of Compulsory Education, shared with the participants the priorities and actions of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation. Over the past two years, the Wallonia-Brussels Federation has implemented a reform of the education system called the “Pact for Excellence in Education”. This pact aims to:

- Make school compulsory from the 3rd kindergarten onwards;
- Develop a positive orientation of young people (especially for technical and vocational education);
- Make schools responsible for the management of their institution;
- Set up projects to fight against early school leaving;
- Set up projects to increase democracy and well-being at school (link with families).

The Federation plays an important role in monitoring school drop-out rates, particularly in the field; there may be individual management of absenteeism cases by teams from the Administration, but there is also a support unit for schools that wish to make the subject of dropping out or the school-family relationship a priority development theme.

The last presentation was by **Resa Koleva-Demonty**, Policy Officer at the European Commission, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion. She presented the European Social Fund (ESF) and the new funding perspectives for the period 2021-2027 with the ESF+, but also the synergies with other EU instruments such as the Seal of Excellence and the funding shared by two programmes in a single operation.

All presentations are available in PDF format on the project website.

Daniel Thérasse, General Director of FISSAAJ concluded the seminar. He has congratulated all the partners for their involvement in the Atoms&Co project and also the opening of schools and school hanging services to other actors at the local level and the involvement of municipalities and regions in the project.

Useful links:

Website: <http://atomsandco.eu>

Device: <http://atomsandco.eu/documents/dispositif/>

Reports: <http://atomsandco.eu/documents/o1/>