Minutes of the Virtual Meeting
on Module 1 "Identification of students at risk"

Meeting held 30 October 2012 at 15:00 CET

The video of the meeting is available on this Internet address:
http://flashmeeting.e2bn.net/fm/24cb2c-15828

Participants

Partners

Federico Fragasso (Pixel), Andreea Cleminte (EuroEd), Christine Cloes and Julien Keutgen (INFOREF), Gisela Vidal (Florida), Camilla Tamiozzo and Anna Consonni (USR Veneto)

Teachers

Martine Prignon (Liège, Belgium); Marcel.la Senent and Mabi Sánchez (Valencia); Catia Ziggiotto, Luigi Veronese and Fabio Mosco (ROVIGO – Italy), Isabella Roverato, Chiara De Manzano (VENEZIA MESTRE – Italy), Antonio Pittala'(BREGANZE (VI) – Italy), Matteo Vecchiatto Montorio (BASSANO DEL GRAPPA (VI) – Italy), Daniela Perotto, Antonella Panziera and Lorenzo Gallina (MONTEBELLUNA (TV) – Italy), Tiziana Ferlicca, Enrica Lazzaretto and Davide Penello (PADOVA – Italy); Elza Gheorghiu and Evelina Zaporojanu (Iasi, Romania); Marco Manzuoli (Italy)

Minutes

Technical Matters

Federico (Pixel, IT) opened the meeting and make sure that all the partners do not have any technical issues. All the partners have been invited to test their connections, equipment to make sure that they can be heard during the virtual meeting. Also during the entire meeting Federico intervened to assure that all the participants are logged in and don't have problems with the microphone.

Welcome of Participants and Introduction of the Meeting Agenda

Andreea (EuroEd, RO) – as moderator of the meeting, welcomed all the participants for joining in the first transnational virtual meeting, reminding the aim of the virtual meeting – as bringing together partners and teachers from all the countries involved, having the opportunity to discuss about the feedback from the trainings with teachers, to see the impact of the resources and information transferred to the teachers. And to share experiences and issues raised.

The participants have been invited to present themselves, to be able to know each other and to interact easier. Each partner introduced into the discussion the participants, the project team members, responsible for the implementation of the training in each country and the teachers as responsible of all the teachers involved in the first training.

The topic of the first virtual meeting has been introduced to the participants – discussions on the feedback and results of the trainings held in all countries on the first Module "Identification of students at risk". And also the agenda and the structure of the virtual meeting have been presented – each partner in alphabetic order will be invited to present the results of their first training and after each presentation there will be a session for questions and feedback from the partners to be able to find out more about the impact of the project. The participants were encouraged to intervene and to raise subject for discussions on the meeting topic.

Teachers' opinions

Belgian teachers

Julien Keutgen (INFOREF) presented the summary of the conclusions of the working group mentioning that the module is complete and relevant. It should be widely disseminated, for it helps anticipate, prevent, better react or find ideas for solutions to the problem of early school leaving. The different actors' upstream interventions need to be coordinated to be efficient. Meetings between the various professionals (education, youth aid, health sector, notably regarding unnecessary doctor's certificate) should be promoted (to better know each other, to define who can do what, to know who you can send someone to, to share one's field experience). In the Liège area, the device "local mixed commissions for reschooling" established in 2008, within the framework of an action research of the Observatory on Childhood, Youth and Youth Aid ("*Reschooling … towards a common reference*"), can be an interesting tool to be developed. We encourage the partners to acquaint themselves with this study. However, we should take care not to externalise problems related to what happens in the class. Partnerships are necessary but it is important to focus the teacher on the practices in the class that enable to tackle school leaving and school inequalities.

In this respect, the works of the laboratory ESCOL of the "Université Paris 8" Saint-Denis (ROCHEX, CRINON, BAUTIER and BONNERY regarding the searchers) is relevant. Their latest publication on practices in the class to tackle school leaving and school inequalities is very interesting: *"La construction des inégalités scolaires, au cœur des pratiques et des dispositifs d'enseignement"* (Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2011).

Regarding the educational factors (chapter 1), according to an action research currently led by the "Service Droit des Jeunes" of Liège, students often expect their teachers to be real learning partners, to dedicate themselves to their courses in order to pass the urge to study.

Even though in Belgium education is compulsory until 18, the same observations can be made, with, among others, possible definitive expulsions after 20 half days of absence for students of 18 and older, and the possibility for schools to refuse to enrol a student of 18 who has been expelled. These legal clauses can worsen school leaving. When students are expelled from their school, being unable to find a school near their home can be another factor fostering school leaving.

Moreover, the waiting time to find a school, even with reenrolment procedures, can be a source of school leaving.

Session of questions and feedback from the partners

Elza Gheorghiu (Romania) raised the question related to the education factors which are indicators of pupils at risk, saying that in the presentation held has been mentioned that the students expects from their teachers to be real learning partners. The question was is the students receive a kind of questionnaire on their expectations, do the teachers allows to the students to write about their expectations and how do collect this information?

Julien Keutgen (INFOREF) mentioned that have been surveys made by external services on this subject, but not by the school staff.

Another question raised was on the feedback of the students after they graduated, to see if their expectations have been meet. Is this feedback collected, do the teachers learn from the feedback offered by the pupils?

Julien Keutgen (INFOREF) specified that in general this kind of activity is not applying in Belgium.

A question about expulsion was raised too. What strategy there is on the expulsion of students with problems? When is expulsion used?

Julien Keutgen (INFOREF) mentioned that expulsion is not very used, only for very serious acts and bullying, it always depends on the case.

The Belgium team was asked about the most common factors identified in their country. And the answer received was that one of the main common factors is the family background, where there is a low education level, lack of communication and support, and there are also addictions to alcohol and drugs, delinquency and health problems.

Italian teachers (Datini)

The representative of Datini specified that there were two face to face meetings with the teachers. On the first meeting there was a general presentation of the project and main teams involved. Then there was an introduction on the national report and on the school dropout situation in different European countries. The portal has been analysed and the resources available. A power point presentation has been prepared by one of the teachers involved, Marco Manzuoli, presenting the most important aspects related to the first module concerning the identification of students at risk. Occasion was supplied for online work (research, production of new experiences and case studies, ideas for the production of teaching materials). The attention was focused on the forum and the teachers received all the information to access the forum.

At the end of the meetings with teachers 3 questions were revealed:
How to develop the skills of students at risk? How can teachers work on re-motivation? During the discussions with teachers one of the most widely spread factor is the low self-esteem and it was agreed that teachers have to work on that in order to reduce or prevent dropout.
The second question is that the importance of creating workshops starting from leisure activities in non-school hours to promote socialization. How can the schools organize these spaces? Extra-curricular workshops, like art, music, sport activities, to create a better and attractive environment for students.

The importance of training teachers. The question is important dealing with orientation to prevent children less motivated studies are targeted towards vocational schools. On the other hand in vocational schools should be given a 'chance' to these students and focus on excellence, there are experiences of tough guys become great professionals. Counseling activities for students, a better work on identifying the needs of the students.

Session of questions and feedback from the partners

Elza Gheorghiu (Romania) raised the interest on ways of re-motivating students, because motivation is a key factor in the school program. The partners from Italy were invited to share their examples on motivating students.

Datini (Italy) mentioned that in order to motivate students the teachers from Italy are using the lab activities, where students works more on practice and less on theory. Students are involved in creating hand made things or in organizing school exchanges. This way the students feel that they are involved and they become motivated.

Elza Gheorghiu (Romania) highlighted that the extracurricular activities are very important in the motivation process and that are used also in Romania. And taking into consideration the problem of students' low self-esteem, the question was on what the teachers do to raise their self- esteem.

Datini (Italy) mentioned that the strategy of improving their self-esteem is done by not underlining their mistakes, not highlighting when they do something wrong. Minimizing that, and increasing their positive responses and activities. Another strategy is to involve the students in learning by doing activities.

Julien Keutgen (INFOREF) asked if in Italy the problem of school leaving is integrated in the initial and permanent training programmes for the teachers, mentioning that in Belgium in the continuing trainings there are modules on the school dropout problem, but nothing related to in the initial training. The question was addressed to all the partners.

Datini (Italy) mentioned that there are a lot of theoretical projects, but nothing practical in the teacher trainings, on how the teachers have to deal and faced with the problem. It is just at general level.

Elza Gheorghiu (Romania) mentioned that is issue is included in the general training of teachers to be and everything is based on case studies.

Italian teachers (USR Vento)
Enrica (URSV) emphasized the importance of family in this process, in order to solve this kind of problems, and that there is a wide literature about youthful trouble in Italian schools. Its terms are correlated to: maladjustment, deviancy and marginality. Most of the times the problems deviated from the family issue and territory aspects and it is important to be mentioned that the problems comes from a combination of factors, as in a puzzle.
The scholastic problems are common in the Italian schools. The last years the problem was on the integration of the students. It was also underlined that the schools are not prepared to deal and faced with this problem. The focus was on the importance of having an effective communication among different schools and among different levels of school (from Primary to Secondary High School till University).
With regard to some good practices about students at risk team-work is very important to reach a positive result. The following aspects were mentioned:
The identification takes place in the Class Council (composed by the teachers, families and students), that realized any personalized programme (psychological/educational support, remedial courses, lessons about the best way to study etc.).
The Class Coordinating Teacher contacts the family to inform about the student's scholastic situation.
The Class Coordinating Teacher, in accordance with the Class Council, starts up: remedial courses linking to the territorial agencies, to some internal school project, to the school web, too.
The Class Coordinating Teacher monitors the actions that are in favour of each student during and at the end of the projects.

Session of questions and feedback from the partners
Elza Gheorghiu (Romania) raised the question related to the effectiveness of the communication between the school and family, asking the partners what they do to build up, to work on this relation, to achieve the effective communication, what ways, activities they implement.

Enrica (URSV) mentioned that it is really important to have an effective communication and it is important to activate it, in order to have good practices. It is important to have a different approach with the students and it is important to think about them in a different way. The school approach refers to the students as being equals. We, as teachers, we have to change the approach that the student is a box, where we have to put information, we have to identify the students' needs, emotional behaviour and educational level and to change the approach.

Ways of working at class have been described: the work of class council, personalized programme, class coordinating teacher, importance on the students' emotions, links to other institutions, and work as a web.

Andreea Cleminte (Romania) asked the Italian teachers how they detect the possible dropout cases, the students at school leaving dropout and if the teachers follow a specific process.

Enrica (URSV) specified that there is a specific protocol that the teachers follows, but is an internal one. First of all the school council identify some critical situation in the school and then they came together with the teachers to discuss about the issue. Each case and student is analysed and discuss individual and they collaborate also with the families to find solutions. It is very important that for the cases the teachers to work with psychologist or specialised people to faced and deal with the situation proper.

Romanian teachers (EuroEd)

Andreea Cleminte (Romania) started the presentation of the training held in Romania, discussing about the administrative and the structure of the training. Over 30 participants have been participated. The training started with an introduction on the project aims and activities, placing the need of the project on the context and situation of early school leaving in Romania. Then there was done a presentation of the project website and portal, presenting the project resources and how they can be accessed. Continuing with an introduction on the general content of the training package, discussing about the structure, timetable, ways of collaborating and opportunities offered by the training (including the virtual meetings and forum). Also has been mentioned that the manner of delivering the training was very interactive (with presentations, videos, workshops and group discussions).

Elza Gheorghiu (Romania) presented the teachers' point of view, mentioning that it was a very interesting course and very active, with a very active participation on the behalf of the teachers. The general conclusion was that in the most cases, the main cause of dropouts is the complexity of all the factors mentioned in the content of the course (the personal ones, the educational system, the family, the community, etc.). Most of the participants agreed that the most important factor, which affects the children and the students later on, is their families. The families through their impact on the children, and their attitude. The families affect the children drop out more than other factors. Most of the students who dropout the school comes from disorganized families or from families with very low incomes and from families with a different attitude towards education. Education is no more a safe place for children, there are families thinking that work is more important instead of education. During the training, the participants identified these kind of cases, for which is very difficult to fight against this attitude. Also the social context is added to the situation. And also we discuss and identified that the media plays a very important role in this view and what is promoted through media is not a positive factor to students.

The materials, to which the participants added their experiences, were very interesting and good think for thought and a very good starting point of this project.

Session of questions and feedback from the partners

Enrica (URSV) highlighted the idea that we have to focalize the attention of the new structure of the family role for children. It is difficult to have a good communication with families with different point of views, culture or education and in developing a collaborative communication between schools and families we should focalize out attention. This is a new situation, the families have a different vision, or the families in our days have different members, it is not composed by all the members. And now the teachers have to face with this new situation and to have a unique approach. We have to search new ways of dealing with these situations. And the question for the partners was which these ways of facing with this problem.

Also has been raised the problem of oriented programs for families, the families don/t want to get involved, they don't participate in these kind of activities. What should we do to attract and make them aware?

Elza Gheorghiu (Romania) mentioned that we are all leaving in a very mobile Europe, no matter is which country we are, we are also invaded by new coming people. And people come and go and we have to cope with the situation. So communication is the key in this respect and each situation is a different case and we have to communicate, and to work together to deal with the education system. Here is very important also the role of councillors and they are the specialist who should support the integration process.

Also the Romanian team asked to clarify what do the Italian wanted to say about the oriented programs. Because in Romania we have oriented programs for students, to support them to find a job based on their interests.

Spanish teachers (Florida)

Gisela Vidal (Spain) started the presentation by highlighting the main important aspects raised during the training held in Spain and on the impact on the teachers. All the participants agreed on the factors and reasons for school dropout mentioned in the course. And all the participants agree also that one factor is not enough and that different factors affect the students. The debate on the topic of the module was distributed in 3 parts, based on the schools involved (secondary schools, lower vocational training schools and adult schools). For the secondary school the most common reason for school dropout is related to the difficult exam that the student have to pass to get to the university, the competition is very hard and most of the time they got scared and gave up, because they feel too much pressure. In lower vocational schools there are students who weren't able to go to the secondary school, so the students' level is lower and also their self-esteem. In these cases the motivation in the key, teachers have to involve the students in education learning. Also the parents of these students don't want to get involved and to support their children. In the adult schools the students are those who haven't finished the compulsory school and most of the time they have already a job or a family, so the school is on a secondary or even third plan.

Also the school dropout has been discussing from the point of view of the economic crisis. But the educational system receives a lot of support and this is very important.

Session of questions and feedback from the partners

Elza Gheorghiu (Romania) put into the discussion the role of the councillor, which is very important in the school life asking about the role of the councillor in the Spanish schools.

Gisela Vidal (Spain) introduced Marcela, who works as school councillor and mentioned that they are working individual with the each student, but they also have a very intensive collaboration also with teachers, supporting them to be prepared and to guide them.

Andreea Cleminte (Romania) asked about the ways of supporting and orienting the students to avoid dropout.

Gisela Vidal (Spain) mentioned that the students are very important in the school life and they are involved and they are the ones who establish the rules and all the students are empowered and raised awareness about their own responsibility, in their own education.

Italian teachers (Cipat)

The representative of Cipat presented the results of the training held in Italy on the first module, mentioning that there were involved students putting in action cases of school dropout. The main idea was to act against the problem, rather than preventing, this being based on the lack of time. During the training the participants discuss about methods and action plan, about targeting students and their needs, planning tools to go in with actions. The teachers presented their experiences carried on in the schools; many of them are teachers in vocational schools, where the problem is much more serious. Some agreements have been established: training of the teachers, before working in the field;

motivating pupils; involvement in practical activities; straightening the students' self-esteem and support them to understand the goal of their education; extracurricular activities for students.

Session of questions and feedback from the partners
Andreea Cleminte (Romania) asked about the main common factors identified.

The representative of Cipat mentioned that the most common factors are: first of all self-esteem – we discuss a lot about this factor, which we find it very important, because if students have problems in attending a school, or are impossible to build on their education and if they are repeating classes, when they arrive on the secondary school they manifest a very low self-esteem. So the first thing to do is to straightening it and very important not to use unorthodox teaching methods. Also students need practical activities to understand the theory. If we encourage the students to have a job in the morning and to support them to study during the day, it is very important for students.

The Italian partners were asked is they are using a specific strategy to support the students to avoid dropouts, if there is a process that they follow.

The representative of Cipat mentioned that the strategies against the risks are based on straightening the self-esteem. The method is the practical experience and if it is possible to match the job experiences with the students' needs. Strategies can also vary. The best strategy is the combination between teaching-studding-practicing.

Conclusion
Andreea Cleminte (EuroEd) invited all the partners to conclude their presentations.

Gisela Vidal (Florida) concluded by mentioning that it is obvious that one factor is not the main reason for school dropout and that the families plays a very important role.

The representative of Datini and Cipat agreed on the general idea and a very important one that the teachers need trainings, to be prepared to face, recognize, prevent and deal with school dropout.

Julien Keutgen (INFOREF) specified that there are needed many services to tackle the problem, such as mediation and counselling. And it is very important that all the services to work in collaboration for a more global approach of the problem.

Enrica (URSV) highlighted the importance of the project to the teachers and the opportunity to confront and interact with other countries situations.

Elza Gheorghiu (EuroEd) mentioned the importance of supporting teachers to deal with early school leaving and in general with these kinds of problems, which our society faces with. We also believe to collaboration towards a better communication. We should be more flexible when it comes to discipline and particular situation in each country. The project is a great opportunity to share ideas and to meet distinctive people, as you are.

Also during the meeting the participants raised issues and question about the forum.
Andreea Cleminte (EuroEd) tried to answer to the questions related to the forum:
- Related to the problem of the teachers who haven't received the passwords to access – to be sent to the Pixel partners a list with all the teaches who haven't received the password, to be able for Pixel to resent the information;

- Related to the problem of raising a start questions on the forum – the structure of the forum has been presented, mentioning that there is a moderator of each topic who addresses questions and the teachers are invited to answer, but also has been agreed that being an open forum the teachers are invited to express their thoughts and to share free ideas and to raise subject of discussion, we can't impose them to stick only to the question raised, because very useful information can be lost this way.
- Related to the profile of the teachers, how can be teachers identified – the suggestion raised was to introduce in the beginning of the message posted the name of the teacher, the school represented and the country. This way the connexion can be more visible.

Andreea Cleminte (EuroEd) thanked to all partners for the great job in delivering the trainings on the first module and for the involvement and discussions raised for the first virtual meeting, which was agreed that was a great opportunity to share ideas and feedback and impact to the teachers involved.