

**CONCEPT NOTE PROPOSAL**

**COSCO  
COmmons, Schools and COllaborations**

**Interreg 2SEAS Call VIII**

**Artevelde University College Gent (Flanders)**

**March 27, 2019**

1. **Challenge**

In most European member states, socio-economic inequalities are rising. Schools reproduce and even strengthen inequalities and polarisation is growing. This socio-economic inequality also has a spatial dimension. Through processes of gentrification and segregation, these families often live on the outskirts or outside of the city centre, which makes their access to a wide range of (usually urban based) facilities more challenging (e.g. Musterd et al., 2017). This project focuses on families with school-aged children (6-12 years old) that encounter multiple barriers in combining (the search for) employment or training on the one hand and family life with school-aged children on the other hand. The focus lies on one- and two-parent families living in poverty or on the edge of poverty, who encounter barriers in combining work, the children’s education, leisure time and family life. In addition, parents often have (precarious) jobs demanding a lot of flexibility, the rhythm of which is difficult to combine with that of the educational system. Most cities and municipalities offer a wide range of activities and support for parents and children, but this offer is often too expensive, unknown, not in line with how families want to spend leisure time or too difficult to reach because of time and mobility barriers.

1. **Main objective**

COSCO’s main objective is to develop a new model for out-of-school care, that offers high-quality and usable, inclusive and accessible activities for children and families, and supports transitions between school and leisure for children and between employment and family for parents. To create a service that answers to the needs of local families, we test new methods that are based on the idea of “commons” (e.g. Bravo & De Moor, 2008). Commons (or common-pool resources) can be defined as a social practice of governing a resource, not by state or market, but by a community of users and stakeholders that self-governs the resource through institutions that it creates. New important uses of commons should be tested on ecological and leisure services, especially for vulnerable neighbourhoods.

Therefore, we aim to (1) set up new after school networks or ‘commons’ in vulnerable neighbourhoods for improving the work-life balance of families. (2) From these new commons, we will co-create collaborative networks in order to support the after school needs of the families. By co-creating leisure activities for the children and solving the mobility and scheduling issues of the parents, families can self govern their work life balance better in collaboration with the community. (3) In order to make the project results sustainable and applicable in other contexts, we will upscale the developed family oriented methods for neighborhood commons on work-life balance in a handbook, and formulate policy recommendations on the local, regional and European level.

1. **Specific objectives, activities and expected output:**

**Specific objective SO1: Setting up NEIGHBOURHOOD COMMONS on citizen initiatives in vulnerable neighbourhoods for improving families’ work-life balance**

**Activities:**

1. Mapping and evaluating international good practices on vulnerable neighbourhood initiatives, with a focus on participation, co-creation and commons, aimed at improving the work-life balance of families.
2. Setting up focus groups on citizen initiatives in vulnerable neighbourhoods with experts in each member state. At cross-border meetings, the project partners bring together their expertise.
3. Co-creating a NEIGHBOURHOOD COMMONS framework: citizen initiatives for after school networks in vulnerable neighbourhoods on improving the work-life balance of families and increasing the social cohesion of the neighbourhoods, based on literature, focus groups and good practices.
4. Setting up and testing pilot areas on after school citizen initiatives in vulnerable neighbourhoods, based on the NEIGHBOURHOOD COMMONS framework. Pilot areas could be for example: Gent, Mechelen, Ronse (Belgium), The Hague (The Netherlands), Saint-Martin-Boulogne (France), Medway, Brighton, Plymouth (England),...

**Output O1: Tested methods for setting up commons (citizen initiatives) in vulnerable neighbourhoods for improving families’ work-life balance**

**Specific objective SO2:  Setting up co-created collaborations to support the work-life balance of families in vulnerable neighbourhoods**

**Activities:**

1. Mapping the needs of families in the NEIGHBOURHOOD COMMONS pilot areas on their work-life balance.
2. Setting up and testing of supported networks from within the NEIGHBOURHOOD COMMONS pilot areas in order to arrange after school activities that meet these needs of the families. Parents will use their combined social networks to set up these activities with volunteers from within the local communities (‘in-sourcing’). Where needed, external organisations, such as schools, leisure and social organisations and mobility facilitators are included in the collaboration (‘out-sourcing’). 3 kinds of collaborations are set up:
   * Co-created collaborations on the needs of **children** on leisure initiatives (sports, music, art) after school and during vacations, in order to work on their talents and increase their social networks. This also provides flexibility and time for parents to combine work and family life.
   * Co-created collaborations on the needs of **parents** on soft skills and labour market skills.
   * Co-created collaborations for **parents and children** together, so that they can spend time together.
3. Testing alternative **mobility** solutions for families and collaborating organisations, in order to bridge the distance between them. These incoming (organisations come to the families) and outgoing (the families go to the organisations) mobility solutions guarantee that the network can set up activities on sport, arts and labour market in locations where the children and/or parents are as well. Solutions are tailor made, by making use of ecological options, such as walking, cycling or taking public transport in group, (electric) bike sharing, bike trailers, car sharing, carpooling...  in vulnerable neighbourhoods.
4. Training of **professionals** in the collaborating organisations on supporting families and stakeholders in vulnerable neighbourhoods within a collaborative and commons based approach on after school activities and mobility solutions.

**Output O2: Tested methods for setting up collaborations with local organisations from within the commons (citizen initiatives) to support the work-life balance of families in vulnerable neighbourhoods**

**Specific objective SO3: Upscaling towards sustainable family oriented methods for neighborhood initiatives**

**Activities:**

1. Setting up focus groups on the upscaling of the NEIGHBORHOOD COMMONS model. These groups consist of policymakers, experts and practitioners as well as observer partners. They enable co-development of an upscaled and sustainable model.
2. Creating a method/handbook with practical guidelines for practitioners, in order to implement the model in a sustainable way in varying contexts.
3. Creating a feasibility study with policy recommendations

**Output O3: Feasibility study to make family oriented neighbourhood commons durable**