Final Report, September 2012

# EU HIGH LEVEL GROUP OF EXPERTS ON LITERACY

Final Report, September 2012

# EU HIGH LEVEL GROUP

# OF EXPERTS ON LITERACY

## THIS REPORT IS SIGNIFICANT FOR:

**HEADS OF STATE** – to be sensitised to an issue with far-reaching consequences for citizens and society.

**GOVERNMENTS** – to develop their policies by taking into account the fact that large numbers of people at which these policies are directed have trouble reading and writing.

**PARENTS AND TEACHERS** – to motivate children, adolescents and adults to learn to read and write well, making it pleasurable, and underlining its relevance throughout life.

**BUSINESSES** – to become aware of the motivational and economic gains of improving the literacy skills of their employees and subsequently taking action.

**EVERY CITIZEN, WOMAN AND MAN, GIRL AND BOY** – to realise how reading and writing enhances self-confidence, access to the full range of learning opportunities, and active participation in society.

## OUR VISION FOR A LITERATE EUROPE:

• All citizens of Europe shall be literate, so as to achieve their aspirations as individuals, family members, workers and citizens.

• Radically improved literacy will boost innovation, prosperity and cohesion in society, as well as the wellbeing, social participation and employability of all citizens.

• EU Member States will view it as their legal obligation to provide all the support necessary to realise our vision, and this support will include all ages.

*Our vision leads to one simple call:*

→ ACT NOW!

# CONTENTS

# FOREWORD

## BY EU COMMISSIONER FOR EDUCATION, CULTURE, MULTILINGUALISM AND SPORT

*I am confident that this report and its concrete proposals and recommendations will help EU Member States make their own policies more coherent, efficient and successful.*

When the results from PISA, the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment, were published, it was a shock to realise that one in five of our 15-year-olds in the EU still has insufficient reading skills. Another matter of concern was the widening gender gap: girls are reading better and more than boys. For adults, the need for action is just as urgent. More than 73 million adults in the EU currently have low qualifications, and many of them do not have sufficient literacy levels to cope with the daily requirements of personal, social, and economic life.

All this requires a call to action. Therefore I established on 1 February 2011 an independent High Level Group of Experts on Literacy, in order to look into literacy, how this has evolved, and examine the most effective and efficient ways to improve reading skills in Europe. I asked the Group to look at common success factors in literacy programmes and policy initiatives and to take into account the realities that people – young and old – face today, and the needs that come with modern technologies, such as 'Web 2.0' and smartphones. Indeed, we not only need to focus on a problem we have long considered as solved in Europe, but we need to rethink what kind of literacy tomorrow's Europe needs.

I warmly thank the members of the High Level Group and their Chair, H.R.H. Princess Laurentien of the Netherlands, for all the effort, knowledge and dedication they have brought to this work.

I am confident that this report and its concrete proposals and recommendations will help EU Member States make their own policies more coherent, efficient and successful.

This report is only a first step – it puts on the table a huge challenge not only to our education systems, but to our entire societies. But now the call to action is up to you, the readers of the report. Read it, think about it, act on it, spread the word and make good literacy for all a top priority in all Member States!

**ANDROULLA VASSILIOU**
EUROPEAN COMMISSIONER
FOR EDUCATION, CULTURE, MULTILINGUALISM, YOUTH AND SPORT

9

# OPEN LETTER

## FROM THE CHAIR OF THE EU HIGH LEVEL GROUP OF EXPERTS ON LITERACY

'Smart growth means strengthening knowledge and innovation as drivers of our future growth.'

**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**,
EUROPE 2020 STRATEGY

If smart growth is about knowledge and innovation, investment in literacy skills is a prerequisite for achieving such growth. This report is a wake-up call about the literacy crisis that affects every country in Europe.

Our world is dominated by the written word, both online and in print. This means we can only contribute and participate actively if we can read and write sufficiently well. But each year, hundreds of thousands of children start their secondary school two years behind in reading; some leave even further behind their peers. This has damaging consequences for their futures. And millions of adults across Europe lack the necessary literacy skills to function fully and independently in society.

Awareness and acceptance of this widespread and deep-rooted problem are the first important steps towards action. This report is as much about Europe's citizens of all ages as it is about socio-economic developments, trends and equality of opportunities. And it is as much about acknowledging the shocking numbers and problems as it is about identifying root causes and opportunities. We hope our call to action will be read by everyone engaged in policy-making or grass-roots activities in a range of areas, be it at local, regional, national or EU levels: from employment to health, from digital developments to civic participation, and from education to poverty. In all these pressing issues, literacy is likely to play a key role. So addressing literacy provides opportunities to tackle some of the root causes and factors blocking progress in all of these areas.

Grasping these opportunities requires a profound understanding that reading and writing are much more than a technique or a skill. Literacy is about people's ability to function in society as private individuals, active citizens, employees or parents. Children need skills to learn, adolescents need them to get a job and shape their futures positively. Citizens won't be able to pay their taxes online or vote if they're not literate. Employees need to be able to read safety instructions. And how can patients use their medication properly if they cannot read the instructions or lack the confidence to ask others? Literacy is about people's self-esteem, their interaction with others, their health and employability. Ultimately, literacy is about whether a society is fit for the future.

We encourage everyone to read this report: parents, teachers, businesses, governments and civil society players. We hope you take our recommendations to heart and act upon them. Investing in literacy is investing in Europe's human capital. Such investments only have winners: citizens of all ages, businesses and governments and, ultimately, Europe's wellbeing and competitive position in the world.

This report will, I hope, help kick-start an ambitious, comprehensive and structural approach within and across EU Member States to prevent and reduce literacy problems. But its usefulness is only as good as the progress made in the coming decade to implement the recommendations of the report. In doing so, we need to be both open- and single-minded in our focus on the children, adolescents and adults who need to be reached.

**H.R.H. PRINCESS LAURENTIEN OF THE NETHERLANDS**
CHAIR, EU HIGH LEVEL GROUP OF EXPERTS ON LITERACY

11

# 00 ABOUT THIS REPORT

*'Examine the most effective and efficient ways of supporting reading literacy throughout lifelong learning.' (Council Conclusions on basic skills, November 2010)*

## CONTEXT

This is the first time that literacy has been reviewed at EU level. Several developments led up to it:

• The May 2009 Council of Education Ministers renewed the target of having no more than 15 % of low-achieving 15-year-olds in reading literacy by 2020, as the number of poor readers had actually increased since 2000, as had the gender gap between girls and boys.

• In 2010, the EU's Europe 2020 strategy set ambitious objectives for smart, inclusive and sustainable growth for the entire European Union. Young people play an essential role in achieving this. Quality education and training, successful labour market integration and more mobility among young people are key to unleashing all the EU's potential and achieving the Europe 2020 objectives.

• On 1 February 2011, Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou asked H.R.H. Princess Laurentien of the Netherlands to chair a group of renowned experts from across Europe in the field of literacy, in view of her track record in this area. Their goal was to examine how to support literacy throughout lifelong learning, based on common success factors in literacy programmes and policy initiatives, and to make proposals for improving literacy among both school students and adults.

## SCOPE OF OUR WORK

The focus of our work has been on literacy skills in Europe relating both to society as a whole and to specific age groups (young children, children, adolescents, and adults).

Literacy has many different dimensions and links with essential related areas such as numeracy, and digital and social competences. Some definitions used in research have a narrow focus on only reading literacy, while others also take in cognitive, affective, motivational, socio-cultural, cultural-historical, creative and aesthetic dimensions. On the basis of different definitions of literacy that are used in research and studies, we developed a multilayer approach to defining literacy, and have related it to numeracy and other key competences. The multilayer approach is outlined below, and related in broad terms to levels defined in the OECD's PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) project. In the light of the broad societal perspective that we are taking in this report, our work focuses largely on the baseline and functional literacy levels.

See Annex for more information on our definition of literacy.

**MULTIPLE LITERACY** Multiple literacy: the ability to use reading and writing skills in order to produce, understand, interpret and critically evaluate multimodal texts. **Broadly equivalent to PISA Level 3 and above, the threshold identified by OECD enabling people to meet lifelong literacy requirements**

**FUNCTIONAL LITERACY** The ability to read and write at a level that enables development and functioning in society at home, school and work. **Broadly equivalent to PISA Level 2**

**BASELINE LITERACY** The ability to read and write at a level that enables self-confidence, and motivation for further development. **Broadly equivalent to PISA Level 1**

13

### MEMBERS OF THE EU HIGH LEVEL GROUP OF EXPERTS ON LITERACY

**H.R.H. Princess Laurentien of the Netherlands (Chair)** – Founder and Chair of the Reading & Writing Foundation (Stichting Lezen & Schrijven) in the Netherlands, UNESCO Special Envoy on Literacy for Development and patron of various language-related organisations.

**Prof. Greg Brooks** – Emeritus Professor of Education, University of Sheffield, UK, 2001-07. For the previous 20 years he worked for the National Foundation for Educational Research in England and Wales at its headquarters in Slough.

**Prof. Roberto Carneiro** – Former Minister of Education of Portugal (1987-91). Professor at the Portuguese Catholic University and Chair of the Editorial Board of the European Journal of Education.

**Prof. Marie Thérèse Geffroy** – President of the French National Agency to Fight Illiteracy (ANLCI), former Director, General Inspector of National Education.

**Dr Attila Nagy** – PhD in psychology and sociology (1997) at the Lorand Eotvos University in Budapest, founder of the Hungarian Reading Association.

**Dr Sari Sulkunen** – Senior researcher at the Finnish Institute for Educational Research and at the Department of Languages at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland.

**Prof. Karin Taube** – Professor of Education (emerita) Umeå University, 2007-11, previously Professor of Education at Mid-Sweden University (2002-07) and University of Kalmar, Sweden (2000-02).

**Prof. Georgios Tsiakalos** – Professor of Pedagogy at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece.

**Prof. Renate Valtin** – Professor of primary education (emerita), Humboldt University Berlin, Germany, 1992-2008, previously Professor of Education at Freie Universität Berlin (1981-1992) and Pädagogische Hochschule Berlin (1975-1981).

**Jerzy Wiśniewski** – Education policy expert from Poland, member of the Governing Board of the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation CERI (OECD).

### WAYS OF WORKING

This report was developed between February 2011 and June 2012. During that period, we:

- held eight meetings to analyse relevant facts and developments, share and interpret knowledge and expertise on main issues such as societal trends affecting literacy, motivation to learn, teaching and learning, and age-specific issues;
- conducted a critical review of existing research and identified gaps in knowledge;
- listened to experts, literacy ambassadors and ordinary citizens; and
- intensively exchanged opinions in between meetings, highlighting and examining evidence from research and practical experience.

### HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

**IN CHAPTER 01** we set out the main facts behind literacy, outline the main societal trends that have a literacy dimension and discuss the impacts for both individuals and society at large.

**IN CHAPTER 02** we focus on the context needed for effective solutions. Central to all solutions is the co-operative approach.

**IN CHAPTER 03** we explain overarching issues related to literacy and preconditions for success that we believe are relevant in any context.

**IN CHAPTER 04** we address age-specific contexts, focusing on:
- young children (from birth to the start of primary education);
- children in primary school (generally ages 6-12);
- adolescents (generally ages 12 to 18); and
- adults (generally ages 18-20 and upwards).

Inspiring examples of current practices from different EU Member States are included throughout the report for illustration.

We conclude the report with recommendations to policymakers and proposals for a wide range of actions to be taken by different players across education and society, in order to improve the literacy skills of all European citizens.

*We appreciate the input* *from many distinguished individuals and organizations.*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We greatly appreciate the co-operation with and support of the secretariat and support services:

• European Commission, Directorate-General for Education and Culture;
• ICF-GHK support consultancy services, in particular the rapporteur to the High Level Group:
 J.D. Carpentieri – Senior Policy and Research Officer, National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy, Institute of Education, University of London, UK.

The organisations listed below are those that responded to a wide consultation of stakeholders:

• ACEV (Mother Child Education Foundation)
• Alliance for Childhood Education Network Group (Alliance)
• Association de la Fondation Etudiante Pour La Ville (AFEV)
• Association pour l'Enseignement et la Formation des Travailleurs Immigrés (AEFTI)
• Prof. W. G. Brozo
• Education Scotland
• Eenvoudig Communiceren, the Netherlands
• European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (European Agency)
• European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA)
• European Association of Craft, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (UEAPME)
• European Bureau of Library Information and Documentation (EBLIDA)
• European Magazine Media Association (EMMA)
• European Newspaper Publishers' Association (ENPA)
• European Writers' Council (EWC)
• Federation of European Publishers (FEP)
• Federation of European Literacy Associations (FELA)
• FloraHolland
• Prof. Christine Garbe

• Gemeentelijke of Gemeenschappelijke Gezondheidsdienst (GGD)
• International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA)
• Landelijke Huisartsen Vereniging (LHV), National Association of General Practitioners, the Netherlands
• Prof. Pirjo Linnakylä
• Lire et écrire communauté française
• Lire et faire lire
• National Agency to Fight Illiteracy, ANLCI, France
• Prof. Ingvar Lundberg
• Prof. Mats Myrberg
• National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA)
• OECD/CERI
• Philips
• Research and Practice in Adult Literacy (RaPAL) Network
• Swedish Centre for Easy-to Read and Easy-to-Read Network
• The *London Evening Standard* newspaper
• The Social Partners in the Netherlands
• Unesco Institute for Lifelong Learning
• Volunteer Reading Help

# 01

## UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEMS & OPPORTUNITIES:

# WHY LITERACY IS A BIG DEAL

*'Literacy is a bridge from misery to hope.'*

**KOFI ANNAN**,
FORMER UN SECRETARY-GENERAL

*Asking why literacy is so important may sound like a redundant question. After all, reading and writing are such basic skills. But, by and large, we take these skills for granted in modern European societies. Individuals often feel ashamed that they cannot read and write well enough. Low literacy has thus become a hidden issue and even a taboo subject in most European societies. Children hide it from their teachers. Patients hide it from their doctors. Workers hide it from their employers. Parents hide it from their children.*

*There is a lack of awareness among politicians, policymakers and many other players in society that literacy is an issue even in European societies. Despite the educational systems and structures we have put in place and the unprecedentedly high levels of access to education and training, some people still leave school without sufficient literacy skills and often fail to make up for this deficit in adulthood. It is precisely this lack of awareness that warrants the basic question: why is literacy a big deal?*
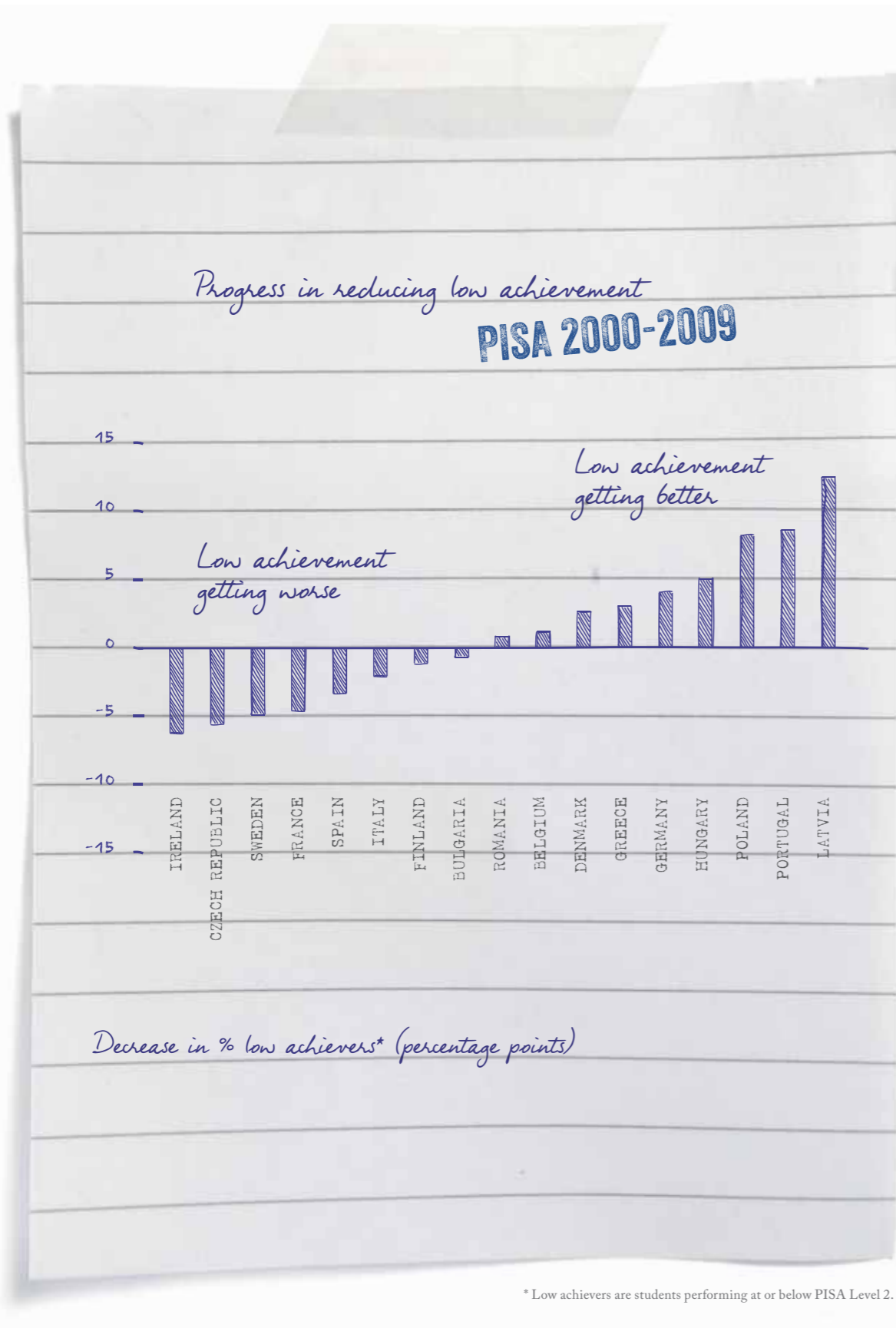
## 1.1
### LARGE NUMBERS OF CITIZENS LACK THE NECESSARY LITERACY SKILLS

Literacy is more essential than ever before. In societies dominated by the written word, it is a fundamental requirement for citizens of all ages in modern Europe. Literacy empowers the individual to develop capacities of reflection, critique and empathy, leading to a sense of self-efficacy, identity and full participation in society. Literacy skills are crucial to parenting, finding and keeping a job, participating as a citizen, being an active consumer, managing one's health and taking advantage of digital developments, both socially and at work.

Yet a startlingly high number of Europeans do not have sufficient literacy skills to fulfil these roles. An estimated 20% of adults lack the literacy skills they need to function fully in a modern society[1]. An estimated 73 million European adults lack qualifications above upper secondary school level, many because their poor literacy makes educational progress impossible[2]. The next generation of adults is on course to do no better. The latest results from PISA, the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment, show that in 2009, one in five EU 15-year-olds had poor reading skills. The EU has made almost no progress over the past decade in reducing this percentage[3]. Even as literacy becomes more necessary, reading levels have stagnated.

This does not bode well for Europe. People with low literacy are less likely to finish school, more likely to be unemployed, more likely to be on social benefits, and more likely to suffer from poor health (e.g. more likely to smoke, less likely to exercise)[4]. Poor literacy does not just thwart education and employment, it thwarts aspiration and ambition. Children of adults with poor literacy are more likely to struggle with literacy themselves, and less likely to do well in school[5]. More broadly, poor literacy limits individuals' capabilities and civic participation, increases poverty, hinders innovation, reduces productivity and holds back economic growth[6].

Tackling illiteracy issues is complex, as it tends to involve several players. But with sustained commitment and a combination of approaches, it is a solvable problem. EU Member States that have focused their efforts on improving literacy have seen positive returns. Five Member States showed significant gains for 8-10 year-olds between 2001 and 2006: Slovenia, Slovakia, Italy, Germany, and Hungary[7]. For the older age range, Latvia, Portugal, Luxembourg and Poland, for example, have improved their reading levels among 15-year-olds substantially over the last decade[8]. And countries with sustained campaigns aimed at broad societal engagement (such as France and the Netherlands) have managed to raise awareness about literacy and put the issue higher on the political agenda. All governments can aim for and achieve similar improvements.

Progress in reducing low achievement
PISA 2000-2009

15
10
5
0
-5
-10
-15

Low achievement getting worse

Low achievement getting better

IRELAND
CZECH REPUBLIC
SWEDEN
FRANCE
SPAIN
ITALY
FINLAND
BULGARIA
ROMANIA
BELGIUM
DENMARK
GREECE
GERMANY
HUNGARY
POLAND
PORTUGAL
LATVIA

Decrease in % low achievers* (percentage points)

* Low achievers are students performing at or below PISA Level 2.

## 1.2
## LITERACY IS KEY FOR IMPORTANT SOCIO-ECONOMIC TRENDS AND AMBITIONS

Europe has changed radically in the past decades, with major implications for literacy. Changes in the nature of work and the role of the media, as well as in the economy and society more generally, have made reading and writing much more important[9].

### THE DIGITAL WORLD IS CENTRED AROUND THE WRITTEN WORD

Digitisation has added entirely new dimensions to our ways of connecting and communicating. What they tend to have in common, is that they centre on the written word. This makes literacy more and more entwined with the way we live our lives in a digital world[10].

The Internet, computers, tablets and smartphones are becoming ubiquitous. Many jobs and services increasingly require some form of ICT skills. But the new opportunities offered by new digital devices mean much less if large numbers of people lack the necessary reading and writing skills to make use of them. Literacy competences thus become more central to our work as well as our private, social and civic lives.

Digitisation is also changing the very nature of literacy: the digital world requires higher-order problem-solving skills. Reading print on paper and reading online share many core characteristics, but reading online demands a greater ability to evaluate information critically within the context of a seemingly infinite universe of available options[11]. Likewise, there is an increasing need for the ability to extract and use knowledge from an ever-growing number of online resources.

### WRITING IS INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT

Writing is a key part of literacy in general and classroom instruction in particular, especially in an increasingly digitised world. Writing has different aspects, including:
• the authorial side: constructing a text;
• the secretarial side: using correct spelling and grammar; and
• the technical side: writing by hand or by machine.

Writing has, however, received much less attention at international policy level than reading. This is largely a product of the lack of assessment instruments capable of quantifying how well children and young people write in an international comparative perspective. There has been no recent international survey on writing skills, which means there are no reliable indicators of how well Europeans are doing at writing, nor are there international benchmarks to aim for. More research is therefore needed.

Digitisation is changing the nature, frequency, and importance of writing. Digital tools provide a clear, strong motivation for writing, one that is particularly evident among young people. Communication via social networking tools such as Facebook, MSN and SMS lies somewhere between speech and writing in terms of the type of language used. Texting involves reading and writing in a 'back and forth', conversational system of communication[12]. Because it is more easily and immediately accessible, it can be highly motivating, particularly for struggling readers. These informal practices are starting to be incorporated into the learning processes in some schools and other educational institutions, but generally in the form of individual projects. However, in light of their motivational benefits, these informal practices need to be better recognised by education systems as a means to guiding learners from non-formal to formal reading and writing.

Two common concerns resurface in the debates around writing with digital media: whether writing by hand is superior to typing when teaching small children reading and writing; and whether texting makes for better or worse writing and spelling. In the little evidence that exists up to now, the arguments seem equally supportive of both standpoints. More evidence on the impact of digital media and handwriting is needed, with a view to determining appropriate approaches in this new context.

### THE LABOUR MARKET REQUIRES EVER HIGHER LITERACY SKILLS

Changes in the economy have major impacts on the types of job that are available. In the industrial age, youngsters could finish school with poor literacy skills, yet still walk straight into relatively secure, relatively well-paid manufacturing jobs. That era no longer exists. The job market for low-skilled workers is rapidly shrinking: the percentage of low-skilled jobs in the EU is expected to decrease by nearly 30 % between 2010 and 2020. This means 16 million fewer jobs available for those without upper secondary qualifications[13]. The manufacturing sector is shifting towards a premium on design and personalised production, and the knowledge-driven sector is expanding, as are the retail and social care sectors. Even low-paid, insecure jobs in these sectors require good literacy skills. More specifically, literacy skills are needed, for instance, for workplace safety reasons. Workplace accident and injury rates increase when employees are unable to read safety and operating instructions because of language or literacy deficiencies.

So the workplace is becoming more literacy-dependent. Emerging industries increasingly require knowledge and innovation from most workers, even in positions traditionally considered 'low-skilled'. Today's jobs require better skills and more education, and literacy is the gateway to both. For example, many bus drivers and building caretakers are now required to read and write incident reports, often using computers[14]. Young people who struggle with literacy may find themselves permanently unemployable.

### SOCIAL AND CIVIC PARTICIPATION ARE MORE LITERACY-DEPENDENT

Being able to read and write is just as important outside the workplace. Europeans increasingly need good literacy skills to manage their health, stay socially active and engage politically. Interaction is increasingly conducted through social networking, particularly among young people. However, good literacy skills are a prerequisite to be able to participate in this trend. Paradoxically, the increased use of texting as a medium of everyday communication is not – yet – leading to improvements in literacy skills or an awareness of the importance of these skills.

Ease of access to digital information is one of the key pillars of e-Government, providing better, more efficient public services through ICT. This can reduce costs for governments and make information much more readily available to citizens, stimulating access, efficiency and greater democratic involvement. The Internet can also increase direct access among politicians and the public. However, e-Government also exacerbates inequalities, as Europeans with poor print or digital literacy skills, or who cannot afford computer facilities, are unable to take advantage of these services.

Similarly, many businesses are shifting their way of communicating with current and potential customers from face-to-face to online. Equally, finding a job is increasingly done online. While this may be a positive trend for many, it has negative consequences for individual consumers and citizens. As such services and activities become more digitised, Europe's disadvantaged find themselves less able to participate. Older Europeans have a double challenge to overcome: 71% of 55 to 74-year-olds have never used the Internet, compared to 11% of the younger generation[15]. This trend towards online services also means missed opportunities and a loss of resources for the public and private sector, as these sectors are not reaching those they want to or should do.

In short, our online way of living constantly enhances the value of and need for literacy. Social activities, as well as online services by governments and businesses alike,

increasingly presuppose that citizens and consumers have the necessary literacy skills.

### POVERTY AND POOR LITERACY ARE LOCKED IN A VICIOUS CIRCLE

There are at least 27 million children at risk of poverty in the European Union. One in ten children live in households where no one has a job. Without social benefits, children are 40% more at risk of poverty[16]. In 2010, around 23% of the European population were considered to be at risk of poverty or social exclusion and 8% of adults in work did not earn enough to make it above the poverty threshold[17]. Given this context, every policy to improve literacy should include appropriate measures to guarantee the material wellbeing and the dignity of all citizens living in poverty, in particular children. This should be done through efficient support of their families, but also through measures addressing the children's material needs in education. This includes free education and schooling from an early age, grants that finance not only tuition costs but also maintenance and transportation costs for the poorest students, and school aid, for example to fund books, clothes, breakfasts and lunches[18]. Gaps in income create gaps in literacy at national level: countries with greater economic inequality also have greater inequalities in literacy levels[19].

Poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon and all of its dimensions have a negative impact on children's literacy and education. Many poor parents are less likely to be able to support their children with their schooling because of their lower educational background[20], and because their everyday struggle in the face of poverty restricts their opportunities to be with their children[21]. Poverty often results in delayed speech and cognitive and social development for children from poor families, who are then less prepared than their richer peers for the start of schooling[22]. In the United Kingdom, for instance, it was estimated that by the age of six, a less able child from a rich family is likely to have overtaken a more able child from a poor family[23]. Early identification, assessment and support in such situations are essential to improve outcomes for these children. In this sense it is obvious that some of the recommendations of our report cannot be realised by poor families without the serious supportive engagement of state and society, and especially school systems.

In **GREECE**, an initiative was started in 1989 (as a part of the EU-Programme POVERTY 3) in one of the poorest areas of Thessaloniki, with the aim of enabling the school attendance and literacy of Roma children between the ages of six and 14 who had never been to school before and often did not speak Greek. Social workers, each

assigned to a particular street, visited children's homes and co-operated with parents, sometimes waking children up in the morning, and picking them up to go to school.

From the beginning, co-operation was established with local authorities and especially with the local church to provide children with breakfast and guarantee the continuation of the action after the end of the POVERTY 3 programme. Today, the local church is actively supporting the effort through the 'Centre for the Protection of Underage Children', providing breakfast and other meals, and also spaces and tuition for learning, playing and socialising to over 60 young Roma. Through these efforts, access to education is given to children, improving literacy levels for most of them. In recent years, the first students from the area have managed to attend university.

In **CYPRUS**, a programme for schools in disadvantaged areas, called 'Zones of Educational Priority' (ZEP), was launched in 2003, aiming to tackle school underachievement, mainly in literacy, and early school leaving. Students at risk are provided with tailored support in literacy and mathematics, and help in facing social and behavioural problems. In addition, in 2011, afternoon courses were added, including Greek language learning and, in several cases, mother tongue teaching for children with a migrant background. Today, about 7% of all students in compulsory education participate in ZEP.

### LIVING LONGER REQUIRES ONGOING SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Most Europeans live longer than ever before[24]. The over-65s already outnumber children under 15[25]. For every 10 children under the age of 15, there will be 20 people over 65; eight of those 20 will be over 80 years old. As the ratio of people aged 65+ to those aged 15-64 rises, the productivity of workers will need to rise accordingly in order to fund the necessary state services such as healthcare and pension schemes.

Europeans will therefore have to work longer. In addition, they no longer tend to hold one job for life. This requires employees to develop different skills over the course of their working lives. Moving into new career paths and jobs – some that do not yet exist or are not yet even known – requires on-the-job training and retraining, for instance in ICT-driven skills.

This trend requires a shift in mindset about the role of education and skills development in relation to employment. Learning in formal, informal and non-formal settings should be recognised as a lifelong task that lies at the basis of employment, economic success and social participation. Literacy

skills, in turn, are the basis of such learning and continuous development. Such recognition can help motivate adolescents and adults in particular to learn and develop the necessary skills to function fully in society and in the workplace.

### LITERACY HAS A GROWING MIGRANT AND MULTILINGUAL DIMENSION

Schools across the EU provide for rapidly rising numbers of children with migrant backgrounds. In 2009, 10% of 15-year-old schoolchildren in the EU had been born in another country or had both parents born abroad, compared to 7% in 2000. In some countries, such as Italy or Spain, the percentage of migrant children has risen five-fold over the decade from 2000 to 2010[26]. Mobility across Europe is increasing, with implications for societies at large, the labour market and education in particular. Both inward migration and internal mobility are expected to increase significantly in the next few decades in the EU, and it is estimated that by 2060, a third of the EU population will have at least one parent born outside the country they live in[27]. While low literacy is not primarily a migration issue, some migrants face difficulties in acquiring the language skills in the country they live in (see also Chapter 02).

By the same token, Europe has been a major source of migrant flows to other continents. Fully literate European migrants stand a much stronger chance of successfully adjusting to the culture and to working conditions in destination countries or to embark on entrepreneurial ventures in new contexts.

In a seamless global world, with human mobility on the increase, literacy becomes more multifaceted. The economy has reached unprecedented levels of interconnectedness, information circulates around the planet in real time, and children are growing up in a globalised world. It is time to revisit Europe's fundamental asset: its multilingual nature and multicultural diversity.

Language learning is therefore ever more important, not only as a tool of enhanced communication, but also, and primarily, as a road to mutual understanding. Literacy is increasingly about rethinking ourselves and our identity when put into contact with the 'other'. Thus, understanding of cultures and a mastery of non-native languages must become part and parcel of any comprehensive literacy approach. From primary education onwards, students must be challenged to think critically about the world, about interdependency between peoples from different continents, about appreciating distinct modes of thinking, praying, dressing or behaving, in an open-minded and tolerant way. For all of this, literacy skills are the foundation.

## 1.3
### INVESTMENTS IN LITERACY MAKE ECONOMIC SENSE

#### GAINS FOR INDIVIDUALS

Improved literacy leads to higher earnings and better educational and employment opportunities for Europeans of all backgrounds[28]. Improved literacy not only helps overcome poverty of income; it helps overcome poverty of aspiration. Good literacy increases self-confidence, improves health, helps adults to be better parents and carers, and increases their social and civic participation[29]. In a more literate Europe, these gains will accrue not just to the individuals who experience them, but to their families, communities and countries. And beyond material gains, we must not forget that being literate lies at the core of being human. Only humans can read. In a world dominated by the written word, being literate enables us to participate actively. While self-confidence may not have a quantifiable economic value, it stimulates economic and social success through the aspiration to be successful. Many formerly illiterate people talk about the positive effects that becoming literate has had on their lives, personally, socially, and at work.

#### GAINS FOR SOCIETY

By fully addressing their literacy problems, EU Member States will be in a better position to reduce poverty and inequality radically, to raise ambitions, to improve the health and wellbeing of their citizens, and ultimately to create a fairer and wealthier Europe. Improved literacy will increase the stock of human capital, add to social cohesion, improve the innovative capacity of the economy, and help spread new technologies[30] . These are all essential goals if Europe is to be the world's leading innovation society. In view of literacy's role as a gatekeeper to learning and employment opportunities, improving literacy is likely to significantly remove barriers to further education and training, and reduce social inequalities[31]. For businesses, improving the literacy skills of employees has huge benefits for employers. It reduces staff turnover, increases productivity, improves the use of new technology in the workplace, reduces the costs of communication, saves time, and increases safety.

There is a strong and robust correlation between good literacy for all and strong economic growth. On past trends, if Europe achieved its current benchmark of functional literacy for 85 % of 15-year-olds, this could lead to an aggregate GDP gain of EUR 21 trillion over the lifetime of the generation born in 2010[32]. If all EU Member States boosted their average PISA scores by 25 points over the next two decades, Europe could experience an aggregate GDP gain of EUR 32 trillion[33]. And if Europe could achieve the more ambitious aim of bringing all Member States up to the level of Finland, for example, the continent would see its GDP improve by EUR 87 trillion. While these estimates are not promises of immediate cash gains, but rather estimates of the great opportunities ahead of us, they do show the huge costs of low literacy in terms of opportunity to our societies, to the order of trillions of euro.

There is a strong and robust correlation between good literacy for all and strong economic growth.

#### CONCLUDING REMARKS

*Literacy fulfils a crucial function that goes beyond the techniques of reading and writing. Literacy is the key to enabling individuals to participate effectively in society in a variety of roles, be it as private individual, citizen, employee or parent. Indeed, radical changes in Europe over the past few decades mean that we now live in an increasingly literacy-dependent society. A lack of such fundamental skills thwarts more than just learning and employment opportunities – it also exacerbates poverty, reduces self-esteem, inhibits ambition, limits civic participation and, ultimately, hinders economic growth.*

*For the benefit of individuals, societies and Europe as a whole, the importance and potential of raising literacy levels cannot be overestimated. We need to act now. But first, we must ensure a starting point of common understanding.*

# 02

**FRAMING THE SOLUTIONS:**

# A CO-OPERATIVE APPROACH

*Recognising the increasing importance and potential of achieving good literacy levels has huge benefits for individuals, societies and Europe at large. To achieve a radical improvement in literacy development, a number of framework conditions need to be in place, because cross-cutting socio-economic issues demand a response from society as a whole, not just from the education sector. Most solutions require players to work together.*

*'Those who learned to collaborate and improvise most effectively have prevailed.'*

**CHARLES DARWIN,**
ENGLISH NATURALIST AND AUTHOR

## 2.1
**DISPELLING WIDELY HELD MISCONCEPTIONS**

Across Europe, some widely shared misconceptions exist about the nature, size and scope of different dimensions of illiteracy. These often hamper the identification of structural solutions. So to achieve real progress, these misconceptions need to be dispelled.

| MISCONCEPTIONS | | THE FACTS |
|---|---|---|
| 'Low literacy is something that happens in developing countries, surely not in Europe!?' | → | One in five European 15-year-olds and almost one in five adults lack the literacy skills required to successfully function in a modern society[34]. |
| 'Low literacy is a problem imported by migrants, not for those born and bred in European countries.' | → | The vast majority of children and adults with poor literacy skills were born and raised in the country they live in, and speak its language of instruction as their mother tongue[35]. |
| 'Poor literacy only affects those on the margins of society.' | → | One in five adults in Europe lack sufficient literacy skills and most of them are employed[36]. |

| MISCONCEPTIONS | | THE FACTS |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 'Some people just cannot learn to read and write.' | → | Almost everyone who struggles with reading and writing could develop adequate literacy skills, given the right support[37]. Only people with the most severe cognitive difficulties are incapable of developing functional literacy. |
| 'Schools are responsible for teaching children to read and write.' | → | Schools have an important role, but are not the only ones responsible. A broad range of actors shapes literacy development, from parents and peers to health services and others. After formal education, employers have a vital role to play, with positive gains for both employer and employee. |
| 'Dyslexia is an incurable condition, so there's nothing we can do about it.' | → | Today's children are increasingly expected to progress in reading and writing at a standard speed and through one methodology. Struggling readers are often diagnosed as dyslexic. The diagnosis should be 'struggling reader'[38], and the focus should be on solving the problem. Every child can, in principle, learn to read and write[39]. |
| 'Improving struggling readers' skills is too time-consuming, too difficult and too expensive to be worth the effort.' | → | Programmes aimed at improving struggling readers' skills have a high rate of success, and are extremely cost-effective. This investment pays for itself dozens and possibly even hundreds of times over the course of an individual's life[40]. |
| 'Parents have no influence on their children's literacy development after the early years.' | → | Parents' attitudes and literacy practices have a very significant influence on their children's literacy development, all the way through secondary school. Interventions to improve parents' support skills have a large impact on child literacy[41]. |
| 'It's too late to do anything about literacy problems after children finish primary school.' | → | Millions of children enter secondary school able to read, but not well enough to do well in school. With specialised support, these young people can develop good or even excellent literacy skills[42]. |

## 2.2
### CREATING CO-OWNERSHIP

There are thus compelling reasons that urge us to act: the large numbers of functionally illiterate[43] people across Europe, the socio-economic trends ahead of us, and the enormous individual and societal gains of literacy development. Europe should be both ambitious about boosting literacy skills and determined to eradicate functional illiteracy within its Member States. This ambition and determination should be at the heart of the solutions to poor literacy, which starts with developing a comprehensive vision on literacy that spans the entire life course. Such vision, both at European and national levels, forms solid ground for developing detailed and result-oriented strategies that take into account the specific circumstances in each Member State. While each national literacy strategy may have its specific areas of focus, there is one core notion that each strategy should embrace: co-ownership. This has various dimensions, such as:
- co-ownership among all players in the private and public sectors and across ministerial departments;
- continuing ownership, reaching across political timetables; and
- cross-target audiences: (young) children, adolescents and adults.

#### CO-OWNERSHIP AMONG ALL PLAYERS

Reading and writing have for too long been viewed as solely a matter for the education system. Wrongly so, as the need for a substantial improvement in literacy levels is driven to a large extent by a number of important socio-economic trends, now and in the future. So literacy is an issue for which both the causes and the solutions should be sought in society as a whole: inside and outside government, and inside and outside the educational sector. There are three reasons why ownership should be shared among these players:
1. Society at large creates the demand for literacy skills and has to deal with the consequences if people do not master them sufficiently. Any sustainable solution to tackling the literacy crisis in Europe should therefore make all societal players jointly responsible for Europe's literacy development.
2. There are many places outside school that provide opportunities to develop the literacy skills of children and adolescents. The problem of poor literacy will not be solved by focusing on education alone. In particular, low-literate adults are unlikely to be 'found' in the educational system, but rather, when visiting a doctor, when going to an employment centre, when bringing their children to school, or on the shop floor. All such places provide opportunities to tackle literacy problems. This makes societal mobilisation crucial. Significant literacy gains will only happen if a broad range of social actors accept ownership of the problem together.
3. Literacy development forms the basis of a solution to many issues we face in society. Employment, health, civic participation, a sustainable lifestyle: all require basic reading and writing skills. Businesses, NGOs and governmental organisations dealing with these issues all have an interest in tackling the literacy issue.

To achieve this means developing an enhanced understanding of the ways that parents, NGOs, employers and other organisations can support literacy development, and how governments can in turn support them to take action and co-operate with each other.

EPIS, Empresários Pela Inclusão Social (established in 2006), is a **PORTUGUESE** NGO created and supported by more than 227 companies. It is the largest and most socially representative private programme in Portugal for the promotion of education for social inclusion. Companies range from the large corporate sector to the SME sector and display a very good spread nationwide. The EPIS programme aims at improving student achievement and reducing early school leaving in Portuguese schools. The programme first screens students to focus only on those more likely to perform poorly; and then conducts a number of small-group sessions aimed at improving their non-cognitive skills (e.g. study skills, motivation, self-esteem). Additionally, from 2011, EPIS has included a business volunteer initiative that addresses career mentoring and numeracy. Some 75 volunteers are recruited from within 25 companies to mentor over 100 students. The ambition is to extend this programme to cover the entire EPIS portfolio of at-risk students. The results of an academic evaluation indicate that the programme reduced grade retention by at least 10 percentage points and did so in a cost-effective way[44].

#### ACROSS MINISTERIAL DEPARTMENTS AND POLICY AREAS

If we want to develop a vision on literacy and to make our policies more effective, policy-makers must work together across departments and organisations. Europe and its Member States should position literacy not just at the heart of their educational strategies but at the heart of public policies more generally. We need political ownership and co-operation across the policy spectrum. As a minimum, Ministries of Health, Family, Employment, Culture, Economic Affairs and Finance must collaborate with Ministries of Education to develop 'joined-up' literacy visions, strategies and policies.
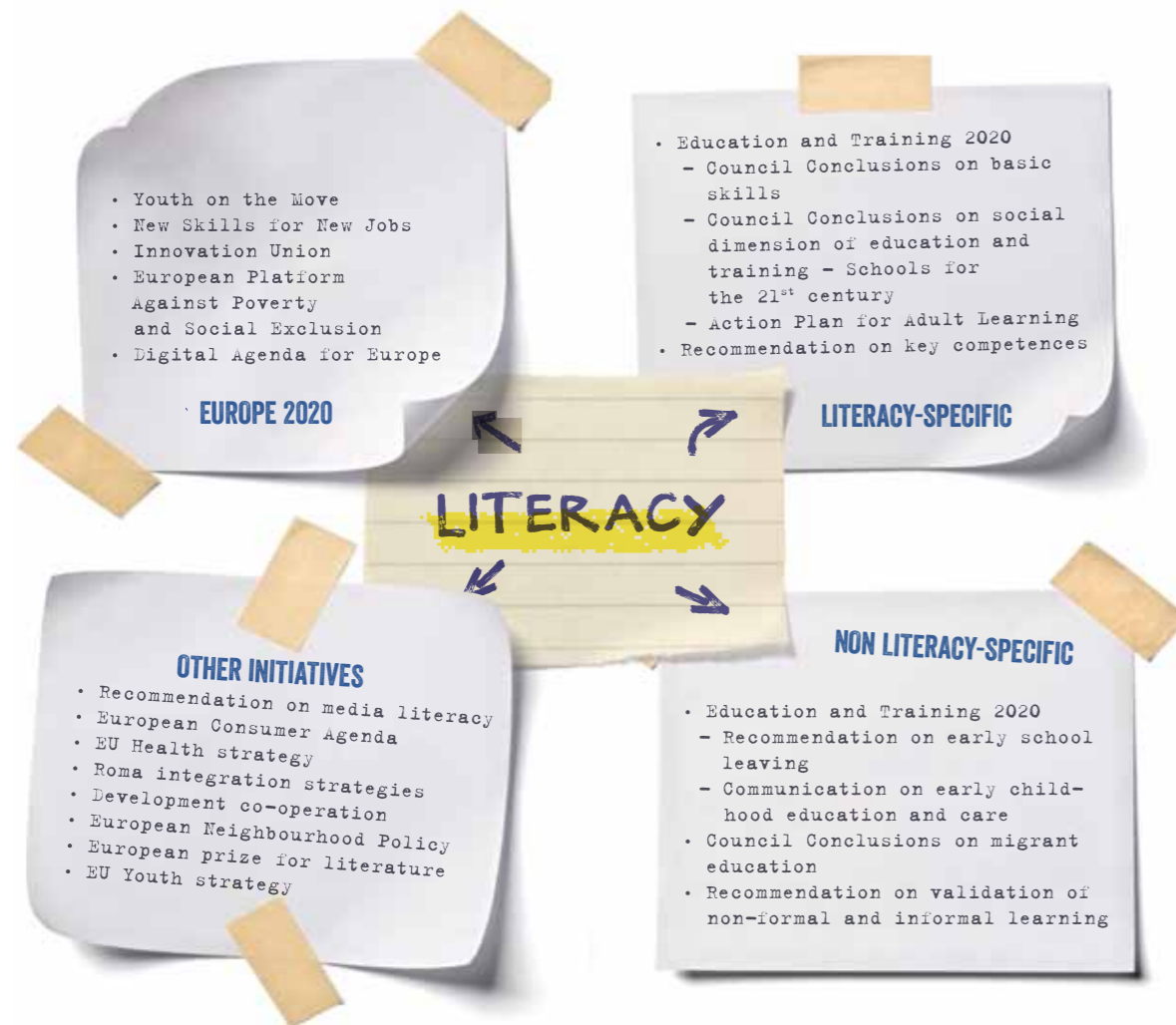
At European level, there are at least 22 initiatives by the European Commission that have a substantial literacy dimension. How the literacy dimension can help achieve its objectives needs to be assessed for each one. Leading by example, as an urgent follow-up to this report, the European Commission should bring the different initiatives together to ensure coordinated action in tackling the literacy issue.

### ACROSS AGES

A vision underlying literacy strategies should be built around all stages of life, stretching from birth, through the school years and adulthood into retirement. Literacy strategies should not just focus on children's development, nor should they deal exclusively with adult education. This approach necessarily involves the entire range of relevant individuals and organisations. Family literacy programmes in particular can play an essential role in policies which cover the whole spectrum of lifelong learning (see also Chapter 03).

### ACROSS POLITICAL TIMETABLES

Despite the urgency of the literacy challenge, national and European strategies must focus on long-term improvements, and be matched by governmental commitments and budgets accordingly. There are no quick fixes for poor literacy. Achieving our ambitions will take time. What we do need, is for all players to work towards the same goals and more transparency about what works and what does not work.

At times educational policy suffers the consequences of 'reform churn', with new ministers launching novel strategies before the previous approach has had time to take effect, let alone be assessed. But successful leadership in literacy is a long game. Successful school reformers, for example, have benefited from long periods of stability, allowing time to implement and consolidate change[45]. Cross-party, long-term approaches and stable ownership are more effective and efficient, particularly in the area of literacy. Finland owes much of its current literacy achievement to solidly based school reforms dating back to the 1970s. That said, leadership also means keeping an open mind to innovative approaches aimed at addressing structural problems.

## 2.3
### SETTING THE STAGE FOR LITERACY DEVELOPMENT

All literacy visions and strategies need to take into account four elements:
• raising awareness;
• providing evidence;
• recognising literacy as the basis for education;
• creating sustained commitment.

### RAISING AWARENESS

Poor literacy is a hidden problem. Children hide it from their teachers, parents hide it from their children, and workers hide it from their employers. Increasing the visibility of low literacy is a precondition for individuals and society to acknowledge the problem fully and address the stigma unjustifiably associated with it. The media and other opinion formers have an important role to play to de-stigmatise the issue, thereby encouraging people with poor literacy to overcome the shame of admitting to their low literacy skills and seek help.

Many NGOs and other community organisations already recognise the need for good literacy for all. But to put the issue on the agenda, active engagement of the media is crucial. Europe needs larger movements and campaigns receiving more support from governments, businesses and individuals. NGOs also help stimulate community spirit around literacy, encouraging volunteering in schools, libraries and religious institutions, to help children, adolescents and adults develop this most fundamental skill.

In **POLAND**, in 2001, the campaign 'All of Poland Reads to Kids' was launched with the aim to raise awareness about the importance of daily reading to children. In June 2002, the Foundation organised the First National Week of Reading to Children, with active involvement of more than 150 villages, towns and cities. This number has grown to over 2 800 by the year 2012. To reach a broader public, the Foundation produced five television advertisements, 14 short films with celebrities reading to their own children, 11 clips with soap opera actors reading to their soap opera children, and eight clips with popular television presenters reading to children. In May 2004, the Foundation initiated a large-scale campaign in support of libraries. Almost 6 000 books have been sent to libraries as a result.

In the **UNITED KINGDOM**, a 2011 London Evening Standard newspaper campaign 'Get London Reading' made literacy problems – and their solutions – front-page news. The aim is to make people aware of the issue through a series of investigative pieces, hard-hitting statistics, and compelling personal narratives. The campaign is boosting the number of reading volunteers, and raising money to fund the volunteers' training and support. More than 700 people have come forward to become volunteers. The campaign has brought together children who cannot read, people who can read and have time to contribute, donors who want to help fund and facilitate this process, and an organisation, Volunteer Reading Help, that has expertise in making all this happen.

In **ITALY** the programme 'Nati per leggere' ('Born to read') has since 1999 promoted reading to children from a very early age. This is a nationwide programme that aims at involving the community in order to give children a better chance to grow and develop from an intellectual and emotional point of view. The organisation is based on a network that includes librarians, paediatricians, teachers, and associations willing to put their energies into the project. At a local level, a commitment is undertaken to realise the project with the greatest flexibility and adaptation to the different situations[46].

In the **NETHERLANDS**, 'Stichting Lezen & Schrijven' was originally established in 2004. The initial goal was to raise awareness, based around the notion of the 'literacy chain' (from young children to adults). Through out the year, high profile campaigns and activities involve a broad range of players – from formerly illiterate people who serve as literacy ambassadors to businesses and a group of 28 celebrities ('Forum A to Z'). The approach can certainly be replicated in other countries.

### BUILDING ON EVIDENCE

Effective literacy strategies are evidence-based. This means starting from a baseline study on the literacy situation of primary-aged children, adolescents and adults, and having a system for monitoring progress. Participation in international literacy surveys can provide the data needed for monitoring progress. Surveys such as PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study) and particularly PISA have contributed in a number of countries to raising awareness of the gaps in functional literacy among primary school children and teenagers respectively. Germany went through a 'PISA shock' after the publication of the PISA 2000 results, leading to a questioning of the whole structure of school education in many Länder (regions). The 2013 PIAAC (Programme for International Assessment of Adult Competences) survey will highlight adult skills in a similar way. In particular, it will give the first systematic view of the demands made on adults' literacy and numeracy skills by the digital age. The results should be carefully

studied and integrated in the development of literacy visions and strategies.

International surveys are not simply a 'health-check' for a country's literacy teaching. They are rich sources of data, providing evidence for improving learning. However, not all countries are using international literacy survey results as a real input in policy-making, often due to lack of capacity to analyse data and construct evidence-based policies. There are tremendous opportunities for Member States to make better use of the results of such surveys, something that cannot easily be done by each country on its own. Co-operation across the EU, supported financially by EU programmes, has an essential role in enhancing proper evidence-based policy approaches to redress literacy gaps.

In **FRANCE**, the 'Agence Nationale de Lutte contre l'Illetrisme' (ANLCI) implemented a national framework for combating illiteracy. One of the essential elements of this framework is that it involves every relevant actor. To count and profile people in situations of illiteracy, they used two studies:
• The assessment carried out among 17-year-olds during the 'Jour de Préparation à la Défense' ('Registration day for defence preparation'): 2002 results: 12 % of these young people were encountering difficulties in reading and writing, and half of them were coping with illiteracy, representing 6 % of the age group.
• The IVQ survey (Daily Life Information) carried out by the INSEE (National Institute of Economic and Statistical Information), in association with the main Ministry statistics offices and public research institutes, provides more detailed analysis.

## TREATING LITERACY AS AN ESSENTIAL PART OF THE HUMAN RIGHT TO EDUCATION

The right to education is enshrined both in the UN Convention on Human Rights and in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. As literacy is the gateway to learning and education, the right to education cannot be exercised without adequate literacy levels. Member States should provide a legal guarantee of the means to develop literacy, as well as reinforcing the political and societal commitment to it. A truly literate society is built on a firm legal basis, mobilising institutions and resources to meet the needs of individuals[47].

The right to literacy should translate into a right to support: nobody struggling with literacy should be left to struggle alone. All European citizens – children, adolescents and adults – should have a legal right to receive all the help reasonably required to become literate enough to achieve their full potential. There should be broadly accessible individualised learning support inside and outside school for all children, adolescents and adults struggling with literacy.

Under the **SWEDISH** Schools Act, pupils have a right to special support where they are unable to reach minimum knowledge objectives in the curriculum. Learning support is provided according to an individual learning plan. Parents have a right to challenge the decision of the school on provision or non-provision of learning support.

In **FINLAND**, a subjective right to learning support is given to all pupils through the Basic Education Act. If general support is not sufficient, there is a requirement that all pupils benefit from a multi-professional pedagogical assessment, as a basis for an individual learning plan.

## DEVELOPING AND COMMITTING TO A LONG-TERM GOAL

In order to address literacy in a structural manner, all players in society need to develop and commit to a dot on the horizon – and stick with it for a sustained period of time. For this ultimate goal, European societies should strive towards 100 % functional literacy. Governmental and societal players such as ministries, schools, employers and NGOs should commit themselves to achieving this and not giving up on anybody. Strategies and approaches can vary and the areas of focus may shift over time. Member States are best able to define shorter-term targets and budgets, translated into meaningful objectives for all actors. Yet this uncompromising ambition of 100 % functional literacy only makes sense if efforts towards it are based on a sense of co-responsibility and co-ownership among all players.

The current EU target is to lower the proportion of low-achieving 15-year-olds in reading skills below 15 % by 2020. This target is equivalent to Level 2 in PISA ('basic reading tasks') and confronts Europe with an enormous challenge for the next seven years. However, it is not ambitious enough. In fact, Europe should commit to the pursuit of a longer-term objective: for all European citizens to reach Level 3 ('tasks of moderate complexity'), which, according to the OECD definition[48], is the minimum threshold enabling people to achieve lifelong literacy requirements. Thus we recommend the establishment, and implementation, of robust metrics dealing with Level 3 literacy in order to monitor our joint progress towards this more ambitious target. To achieve this end, we must strive to develop innovative learning approaches, motivating people to continue to develop their literacy skills so that an ever larger proportion

of Europeans can achieve level 3 literacy. We recognise that the timescale for the measuring of effective educational reform is one of generations. Therefore we recommend that European ministers agree upon a 'Literate Europe' strategy, comprising not only short- and medium-term goals benchmarked against level 2 literacy performance, but also long-term strategies capable of nurturing the unrelenting ambition of bridging the gap to a level 3 literacy target for the maximum population possible.

## PUTTING EFFECTIVE LITERACY STRATEGIES INTO PRACTICE

National literacy strategies are essential to putting literacy at the heart of public policy. They must not be just a paper exercise, but should be founded on a strong vision of the importance of literacy for citizens and for the whole of society.

National literacy strategies require strong leadership and should:
• be founded on a clear vision that spans across different policy departments as well as businesses, trade unions and NGOs from within and outside the educational sector;
• span the entire lifetime of citizens;
• include all different dimensions needed to address illiteracy, from reading promotion to awareness-raising campaigns, from support to struggling readers to the quality of literacy teaching and teacher education, from literacy at the workplace to involvement of volunteers, and from actions at national level to action at local and regional levels;
• be based on evidence;
• allow for testing of new approaches to find structural solutions for recurring issues such as struggling readers and reaching more adults;
• be adequately funded;
• set out a framework for national, regional and local action;
• have clear educational goals; and
• assess regularly whether people meet minimum standards and offer support for those who do not.

In the **NETHERLANDS**, the 'Meijerink Commission' (2008) defined reference levels of performance in literacy and numeracy from primary school to adult education, including the minimum level necessary to function fully in society. These reference levels have been endorsed by several sector-organisations. Different action plans and a dedicated website have been launched in order to promote the use of reference levels[49].

The **PORTUGUESE** National Reading Plan (2006) focuses not only on children through a 'childhood-wide' approach, but also on the entire lifespan. It introduced one compulsory hour of reading per day in early childhood education and care and primary education, and one hour of in-class reading per week in lower secondary. The Plan also provides nationwide continuing professional development programmes in literacy instruction for teachers, and puts a strong emphasis on family literacy and inter-generational approaches. It also has a strand of promotion of reading developed together with public libraries, focusing on book acquisition, TV programmes and media campaigns, and a collection of age-appropriate e-Books. Portugal is among the countries with the most spectacular improvement in PISA-results in the past decade.

Percentage of low achievers in reading literacy

**PISA 2009**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| FINLAND | 8,1 | |
| ESTONIA | 13,3 | |
| NETHERLANDS | 14,3 | |
| POLAND | 15 | |
| DENMARK | 15,2 | |
| IRELAND | 17,2 | |
| SWEDEN | 17,4 | |
| PORTUGAL | 17,6 | |
| HUNGARY | 17,6 | |
| LATVIA | 17,6 | |
| BELGIUM | 17,7 | |
| UK | 18,4 | |
| GERMANY | 18,5 | |
| SPAIN | 19,6 | |
| EU (26 COUNTRIES)* | 19,7 | |
| FRANCE | 19,8 | |
| ITALY | 21 | |
| SLOVENIA | 21,2 | |
| GREECE | 21,3 | |
| SLOVAKIA | 22,3 | |
| CZECH REPUBLIC | 23,1 | |
| LITHUANIA | 24,3 | |
| LUXEMBOURG | 26 | |
| AUSTRIA | 27,5 | |
| MALTA | 36,3 | |
| ROMANIA | 40,4 | |
| BULGARIA | 41 | |

0   5%   10%   15%   20%   25%   30%   35%   40%   45%

Share of 15-year-olds scoring at or below Level 2
in PISA 2009

* Cyprus did not participate in PISA 2009.

Society as a whole needs to respond, not just the education sector.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

*One of the most prevailing myths is that the education system alone is responsible for reading and writing – a viewpoint that is not simply out of date but can hamper progress. Trends in society demand better literacy skills – and so society must find solutions. In order to achieve this, broad co-ownership across sectors, policy areas and political groups, service providers, stakeholder organisations, and even ages is crucial. Furthermore, the success of such co-ownership depends upon a coherent vision and strategy at EU and international levels, underpinned by raising awareness, providing evidence and creating sustained commitment among all actors.*

*In order to take things one step further, we need to identify the underlying preconditions for success to make improvement of literacy levels in Europe a reality.*

# 03

**TACKLING THE LITERACY CHALLENGE:**

# PRECONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS

*'Literacy is not a luxury, it is a right and a responsibility. If our world is to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century, we must harness the energy and creativity of all our citizens.'*

**BILL CLINTON**,
FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

*EU Member States must find the most efficient, effective ways of addressing the literacy needs of all their citizens. The routes to improvement will of course differ from country to country. However, there are three key issues that all Member States should focus on as they craft their own literacy solutions:*

*1. Creating a more literate environment*
*2. Improving the quality of teaching*
*3. Increasing participation and inclusion*

## 3.1
### A LITERATE ENVIRONMENT

A literate environment is one that acknowledges the importance of language and encourages and supports the literacy development of all, no matter what their age or background. It all starts with motivation. So the primary objective of a literate environment is to increase literacy motivation and engagement by encouraging and supporting reading and writing for pleasure. This means cultivating a culture of reading, increasing the visibility and availability of reading materials and promoting reading in all its forms, through diverse materials, online and offline.

#### THE FAMILY CONTEXT PLAYS A CENTRAL ROLE

The family is generally recognised as the most influential structure in society. It is no different when it comes to literacy. Motivation and support for engaging with reading begin in the home. Parents and carers are children's first teachers, and many of the most important steps towards good lifelong literacy are taken in the home.

The family structure is often overlooked when addressing literacy-related issues. Instead, the main focus is on schools. Yet for a number of reasons, no literacy approach can be successful without including a family dimension. This requires a shift in mindset and development of family programmes that should be conceived across generations, not just focused on one age group.

At all stages of childhood, parents play a central role in their children's literacy development. Children spend far more time at home with their families and only approximately one-third of each weekday in school. Children can also support parents' literacy growth. One of the key motivators driving adults to improve their literacy skills is the desire to be a better parent: to be able to read to their children, help them with homework, and serve as a literacy role model.

It cannot be taken for granted that all homes are able to provide a sufficiently literate environment, either to support children's success in education, or to foster the literacy development of parents – or both. Some children start school not yet able to communicate clearly and confidently in the language of instruction. This means that many children – particularly those in poverty or whose home language is not that of the school – start school at a disadvantage, carrying this with them throughout their school careers. Parents themselves need to be equipped with sufficient literacy skills to support the language development of their children. If they have difficulties, these need to be recognised and the parents helped to overcome them. In other cases, parents need more support to become good reading role models and help their children develop good oral, print and digital literacy.

Effective support is available, but is not widespread enough. Throughout Europe, family literacy programmes teach parents how to help their children improve their reading and writing. These programmes achieve impressive results,

39

including when targeted at the most disadvantaged homes[50]. Such programmes work best when they combine techniques for teaching parents how to improve the child's literacy with training in parenting skills. This joint focus on cognitive and non-cognitive support has yielded significant social and economic gains for society, including higher secondary school graduation rates and better employment in adulthood[51]. Despite being effective and affordable tools for improving national literacy levels, family literacy programmes are under-used by policy-makers[52].
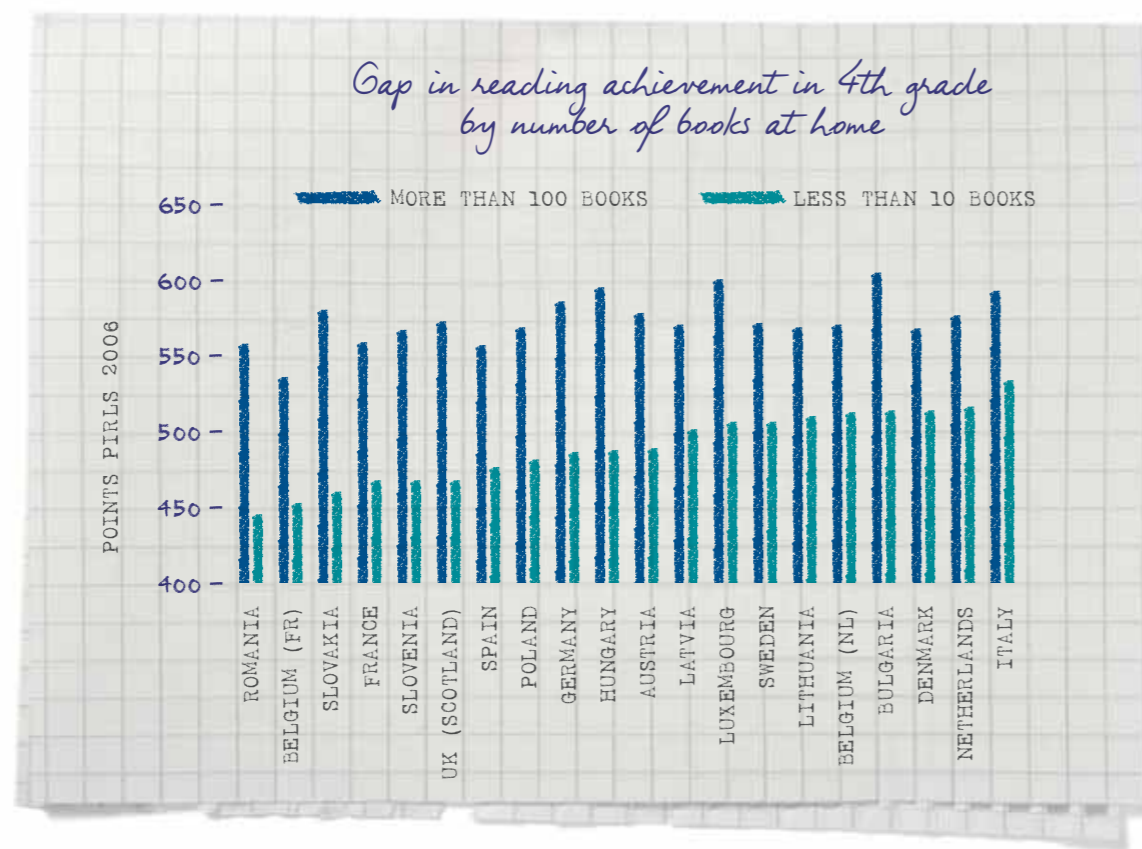
In **FRANCE**, the 'Action educative familiale' is aimed at parents whose own reading skills need development. Nathalie Bernard is a mother from Château-Chinon: 'The "family education programme", where I follow a literacy course, has brought me a lot of self-confidence and helped me to overcome being shy […] My children are happy that I am taking part. They see that I can help them better. They can ask me things for their homework, and I can help them without

having to say "go and see your Dad, I don't know or I don't understand."'

### BOOKS AND OTHER READING MATERIALS NEED TO BE VISIBLE AND AVAILABLE

The visibility and availability of books and other reading materials are key components of a reading culture at home, in schools and throughout society. Children growing up in homes with more books develop better reading skills, no matter what their social background[53]. Schools should provide a wide range of reading materials that attracts boys and girls of all ages and interests. School and public libraries can play a significant role in helping and inspiring pupils to find reading material that they can relate to.

The following chart of 9-11 year-olds' reading levels in relation to the number of books in the home is a graphic illustration of how important the literate environment is.



Gap in reading achievement in 4th grade by number of books at home

MORE THAN 100 BOOKS — LESS THAN 10 BOOKS

POINTS PIRLS 2006

650 — 600 — 550 — 500 — 450 — 400 —

ROMANIA, BELGIUM (FR), SLOVAKIA, FRANCE, SLOVENIA, UK (SCOTLAND), SPAIN, POLAND, GERMANY, HUNGARY, AUSTRIA, LATVIA, LUXEMBOURG, SWEDEN, LITHUANIA, BELGIUM (NL), BULGARIA, DENMARK, NETHERLANDS, ITALY

The availability of books is not a solution on its own. Books do not read themselves. Parents and teachers and others not only need to provide children with books, but also to take the time to read to children and engage them in storytelling. In addition to being read to, children need literacy role models. Families where reading is valued as a pleasurable activity, where there is active conversation about books, provide a breeding ground for interest in reading[54]. The involvement of parents in reading activities of their 15-year-old children has a known positive effect on reading performance of 15-year-olds[55].

Several countries have implemented book-gifting programmes based on Bookstart. The original book-gifting programme, Bookstart, was initiated in Birmingham, **UNITED KINGDOM**, in 1992 by the Book Trust, a charity based in London, and eventually spread to all areas of the UK and, at least in intention, to the parents of all newborns in the country. Studies in Birmingham suggested that, when children in the original cohort were aged 2½-3, they showed greater engagement with books than a comparison group (and at this point the parents also showed better ability to help their children), and that, when the children were aged 5 (i.e. at school entry) and again at age 7, they were ahead of comparison groups in both literacy and numeracy[56].

'Lesestart', **GERMANY**, is a three-stage project to promote reading to young children. The first stage runs from 2011 to 2013, and focuses on parents of one-year-olds: they receive a book and information about how to read to their child. The second stage (2013-2015) is focused on libraries, and will offer a further set of Lesestart books (and information) to three-year-olds. The final stage runs from 2016 onwards: Lesestart books will be provided to primary schools.

In **FINLAND**, a maternity pack is available for free to all families with a new-born child including clothes and other necessary equipment for the new-born and the parents. The maternity pack also includes a baby's first picture book, together with guidance for parents about the importance of early interaction with the baby.

In the **NETHERLANDS**, there are various programmes that work with local libraries and the local agencies for parents and new-born babies (the 'Consultatiebureaus'). The aim is to involve all parents and babies in reading activities, and get them into the libraries, where librarians support the parents in reading activities with the children. Some programmes also include raising the literacy level of the staff of 'Consultatiebureaus'.

'The First Book of My Baby' in **POLAND**, a project with educational films and lullabies to be distributed for free among all mothers of newborns (yearly, c. 400 000), will be launched in 2012 by the 'ABC XXI – All of Poland Reads to Kids' Foundation.

Books should be visible, available and used not only at home, but in society at large. In an age where small bookshops are disappearing from the urban landscape due to competition from online retailers, we need to find new, creative ways of keeping books in community life. More than ever, libraries have a key role in making books and stories available to everyone, while also making reading more visible. This may involve creative solutions, such as putting libraries in shopping centres or in train stations routinely used by commuters, or making reading materials visible and available in family-focused restaurants.

In 1998, the association Läsrörelsen, **SWEDISH** McDonald's and Munkedals paper mills started discussions about how they could stimulate children's reading. Two years later, 1.2 million books for children and young adults had been included in the 'Happy Meal'. Since 2004, children's books and picture books have been found in Happy Meals for one month each autumn. The books are by authors and illustrators from Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Norway and are translated into each country's language. In 2003, the Reading Movement and McDonald's won an Arts and Business Award for 'Best Co-operation Culture & Industry 2003'.

Creating a more literate environment will help stimulate a culture of reading, i.e. where reading for pleasure is seen as the norm for all children and adults. Such a culture will fuel reading motivation and reading achievement: people who like to read, read more. Because they read more, they read better, and because they read better they read more: a virtuous circle which benefits individuals, families and society as a whole[57]. A true culture of reading will not only encourage more and better reading, it should encourage those who read poorly to seek support and provide that support when and where it is needed.

In **LITHUANIA**, the 'Reading Promotion Programme' was launched in 2006 and is based on collaboration between the Ministries of Culture and Education. The programme promotes initiatives such as the 'book of the year', book listings for adolescents, and public readings with celebrity actors in non-conventional places, including parks, bridges, manors or even the roof of a school.

Every September, the **HUNGARIAN** Reading Association organises a 'National Day of Folk Tales' in hundreds of libraries around the country, in public and school libraries and also in theatres, museums, teacher training institutions and kindergartens, with storytellers, puppet shows, lectures about the meaning of folk tales and the roles of parents and teachers. In 2012, the focus will be on Roma folk tales.

### MAKE USE OF THE FULL DIVERSITY OF MATERIALS

There should not be a hierarchical ranking of reading material. Books, comic books, newspapers, magazines and online reading materials are equally valid and important entry points to reading for children and adults alike. A literate, motivating environment is one that encourages and supports a wide diversity of reading materials and reading practices. Books and other printed texts are important. But in recognition of the digital opportunities, people should be encouraged to read what they enjoy reading, in whatever format is most pleasurable and convenient for them. This includes reading and writing online.

Computers, tablets and smartphones provide a clear, strong motivation for reading and writing, one that is particularly evident among young people[58]. Social networking tools stimulate teenagers to spend a significant percentage of their leisure time reading and writing[59]. The challenge for the formal education system is to capitalise on young people's informal digital literacy practices. In their leisure time, people of all ages read different types of text using a broad range of tools such as printed books, tablets, computers, and Internet sites. All these activities should be considered as valid and valuable in relation to literacy development.

In **SPAIN**, the 'Plan for the Promotion of Reading', under the authority of the Ministry of Culture, builds on an extensive yearly monitoring of reading habits across Spain. Every year, it publishes a survey of reading habits (Observatorio del libro y la lectura), raising national awareness through the media. The plan aims to assist the public library network in the transition to new reading habits, including digital reading. It organises specific instruction within initial teacher education on contemporary authors. It builds on a large network of partnerships, primarily with the Publishers' Association, but also with other relevant authorities, such as the Prisons Authority.

## 3.2
## QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

Learning to read and write does not just happen – people need to be motivated to learn. Similarly, high-quality teaching does not just happen – it requires high-quality teachers and instructors. In addition, the context in which learning and teaching takes place also helps determine the effect on both learners and teachers. In other words, all elements are interrelated and no one aspect is sufficient in itself. While cultures differ from country to country and there is no exact 'blueprint', a number of skills and characteristics are considered central to making teachers outstanding. They[60]:
· have excellent knowledge of how literacy is learned, how to teach reading and writing, and how to detect and handle learning difficulties, and are able to use a mix of approaches to meet the needs of individual learners;
· increase learners' motivation to read and write, and their skills in doing so;
· have high expectations for all pupils, whatever their background; and
· have a strong personal interest in and passion for teaching and reading in particular.

More broadly, just as in any workplace, the school system must create a positive work environment, stimulating teachers to thrive. Countries with the highest levels of literacy achievement do not just have highly talented, well-qualified, well-trained teachers, they have teachers who are trusted to make key decisions about what to teach, how to teach, and what materials to use[61]. This autonomy is used not to concentrate on one or two pedagogical strategies, but to use a broad range of integrated approaches based on individual pupils' needs[62]. Teachers need a school environment in which continuous learning for teachers is stimulated.

### A COHERENT LITERACY CURRICULUM

Too often, curricula have a limited view of literacy, namely as just the ability to decode and encode, read and write, or, if somewhat more advanced, to produce a varied set of texts of different genres appropriate to different situations. Over and above these basic aims, however, the literacy curriculum should focus on developing a set of composite skills that will enable learners to decode and negotiate critically the cultural, social, political and ideological aspects of language use. It is therefore essential to cultivate critical literacy skills, being able to 'read' culture, identities and ideologies and different uses of language.

A curriculum that maximises language and literacy development fosters high-quality teaching, allowing the mix of adequate instructional strategies to vary to address individual needs[63]. Such a curriculum should provide a coherent framework for the age-related development of reading abilities, not only in primary education, but also in early childhood education and care (ECEC), in secondary education and adult education. Key points include the following:
· Emphasising emergent literacy activities in the ECEC curriculum. Fostering early literacy activities in a broad sense (reading books, telling tales, speaking about books) in ECEC leads to better reading skills later in primary education[64].
· Including instruction in reading strategies. These are useful tools for any student in various reading and learning situations in suitably challenging tasks. Using strategies independently builds children's persistence and academic resilience[65].
· Allowing adequate time for reading instruction. School curricula should allow time for free reading activities, so that pupils may choose their reading material and their own pace while reading. PIRLS 2006 showed that in 4th grade not only the overall instruction time, but also the instructional time for languages and reading, varied considerably among European countries[66].
· Mainstreaming reading literacy across the curriculum, addressing reading aspects in the subject curricula throughout secondary education, whether in academic or vocational routes. Curricula need to integrate more reading and comprehension aspects in other subject areas besides the national language, such as mathematics, science and technology.
· Developing a curriculum for adult literacy. For adults, curricula should focus on acquiring literacy skills through practical, real-life and/or workplace examples.

Half of EU Member States have introduced major changes to their reading curriculum in the past 10 years, while the other half intends to do so in the next few years. This is welcome, and it has to be done carefully and systematically. Curriculum reforms and their implementation take time and in order to succeed initial teacher education and teachers' continuing professional development have to be aligned with the new developments.

In **CYPRUS**, the national curriculum reform that started in 2008 yielded a new language and literacy curriculum, which was introduced in the school system in September 2011 after partial implementation in 2010. The new curriculum aims to cultivate reading and writing skills as part of a broader critical literacy agenda, moving beyond functional literacy to the honing of critical language-awareness skills. Literacy skills are viewed as dynamic and flexible

and the aim of literacy learning is (a) to enable students to control consciously a host of varied literacy skills and (b) to develop critical approaches to the interrelations between literacy practices, society and culture.

### ESTABLISHING AGE-SPECIFIC ACHIEVEMENT GOALS AND STANDARDS

Learners progress at different speeds. Standards of reading achievement allow teachers, parents and school leaders to understand the rates of progress of learners, identify individual strengths and weaknesses, and allocate attention and resources accordingly. Such standards should be integrated in the curriculum and adequately reflected in assessment tools. Minimum standards should be adopted, entitling pupils who are not yet able to meet them to receive special support. Adult literacy curricula should also develop standards, allowing adult learners to track their progress and teachers to further individualise provision. It is essential that all assessments against age-specific achievement goals and standards give access to extra support where they show this is needed.

All EU Member States have defined learning objectives in reading to be reached at the end of primary and secondary education cycles. However, only a few EU countries – such as UK (England) and Lithuania – have detailed standards at each grade (school year), which form the basis of assessments allowing early identification of reading difficulties. These standard-based assessments can be helpful for teachers and school leaders in judging children's progress and for targeting additional reading support. These standards are not the same as national tests, often used for ranking schools in 'league tables' or for selecting students for different academic streams.

In 2006, the **GERMAN** state of Hamburg introduced the 'Sprachförderkonzept'. In every school year from 1 to 8, all pupils are tested on their speech, reading and spelling achievement with standardised tests. All pupils across the city with low scores (below the 10th percentile) get additional support from specially trained language/literacy teachers, based on an individual remediation plan, normally in small groups in the afternoon (Germany has half-day schools), until their achievement improves. Schools with a large number of low achievers get additional financial support. Schools are obliged to develop a concept for remediation and are evaluated every year. The evaluation report on this programme shows that the number of low achievers has been reduced in recent years[67]. The overall approach is powerful in giving support to those who need it, providing more money for schools in problem areas, training teachers to be 'language teachers', testing for language, reading and

spelling, evaluating the progress of the children, and reporting on the effectiveness of the approach.

## TEACHER EDUCATION, RECRUITMENT AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

There is little direct evidence or research on the effect of recruitment policies, or teachers' qualifications levels on student's literacy performance. However, it is clear that high-quality teachers and teaching lead to better learning outcomes, including literacy performance. The quality of teaching lies at the heart of development of literacy skills for every age group.

There are two key aspects to recruiting high quality teachers:
- recruiting teachers selectively;
- training those teachers well, both at the start of and throughout their careers.

### Recruitment and qualifications

Countries with the most effective education systems, such as Finland and Singapore, tend to have the most selective teacher recruitment policies[68]. In these cases, the teaching profession is considered and treated as a cornerstone of society; acknowledging that teachers enable a country to maximise its future human capital. Only the most talented are encouraged to apply, and there are strict entry criteria based on competence and motivation. This approach is crucial to help boost the status of the profession. Boosting status also requires good pay, good working conditions, a high degree of professional autonomy and high qualification requirements – for all teachers[69]. Teachers in adult education need to develop specialist skills for educating adult learners. See Chapter 04, Adults.

### Teacher education

Excellent initial teacher education is essential. The better qualified teachers are, the better their learners' results. But qualifications alone are not enough; teachers need a high level of professional competence. Prospective teachers should be taught detailed subject-specific knowledge about literacy (e.g. the processes involved in reading and writing), general pedagogical skills (e.g. controlling and motivating classes), and a wide range of literacy-specific teaching strategies, including those for word identification and comprehension; they should also be taught appropriate assessment techniques and how to diagnose and address reading problems[70]. However, most European countries' official curricular documents do not have clear guidelines on the competences that teachers need to teach reading and writing[71]. Moreover, where such guidelines exist, they most often do not include

core skills, such as tackling reading difficulties, assessment skills for reading, or selection of reading materials[72].

### Using teaching techniques adapted to the learners' needs

No single teaching strategy works for all learners. Good teachers know this and adjust their teaching accordingly. Since there is no single best method for teaching literacy, all teachers should be familiar with a range of strategies. Likewise all teachers must be aware of the importance of teaching in ways that are motivating and engaging and yet optimally challenging for children. All students need the experience of success in meeting challenges so that they can develop their agency and sense of self-efficacy, and thus become more motivated to read, which in turn gives students opportunities to practice their reading literacy[73]. The most successful instructional practices in ADORE – the project studying good practices in teaching adolescent struggling readers in European countries – focused on improving students self-efficacy in reading as the main objective of instruction[74].

Good teachers also make skilled use of assessment tools; to remedy a problem, teachers need to recognise it. Effective assessment tools help teachers identify and diagnose reading problems in their early stages, before they grow into major difficulties[75]. Adaptive computer tests, provided they have a good theoretical foundation, can provide reliable and instant feedback to teachers, providing a strong tool for quickly diagnosing strengths and weaknesses of their students. Key to remedying problems is greater use of qualitative feedback, or 'formative assessment', rather than scores. Formative assessment is one of the most powerful teaching tools known to the profession[76]. It gives teachers and students timely, individualised information about pupils' reading problems, so that instruction can be based on individual students' strengths and weaknesses. This can be particularly beneficial for low-achieving pupils – such pupils should be assessed regularly by teachers who are well trained in recognising reading problems – but this can lead to stigmatisation and further disadvantage if badly handled[77].

Turning secondary schools into institutions where literacy is their core business is a matter for school leaders and teachers, but not just for them. Policy-makers also have a role to play, to ensure that their initial training enables teachers in secondary school to play their role as teachers of reading, and to give school leaders incentives and support to introduce school-wide literacy strategies. This is not even a matter of investing much more money; it is more a question of changing mindsets, setting clear priorities and adjusting organisation and governance structures.

In Schleswig-Holstein, **GERMANY**, 'Reading Empowers' ('Lesen macht stark') targeted some of the weakest performing 210 secondary schools in the region (Land), reaching 40 000 students between 2006 and 2010. The intervention was based on additional individual reading support underpinned by a school-wide reading development strategy and teacher training in early identification of reading difficulties across subjects. An evaluation of the project using comparison groups shows the programme helped many low-achieving schools catch up, but for those schools that did not improve more effort is needed[78].

In **PORTUGAL**, 'The Book Time' programme is designed to stimulate children's and adolescents' interest in books, introducing reading, games and other recreational/educational activities with books into classroom activities. The programme promotes meetings with authors and illustrators, book fairs, competitions and recreational activities based on books. It provides technical orientation on reading promotion and a budget for school libraries to purchase different types of book to be used in classroom reading activities and promote independent contact with books[79].

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: MINDSET OF CONTINUOUS LEARNING

Training cannot end once young teachers are in the classroom. The best teachers are not just trained well, they are trained often, throughout their entire careers. Effective Continuous Professional Development gives teachers opportunities to reflect on their work in the classroom in light of research evidence about effective practice in teaching reading and writing[80]. It also gives teachers an opportunity to keep up with new developments in the field. Governments should promote continuous learning about literacy teaching, and for expanding teachers' capacities to personalise teaching.

Digital literacy is a particular challenge. Teachers across Europe rank ICT skills as their second-largest training need[81]. Member States need to make significant improvements in ICT-related teacher training, not least in the area of literacy, where ICT is very poorly integrated into pedagogy[82]. These issues should be a focus of more continuous professional development (CPD) programmes, and should also play a more central role in Initial Teacher Education.

## STRUGGLING LEARNERS NEED INDIVIDUALISED SUPPORT

Struggling readers, whatever their age, need one-to-one or small-group-based instruction. This support should be provided by well-trained literacy specialists for as long as it

takes learners to catch up with their peers. Neither schools nor parents should accept the myth of the 'late developer'. If children are falling behind in reading, they need targeted early support from teachers with specialist literacy expertise: otherwise they are likely to fall even further behind.

There is a high demand for remedial instruction in reading across the EU. At least one third of 4th grade pupils who, in the opinion of their teachers, should get remedial instruction do not have access to it. In 2006, only 7.9 % of pupils across the EU had access on a permanent basis to a support person to help with reading[83].

Teaching assistants and support staff are often not perceived as core educational provision, making these posts prone to budget cuts. However, the benefits of investing in a network of in-class support to teachers – whether in the form of reading specialists, teaching assistants or special needs teachers specialised in reading difficulties – far outweigh the costs of this provision[84].

Adult literacy teaching also needs to be learner-centred. Because many learners had very negative experiences of compulsory schooling, it is important to have a safe, supportive environment that recognises knowledge gained through informal and non-formal learning. Adults are elective learners – the vast majority attend courses because they want to, not because they are required to – so adult literacy provision must appeal to their objectives and interests.

### CHANGE OF MINDSET ON DYSLEXIA

Today's children are increasingly expected to progress at a 'normal' rate in reading. Those who fall behind are considered problematic and are often diagnosed as dyslexic. However, such labelling is misleading. There are many conflicting definitions of dyslexia; a British review published in 2004 found 28 definitions in the English-language literature alone, only two of which contained the same criteria, and one of which even omitted reading difficulties[85]. Because definitions and diagnostic criteria vary so much, estimates of the prevalence of dyslexia also vary widely, with a range from 4 % to 10 %.

Despite the absence of an agreed definition of dyslexia, the medical connotation is that it is an incurable dysfunction (illness) and difficult to overcome. But dyslexia is not a distinct category; the definitions overlap with other reading difficulties[86]. The majority of struggling readers can make excellent progress[87].

A diagnosis of dyslexia can give teachers, schools and parents a false sense of comfort by seemingly having identified

the issue. Children, and particularly parents, can find it a relief to be given a diagnosis of the reading problem, but there is a risk of a vicious circle of disempowerment and low expectations[88]. In fact, it can give an incentive not to address reading difficulties educationally, leaving the problem-solving to others outside the classroom. Perhaps most importantly, the common perception of dyslexia as incurable can undermine a child's self-confidence, reducing motivation to improve. A diagnosis of dyslexia can even be harmful if children receive only 'alternative' therapeutic interventions, for example all kinds of training of auditory or visual perception and movement programmes. There is no empirical evidence that these therapies are effective[89].

There is an urgent need for a change in mindset and awareness among parents, teachers, reading specialists, educational psychologists and those offering medical and physiological solutions. We recommend that all concerned should agree that:
• anyone can learn to read, given adequate time and method;
• teachers need more support inside the classroom for helping struggling readers;
• strenuous efforts should be made to prevent reading problems (family literacy programmes, literacy environment in kindergarten, approved methods of teaching to begin reading, early diagnosis of weaknesses in the reading process) and to support struggling readers;
• struggling readers need primarily educational support to improve their reading skills, and psychological support to build up motivation and self-confidence (which will also arise from improving their skills); and
• individual learners' needs should be carefully identified and provision made for those needs, rather than stigmatising or categorising needs based on definitions[90].

### PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS REQUIRE SPECIAL ATTENTION

People with special needs often experience serious obstacles and even exclusion. Everyone should have a chance to develop good literacy skills. This requires appropriate curricula, instruction and supportive learning environments. Examples include:
• transcribing printed materials into braille, so that blind persons are able to participate equally and autonomously in every field of the literate world; and
• recognising that deaf people are bilingual (when sign language is their mother tongue), and to organise their literacy in their first and second languages accordingly.
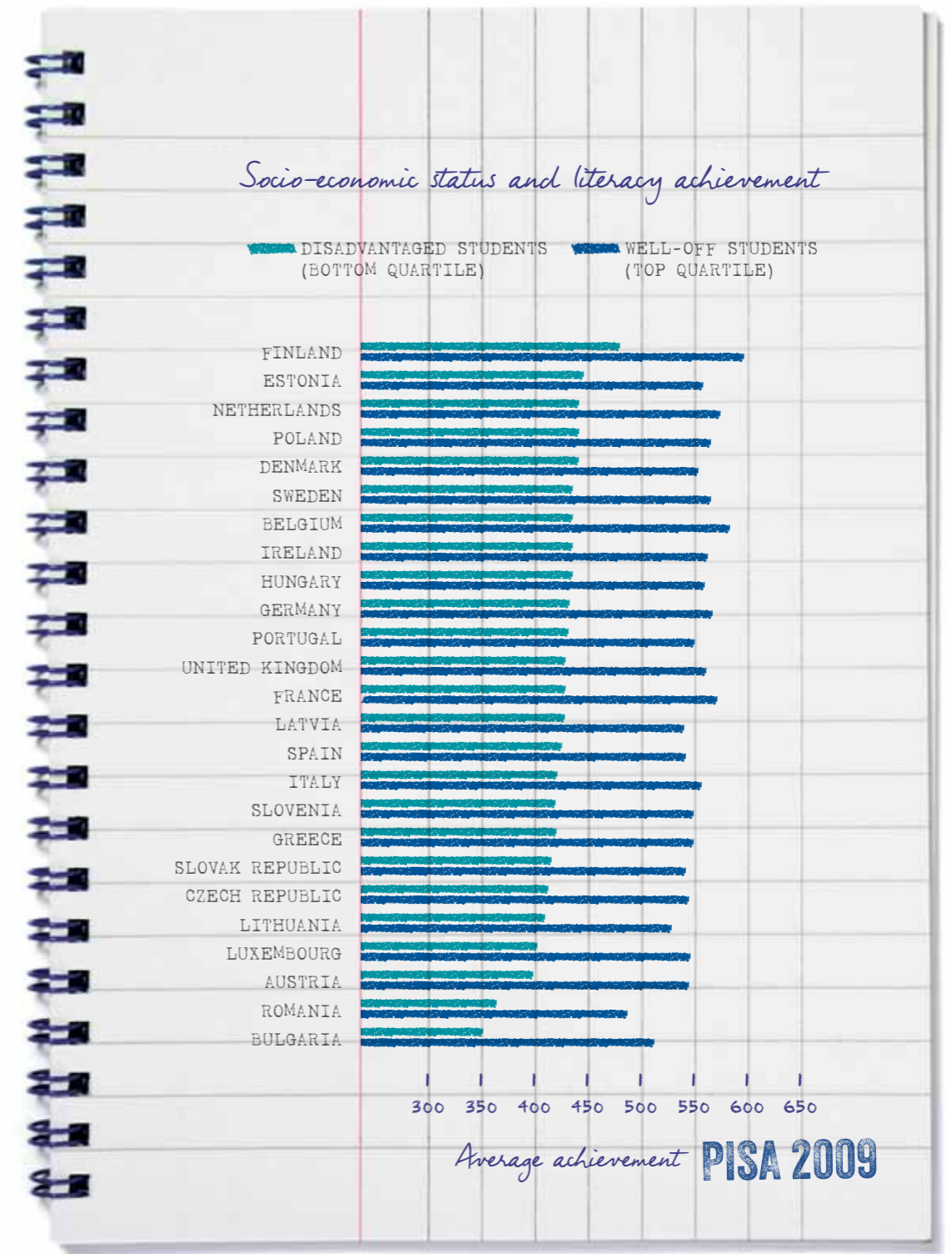
## 3.3
### PARTICIPATION AND INCLUSION

Access to education means little without high-quality provision and specialised support targeted at those who most need it. Almost all children participate in formal education for at least 10 years; yet, as we have seen, nearly one in five reaches the age of 15 without having developed good reading skills. To close the gaps between those who have good literacy skills and those who struggle, Europe needs to place greater emphasis on inclusion and fair access: participation coupled with quality, and bolstered by specialised support for everyone who needs it.

There are four main literacy achievement gaps that Europe must address. These are the socio-economic gap, the gap between migrants and native-born students, the gender gap and the digital gap.

### THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC GAP

Poverty increases the likelihood of poor literacy, and vice versa, but poverty does not create poor literacy. Some Member States are better than others at helping children and adults develop good literacy skills, whatever their socio-economic status. It also means that socio-economic gaps can be overcome.

Successful school systems – those that have above average overall scores, coupled with below average socio-economic inequalities – provide students of all backgrounds with similar opportunities to learn[91]. In contrast, school systems based on different expectations and directions for pupils tend to produce less equitable outcomes without improvements in overall scores[92]. Early selection (around age 10-12) of children into different school types can lower achievement, especially for those from disadvantaged backgrounds, by concentrating them in less prestigious 'tracks'. Making students repeat a year also leads to poor literacy outcomes for individuals and nations[93]. By addressing the design of their school systems, and monitoring the inter-schools variance in achievement, Member States could greatly reduce the socio-economic gap in participation and achievement.

*Socio-economic status and literacy achievement*

DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS (BOTTOM QUARTILE)    WELL-OFF STUDENTS (TOP QUARTILE)

FINLAND
ESTONIA
NETHERLANDS
POLAND
DENMARK
SWEDEN
BELGIUM
IRELAND
HUNGARY
GERMANY
PORTUGAL
UNITED KINGDOM
FRANCE
LATVIA
SPAIN
ITALY
SLOVENIA
GREECE
SLOVAK REPUBLIC
CZECH REPUBLIC
LITHUANIA
LUXEMBOURG
AUSTRIA
ROMANIA
BULGARIA

300  350  400  450  500  550  600  650

*Average achievement* **PISA 2009**

### THE MIGRANT GAP

Migrant students have lower average reading levels in the language of instruction in all but Hungary[94]. This is true even for second-generation migrant-background students and some ethnic minorities, especially Roma[95]. Some of this under-performance is driven by poverty, but not all. To reap the full benefits of a diverse and dynamic Europe, Member States will need to do a better job of supporting migrants. This includes language and literacy screening for newly arrived migrant students and pre-school children, as well as individualised support in inclusive settings. It also includes mentorship schemes and outreach activities to migrant and minority parents, involving the whole school community.

Migrant children develop better literacy in the language of instruction if they also develop excellent literacy in their native language[96]. Bilingualism should no longer be perceived as a deficit, but turned into an asset which can be used and cherished in schools. Such principles also apply to many learners from linguistic minorities.

Adult migrants tend to fall into three different categories:
• those who are literate in their own language and skilled in the host country language;
• those who are literate in their own language but need host language instruction;
• those who are not literate in any language.

If teaching approaches do not take account of these differences, adult migrants will not receive the targeted instruction they need to improve their skills.

In **SWEDEN**, a 'Swedish as a Second Language' curriculum has been developed for immigrant children. This curriculum stresses the right of multilingual children to have their language development fully supported in both Swedish and their mother tongue. Support for both mother tongue and host language instruction is essential. Adult migrants benefit from free, curriculum-based teaching by qualified teachers of Swedish as a second language. The recent Swedish for Immigrant Adults reforms include assessment to help educators shape training to meet the specific needs of migrants, speeding social and economic integration.

In **PORTUGAL**, 'Entreculturas' was established as early as 1991 to address the specific needs of migrant and minority children in state schools. Moreover, this programme has extensive experience in building the awareness of native children to the value of human difference and social diversity. 'Entreculturas' is project-based and directs considerable resources to the training of teachers, the production of
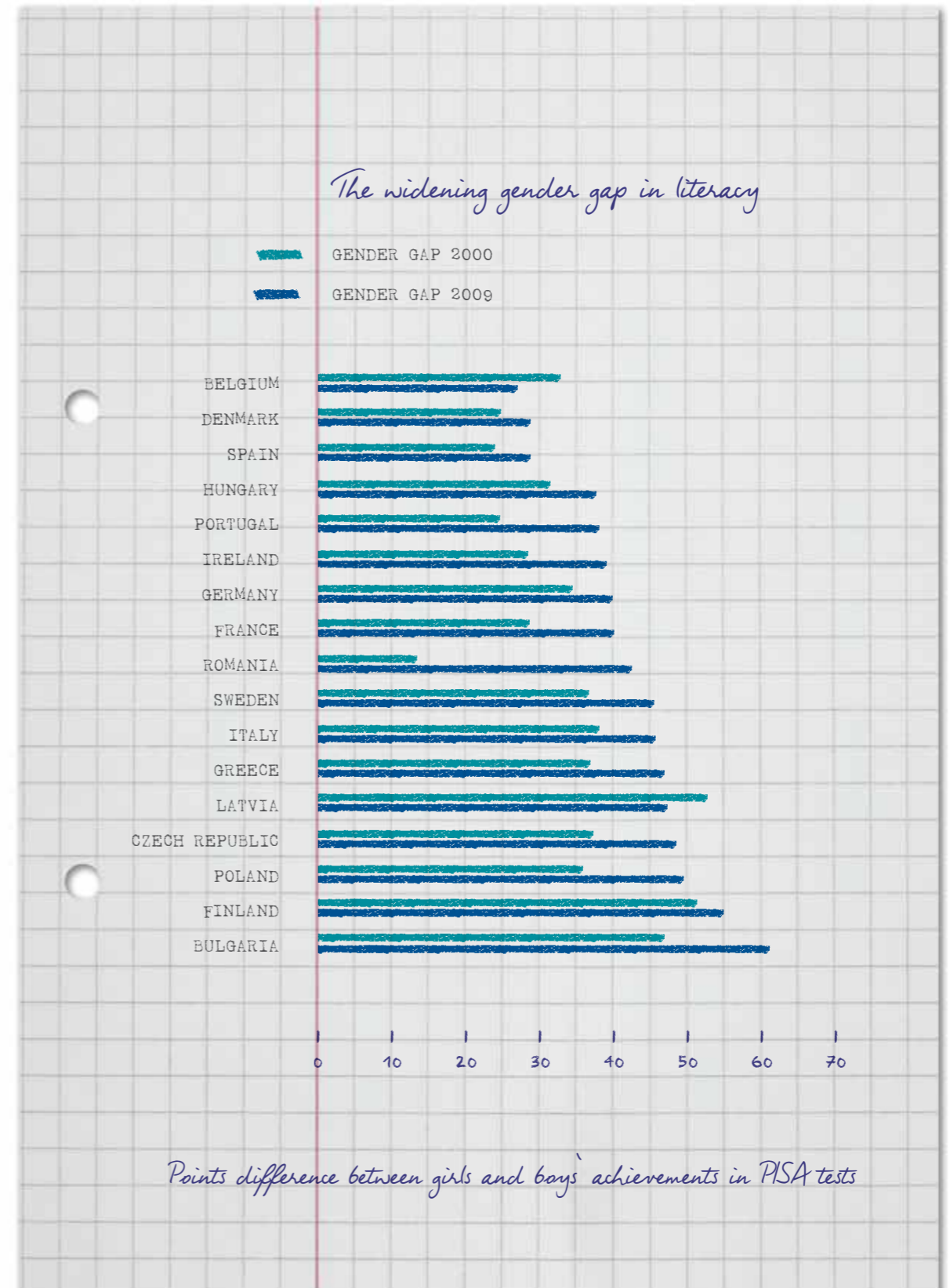
intercultural materials for classrooms, and the development of additive learning strategies as opposed to subtractive classroom strategies – enhancing the value of diverse identities, memories, creeds, languages and cultures that are increasingly available in schools as an invaluable asset to realise the purpose of learning to live together.

### THE GENDER GAP

The differences in reading competence between boys and girls widen between primary and secondary education[97]. On average, European girls are about one year ahead of boys in reading performance by the age of 15[98]. The gap between boys and girls is so large that, if only girls were being counted, Europe would have already achieved its Europe 2020 goal of 85 % of 15-year-olds having adequate reading skills: only 13 % of European girls are poor readers. This is in stark contrast to boys, 27 % of whom have low skills. Adolescent boys lag well behind girls in all Member States – and in all but one EU Member State boys have failed to reach the Europe 2020 goal of 85 % good readers[99].

This gender gap is much larger in reading than in mathematics and science – and is growing rather than shrinking in adolescence[100]. It should be noted that part of the gender difference in reading may be related to test characteristics. Boys showed poorer performance in test items requiring written answers to open-ended questions, which may be attributed to lower engagement[101]. Gender differences persist across the lifespan. In adulthood, for example, males are less likely to read than females[102]. At all ages, males are less likely to read for pleasure.

When talking about the gender gap, the main issues are motivation and engagement[103]. This is consistent with the fact that the gender differences in online reading are much smaller[104]. Fortunately, motivation is malleable: if schools and school systems adopt the right educational strategies, boys can become much more motivated to read and write. In particular, school reading materials need to take greater account of boys' individual interests and give them more scope to choose what to read[105]. Ensuring visibility of male role models showing reading as a masculine activity is crucial, given our increasingly feminised teaching workforce. After-school programmes can play a key role in addressing the male reading gap. In successful versions of these initiatives, the emphasis is on fun, not achievement, and activities tend to be dynamic and hands-on[106]. See also Chapter 04, Adolescents.

48

49



*The widening gender gap in literacy*

GENDER GAP 2000
GENDER GAP 2009

BELGIUM
DENMARK
SPAIN
HUNGARY
PORTUGAL
IRELAND
GERMANY
FRANCE
ROMANIA
SWEDEN
ITALY
GREECE
LATVIA
CZECH REPUBLIC
POLAND
FINLAND
BULGARIA

0  10  20  30  40  50  60  70

*Points difference between girls and boys' achievements in PISA tests*

In the **UNITED KINGDOM**, the project 'Premier League Reading Stars' targets primary school pupils from Years 5 and 6 (age 9-10) who are not reaching the expected levels in literacy for their age and supports secondary school pupils with low attainment who are motivated by football but not by literacy. The Premier League Reading Stars project consists of two parts. One is an online literacy game for individual pupils and the second is a resource pack for teachers and librarians to deliver the project. The online challenge is available to everyone with Internet access. Children can watch films in which 20 high-profile Premier League players set 100 literacy challenges, and pupils win online rewards by successfully completing the challenges. The project also provides an opportunity to engage with, and bring benefits to, parents. Their involvement can help in terms of raising their own confidence (40 % of parents feel more confident speaking in front of other people after taking part in Premier League Reading Stars), as well as inspiring them to improve their own skills and take more interest in their children's reading habits (84 % of parents read more with their child after taking part in this project)[107].

### DIGITAL GAPS

Several digital divides make literacy problems even more acute: in access, in quality of use, between in-school and out-of-school patterns of use, and in teachers' digital competences. The last three gaps should be addressed through explicit policies. The digital environment is underused as a medium for reading promotion and for supporting engagement in reading activities. The market for educational 'apps' is exploding and educational content is becoming a selling point for handheld devices. Nevertheless, there are limited examples of programmes harnessing the enthusiasm of adolescents and adults for digital interaction in order to improve literacy and motivation to read[108].

Gaps in access and quality of use lead to employment-related digital divides. Jobs increasingly require the ability not just to read and write text, but to use 'higher order' problem-solving skills, such as searching for reliable information online. For individuals who struggle with literacy, this presents a double divide[109]. Most adults develop their digital skills on the job – but if poor literacy reduces employment opportunities, it also reduces the opportunities to develop the digital skills required by employers, creating a vicious circle.

#### Access
• The poorly educated, unemployed and elderly use computers and the Internet much less than other groups[110]. Where people live also influences their access: in Iceland and Norway, older people were over 10 times as likely to use the Internet as their peers in Bulgaria, Greece and Italy[111]. It should be noted that this gap is diminishing in importance: since 2008, the share of households with access to broadband Internet in Europe has doubled.

#### Quality of use
• Some people have the literacy skills and other competences required to use computers productively and creatively; others do not. For example, disadvantaged adolescents are less likely than their peers to use computers for school work, and more likely to use them solely for gaming and entertainment[112].

#### Gap between in-school and out-of-school (literacy) activities.
• School activities are based almost exclusively on print, and out-of-school literacy practices are increasingly digital: a significant challenge facing teachers and schools[113].

#### Gap of digital competences of teachers
• There is a growing gap between students who are taught by teachers who have digital competences and those who are not. Addressing teachers' levels of skill in using digital media is clearly essential to achieving the other objectives in this area, and will require action.

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

*In this chapter, we have addressed the underlying factors that determine success in improving literacy. At the heart of these lies the importance of creating an appetite for reading, especially within the family circle where children spend the majority of their time and can, through their increased motivation, simultaneously influence the habits of their parents. It does need to be recognised, however, that many parents are unable to fulfil their necessary support role. This contributes to locking illiteracy into an inter-generational vicious circle. Increasing the availability and visibility of books through creative solutions is key, as is promoting the value of a diverse range of reading genres. These approaches go hand-in-hand with enhancing the quality of teaching and learning, and empowering education providers to assess and respond to individual students through a variety of methods, while offering individualised support where needed. Finally, access to education should not be undermined by a lack of quality provision and targeted support to address four specific 'gaps', namely socio-economic, migrant, gender and digital gaps.*

*These overarching issues apply across all ages. However, every age group has its specific challenges in literacy acquisition and development and therefore requires a customised approach. In the next chapter, we focus on the literacy issues that apply to four different age groups: young children, primary age, adolescents and adults.*

Literacy is the key to participate                    in *society* ...

# 04

# LITERACY
# FOR ALL AGES

Young children

Primary school years

Adolescents

Adults

'Children are made readers on the laps of their parents.'

**EMILIE BUCHWALD**,
AUTHOR

# 4.1
# YOUNG CHILDREN

People's literacy skills as adults are largely determined in their early years. Some children are lucky enough to be born into homes where a love of language, storytelling and songs is fostered within a loving relationship between the parents and their young children. But many children do not grow up in such homes. Many, especially from disadvantaged backgrounds, are already behind before they start school. As a result, not all children start primary school with good emergent literacy skills, and the knock-on effects are felt throughout their lives.

*57*

## THE FACTS

- The foundation of literacy is in spoken language at an early age. Reading competence strongly builds on oral language proficiency, word knowledge, and syntactic knowledge[114].

- Researchers in the US have estimated that by the age of three, children in literacy-rich households will hear some 20 million more words than their less-advantaged peers[115].

- In the United Kingdom, three-year-old children of highly educated parents have vocabularies that are nearly a year ahead of children whose parents have no qualifications[116].

- Children from homes that foster literacy, for instance those where parents frequently read aloud to their children, become better readers. Along with the presence of children's books in the home, this predicts achievement later[117].

- There is a positive correlation between time spent in pre-primary education and 4th grade students' reading achievement. Students who had not attended pre-primary school had an international average reading score of 455, compared to 510 for those students who had received three years or more of pre-primary education[118].

- Children who attend high-quality ECEC show a broad range of cognitive, linguistic, social and emotional benefits. This improves their performance in primary and secondary school, leading to better economic and social outcomes in adulthood[119].

- Economic analyses of several early childhood interventions demonstrate that effective programmes can repay the initial investment with savings to government and benefits to society down the road[120].

### ➜ WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?

The facts are clear, but the key question is what to do with them. The answer lies with two key actors: parents and Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) staff, and one important precondition: participation and inclusion.

## 4.1.1
### THE LITERATE ENVIRONMENT

#### PARENTS NEED TO FOSTER THEIR CHILDREN'S LITERACY SKILLS

Motivation is the driving force behind learning and parents play a key role in children's attitudes and motivation to read[121]. Parents with poor literacy skills are less likely to read to their children. They are less likely to have books in the home, less likely to see reading as a pleasurable parent-child bonding activity, and more likely to allow their children to watch lots of television, which goes along with poorer literacy development[122].

In most cases, small children are taken care of by women (in the homes and at ECEC) and these women talk to and read to them. The involvement of fathers is also very important for children's learning and development. Seeing fathers read in the home provides children with a positive role-model, which is of great importance (especially for boys) and having fathers involved in reading activities is an important factor for later reading and school success. Given that the often low percentage of children who are read to by their fathers is primarily due to time constraints rather than a lack of awareness, the solution requires a shift in employment and social organisation, such as policies targeting work-life balance[123].

In Hessen, **GERMANY**, the programme 'Mein Papa liest vor' ('My dad reads to me') promotes reading to children by male employees. This programme was developed by 'Hessenstiftung – Familie hat Zukunft' and by Stiftung Lesen. In the participating firms, fathers can download information and reading material for their children from the firm's Intranet. Fathers can print the stories out and read them to their children[124].

Family literacy programmes that focus on both parents and children, and their interaction, are highly cost-effective in increasing the literate environment at home: they are powerful, low-cost interventions[125]. Such programmes can result in long-term benefits lasting well into adulthood[126].

#### BOOKS AND OTHER READING MATERIAL SHOULD BE BOTH AVAILABLE AND VISIBLE

We have seen that children's literacy development requires a home that is rich in reading materials. Getting books and other reading materials into every family's home – especially to provide reading materials for parents and children who cannot afford to buy them – is a monumental and necessary task, but it is not enough on its own. Successful book-gifting schemes do not just provide books and information; they also provide practical, hands-on support, guidance and advice for parents. Nurses, librarians and other members of the local community can play a vital role in encouraging parents to read to their children.

## 4.1.2
### PROVIDE MORE, AND MORE ACCESSIBLE, HIGH-QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) facilities play an essential role in children's development, in partnership with parents. While most ECEC policy efforts until recently have focused on increasing enrolments, it is increasingly recognised that the quality of provision is the key to ECEC's social and educational benefits. Where ECEC is of high quality, it goes beyond looking after children's basic health, safety and care needs and provides intellectual and social simulation which supports children's wellbeing, psychomotor and cognitive development and social competences.

ECEC providers also need to develop effective ways of working with parents: supporting each other's complementary roles will produce maximum benefit for children.

In **SLOVENIA**, a specific Pre-school Institution Act states that pre-school should implement parental involvement activities, that parents have the right to participate in planning (educational) activities, and establishes parents' right to information on the development of their child.

In **BELGIUM (FLANDERS)**, there are several Local Consultative Forums for childcare and out-of-school care. These forums consist of professionals, centre managers, parents, local authorities and other stakeholders. The Forums function as a municipal advisory body and give advice on childcare to the local administration. Parents can join the school board, school council and parent council of pre-primary schools and be involved in decision-making processes.

High-quality pre-school benefits all children, whereas low-quality ECEC can lead to worse outcomes than no ECEC at all. Furthermore, the gains from high-quality pre-school education last, improving performance in primary and secondary school, and leading to better economic and social outcomes in adulthood[127].

Investing in high-quality ECEC is a long-term investment in Europe's skills. Increased participation will particularly benefit children facing literacy challenges, including those whose home language differs from the language of the school. Moreover, it is cost-effective. Especially for socio-economically disadvantaged children, government spending on ECEC pays for itself many times over[128].

**DESIGN A CURRICULUM TO MEET CHILDREN'S NEEDS**

As in the home, the presence and use of books in playful games are important factors in creating a literate environment in ECEC. The ECEC learning environment must be appropriate to children's needs. In practice, this means providing not only didactic but also playful and enjoyable activities. There can be a temptation to 'speed up' the process of early learning and focus teaching on 'less play' and 'more learning'. In fact, for young children, play is learning, and formal approaches can be a hindrance rather than a help, reducing motivation, and making reading seem like a chore rather than pleasure. Paradoxically, pushing children too early is likely to produce poor results later.

Pre-school programmes should focus on developing children's emergent literacy skills through playful experience where children see and interact with print as they build an awareness of its functions and conventions'[129]. Curricula should be age-appropriate and designed to meet the full range of children's needs: cognitive, emotional, social and physical[130]. An emphasis on non-cognitive skills such as perseverance, motivation, movement and the ability to interact with others in early years is essential for all future learning.

Competence in the language of the school is the key to learning to read and spell, so many children need a comprehensive programme to develop their oral language before entering school. ECEC and pre-school programmes should be comprehensive, with the aim of improving children's clarity of speech (volume and enunciation, both of which depend on and reinforce self-confidence) and broadening their vocabulary, grammatical accuracy and communicative abilities, as well as developing their fine-motor control which is needed for good handwriting and use of the keyboard. ECEC staff should give children a variety of situations where they can learn and experience different functions of language: in social play, in conflict situations, and for problem-solving. The ability to shift the attention from content to form may be fostered in language games, using rhymes, tongue-twisters and poems[131].

In **FRANCE**, the AFEV (Association de la fondation étudiante pour la ville), an association of volunteer students, developed a programme that involves students taking care of a child, at their home once a week, and offering them activities around books and reading.

**STAFF NEED TO BE HIGHLY QUALIFIED**

Where ECEC staff are more highly qualified, children tend to do better, both in the short and the long term. Reinforcing the quality of ECEC staff means not only requiring higher degrees, paying higher salaries and offering better working conditions[132], but also ensuring that they have suitable language teaching skills and the ability to engage parents in their children's language development and the learning process[133].

To maintain quality standards for young children, staff members need both good initial education and ongoing training, ideally based on national formal competence requirements for the profession. Continuous professional development is just as important for those caring for and educating young children as it is for teachers of other age groups[134].

**EARLY SCREENING AND INTERVENTION IDENTIFY SPEECH AND LANGUAGE DIFFICULTIES WHEN THERE IS STILL TIME TO ERADICATE THEM**

Assessment plays a key role in supporting cognitive and non-cognitive development. Through language assessments at the start of ECEC, pre-school teachers can know about and take into account each child's individual learning needs. Literacy problems can have very simple causes, and if language problems are addressed early they can be prevented from growing into much bigger educational obstacles later. Language assessments should follow the example of successful health programmes which screen young children for hearing, eyesight and speech, and provide reliable access to the professional support they need to overcome difficulties.

In **FINLAND**, the municipalities are obliged to provide the services of the maternity and child welfare clinic 'Neuvola' free for all families with children under the school age. Neuvola is attended by nearly every family, and families visit Neuvola eight times during the child's first year and later twice to 4 times a year until the child enters school. Neuvola assesses the children's physical, mental and social condition with the emphasis on counselling, identifying problems at an early stage and arranging help for families from a multi-professional team. Children's growth is monitored, eyesight and hearing are examined regularly, and neurological development is assessed. Learning difficulties and delays in language development and in communication are detected as early as possible.
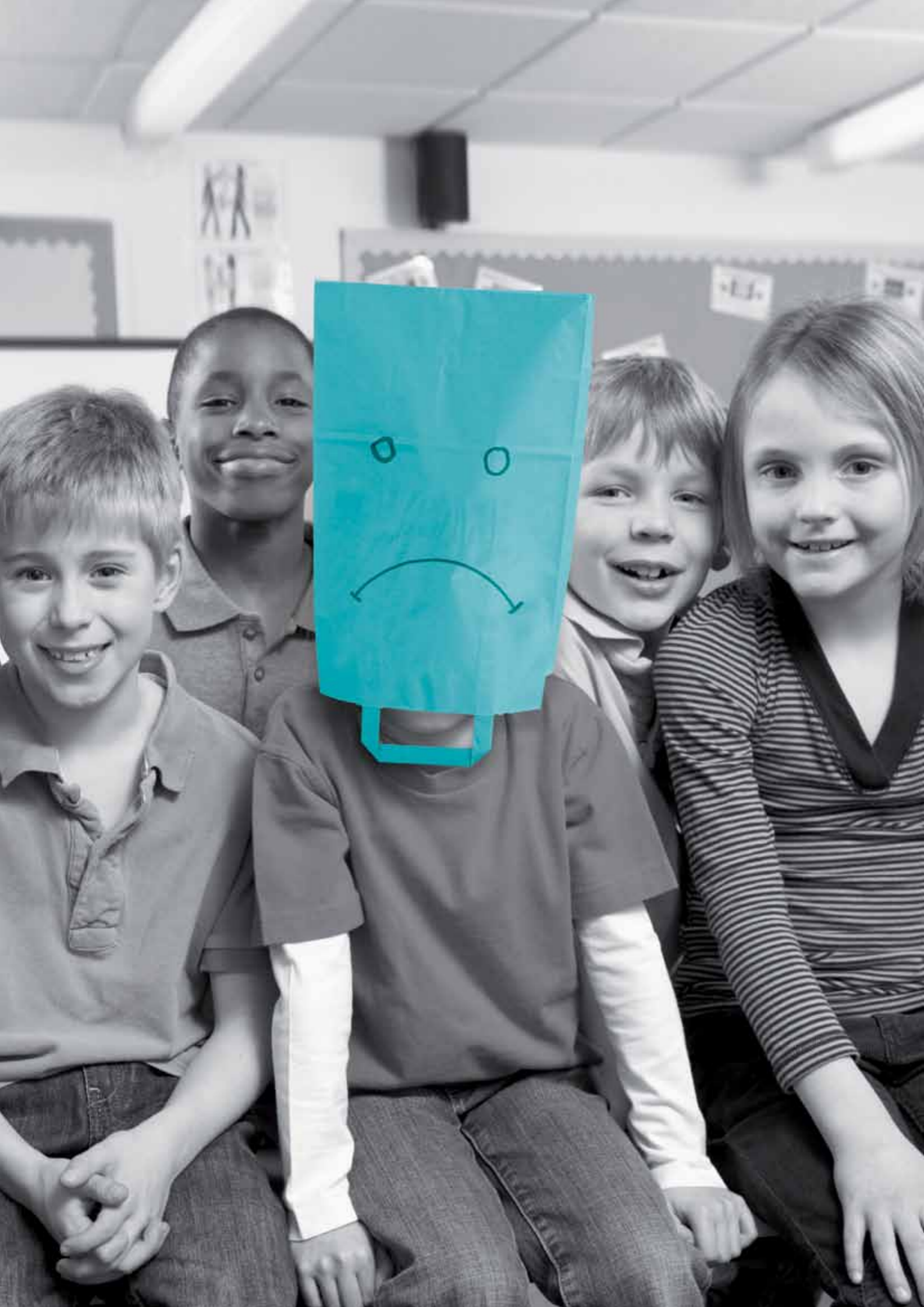
The **DANISH** government has developed a comprehensive strategy on reading skills for young children. The ambition is that, by 2020, all children finishing the second grade of school will have adequate reading skills and that no student will leave compulsory education without knowing how to read. The strategy includes a compulsory language assessment at the start of ECEC. This is also used to better understand children's individual needs.

In Baden-Württemberg, **GERMANY**, the 'Intensive Sprachförderung im Kindergarten' (ISK) ('Intensive language training in kindergarten') offers 120 hours of training in a kindergarten to children who have a diagnosis of poor language competence one year prior to entering school, in groups of two to ten children, by experts in language development. In some kindergartens, parents are involved ('Aktive Elternbeteiligung' or 'Active participation of parents'), for example, through afternoon meetings with parents and their children to promote literacy activities (reading picture books, fairy tales, singing)[135].

# 4.1.3
## PARTICIPATION AND INCLUSION

### ALL CHILDREN SHOULD BE ABLE TO BENEFIT FROM ECEC

Access to high-quality ECEC at least from the age of four should be 100%. Children attending high-quality ECEC show a broad range of cognitive, linguistic, social and emotional benefits, and among other things, develop better literacy skills[136]. Yet, enrolment across the EU in early childhood facilities varies significantly between Member States, from a low of 67.5% in Poland to 100% in France, meaning that in some countries a large proportion of children does not benefit from early education and care[137].

Socio-economically disadvantaged children have the most to gain from high-quality early learning[138]. Yet it is often these children who are the least likely to attend, particularly when fees are charged[139]. Increasing ECEC participation among socially disadvantaged children can thus help reduce literacy gaps later across the entire school system.

'If we talk about literacy, we have to talk about how to enhance our children's mastery over the tools needed to live intelligent, creative, and involved lives.'

**DANNY GLOVER**,
AMERICAN ACTOR AND SOCIAL ACTIVIST

# 4.2
# PRIMARY SCHOOL YEARS

63

Primary school age is a critical time to tackle and close emerging gaps in literacy development, as gaps are already evident when children start primary school. They subsequently widen in adolescence. Children who did not receive the necessary support before entering school fall further behind once they enter formal schooling. This creates a 'literacy support gap' among primary age children, with worrying differences between parents who have the skills and knowledge to support child literacy and those who do not. Even those who received support for their emergent literacy skills when they were young children often find that support disappears once they enter school. For the first time, there may be a gap between the home and the school in what children read. Many children have entered the digital world by primary age; however, this is often not reflected in their learning environment in school. Gender divisions in literacy skills are already visible during primary school.

## THE FACTS

- Only 55% of fourth grade students (9-11 year-olds) are taught by teachers with degrees[140].

- Only 25% of fourth grade students are taught by teachers whose initial education had an emphasis on reading[141].

- There was little improvement in the reading achievement of fourth grade students between 2000 and 2006. Of the 14 EU Member States that participated, only five showed improved reading[142].

- Fourth grade students who reported that they have more than 100 books at home scored 43 points higher in PIRLS than their peers who reported having fewer than 100 books at home[143].

- Children whose parents were born abroad have lower average reading scores than their peers, although there is a great deal of variation, depending on the country of origin[144].

- Some gender differences in reading are already identifiable in the fourth grade, with girls doing better in reading literary texts than boys in all countries[145].

- On average in Europe, 18% of fourth grade students (13% of girls, 24% of boys) reported never or almost never reading for fun outside school[146].

- Only 7.9% of fourth grade students have permanent in-class access to a reading specialist, while 36.7% sometimes do[147].

## ➔ WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?

## 4.2.1
### THE LITERATE ENVIRONMENT

Children of primary age tend to enjoy reading. Only 8% say they do not like it. However, this generally positive attitude does not always translate into more reading: only 40% of children read for pleasure daily or almost daily, and a third read for pleasure less than three times a month[148]. This leaves a lot of room to improve the amount children read for pleasure at this age.

It is often wrongly assumed that creating a more literate environment for primary age children is just a job for schools. Parents play an enormously important role in supporting their children in their literacy development throughout their school years. When children enter primary school, many parents reduce the amount of reading they do with their children, seeing literacy as the school's responsibility[149]. Particularly among parents who do not have strong literacy skills themselves, teachers are seen as the literacy experts[150]. All parents need to be empowered to support their children and their literacy development. Libraries have a vital role to play here, especially for families who cannot afford to buy many books or other reading material.

- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

'Lire et Faire Lire' is a nationwide programme in **FRANCE**, building inter-generational solidarity around reading. It mobilises adult volunteers to organise small-group reading aloud sessions in primary schools at least once a week during after-school activities. The programme explicitly does not target learning support, but rather cultivates the joy of reading[151].

'A book for every child' (EN BOK ÅT ALLA) is a **SWEDISH** programme to promote children's reading through book talk and other reading activities in schools and libraries and visits to the local bookshop. Every child who participates is invited by the bookseller to choose a free book to keep. This programme started with a few schools in 1996. The Book-in-Sweden Foundation took the initiative, in close co-operation with the Swedish Booksellers Association. The programme has since become nationwide.

During the wars following the break-up of Yugoslavia in the 1990s, a large number of children were left traumatised by their experiences. In the period 1991-98, a 'bibliotherapy' project for such children was carried out in **CROATIA** and neighbouring areas, and in 2001 its authors were given the International Reading Association Award for Innovative Reading Promotion in Europe. The programmes consisted of a wide range of literary workshops, combined with other media of contemporary art therapy such as drawing, painting and puppetry. In Croatia alone, a network of 45 public libraries was involved. Librarians working in children's book departments and school librarians were specially trained in the use of thematically selected readings and/or video materials in their workshops. An evaluation study found that many children benefited psychologically, as shown by improvements on standardised measures of mental health. Three lessons: no child is or should be beyond help; libraries have a key role to play; and award schemes need to be more numerous and better known[152].

- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

### CREATING THE DIGITAL LITERATE ENVIRONMENT

Computers and mobile devices enter the lives of children earlier and earlier. The age when children are first taught the alphabet often coincides with their first time online. This is the start of two learning journeys: in school through traditional print material, and at home through digital devices, which offer a more immediately engaging medium: the Internet and computer games. Children use the Internet more at home than at school (89% vs. 63%) and increasingly in their bedrooms and on handheld devices. 85% of 9-to 16-year-olds in Europe use the Internet for schoolwork and 83% for gaming. 9-to 10-year-olds spend an average of 1.4 hours a day reading and one hour a day browsing the Internet, primarily for school work[153].

There are huge opportunities to incorporate digital forms of learning into the school environment and connect these to a child's life at home. Yet they are also hugely underexploited. The rapid spread and declining costs of high-powered mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets present possibilities for portable, ubiquitous access to literacy tools, from help with vocabulary and grammar to digital libraries full of instantly accessible stories[154].

Texting, Facebook and other forms of online communication give many young people the opportunity and incentive to write more extensively outside school than they otherwise would, with potentially positive effects on writing skill and interest. Policy-makers should urge schools to find new and innovative ways to incorporate the learning environment at home into the practice of reading and writing development at school.

- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

In **SLOVAKIA**, the project 'e-Aktovka' provides access to digitised textbooks, literature and other materials for students, parents and teachers.

In **LATVIA**, the project 'Forum of Ideas' has developed two websites where children can find books in audio and written versions. Latvia also has a project called 'Children's Books Web Publishing': pupils, parents and teachers can write and illustrate a story, which is then published online.

In **PORTUGAL**, the project 'Book Digger' is a web-based platform to familiarise young children with key literary books in an interactive fashion. Furthermore, the projects 'The Way of Letters' ('Caminho das letras') and 'Digital Library' are parts of the National Reading Plan designed to improve the use of digital resources in literacy development.

In **ESTONIA**, the projects 'Stories' and 'Poems' were developed by the Tallinn Central Library Children's Page. Children write stories and poems that are competitively selected and then published online on the library website.

The **HUNGARIAN** 'Digital Library' is available on the homepage of the national library and the collection is increasing continuously. This gives access to the full text of books online free of charge, and covers 10 300 titles for all ages, including fiction, handbooks, and textbooks.

- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

## 4.2.2
## QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

While the early years of a child's life lay the groundwork for their literacy development, and families play a key role throughout childhood, most of what children formally learn about reading and writing happens in primary school. The best schools teach all their pupils to read, regardless of their socio-economic background, ethnicity, languages spoken at home and special needs or disabilities[155]. They do this by providing children, as early as possible, with individualised support, high-quality teaching, engaging reading materials, and a culture that combines equity with high expectations where all children are expected to succeed at reading – and are given the support they need to do so.

### HIGH-QUALITY TEACHING

Primary school teachers should have extensive knowledge of the theoretical foundations of literacy learning, and be able to detect and handle their pupils' reading difficulties. Furthermore they need to be trained in a wide range of teaching strategies that are effective with pupils of this age, but most European countries do not have clear guidelines on the competences primary school teachers need in order to teach reading and writing. Moreover, where such curriculum guidelines exist, they most often do not include core issues, such as tackling reading difficulties or skills for reading assessment.

Especially in languages with complex spelling-sound relationships, systematic teaching of so-called 'grapheme-phoneme correspondence rules' – also called phonics – should not be stopped too early at primary level. Successful teaching methods must be continued. Systematic phonics instruction embedded in reading tasks and within a broad and rich language and literacy curriculum enables both normally developing children and those at risk of failure to make better progress in reading than incidental or no phonics instruction[156]. Most EU Member States currently have curricular guidelines for phonics instruction, but in many it stops after the first few years of primary education, on the false assumption that the task has been completed[157].

### INTEGRATE ICT DEVELOPMENTS
### INTO CURRICULUM DESIGN

The current digital divide is not whether primary age children in Europe are using digital tools, but the quality of their use[158]. Online reading is largely ignored during initial primary teacher education, although evidence shows that a majority of children engage almost equally in digital and print reading from early on in primary education. Only five EU Member States currently require competences for teaching online reading in the education of primary teachers. Very few countries define learning outcomes for digital reading.

Primary school teachers have found it difficult to integrate technology into their teaching practice in the classroom. Their confidence and skill levels in using ICT are generally lower than among secondary school/level teachers, who often also have the benefit of specialised ICT staff to support them. Most computer use in primary school appears to be 'bolt-on' rather than integrated into the pedagogy[159]. Furthermore, as we highlighted at the start of this report, digitisation is changing the nature of literacy. A critical evaluation of the sources of what is being read, being able to evaluate the reliability of content, managing quantities of information that would have been unimaginable just 10 years ago – this is what we are asking of our children at a younger and younger age, as digital media become all-pervasive. This is a massive challenge to education systems, one that they are only just beginning to tackle. There is an urgent need to reflect the range of impacts of digital media in the design of national curricula.

### EARLY INTERVENTION IS BEST

Early intervention is most effective[160], so children should receive extensive and evidence-based support to deal with reading difficulties from the very first years at school. When learning difficulties such as language and speech problems are identified during pre-school, it is crucial that they are communicated to the school and that support starts as early as possible during primary education. Such intervention should not be stigmatising: it should be embedded in day-to-day activities in the school.

### STRUGGLING READERS NEED TARGETED,
### INDIVIDUALISED SUPPORT

Struggling readers do not catch up by themselves. Every pupil with problems in reading and writing should therefore be given one-to-one or small group-based instruction in primary school until they have caught up with their peers. This will prevent growing gaps in secondary school. Currently only 12 % of fourth grade pupils receive remedial instruction in literacy[161]. This approach, centred on the individual, is essential for successfully addressing reading problems, or – better – avoiding them altogether.

Struggling readers are a heterogeneous group, so no single teaching strategy works for all of them. Children at this age benefit from a mix of instructional strategies that have to be adapted to the level of competence of the child. As with other age groups, a high level of autonomy to use the broad range of integrated pedagogical approaches based on the needs of their individual pupils characterises effective primary school teachers[162].

Greater use of formative assessment is needed for this age group. Effective assessment tools upon entry to primary school will help teachers identify literacy skills from the very beginning of formal education. Regular formative assessment throughout primary school will ensure that literacy problems do not continue to go unrecognised and that students receive the support they need through education that matches their learning needs. This should prevent children leaving primary school with unrecognised literacy problems.

### SPECIALIST READING TEACHERS HAVE
### A HUGE ROLE TO PLAY

Individualised instruction works best when it is provided by teachers with specialist training in recognising and overcoming reading problems, acting as resource persons for all primary school teachers[163]. Specialist reading teachers are experts in addressing individual learning difficulties, and are a great resource not only for other primary school teachers, but also for the development of positive school-learning environments with a focus on literacy for all.

Pupils struggling with reading are entitled to specialised support in all European countries, but only in Malta, Ireland, the UK and the five Nordic countries is specialised help – either specialist teachers of reading or special education teachers who specialise in reading – readily available. Many countries still face the challenge of developing a profession of specialist reading teacher, both as part of teacher education and as part of learning support available to schools.

In the **UNITED KINGDOM**, the 'Reading Recovery Teachers' project provides specialist one-to-one teaching for the lowest-performing children in reading at ages 5-6. These children are often not able to read the simplest books or even write their own name before the intervention, which involves intensive one-to-one lessons for 30 minutes per day with a trained Reading Recovery teacher, for an average of 20 weeks. The programme is different for every child, assessing what the child knows and what he/she needs to learn next. Some 81 % of children have caught up with their age group after Reading Recovery.

**FINLAND** offers extensive learning support to a large proportion of pupils in the first years of primary education. Over 31 % of pupils receive learning support in speech, reading and writing in their first year of primary education. A reform of special needs support in 2010 introduced a gradation of support, depending on the learning difficulty. A major principle is early and rapid intervention. Additional support is given in a way that avoids labelling or stigmatising students.

In **SWEDEN**, 'code-crackers' is a support system for parents of children with reading and writing difficulties. A dedicated webpage provides information to parents and teachers[164].

## 4.2.3
## PARTICIPATION AND INCLUSION

Children can only participate fully and inclusively in primary education if they receive all the necessary support to meet their needs. In particular, this means ensuring that parents who struggle with literacy problems themselves are in a position to support their children, and ensuring that teachers and parents alike help children to be engaged and motivated.

### SUPPORTING PARENTS WHO STRUGGLE WITH LITERACY

If Europe is to achieve its necessary ambition that all children develop solid skills in reading and writing, the gap between parents who have both the skills and the knowledge to support their children in their literacy development and those parents who do not will have to be closed. Disadvantaged parents who do not have strong literacy skills themselves need targeted support to translate their ambitions for their children into reality and they need to be supported to learn the language of the school. Programmes that provide literacy and general parenting support to these parents offer a promising way of providing parents with information and resources on their literacy support role. These programmes often emphasise a whole family approach to literacy, whereby parents embark on a journey of (re-)discovering literacy alongside their school-age children.

In **GERMANY**, the 'Hamburg Family Literacy Project' (FLY) focuses on enhancing literacy in immigrant families and promoting these families' integration into the broader community. Targeted at migrant parents in disadvantaged districts of Hamburg, the programme aims to give mothers in particular the skills and confidence they need to engage in literacy activities with their children, including helping them with their schoolwork. In Berlin, the 'district mothers' ('Stadtteilmütter') are immigrants themselves and go into immigrant families not only to support literacy but also to give information about essential services such as health systems, social welfare, and the school system in order to make them more accessible and less intimidating.

### REINFORCING MOTIVATION AND ENGAGEMENT, ESPECIALLY OF DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN

Motivation and competence go hand in hand: improving competence is motivating, and higher motivation leads to better skills development. As mentioned earlier, this is because children who like to read, read more. Because they read more, they read better, and because they read better, they enjoy reading more. It is crucial, therefore, to create this positive upwards spiral.

Children who read for pleasure read significantly better than those who do not[165]. Those who do not read for pleasure fall into a vicious circle where low achievement reduces motivation to read, which drags down achievement still further. To avoid this, schools should focus more attention on reinforcing motivation, particularly for pupils from disadvantaged groups. The emphasis should be not just on reading well, but also on reading for pleasure, as one supports the other. Children should be given free time for pleasure reading for relaxation and escape ('reading corner' filled with a wide range of high-quality literature). In this process, intrinsic motivation is key – reading for its own sake rather than for reaping other rewards. When rewards are provided for outcomes, children focus too much on success and steer clear of efforts that they feel have a chance of ending in failure[166].

The **FRENCH** nationwide programme 'Coup de Pouce Clé' provides small reading groups for children who are 'fragile in reading' during the first primary classes. The programme mobilises a whole school early during each school year to identify children at risk of falling behind in their reading early. Children join an after-school club for 1.5 hours per day, led by a reading specialist. The aim for the children is to gain early success in reading and writing, build their self-confidence and discover the pleasure of reading. Parents are fully involved in the clubs: upon entry to the clubs, parents sign up to following the progress of their child[167].

In Berlin, **GERMANY**, about 2 000 'Lesepaten', adult volunteers, go regularly to schools in social problem areas and read to and with children to cultivate the joy of reading[168].

*'Education is the most powerful weapon which
you can use to change the world.'*

**NELSON MANDELA,**
FORMER PRESIDENT OF SOUTH AFRICA

ALL THE WORLD IS FULL OF LETTERS
BUT THE LOCK IS CLOSED
I'D LIKE TO BREAK IT OPEN
OR TO SAW IT OPEN *

# 4.3
# ADOLESCENTS

The transition from primary to secondary school often brings less positive attitudes towards reading[169], particularly among boys. Maintaining motivation and reading frequency is vital for achieving good results in reading and writing. It should not be assumed that children have achieved the necessary literacy skills during their primary school years. Equally, it should not be assumed that children who did not learn to read well during primary school are not capable of learning do so later. Ignoring the literacy needs of adolescents and failing to give them the support they need must be avoided at all costs.

In many education systems, students are differentiated into separate groups for the first time at this age. As a result, students embark on different curricular paths according to different expectations of their abilities, which lead to less equitable outcomes and lower literacy scores. The knock-on effects of decisions made for students of this age about their abilities can be felt throughout their lives.

* poem written by Joanne Hoekstra
  and translated by Ate Grijpstra, English teacher,
  Christelijk Gymnasium Beyers Naudé,
  Leeuwarden, the Netherlands.

## THE FACTS

- Across the EU, one child in five struggles to reach a level of reading that enables them to read to learn by the time they are adolescents. Figures range from a low of 8 % struggling readers in Finland to more than 40 % in Bulgaria and Romania[170].

- Family social background often has a strong influence on individual reading achievement levels and on enjoyment of reading. These influences on average explain over 14 % of the differences in achievement in the EU. This varies substantially across countries[171].

- Within the EU, students with migrant backgrounds have, on average, lower reading achievement than native-born students[172].

- Nearly half of all 15-year-old students (46 %) agreed strongly or agreed that they read only to obtain the information they needed, while almost as many (41 %) reported that they read only if they had to[173].

- A quarter of 15-year-olds claim that reading is a waste of time, while 37 % never read for pleasure. Half would not like to receive a book as a present[174].

- Some 73 % of girls and only 53 % of boys report that they read for enjoyment. Between 2000 and 2009, the level of reading for enjoyment declined steadily, particularly among boys and across all kinds of print reading materials, except comic books[175].

- The 15- to 16-year-old age group across Europe spends almost two hours per day online. Only 15 % of 15-year-olds spend more than one hour per day reading[176].

- As many as 82 % of 15-year-olds in the EU never use a computer during their classes in the language of instruction[177].

### → WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?

## 4.3.1
### THE LITERATE ENVIRONMENT

#### INVOLVE PARENTS

Despite the common opinion that parents play less of a role at this stage than when their children were younger, parental support for reading continues to influence motivation to read in adolescence[178]. Reading can still be an intensely social activity, with parents and their adolescent children increasingly sharing the same reading material, rather than one reading to the other. This adds to the sense of reading as a pleasurable, shared pastime.

In contrast, while non-readers may also be encouraged to read by their parents, it is often in order to achieve something else (such as to do better in school), not to read for pleasure.

#### MOBILISE PEERS

In adolescence, the influence of peers increases. While the media tend to emphasise the negative influence of peer groups, particularly for disadvantaged boys, peers can have strong positive influences, both in formal education and in informal learning[179].

Young people gain much of their knowledge and skills in contexts that do not involve formal instruction. Self-motivated learning results not only from schools and other institutions setting standards and providing instruction, but from young people's participation, both socially and alone, in leisure interests. Today's teenagers are increasingly connected online. For more and more teenagers, the Internet has become the place for social interaction. Half of 9- to 16-year-olds find it easier to be themselves on the Internet than in face-to-face interactions. Despite the known influence of peers, relatively few literacy campaigns and programmes mobilise peers for reading.

In **ESTONIA**, the 'Reading is Fun' ('Lugenda om monus') project targets 11- to 16-year-olds, who freely choose books to read and discuss them afterwards online through chat rooms. Participants meet both virtually and face-to-face, and take part in competitions and quizzes.

#### USING THE DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT

Adolescents devote more time to electronic and digital media (including television, computers and electronic games) than any other single activity[180]. Some 77 % of 13-16-year-olds in Europe have a social networking profile[181]. Time spent online far surpasses time spent reading for the overwhelming majority of young Europeans. Though this may be viewed negatively, children and young people can also develop the skills needed to support academic work through informal computer 'play'[182]. Digital activities can be beneficial for reading proficiency: teenagers who spend more time browsing the Internet for fun at home have better digital reading results[183].

The digital environment is not used enough as a medium for reading promotion and for supporting the engagement of adolescents in reading. The market for educational apps is exploding and educational content is becoming a selling point for handheld devices. Nevertheless, the availability of e-Reading material specifically for teenagers, particularly in languages other than English, is limited.

#### SEEING THE RELEVANCE OF LITERACY SKILLS IN THE WORKPLACE

The importance of creating a literate environment does not stop at the context of the home or at school. A society-wide approach is needed to provide adolescents with a relevant context for reading, at a time in their lives when many feel disengaged from education and training. Businesses can play a major role in providing a meaningful context for adolescents to develop their reading and writing skills, and can powerfully increase their motivation to do so. Successful co-operation between schools and businesses is not focused solely on improving literacy skills, but can do so implicitly and provide real-life experience to show pupils what skills they need for the workplace, and thus relate learning in general, and reading and writing in particular, directly to their future livelihoods.

In **FRANCE**, there is a special apprenticeship called the 'CBA programme': for two years 50 apprentice training centres have offered low-literacy apprentices specific training to reinforce their reading and writing abilities, linked to their workplace[184].

## 4.3.2
### QUALITY OF TEACHING

Most children learn to read in primary school. However, this is not the case for a significant minority. Adolescent struggling readers are not illiterate: they can read, but struggle to read well enough to succeed in subjects such as history, science and literature[185]. These adolescents, many of whom enjoyed reading as younger children, soon come to see themselves as non-readers, disengaged from literacy and thus from most other schoolwork.

#### ALL TEACHERS ARE TEACHERS OF READING

Improved teaching has the biggest positive impact on improving literacy development among pupils in secondary school[186]. A particularly important issue at secondary level is that of reading across the curriculum: pupils need good reading and writing skills to cope with the content of all their courses, e.g. reading strategies that enable students to understand and actively use written texts in all subject areas. Few secondary schools offer the support required to develop these skills if pupils do not already have them. For struggling readers, the potential rewards are huge. In secondary schools where teachers in all subject departments have received training in teaching literacy and where all lessons include literacy objectives, schools see improvements in all subjects, not just literacy[187].

A number of real or perceived issues hamper progress and more effort is needed to implement reading across the curriculum. Many secondary school teachers have argued that integrating literacy education into content area teaching is not feasible[188]. This is not necessarily because teachers do not believe literacy is a problem at this level. There are three obstacles to overcome: time, training and leadership:

- **Time:** if literacy is treated as an extra to be added onto an already crowded curriculum, then it will not be integrated on a systemic level, even when teachers have the best of intentions.

- **Training:** for content area teachers to integrate literacy into their teaching, literacy must be integrated into their education and training – both pre-service and in-service – and into the curriculum.

- **Leadership:** literacy must be seen as essential not just by literacy specialists, but by the entire school system. School leadership plays a crucial role in fostering teacher collaboration on reading.

The **EU**-funded BACULIT (Basic Curriculum for Teachers' In-Service Training in Content Area Literacy) initiative helps all types of secondary school teachers understand that literacy is their business, and helps them to develop the skills they need to support struggling readers.

In **DENMARK**, the main teachers' trade union conducted a nationwide project to support reading across the curriculum. The union provided continuing development courses for teachers to improve their competences in reading instruction, particularly in teaching the reading competences required for teaching other subjects.

### MOTIVATING STRUGGLING READERS

While every child is different, various policies and practices are known to help improve the skills and motivation of struggling teenage readers[189]. Two defining characteristics of adolescents who struggle with reading are a lack of confidence in their own capabilities and a lack of motivation[190]. Interventions by teachers aimed at improving the academic and life chances of these teenagers therefore need to focus not just on cognitive skills, but also on the development of non-cognitive competences: motivation, self-concept and self-efficacy. Where students have a feeling of self-determination and are able to see their own role in the educational process, they are much less likely to give up and more willing to continue to develop their skills even when they encounter difficulties[191]. For struggling readers, peer assessment can improve self-reflection and boost self-esteem, self-efficacy and motivation to read[192].

### USING APPEALING MATERIALS AND CURRICULA

When students leave primary school, they are faced with a radical shift in what they are expected to read, and in the time they have to read[193]. At school, pupils find that they have left the world of storybooks and entered the world of textbooks. Even as they are confronted with these more daunting reading materials, they are given less support in understanding and engaging with them. At home, they are required to do more homework, leaving less time for leisure reading[194]. For many teenagers, the stage at which reading takes an academic, competitive turn is the moment when the process of reading loses its pleasure.

Many struggling readers engage in 'adaptive apathy', hiding their literacy problems behind a mask of indifference[195]. 'We can read if we want to,' this attitude suggests; 'we just don't feel like it.' The main demotivating factor for struggling readers is lack of interest in school reading materials[196]. Many are happy to read materials they find interesting – such as genre fiction, magazines and websites – and to read and write via

Facebook, texting and other social media. At the same time, they go to elaborate lengths to avoid assigned reading they consider boring, relying on coping strategies such as watching film versions of assigned books. A key danger here is that 'learning how to get by without reading' can take precedence over 'learning to be a better reader', establishing a lifetime of disengagement from literacy[197].

Students with low reading scores – including boys, and students with poor reading motivation – are less likely to find their preferred reading materials at school, and they commonly have less choice in what to read. What they are likely to find is canonical literature – set literary texts – which many pupils do not see as relevant to their interests or lives. Most literature taught to teenagers in schools was originally written by adults for adults. We teach this literature not because it is inherently appropriate for teenagers, but because we are seeking to give them a cultural education. While canonical literature should play an important role in curricula, this should not be at the expense of the motivation of potentially disengaged pupils.

The primary factor in selecting reading material for schools must be to increase interest and engagement, particularly for reluctant readers[198]. Adolescents have less choice over their reading materials than any other age group[199]. They should have more say in what they read, and schools should be assessed not just on literacy skills but on motivation and engagement, especially for disadvantaged pupils (including boys). One type of reading that struggling readers often find attractive is reading in a digital environment[200]. Moreover, online texts are usually relatively short and have plenty of visual elements to support comprehension. This is an ideal starting point for the development of adolescent struggling readers' reading skills. However, when we read in a digital environment, we tend to scan the texts instead of reading accurately and paying attention to details[201]. As a result, students' ability to read accurately and focus on details as well as their persistence in reading longer texts may not develop as expected. Therefore, there is a great need for explicit instruction on reading strategies which give students tools for comprehending and studying written texts they will encounter in their studies and working lives.

## 4.3.3
## PARTICIPATION AND INCLUSION

### REDUCING THE GENDER GAP

Most reluctant and struggling readers among adolescents are boys, most often from low social classes and with a migrant background. The gender gap is large at this age, and gets larger throughout the school career. Much of the gender literacy gap is driven by motivation. Throughout childhood, girls are more likely than boys to read and to enjoy reading, and more willing to respond to the demands of school, showing more positive attitudes towards school[202]. Part of the problem is the limited range of reading material. On average boys are better at reading non-continuous texts, and have a clear preference for expository texts, newspaper articles and comics including computer-based information, and such material should be used more in the classroom as a bridge from materials that are relevant and interesting to students towards more demanding and unfamiliar materials[203].

In **NORWAY,** the 'Make Room for Reading!' initiative was a four-year national action plan covering all schools and school levels in the country, with a particular emphasis on improving reading achievement and motivation among 13- to 16-year-old boys. Priorities included strengthening teacher competences in teaching reading, improving the use of school libraries and increasing overall awareness of reading as a social issue[204].

The **IRISH** 'National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy' aims at ensuring that the literacy curriculum and reading materials are relevant for boys.

Disengaged adolescent boys also face other barriers to becoming engaged readers, including a lack of males modelling literacy, both in school and outside, and they also have more unfavourable attitudes to school. In European schools, women account for the large majority of teachers, even – in some countries – at secondary level[205]. Reading may be seen as a feminine activity, not fitting a young man's self-image and something they more readily associate with their mothers when they were growing up and very seldom something they see their fathers doing[206].

After-school programmes can play a key role in plugging the male reading gap. The definition of what is considered 'acceptable reading materials' needs to be expanded, giving boys more choice in choosing what they read, and encouraging male role models. Equally, there should be room for creative ways of motivating boys to read, for instance by putting the emphasis on fun, not achievement, and through activities that are

dynamic and hands-on[207]. Campaigns directed at boys specifically can help stimulate their reading motivation.

A **FINNISH** project supported by the Finnish Cultural Foundation called 'Boys' Writing School' was a major effort to motivate boys with weak reading and writing skills. A well-known male author came to the school and, with the boys, composed a beginning for a story. This took two or three days, during which time the boys were exempt from all normal instruction and were allowed to concentrate fully and exclusively on brainstorming and writing the story. The author gave feedback, focusing on the content and structure of the story in particular. After the initial two or three days, the writing was continued as a distance learning task on the Internet, with the author providing feedback by means of video conferencing. Since many boys find writing by hand arduous, they were allowed to use the computer. The computer not only motivated the boys to produce texts, it also made editing the texts easy. The increased motivation to write, in turn, resulted in an increased motivation to read literature[208].

The **US** 'Guys Read' initiative motivates boys to read by providing them with materials they will want to read in ways they like to read[209].

## PEN PORTRAIT:

**Joanne Hoekstra (the Netherlands)**,
former struggling reader and voted
Dutch Young Poet of the Year in June 2012

'I was a struggling reader, so Dutch was not my favourite subject. Then one day, a teacher dedicated a lesson to poetry. I became fascinated, and for the first time enjoyed playing with words. I started writing my own poems, being inspired by everyday situations. I want to make people smile, even if the subject is very serious. My aim is to motivate my peers to write poems.'

*'The limits of my language are the limits of my world.'*

**LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN,**
PHILOSOPHER

# 4.4
# ADULTS

Literacy changes lives, including adult lives. It is central to personal wellbeing and social development, and contributes to economic independence. Adults who improve their literacy skills do much more than get better at reading and writing; they improve their self-confidence, develop better attitudes to learning, improve their health, and increase their levels of civic and social involvement[210]. Improving adults' literacy serves as a stepping stone not just to further education, improved outcomes for their children and better employment, but to greater social inclusion, active and informed citizenship and more fulfilling lives.

Despite the scope and depth of the problem, low literacy remains a taboo subject and thus largely invisible across Europe. In most Member States, there are no surveys or studies, so the scale of the issue simply does not show up. This has created a vicious circle whereby decision-makers in both public and private sectors are largely unaware of the gravity of the problem, leading to inaction, which, in turn, feeds the sense of shame among people, believing they are the only ones with the problem.

The majority of adults with literacy problems have attended at least compulsory schooling. But the system has failed to equip them with competences in reading and writing.

## THE FACTS

### LOW LEVELS OF LITERACY SKILLS

- Member States have limited knowledge about the literacy levels of their adult population. A small number of international literacy surveys have been carried out, but these involved a minority of European countries and took place in the 1990s and early 2000s[211]. Only a few Member States, namely the UK, France and Germany, have conducted national surveys[212].

- In 2011, across Europe there were approximately 73 million low-educated adults (25-64-year-olds) – many of whom are likely to have literacy problems too[213].

- Many adults are disengaged from reading and writing. This is particularly true of males, as women are much more likely than men to read books[214].

- The vast majority of those with poor reading and writing are native-born. There is a large, hidden problem of low literacy among the non-migrant population[215].

- Low literacy levels impede participation in society and reduce adults' self-confidence, self-esteem, health and happiness, while improving literacy can turn this situation around and can lead to less unemployment and higher earnings[216].

- Adults with poor literacy skills are much more likely than the general population to have low or no incomes, and to be unemployed or in insecure, irregular employment[217]. Those unemployed are much less likely to improve their skills: this is a vicious circle, as their children are also more likely to suffer from poor literacy and be unemployed. These barriers make it difficult for them to engage in lifelong learning[218].

- Adults who become unemployed tend to lose their basic skills. Their numeracy starts to decline almost at once, and their literacy after about two years[219].

- About a third of adult offenders, and about half of young offenders, have poor reading levels[220].

### HIGH IMPORTANCE OF LITERACY SKILLS

- The world of work is changing and demands better literacy skills. Even jobs that traditionally did not require literacy skills now demand good reading and writing. The use of ICT has in fact increased the need for these skills[221].

- The digital divide exists not just in the workplace, but in private lives: digitally literate adults are better able to take advantage of government services, and to manage their finances and health[222]. The digital divide impacts on today's social life: grandparents who know how to use Facebook and e-mail can more easily keep in touch and in tune with their grandchildren.

### ➔ WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?

## 4.4.1
## LITERATE ENVIRONMENT

### RECOGNITION OF THE PROBLEM OF LOW LITERACY AMONG ADULTS

The problem of low literacy among adults remains under-recognised in society and consequently at the level of the individual. Many native speakers of national languages do not recognise their own shortcomings in reading and writing. Among adults who perform poorly on literacy assessments, most feel that their skills are average or better, and that they therefore have no need to improve[223]. These adults often do not recognise their weaknesses until some significant change in their life occurs, for example the birth of a child, death of a partner whose reading skills masked the problem, or new responsibilities in the workplace.

Adults with low literacy skills tend to be ashamed about their shortcomings, often hiding it from others, including close friends and family. Many adults believe they are too old to learn[224]. Others are afraid of failing, or consider improvement to be impossible[225]. They need personal support to overcome their sense of shame and previous negative learning experiences and to take the first step towards the improvement of their skills.

Many low-literate adults have developed ways to live with poor literacy, avoiding situations in which reading and writing may be needed and relying on friends, relatives and co-workers for help. These coping strategies are becoming less of an option as businesses and government services reduce opportunities for face-to-face contact in favour of digital, text-based alternatives (e.g. online tax returns, online banking and other services). In the long run, literacy problems cannot be avoided. Adults are therefore best helped when they get assistance to recognise their difficulties, rather than being helped to hide them.

### MOTIVATE ADULTS TO LEARN

The personal benefits of literacy for adults are many: increased self-esteem and self-assurance, self-awareness of capabilities, and consequent empowerment and confidence to embark on a professional and personal project. Therefore, adults must be motivated and get support to overcome negative attitudes towards learning, which have often been formed during childhood years. These are complex and poorly understood, yet potentially the most important factors influencing adult literacy motivation[226].

Motivation can be increased by focusing on the benefits, for instance being able to read to one's children or grandchildren, or to improve digital literacy skills. The accreditation of prior informal/non-formal learning has a strong impact on the adults' motivation to pursue further lifelong learning endeavours[227]. Contrary to what we said earlier about primary age children, reading as a means to achieve something else can be a powerful and enduring motivating force for adults. Family literacy programmes provide parents with the strongest possible motivation for participation: improving their children's chances in life[228]. There is good evidence that these programmes attract adults who would not otherwise take part in education[229]. In addition, public awareness about the issue helps.

The Nordic model of adult learning emphasises a culture of participative adult education based on learning as a form of personal development and social participation. Adult learning is seen not just as a tool for getting ahead economically, but as a typical part of adult life. This encourages participation, reducing dispositional barriers and encouraging a learner-centred culture where solutions to situational and institutional barriers are easier to find[230]. In **SWEDEN**, the Adult Education Initiative, or 'Knowledge Lift', led to a sharp uptake in basic skills training[231].

## 4.4.2
## QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

### A. ADULT EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Low literacy is a complex personal and social problem and tackling it requires a structured, pro-active and high-quality adult learning sector. Learners should be well-supported from the very start. When governments and colleges put learners rather than institutions at the centre of the educational process, they can reduce institutional barriers and provide adults with the support they need to overcome situational barriers – for example, by providing classes at convenient times, and offering free childcare.

Creating more demand for literacy instruction will require an increase in the supply of high-quality courses. Improving the quality of adult education and training means improving all the components that shape it, including institutional ethos, teacher recruitment, teacher training, pedagogy and curricular strategies. It also means being clear about the level of commitment required to produce long-term literacy improvements.

### LITERACY COURSES NEED TO BE OF HIGH QUALITY AND BASED ON INDIVIDUAL NEEDS

Central to any teaching of adults is that the approach and courses match learners' individual needs. While contexts may vary, adult learners of literacy thrive in small classes (10 learners or fewer), without too much variation in learners' literacy levels[232]. Learners who are well motivated and have specific objectives for their literacy learning are more likely to persist, as are those who purposefully monitor their progress towards those goals[233]. For some adults these goals may be external incentives, such as qualifications; in other cases the goals may be more personal. There is evidence that most adults prefer problem-centred rather than subject-centred learning, and that individual learning plans[234] can help teachers tailor provision to individual goals. Adult learners benefit particularly from learning in collaboration between teachers and students, rather than as a uni-directional process[235]. Because most adult literacy learners are not skilled navigators of education systems, information, advice and guidance are essential in supporting persistence and progression[236].

### HIGH-QUALITY ADULT LITERACY COURSES REQUIRE COMMITTED AND WELL-QUALIFIED TEACHERS

Teaching adults requires qualified teachers, trained to deal with the specific challenges of adults. These adults have a long history of struggling in school, and managed to leave compulsory education without developing good reading and writing skills. They need high-quality teachers who treat learners as adults and give them individual attention. However, at present, very few tutors have specific qualifications in adult literacy pedagogy. Well-qualified staff members bring about better outcomes for learners[237]. However, recruiting and retaining the very best is extremely difficult, given the low pay and limited job security characteristic of the profession of adult literacy trainers[238].

In **FRANCE**, recruiting and retaining teachers of adult literacy has been difficult because of low pay and limited job security. This led to a serious shortage of trainers. In response, the 'Agence Nationale de Lutte contre l'Illetrisme' (ANLCI) developed a framework for the profession of teacher/trainer working in the specific field of literacy. ANLCI also offers a programme to improve teachers/trainers' skills through sharing good practice.

In some countries, the adult literacy workforce is a mix of professional educators and volunteers. In **IRELAND**, for example, volunteers account for 80% of the teaching workforce, though they teach only 20% of learners[239]. This disparity is primarily because volunteers are recruited to focus on remote, rural learners with tuition in small groups or one-to-one, while professional teachers work in classrooms.

Part of the extensive programme 'Skills for Life' in the **UNITED KINGDOM** is recruitment and training of volunteers in companies by the trade unions to become qualified volunteers and then pro-actively identify and reach out to (functionally) illiterate adults.

In the **IRISH** programme 'Learning for Life', trained volunteers play a huge part in supporting the learning process of illiterate adults. The Irish and UK programmes were used as an inspiration for a pilot project in six regions in the **NETHERLANDS**, 'Taal voor het Leven', of the Ministry of OCW (Education, Culture and Science) from 2012-2015.

### LINK LITERACY LEARNING TO DAILY LIFE AND OTHER FORMS OF LEARNING

Materials suitable for children are not necessarily suitable for adults, and methods may also need to be adapted. Authenticity and relevance are especially important: for many adults, learning appears to work best when it is linked to real-world tasks and relevant challenges (health, employment and citizenship)[240]. Using real-life examples in literacy learning has radically improved literacy achievement, in some cases nearly doubling participants' rate of success. Similarly, 'embedded learning', that is, teaching basic skills as part of vocational education and training, can improve both those aspects of learning, and also course completion rates[241]. However, neither 'bringing in the outside world' nor embedding is easy. Literacy tutors and vocational tutors need to work closely together to develop and deliver courses. Much more needs to be done to develop suitable materials.

### COURSES MUST HAVE THE RIGHT LENGTH AND INTENSITY

For some adults, finding time to learn is challenging, given the pressures of day-to-day life, such as work and family commitments. The amount of learning time available for adults is far less than for children and young people. Indeed, a typical adult literacy course consists of no more than three hours of class time per week, spread over six months, equivalent to only three weeks of compulsory schooling. For adults who have lifelong problems with reading and writing, this is insufficient, both in duration and intensity. Learners generally need to attend at least 100 hours of instruction to achieve progress equivalent to one US grade level[242]. However, most adult literacy learners in Europe are unlikely to manage this much 'time on task'. This suggests that longer and/or more intensive courses are needed, and classroom time should be used more efficiently[243]. Courses must strive to reach a balance between more time on task and the time constraints of adult learners.

### GATHER EVIDENCE OF ADULT LITERACY PROGRAMMES' EFFECTIVENESS THROUGH LONG-TERM MONITORING

More evidence means better accountability. International evidence indicates that, for most adults, improving literacy is a cumulative, often slow process[244]. While many learners do not exhibit proficiency gains immediately after completion of their course, most do experience meaningful changes in literacy attitudes and practices. Longitudinal evidence shows that these changes in practices lead to long-term gains in skill. Policy-makers assessing the effectiveness of adult literacy programmes should bear this in mind. Measuring short-term proficiency changes may not capture

the full impact of provision, and is likely to distort that provision, as it encourages 'teaching to the test'.

Organisations such as **NORWAY'S** Vox and the **UK'S** National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy (NRDC) provide research to support improved policy and practice.

**UNESCO-UIL** has initiated a multi-country action research project to measure literacy programme participants' learning outcomes (RAMAA). This project aims to test the effectiveness and impact on the beneficiaries of different literacy programmes. Its study is not being carried out in Europe, but the outcomes and especially the design could be used here too.

The **EUROPEAN COMMISSION'S** Action Plan on Adult Learning calls on Member States to improve their monitoring of adult learning. The follow-up Council Resolution on a renewed European agenda for adult learning has added to the ET2020 strategic objectives improving the evidence-base and monitoring as a specific priority for the adult learning sector, 2012-14; this is a particularly important objective for adult literacy.

### NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING SHOULD BE RECOGNISED AND VALIDATED

For adults, recognising and validating non-formal and informal learning are particularly important. The process enables adults to identify their skills and weaknesses, reflect on their learning since school and identify where they need to improve. The flexibility that non-formal and informal learning offers is particularly valuable for older groups of adults, who may not have had many opportunities for formal learning when they were younger, but have valuable skillsets that they developed through other types of learning.

### IMPROVE LITERACY SKILLS OF OFFENDERS

The literacy levels of both adult and young offenders tend to be low[245]. Developing literacy skills can help boost their self-confidence and foster a more positive self-image. Given that poor literacy is a key predictor of not finding a job on release and of recidivism, it makes both economic and ethical sense to boost offenders' basic skills so that their chances of getting a job and not re-offending are improved[246].

In the **UNITED KINGDOM**, the 'Toe By Toe' programme (entirely phonics-based) is used in almost every prison. In 2010, some 9 000 prisoners learnt to read using this programme, helped by other inmates or visiting volunteers. A scheme called 'TextNow' has had some success with young offenders in England and Wales, some held in Young Offender Institutions but most under supervision in the community. This too relies on one-to-one tutoring by volunteers, but concentrates on reading and re-reading texts written in simple English but based on teenagers' interests. The young people attend for 20 minutes a day, five days a week, for 10 weeks, and earn points which they can use afterwards to buy books online[247].

The acid test is whether such initiatives reduce re-offending rates, which are high. A British scheme called 'INCLUDE' carried out in 1999-2002 reported that two-thirds of the 155 participants re-offended within a year but, when a set of background factors were controlled for, literacy and numeracy gains emerged as important predictors of lowered rates of reconviction[248].

In the **USA**, it was found that offering inmates reading instruction can reduce the rate of reoffending by 20%[249].

In **GREECE**, in the Diavata prison in Thessaloniki, a literacy action was launched in 2000, providing education to inmates who had never attended school before, and Greek language tuition to inmates with migrant backgrounds. The curriculum was created with the participation of the inmates and, using the concepts of Paulo Freire, was based on learning, discussing and negotiating human rights (including prisoners' rights). The inmates were highly motivated, and some of them were able to achieve elementary education level and pass the relevant state examination within two years.

In **FRANCE**, the CyberBase in Gradignan prison has offered 700 prisoners a basic computer training focused on reading, writing, e-Administration and job-seeking technique, using ICT, in order to bridge more efficiently the digital divide and obtain their first diploma (for some of them) as a sign of acknowledgment of personal improvement[250].

## B. WORKPLACE

Throughout Europe, forward-thinking businesses recognise the value of having a modern, fully literate, high-skilled workforce. By investing in their workers' literacy skills, companies enhance their own capital and the loyalty of their employees. Training in identifying and addressing employees' basic skills needs should be a standard part of companies' human resource management, and there should be much greater awareness of the problem with literacy and numeracy among employed adults (and not just among migrants). A range of large companies has engaged in workplace literacy programmes, and together with trade unions provide incentives for employees to engage in literacy instruction. However, many businesses do not yet recognise the economic case for investing in literacy.

Several businesses in the **NETHERLANDS** have initiated projects to improve the literacy of the workforce. The facility service organisation Asito invited 10 000 employees to a literacy course, combined with information for managers. Almost 100 employees expressed their interest to attend a course and will get access to the necessary facilities. The workplace literacy development will be a continuing process monitored by the Human Resources director. FloraHolland, the largest flower trader in the world, signed a covenant in 2011 to use the collective labour agreement to fight illiteracy and stated its ambition to eradicate illiteracy among its employees. The company runs a constant awareness-raising campaign to guide employees to courses for literacy development.

### PROMOTING LITERACY IN THE WORKPLACE

Many employers are unaware of literacy difficulties among their employees, particularly among native speakers. Reading and writing capability is often taken for granted by employers and thus not explicitly discussed either at the start of employment or later on. Some employers may be aware that some of their employees are functionally illiterate or have serious reading difficulties. Some are nevertheless reluctant to address low literacy for reputational reasons, for instance if they wish to position their company as 'highly skilled'. Employees with low literacy skills, in turn, are reluctant to admit to these obstacles, fearing the negative impact on their employment status. Employers should recognise the value of reading skills both for productivity and safety and for employees' wellbeing, and recognise the role they can play in improving the literacy of their staff. Workplace literacy courses increase the engagement and participation of employees, particularly among those typically thought of as 'hard to reach'.

### INVESTING IN EMPLOYEES PAYS OFF

Employers should recognise the value of reading skills both for productivity and safety and for employees' wellbeing, and recognise the role they can play in improving the literacy of their staff. Many employers consider it too risky to invest in literacy training, as they are unaware of how well it will pay off. One common fear is that when the skills improve, employees will leave for another job. In fact, the opposite tends to happen: offering literacy training reduces staff turnover[251]. More skilled employees tend to receive the most training, whereas lower-skilled employees receive the least[252].

Investing in literacy courses for employees has distinct advantages for employers, such as:
- increased productivity;
- improved use of new technology in the workplace;
- saved time;
- increased safety; and
- reduced staff turnover and costs[253].

Literacy courses also form a basis for further personal and professional employee development. Workplace literacy initiatives have been successful in attracting adults who will not participate in other forms of learning[254]. While individuals are initially motivated to take part because of a desire to improve their earnings or position, motivations to persist tend to focus on improved job satisfaction[255]. Literacy courses also have a strong record of improving attitudes to education, giving many previously disaffected adults their first experience of enjoyable, personally satisfying education[256].

### PROVIDE HIGH-QUALITY WORKPLACE LITERACY TRAINING

The potential benefits of workplace literacy programmes for both employees and business owners are clear. The quality of training programmes is crucial for both employers and employees. They need to include effective assessment of the learners' needs, employ tutors with industry-specific knowledge, schedule the learning programme so that it is work-friendly, and ensure there is adequate funding of such approaches[257].

Workplace training should be based on real workplace situations. Since these adults often have negative prior experience with formal education, providers should avoid using a school-based approach. There is often a lack of co-operation between larger businesses to provide workplace training, and the efforts of small and medium-sized enterprises can be hampered by limited training capacity within each company. However, when setting up workplace literacy programmes, partnerships between businesses – whether they are large, small or medium-sized – and training providers are essential. These can avoid conflicts between the needs of employers and the type of education offered: workplace literacy courses need to be employment-focused for maximum gains for both employer and employee. Courses need to be long enough and provide adequate 'time on task'.

**NORWAY** subsidises employers to provide basic skills starting with literacy for low-skilled employees. This helps address the contentious issue of who should have responsibility for employees' literacy skills.

In **FRANCE**, employers' and employees' organisations have taken responsibility for organising literacy training in each economic sector. ANLCI (Agence Nationale de Lutte contre l'Illetrisme) signed and implemented agreements to promote the development of basic skills training in several professional sectors. The ANLCI offered all these professional sectors the opportunity to join in the 'good practice Charter' for the development of action promoting access to literacy, and aiming at securing professional careers, with a special tool, the scale of reference for key competences in different professional situations[258].

Collaboration between employers and employees' groups is also evident in the **UNITED KINGDOM**, where trade unions (including designated learning representatives) have played a central role in supporting courses and encouraging employees to improve their skills. Incentives can increase participation.

In **IRELAND**, as part of its Labour Market Policy, the government is making literacy and basic workplace skills a national priority, with literacy training incorporated into a wider variety of further education and training programmes.

In **GERMANY**, the co-ordination centre 'Deutsch am Arbeitsplatz' ('German in the Workplace') works with companies to develop a plan for implementing and evaluating in-company training programmes. Individual workplace-related language requirements are analysed so that training modules can be developed according to these requirements[259].

In the **NETHERLANDS**, the employers' association and trade unions, united in the Labour Foundation ('Stichting van de Arbeid') signed an agreement with the Dutch government on a long-term approach to low literacy in society and in trade and industry. They agreed that government is responsible for quality of teaching and learning in order to prevent illiteracy among children and adolescents and low-literate individuals who are not in employment, whereas the social partners and government share responsibility for eliminating low literacy in the working population. In their Low Literacy Agreement, the social partners and government have undertaken to reduce the number of low-literate workers by 60%, from 420 000 in 2007 to 168 000 in 2015.

### 4.4.3
### PARTICIPATION AND INCLUSION

Though lifelong learning has received significant policy attention in Europe in recent decades, our education and training systems are still based too much on the idea that learning is something we do when we are young. In many Member States, the adult education sector lacks coherence, with many unconnected or loosely connected activities that add up to less than the sum of their parts: such as awareness-raising campaigns, the offering of adult literacy courses, development of materials, activation of volunteers and other societal players, as well as engagement of people close to the adults who require support. These factors limit participation among adults, as the message appears to be that they should have developed these skills when they were younger and there is no clear pathway towards improving them now as adults.

#### THE ADULT PARTICIPATION GAP

Adults with medium and high qualifications are seven times as likely to participate in lifelong learning as those with low qualifications. A tiny 4% of low-skilled adults participate in lifelong learning, although these are the people who most need to strengthen their skills, and should have the highest participation rate.

The adult participation gap can be tackled in several ways: by bringing literacy instruction into the workplace, through workplace literacy programmes; by making courses free and more accessible; and by using family links and NGOs to reach those who are hardest to reach.

A key way to attract low-skilled adults into lifelong learning is providing them with early success and early recognition of their achievements. Non-formal and informal learning form an important part of the lifelong learning process, but are not often recognised or formally validated[260]. This sends a message that informal learning is less valuable. Validation of informal learning is motivational and inclusive, and can be a particularly effective tool for particular target groups, especially those 'most in need', such as those with low qualifications[261]. The process of recognising and validating this prior learning can place a value on and help individuals to identify their skills, record their achievements, reflect on their learning and recognise gaps for improvement. Recognising and validating non-formal and informal learning offer flexibility to learners, particularly for older age groups who may not have had many opportunities for formal learning when they were younger and/or had negative experiences of the formal education system. Participating in validation provides the opportunity to increase literacy

skills, but it also provides benefits increasing self-esteem and self-motivation[262].

In **PORTUGAL**, the 'New Opportunities Initiative' focuses on recognising and validating the skills that adults have developed outside formal education. It has enrolled more than 1.6 million people. To receive qualifications, adults have their skills validated, and can fill gaps in their skillsets by attending formal lessons in schools or flexible training in modular programmes. Because literacy improvements are part of a larger educational package that recognises the importance and validity of informal and non-formal learning, adults have strong 'pull' motivations to participate, persist and improve. This approach improves learners' self-image and self-confidence, by showing them that what they have done outside formal education is meaningful and valuable not just to them but to the formal education system. Double certification may validate both educational and professional achievements to the equivalent of a secondary level of education and vocational training[263].

#### THE DIGITAL DIVIDE IS STRONGEST AMONG ADULTS

The digital divide is more pronounced among older age groups. Some 91% of young people aged 16-24 regularly use the Internet, compared to only 40% of those in the 55-74 age group[264]. For adults of all ages, ICT skills are increasingly important for employment. Almost one-third of those who are unemployed and aged 25-64 have never used the Internet, compared to 14% of employed persons in this age group, and over half of these unemployed persons judge their current Internet and computer skills to be insufficient to look for a job, compared to 40% of those in employment[265].

When in employment, older people are less likely to be offered training[266], as governments and employers view the potential return on investment as limited. This has the potential to exacerbate the literacy and digital divides, particularly given that, at present, older people in Europe tend to have poorer literacy skills than younger people[267]. However, adults lacking computer skills tend to be very keen to develop them, and there is evidence that participation in adult education and training can be raised if literacy education helps adults to improve their basic skills[268].



## PEN PORTRAIT
Pascal Koelf (France)

© ANLCI – Groupement d'intérêt Public

'My struggle with writing skills prevented me from doing many things, especially when I was looking for a job. All I wanted was to start training in order to read and write better. My career was my real motivation. When I was going to start the training, my colleagues warned me, they told me "you are going to struggle, for the qualification you want to do, there is a 10 line text to write and you have never even been able to write us a note! You should attend a basic skills class." In my present job, I just have dates and names to write on stickers, but if I want to improve and pass a diploma, and get that job, I will have meetings with trainees, with the managing staff, I will have minutes to write. I failed my exams because of the written part.

Everything was fine at the oral. For example, for my professional certificate I failed the written part. With that training, I regained motivation to do another job, to discover something else and to earn a bit more. This shows that even if you are illiterate, you can improve. I have gone a good part of the way, but there are still things to do to allow other people to follow that way.

It is important for me to testify, because what is difficult with illiteracy is that it is a taboo. Personally I don't mind talking about it, but other people hide it, and are working on their own, late at night in their kitchen to learn again because they are ashamed! Why not talk about it?

There is no shame to bear! As long as we are not able to make people speak, we will not succeed. If women can work and vote today, it is because they fought for it, they got mobilised. Today, I want to say it is important for the fight against illiteracy to become a 'National Cause' in 2012, to encourage more people to speak up and raise their voice about the problem, for the people concerned to come out and to show them all the solutions that are available.'

# 05

# RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

'We cannot solve a problem
with the same thinking
as the one that created it.'

**ALBERT EINSTEIN**

*Based on the facts, misconceptions, trends and opportunities we have identified in this report, there is an urgent need for action on literacy at all levels: locally, regionally, nationally and Europe-wide. Our vision for Europe is threefold:*

- *All citizens of Europe shall be literate, so as to achieve their aspirations as individuals, family members, workers and citizens.*

- *Radically improved literacy will boost innovation, prosperity, social participation and cohesion and raise the life chances of all citizens.*

- *Member States will view it as their legal obligation to provide all the support necessary to realise our vision, and this support will include all ages.*

## 5.1
### FASTER PROGRESS

The EU's Education and Training 2020 (ET2020) goal calls for at least 85 % of European 15-year-olds to have adequate literacy skills – which is at least PISA Level 2. This is a step on the way, but we need to raise our ambitions and expectations if we want to make real progress. Tomorrow's knowledge society requires young people and adults on a daily basis to be able to read and use information in multiple formats and from multiple sources.

For this to become reality, Member States should redefine their objectives and should help ensure that all citizens obtain, in due course, 'multiple literacy' skills. We identify this level as corresponding to Level 3 in PISA. So far, in the absence of a reliable measure of adult skills, ambitions for adult literacy have been limited. The report of the OECD's adult skills assessment, PIAAC, in 2013 will change this. Ministers for Education should set ambitious and measurable targets for adult literacy skills. The long-term objective must be a Europe in which every citizen is literate.

In order to live up to these necessary ambitions and expectations, we have developed a range of recommendations aimed at shaping coherent approaches that help boost literacy levels and reduce illiteracy among all ages.

## 5.2
### DEVELOP VISIONS AND STRATEGIES FOR LITERACY DEVELOPMENT WITH WIDE OWNERSHIP

Achieving real improvement in literacy requires political ownership and co-operation across the policy spectrum and beyond, in society as a whole. Literacy strategies should be co-owned across society and government, should cover all ages and should be independent of political timetables.

#### • ACROSS SOCIETY

Create partnerships for literacy development between education and societal players such as municipalities, businesses, trade unions and NGOs.

#### • ACROSS GOVERNMENT

The main ministry responsible for developing an integrated vision and strategy on literacy (generally the Ministry of Education) should develop a 'joined-up' literacy approach, actively involving other ministries, such as Culture, Health, Employment and Finance. Within European institutions, a dialogue should be initiated between different services and institutions with policies relating to literacy, in order to raise awareness of literacy in European policy-making.

#### • ACROSS AGES

Adopt literacy strategies with a lifelong time-span, stretching from early childhood to adulthood.

#### • INDEPENDENT OF POLITICAL TIMETABLES

Literacy development and politics move at different speeds. The delivery and funding of literacy strategies need to persist across electoral cycles. Political commitment from the top to keep the issue visibly alive across society is crucial to maintain momentum for initiatives on the ground.

## 5.3
### OVERARCHING RECOMMENDATIONS

We have eight broad recommendations that cross all age groups, which we see as fundamental preconditions for success in any literacy approach.

#### 1. CREATE A LITERATE ENVIRONMENT

- Promote family literacy programmes focused on both parents and children. Their aims should be to help parents improve their skills and confidence to engage and motivate their children to both develop their language, and to read for pleasure.
- Support libraries in maintaining a literate learning environment and increase their accessibility, particularly for disadvantaged learners, whether children or adults.

#### 2. DEVELOP SOCIETY-WIDE ENGAGEMENT IN LITERACY

- Develop broad public awareness-raising campaigns at local, national and EU level on the relevance, value and joy of reading and writing. These should engage a range of educational and non-educational players and target all age groups.
- Shift the mindset of all players in society – from parents to policy-makers, from social and medical services to educational players and from individuals to businesses – so that they see their engagement is crucial to promoting reading and writing and that everyone can learn to read and write with the right encouragement and support.
- Harness the resource of volunteers in the approach to literacy, e.g. formerly illiterate adults as literacy ambassadors, or retired teachers or celebrities.
- Promote co-operation between national and regional literacy-related policies and initiatives at EU level in order to identify, disseminate and mainstream good practices.

#### 3. RAISE THE LEVEL OF LITERACY TEACHING AND PROVIDE MORE READING SUPPORT

- Include a wide range of literacy-specific teaching strategies, including digital aspects, assessment techniques, methods for diagnosing problems in reading and writing in initial education and professional development of teachers of primary, secondary and adult education, and improve their capacity to communicate with families in order to inform and complement school work.
- Improve and raise awareness of the early diagnosis of sensory, language and learning difficulties in order to provide more effective educational support addressing all reading and writing difficulties.
- Give incentives and support for the creation of organisation-wide literacy strategies in schools, explicitly committing the whole school community to raise the level of achievement in reading and writing.

#### 4. ADOPT A COHERENT LITERACY CURRICULUM

- Develop a coherent literacy curriculum from early childhood education to adult learning.
- Cover the full range of reading materials, from electronic to print, from canonical literature to newspapers and comic books.
- Set age-related standards and provide assessment tools to help teachers measure progress and identify extra support needs – and make sure this support is available.
- Include instruction in reading strategies as useful tools for every student.
- Allow adequate time for reading instruction and for free reading activities, where students choose their reading material and set their own pace while reading.
- Mainstream reading literacy across the curriculum, addressing reading aspects in the curricula for other subjects throughout secondary education, whether academic or vocational.
- Develop a curriculum for adult literacy. For adults, curricula should focus on acquiring literacy skills through practical, real-life and/or workplace examples.

#### 5. CLOSE THE SOCIAL GAP

- Provide all the necessary support and material for children's needs in literacy education.
- Offer special support for parents and pupils according to their individual needs.
- Provide access to free libraries or community centres with books, reading materials and digital equipment.
- Avoid early differentiation of students by ability in different educational tracks at the transition to secondary education, and replace class retention with learning support at all ages.

#### 6. PROVIDE MIGRANTS AND MEMBERS OF OTHER MINORITIES WITH TAILORED SUPPORT

- Ensure that all newly arrived migrants, both adults and children, have access to language and literacy screening. Provide individualised support to migrant learners on the basis of this screening.
- Flexible arrangements are required for newly arrived migrants, particularly with regard to language learning. In this respect, there is a need not only for rapid and targeted intervention shortly after arrival in the host country, but also for sustained programmes of language support.
- Treat bilingualism as an asset for further language development, encouraging language maintenance and pride for all linguistic minorities.

#### 7. CLOSE THE GENDER GAP

- Focus on motivating boys to read and write in order to close the gender gap.
- Open up schools to appealing materials, including digital ones, to make reading and writing relevant to boys' individual preferences.
- Facilitate contact with male role-models engaging in literacy.
- Attract more men into the educational professions.

#### 8. CLOSE THE DIGITAL GAP

- Use more digital and non-formal digital practices in classrooms and in adult education in order to boost motivation of learners to engage in reading and writing.
- Equip teachers at all levels, including in adult education, with the skills they need to integrate ICT in the teaching of literacy.
- Publishers and software producers should provide varied digital reading environments, allowing more use of ICT for learning – not only for entertainment.

# 5.4
## AGE-SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

### A. YOUNG CHILDREN

Our vision for literacy development among young children is that parents and Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) staff have the right tools to stimulate the language development of young children. Parents who are themselves struggling with reading will receive the necessary support. All European governments will have realised that providing affordable, high-quality childcare is – while a considerable expense in the short-term – a cost-effective long-term investment.

All European countries will strive for maximum attendance in ECEC free of charge. Participation will be matched with high-quality instruction. ECEC pedagogical staff will be well-educated and have the pedagogical skills needed to support children in their language development. They should also be appropriately paid and socially respected.

All parents will have ready access to family literacy programmes teaching them how to support their children's speaking, listening, reading and writing while they are still very young. Children will be born into literate societies where there is a broad culture of reading for pleasure in all sectors of the community. Children will be exposed to books and other printed and digital reading materials from their earliest days, and reading together will be a regular part of all families' lives.

### SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS RELATING TO YOUNG CHILDREN:

#### 1. STIMULATE AND SUPPORT THE FAMILY

- Implement family literacy programmes to improve parents' literacy and parenting skills and create a culture of reading for pleasure.
- Provide language courses for parents who do not speak the language of the school.
- Co-operate with businesses, NGOs and family support services (e.g. health services) to reach out to parents and engage them in literacy programmes.
- Equip those responsible for family support services to assist both children and parents in their literacy development.

#### 2. INCREASE THE QUALITY OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE AND PROVIDE FREE ACCESS

- Foster early literacy activities in a broad sense (reading books, storytelling, speaking about books) in Early Childhood Education and Care to help improve reading skills in primary education.
- Increase investment in high-quality Early Childhood Education and Care, as one of the most cost-efficient investments in Europe's future human capital.
- Provide access to free, high-quality Early Childhood Education and Care for all children.
- Base the Early Childhood Education and Care curriculum on the notion of playful learning with an emphasis on language, psychomotor and social development, and emerging literacy skills, building on children's needs and interests.

#### 3. ENSURE EARLY SCREENING FOR EMERGING LITERACY PROBLEMS

- Ensure that all young children have their hearing, eyesight and speech tested at the appropriate ages, and that problems are corrected as soon as possible.
- Implement a system of early screening for language and pre-literacy skills and for identifying and reaching out to those who risk lagging behind or being excluded.

#### 4. CO-OPERATE AMONG STAKEHOLDERS FROM A CHILD-CENTRED PERSPECTIVE

- Stimulate co-operation between Early Childhood Education and Care, parents, health services, schools, publishers, libraries and other organisations central to young children's lives and development.
- Support the establishment and expansion of book-gifting programmes.

### B. PRIMARY SCHOOL YEARS

Our vision is of a Europe where parents receive the necessary support to assist their children in their development before they enter, and after they leave, the school gates. Equally, all schools will support children in a way that matches the needs of those children regardless of their situation. All teachers will receive the appropriate training to teach reading and writing and to recognise problems at this early stage before they become entrenched. At this age, children who are struggling with their reading and writing will be given specialist help through specially trained literacy experts for as long as they need it. Policy-makers will embrace this up-front expenditure, because they will be familiar with the research showing the tremendous long-term cost savings of overcoming literacy problems before they grow too severe, and perceive this as 'the right thing to do'.

To meet the demands of the future, literacy provision will be reinvented in Europe. Literacy teaching in primary schools will be expanded to include the implications of digital literacy, including critical engagement with texts and their sources. This will provide a firm basis for developing 21st-century competences in an information society.

No child will leave primary school struggling to read and write. All children will be able to read critically in a range of formats, including traditional print and digital. The key is for all struggling children to receive specialised support early on, based on their real needs and strengths. On this basis, several recommended actions can be identified.

### SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS RELATING TO PRIMARY SCHOOL YEARS:

#### 1. ESTABLISH SPECIALIST READING TEACHERS AND HIGHER QUALIFICATIONS FOR ALL PRIMARY TEACHERS

- Create the role of specialist reading teachers, acting as key resource persons for other primary and secondary teachers in improving literacy.
- Develop measures to raise the standing and attractiveness of the profession of primary school teachers, e.g. through salaries, good working conditions and high qualification requirements, also with the aim of attracting more men into the profession.
- Ensure that all newly qualified teachers obtain a master's degree, with competences in, for example, critical evaluation of literacy research and new instructional methods, tailoring instruction to student language diversity and engaging parents in their children's reading and writing work at school.

#### 2. EARLY INTERVENTION

- Establish age-related minimum standards for literacy achievement, supported by assessment, in order to address pupils' individual literacy needs early.
- Provide low-performing pupils and schools with the assistance they need, as early as possible.
- Support parents to understand learning difficulties and to collaborate better with schools in addressing them.
- Change the mindset on dyslexia, shifting the emphasis from medical to educational support for struggling readers.

#### 3. INSPIRE THE MOTIVATION TO READ

- Ensure that curricula and teaching methods focus on reading and writing motivation combined with a high expectation of success, in order to avoid learning failure and to build up confidence.
- Provide school and classroom libraries with reading materials that are attractive and challenging for all age groups and different interests.
- Use ICT tools and digital reading both in schools and in home / family activities.
- Develop campaigns and programmes that offer resources, support and reading volunteers to disadvantaged parents and pupils in the context of family literacy programmes.

## C. ADOLESCENTS

Our vision is a Europe in which reading reconnects to adolescents' lives. The digital environment will be designed to engage teenagers in reading. We envisage secondary schools and institutes for vocational education as organisations that see literacy as part of their core business, and as places with diverse and engaging reading materials, where all teachers see themselves also as teachers of reading. In these schools, adolescents who struggle with reading and writing will have their problems quickly diagnosed and addressed. These young people will receive specialist help to improve their skills and increase their motivation. Their motivation will be further encouraged by in-school reading materials that resonate with out-of-school reading preferences. Where adolescents have a feeling of self-determination and are able to see their own role in the educational process, they are much less likely to give up and more willing to continue to develop their skills even when they encounter difficulties. Peer assessment can improve self-reflection and boost self-esteem, self-efficacy and motivation to read.

### SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS RELATING TO ADOLESCENTS:

#### 1. MAKE EVERY TEACHER A TEACHER OF LITERACY

- Adapt teaching approaches so that reading and writing are taught as essential skills across the secondary curriculum.
- Raise awareness among teachers about the importance of literacy skills for all courses, in order to stimulate all teachers to see reading and writing as part of their responsibility.
- Mainstream reading literacy across the curriculum, addressing reading aspects in the subject curricula throughout secondary education, whether academic or vocational.

#### 2. PROVIDE THE RIGHT MATERIAL TO MOTIVATE ALL READERS, ESPECIALLY BOYS

- Provide more diverse reading materials, from comic books to canonical literature, from SMS to electronic books.
- Include digital reading as part of the norm in schools across Europe.
- Provide language and literature teachers with skills to use more ICT in their classes.

#### 3. STIMULATE SCHOOL-BUSINESS CO-OPERATION

- Promote, stimulate and facilitate co-operation between schools and businesses, providing pupils with the insight that literacy skills are essential for personal development and for getting and keeping a job.

## D. ADULTS

We envisage a Europe where adults get more than one chance; a Europe in which poor literacy skills are no longer a taboo subject and in which every adult suffering from literacy problems has access to high-quality, affordable (if possible, free) adult literacy provision. We envisage a proactive approach based on data and evidence and focused on motivating adults to acknowledge their shortcomings, and addressing them wherever they are best addressed: in colleges, in the workplace, as part of vocational courses, in libraries, in community centres or at home – and with the support of ICT.

We envisage an era in which the existing notion of lifelong learning also becomes a reality for those with low literacy skills, and those in a position to help are empowered to do so. The 'initial education paradigm' will be replaced by a lifelong learning paradigm. And 'lifelong learning' will be more than just a phrase: the adult education sector in general – and adult literacy in particular – will receive the funding and support they need to help all struggling adults to achieve their full literacy potential.

### SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS RELATING TO ADULTS:

#### 1. ESTABLISH SYSTEMS TO MONITOR ADULT LITERACY LEVELS AND PRACTICES

- Develop data on levels of literacy achievement within the adult population.
- Develop national and regional surveys and monitoring to identify groups in need of particular attention and to plan future strategies.
- Share best practices and create demand among the players not yet involved.
- Within this, establish a specific focus on the literacy and numeracy levels of disaffected youth and of offenders, both adult and juvenile.
- Use the results of international surveys, such as the forthcoming PIAAC, to stimulate policies.

#### 2. COMMUNICATE WIDELY ABOUT THE NEED FOR ADULT LITERACY DEVELOPMENT

- Intensify policy and enhance strategies directed at poor literacy among adults.
- Use direct and indirect communication to encourage adults to acknowledge their literacy problems and then take steps to improve their literacy skills.
- Use the media to break the taboo associated with low literacy, targeting both native EU citizens and migrants.
- Raise societal awareness: work with NGOs, media, celebrities, employers and varied local organisations to make both the literacy problem – and its solutions – visible.

#### 3. STRENGTHEN THE PROFESSION OF ADULT LITERACY TEACHERS

- Raise the professional profile of the adult literacy teacher by providing tailored initial and continuing pedagogical training, good career prospects and adequate remuneration.
- Produce appropriate teaching and learning materials and make them available free of charge.
- Design curricula and assessment methods sensitive to the needs of the adult learner.
- Support volunteers in gaining pedagogical skills and joining programmes aimed at reaching and teaching adults with reading difficulties.

#### 4. ENSURE BROAD AND VARIED ACCESS TO LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

- Provide adults with a variety of personalised learning opportunities, of adequate length and pace, at convenient times, in convenient settings – as well as with ICT support – and preferably related to their life or work context.
- Use national and regional legislation to finance, mandate and support increased access to high-quality adult literacy courses.
- Co-operate across government departments and with local and regional authorities, business and civil society to reduce institutional barriers.
- Co-operate with employers to promote literacy among their workers and provide incentives for social partners to take ownership of developing literacy programmes at work.
- Encourage providers of vocational education and training, and vocational teachers and trainers, to embed literacy instruction in their programmes.
- Recognise and validate non-formal and informal learning, putting a premium on adults' achievements in experiential learning and tacit knowledge consolidation.
- Develop effective programmes for improving the literacy of disaffected young adults and offenders with low literacy skills.

Literacy is not just an issue for the educational sector.

Whatever our role, **we should all act now!**

# ACT NOW!

## A WIDE RANGE OF PLAYERS CAN

# CONTRIBUTE TO IMPROVING LITERACY

*We cannot emphasise strongly enough that literacy is neither an issue just for the educational sector, nor a problem to be solved by policy-makers alone. All players in society can benefit from actions that help prevent and reduce illiteracy. It also means that the responsibility to act does not only rest with governments. A broad range of individuals and organisations in European countries and at EU level are in a position to develop initiatives and implement policies to stimulate literacy development. We see these as opportunities for intervention. They can either function as stand-alone policies with individual and organisational benefits, or they can be multiplying factors strengthening existing governmental literacy policy. The message is clear: whatever our role, we should all act now!*

*We have listed the opportunities for intervention by player (in alphabetical order), indicating what each player can do in relation to the age groups we have identified:*

· **YOUNG CHILDREN**
· **PRIMARY SCHOOL YEARS**
· **ADOLESCENTS**
· **ADULTS**

97

| PLAYERS | YOUNG CHILDREN | PRIMARY AGE | ADOLESCENTS | ADULTS |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **BUSINESSES –LARGE AND SMEs** | • Game developers and television programme makers to develop more educational content and concepts, more specifically including language games. | | • Use the digital environment as a medium for reading promotion. • Co-operate with schools to show adolescents real-life use of their literacy skills. | • Raise awareness about literacy, encouraging employees. • Invest in literacy training – it reduces staff turnover and increases productivity. |
| **CELEBRITIES** | • Get involved in campaigns on reading and writing promotion. • Raise awareness of illiteracy and promote the importance of books, reading, writing etc. through unconventional methods such as cabaret, music, movies and television series. | | | |
| **ECEC MANAGERS** | • Develop programmes to support parents in their role in their children's development, including speech and reading, before and after childbirth. | | | |
| **ECEC STAFF** | • Diagnose oral language proficiency problems and emergent literacy skills at early stages of learning to spot intervention needs. | | | • Engage parents to recognise and address literacy problems of children. • Help parents (when help is needed) to facilitate the natural development of 'pre-literacy' skills. |
| **HEALTH PROFES- SIONALS** | • Test young children's hearing and sight in order to recognise possible barriers to developing literacy skills. | | | • Engage parents to recognise and address any literacy problems their children may have. |
| **LIBRARIES** | • Work together with ECEC facilities in order to provide them with books and hands-on support, guidance and advice for parents and ECEC teachers. | • Reach out to schools and parents to engage children and families in reading activities – also offering digital materials and computers. | • Reach out to engage adolescents in reading activities, by providing diverse reading materials and mobilising peers – also offering digital materials and computers. | • Develop inter-genera- tional reading activities for older people and children. • Develop activities and incentives for older people to stay in reading. • Develop digital reading opportunities for adults and older people. |
| **MEDIA** | • Raise awareness about the issues at stake, and break the vicious circle of illiteracy as a taboo subject. • Give a voice to those with reading and writing difficulties who want to speak out – not to stigmatise the individuals, but to bring the issue out into the open, indicating that solutions are possible and motivating others to seek help. • Create and foster a wide culture of reading. | | | |

| PLAYERS | YOUNG CHILDREN | PRIMARY AGE | ADOLESCENTS | ADULTS |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **NGOs** | • Set up parental awareness campaigns that encourage a culture of reading for pleasure at home.<br>• Establish a support system for parents, which also gives them information about the importance of literacy and guidance on supporting children's literacy development. | | • Develop initiatives aimed at making language development fun and appealing, e.g. involving music, etc. | • Raise awareness of, and willingness to address, adult reading problems.<br>• Provide support, advice and materials to adults with reading difficulties and to mobilise policy-makers and other stakeholders. |
| **PARENTS** | • Provide an environment rich with books and written texts.<br>• Read aloud 15 minutes every day. | • Continue to read with their children while they are at primary school.<br>• Establish high aspirations and emotional support for their children. | • Make reading a social activity, sharing and discussing books with adolescent children. | |
| **PEERS** | | | • Engage in reading activities in informal settings, including digital and social networking. | |
| **POLICY-MAKERS- NATIONAL AND LOCAL LEVEL** | • Provide free, top-quality, 'playful learning' facilities for all children.<br>• Develop more extensive, larger and better coordinated family literacy initiatives to engage parents and help them support their children's literacy development.<br>• Put one institution in charge of the family literacy policy.<br>• Develop a strategy to make the development of young children a vital part of the education system, with a developed curriculum, high-quality staffing and parental involvement.<br>• Develop clear standards for requirements of the profession of ECEC teachers. | • Incentivise schools to find new and innovative ways to incorporate the learning environment at home into the practice of reading and writing development at school.<br>• Integrate critical literacy and evaluation of reading material in curricula of primary education.<br>• Provide targeted support for disadvantaged parents who do not have strong literacy skills themselves.<br>• Provide parents with information and resources on their literacy support role.<br>• Empower parents to support their children and their literacy development.<br>• Develop national literacy action plans and put literacy at the heart of primary education. | • Promote support for parents with adolescent children.<br>• Ensure initial teacher education and further learning are provided to secondary teachers in their role as literacy teachers. | • Recognise the literacy problem among adults and gather and analyse data at national level.<br>• Provide specific training in adult pedagogy for staff working in adult education.<br>• Organise awareness campaigns, in co-operation with the media .<br>• Support NGOs that work on literacy and have specific target groups within their reach. |

| PLAYERS | YOUNG CHILDREN | PRIMARY AGE | ADOLESCENTS | ADULTS |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | • Liaise across departments to make literacy a horizontal issue that requires multi-department involvement. | | | |
| **POLICY-MAKERS- EU LEVEL** | • Share knowledge and good practices among Member States on ECEC, and family literacy programmes. | • Share knowledge and good practices on improving literacy skills among Member States.<br>• Coordinate literacy initiatives across all Directorates-General (DGs) within the European Commission. | • Put literacy at the heart of Europe's goal for innovation, employment and wellbeing to ensure that European adolescents have the skills to succeed in the modern world. | • Promote and work with Member States and all stakeholders on the Renewed Agenda for Adult Learning in Europe.<br>• Support the development of data and indicators on adult literacy.<br>• Liaise with other international actors such as the OECD and UNESCO for the promotion of literacy. |
| | • Liaise among DGs to make literacy a horizontal issue. | | | |
| **POLITICIANS** | • Create a vision to make development of young children a vital part of the education system, with a developed curriculum, high-quality staffing and parental involvement.<br>• Invest at least the same amount of money in ECEC as in later phases of education.<br>• Commit to viewing literacy as a human right for young children. This means having a right to be read to by parents, and a legislation mandating a right to access to free, high-quality early childhood facilities. | • Pass national and regional legislation to mandate and support access to high-quality basic education including literacy education.<br>• Promote a 'whole family' approach to literacy whereby parents embark on a journey of (re-) discovering literacy alongside their school-age children.<br>• Ensure sustained, long-term political commitment.<br>• Establish benchmarks for reading achievement for each grade, in order to recognise low-performing pupils and schools, and provide them with support and assistance they need.<br>• Establish national bodies for reading promotion to develop reading material, conduct research and publish information about reading. | | • Pass national, regional and local legislation to mandate and support increased access to high-quality adult literacy courses.<br>• Provide funding schemes that incentivise and enable adults to learn literacy skills throughout their lives. |
| **PRISON AUTHORITIES** | | | • Develop and provide effective programmes for improving the literacy of disaffected young adults and offenders with low literacy skills. | |

| PLAYERS | YOUNG CHILDREN | PRIMARY AGE | ADOLESCENTS | ADULTS |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **PUBLISHERS** | • Set up book-gifting schemes in order to get books into the home. Include hands-on support, guidance and advice for parents.<br>• All book-gifting programmes for pre-school-age children should be combined with support (where needed) for parents' own reading skills. | • Develop and publish age- and gender-appropriate reading material. | • Develop and publish e-reading material for adolescents. | • Provide adult learners with 'easy to read' materials, books, newspapers and websites.<br>• Support awareness-raising campaigns. |
| | • Develop books for people with special needs (e.g. Braille). | | | |
| **SOCIAL AND YOUTH WORKERS** | • Engage and motivate new and/or disadvantaged families to undertake reading activities at home. | | • (Re-)motivate young adolescents to engage in reading activities by mobilising peers. | • Address literacy issues when working with adults.<br>• Get training to recognise problems and network with other actors to provide individualised support. |
| **SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES** | • Implement reading across the curriculum with the notion that every teacher is a reading teacher.<br>• Ensure all schools see literacy as their core business and develop a vision for literacy within their school.<br>• Provide financial resources for school and classroom libraries, computers, etc. | | | • Recognise the importance of adult literacy as an enabler to cut the inter-generational vicious circle.<br>• Liaise with other authorities to support families where adults have a literacy problem. |
| **SCHOOL AND EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION LEADERS** | | • Ensure primary schools focus on reinforcing motivation and emphasise reading for pleasure. | • Support all teachers within the school to teach reading.<br>• Ensure literacy is seen as the school's core business and develop a vision for it.<br>• Develop a school-wide literacy strategy. | • Ensure classes are small without too much variation in learners' literacy levels.<br>• Provide classes at convenient times.<br>• Ensure suitable course length and intensity. |

| PLAYERS | YOUNG CHILDREN | PRIMARY AGE | ADOLESCENTS | ADULTS |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **TEACHERS (INCLUDING VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND ADULT EDUCATION)** | | • Develop instructional strategies and pedagogical approaches to teach reading in a way appropriate to each individual learner.<br>• Provide children with individualised support, engaging reading materials and a creative culture that combines equity with high expectations as early as possible.<br>• Ensure early intervention, in a non-stigmatising way, embedded in day-to-day activities.<br>• Use formative assessment, to identify literacy skills and needs from the very beginning of formal education.<br>• Integrate technology in teaching practice. | • All teachers should be reading teachers, even if they are not language or literacy teachers.<br>• Teach reading strategies that enable all students to cope with texts, also in subject areas.<br>• Assess motivation as well as literacy skills.<br>• Use attractive, age- and gender-appropriate materials to motivate adolescents to read, including digital material.<br>• Allow students free time for reading and to choose their reading material.<br>• Use formative assessment to diagnose individuals' strengths and weaknesses and therefore help teachers to adjust their strategies. | • Specialise in adult literacy training.<br>• Adapt teaching strategies to individual needs.<br>• Link authenticity and relevance in teaching strategies.<br>• Link instruction to real-world tasks and relevant challenges. |
| **TEACHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS** | • Provide extensive training for teachers to recognise and remedy literacy problems at an early stage. | • Provide extensive training for teachers to recognise and remedy literacy problems at an early stage.<br>• Integrate online reading, digital technologies and critical literacy in curricula for teacher education and CPD. | • Ensure all teachers have the knowledge and skills to recognise reading difficulties, for adolescents and adults in particular.<br>• Provide teachers with knowledge and skills to overcome literacy difficulties even if they are not a literacy or language teacher.<br>• Provide further learning to make sure that all teachers have the necessary skills to tackle literacy difficulties among adolescents or adults. | |
| | • Ensure that training of all teachers of all ages and at all levels is research-based. | | | |
| **VOLUNTEERS** | • Get involved in reading promotion activities in schools, homes, libraries, etc. | • Get involved in reading activities in and outside schools to support children with reading difficulties and to promote reading for pleasure. | • Act as role-models by promoting reading and supporting literacy efforts among adolescents and adults.<br>• Obtain volunteer qualifications for improved instruction. | |

# ANNEX

102

103

## CROSS-COMPETENCE

**LEARNING TO LEARN**

The ability to pursue and organise one's own learning, either individually or in groups, in accordance with one's own needs, and awareness of methods and opportunities.

## LEVELS OF LITERACY

### MULTIPLE LITERACY

The ability to use reading and writing skills in order to produce, understand, interpret and critically evaluate written information. It is a basis for digital participation and making informed choices pertaining to finances, health, etc.

### MULTIPLE NUMERACY

The ability and willingness to use mathematical modes of thought (logical and spatial thinking) and presentation (formulae, models, graphs, charts) that enable a person to fully function in a modern society.

### FUNCTIONAL LITERACY

The ability to read and write at a level that enables someone to develop and function in society, at home, at school and at work.

### FUNCTIONAL NUMERACY

The ability to apply basic mathematical principles and processes in everyday contexts at home, school and work (as needed for banking, payments, reading timetables, etc.).

### BASELINE LITERACY

Having the knowledge of letters, words and text structures that is needed to read and write at a level that enables self-confidence and motivation for further development.

### BASELINE NUMERACY

Having a sound knowledge of numbers, measures and structures, basic operations, basic mathematical presentations and the ability to use appropriate aids that enable further development.

## ENABLING AND FACILITATING COMPETENCES

### DIGITAL COMPETENCE

The ability to use ICT to retrieve, assess, produce, present and exchange information. The ability to communicate and participate in collaborative networks via the Internet.

### COMMUNICATION

The ability to express and interact linguistically in an appropriate and creative way in a full range of societal and cultural contexts.

# REFERENCES

1.   See e.g. OECD & Statistics Canada (2000) Literacy in the information age: final report of the Adult Literacy Survey, Paris, Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development; UK Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (2011) Skills for Life Survey: Headline findings. BIS research paper 57. London: Department for Business, Innovation and Skills; National Agency to Fight Illiteracy (ANCLI) (2008) Illiteracy: the statistics. Analysis by the National Agency to fight illiteracy of the IVQ_Survey conducted in 2004-2005 by INSEE. National Agency to Fight Illiteracy.

2.   'Europe has 80 million low-skilled workers (A), some one third of the labour force (B). Estimates indicate that by 2010 only 15% of newly created jobs will be for those with basic schooling, while 50% of net additional jobs will require tertiary level qualifications (C). At the same time, international surveys show that a significant share of the European population does not have the ability to understand and employ printed information in daily activities at home (D), at work and in the community and early school leavers are particularly at risk.' Sources for the above passage:
A: Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on key competences for lifelong learning (2006/962/EC) http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/objectives_en.html#basic
http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2006:394:0010:0018:EN:PDF
B: Action Plan on Adult Learning: It is always a good time to learn http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/adult/com558_en.pdf
C: Vocational education and training – key to the future. Cedefop synthesis of the Maastricht study, Luxembourg, 2004.
D: Literacy/basic skills in the information age, Final report of the International Adult Literacy/basic skills Survey, OECD.

3.   OECD (2010) PISA 2009 Results: What Students Know and Can Do – Student Performance in Reading, Mathematics and Science (Volume I) http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264091450-en. Comparing results from 2000 and 2009 for the 21 countries for which there is available data. While some Member States, such as PL, PT, LU and LV, made impressive progress, others saw their percentage of poor readers go up

rather than down. Reading performance, as well as equity, has considerably increased in some countries: LV, PL, PT, DE and HU. In these countries, the increase in national averages came from a considerable decrease in the number of low achievers, while the number of high achievers remained the same.

4.   Parsons, Samantha and Bynner, John (2007) Illuminating disadvantage: Profiling the experiences of adults with entry level literacy or numeracy over the lifecourse. London: NRDC.

5.   Parsons and Bynner, 2007.

6.   Parsons and Bynner, 2007; Hanushek, Eric and Woessmann, Ludger (2011) The Cost of Low Educational Achievement in the European Union, EENEE Analytical Report No. 7, http://www.eenee.de/doc/cost_of_low_achievement.pdf

7.   Mullis, I. V. S., Martin, M. O., Kennedy, A. M., & Foy, P. (2007) PIRLS 2006 international report: IEA's Progress in International Reading Literacy Study in primary schools in 40 countries. Chestnut Hill, MA: TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center, Boston College.

8.   OECD (2010) PISA 2009 Results: What Students Know and > Can Do.

9.   For example, Bynner has used UK birth cohort studies from 1958 and 1970 to show the increasing importance of good literacy and numeracy skills in shaping young people's future employment outcomes – and the diminishing employment prospects for those who lack them. See e.g. Bynner, John (2004) Literacy, Numeracy and Employability: Evidence from the British Birth Cohort Studies. Literacy and Numeracy Studies, 13, 31-48.

10.   In The Shallows, Nicholas Carr argues that the Internet is destroying our powers of concentration. However, this claim is hotly contested. Carr, Nicholas (2010) The shallows: What the Internet Is doing to our brains. New York: Norton.

11.   Leu, D., Zawilinski, L., Castek, J., Banerjee, M., Housand, B., Liu, Y. and O'Neil, M. (2007) 'What Is New about the New Literacies

of Online Reading Comprehension?', in Rush, Eakle, and Berger (editors). Secondary School Literacy: What Research Reveals for Classroom Practice. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English (2007).

12.   Andrews, Richard and Smith, Anne (2011). Developing Writers: Teaching and Learning in the Digital Age. London: Open University Press.

13.   CEDEFOP, 2012.

14.   Wolf, Alison (2005) Basic Skills in the Workplace: Opening Doors to Learning. London: Chartered Institute of Personnel Development.

15.   Ala-Mutka, K., Punieand, Y. and Redecker, C. (2008) Digital competence for lifelong learning: Policy Brief. JRC Technical Notes. Seville: European Commission Joint Research Centre Institute for Prospective Technological Studies http://ftp.jrc.es/EURdoc/JRC48708.TN.pdf

16.   Eurochild, End Child Poverty Now! http://www.endchildpoverty.eu/index.php?id=49

17.   European Commission; Europe 2020 strategy. http://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2010:2020:FIN:EN:PDF and Eurostat in Focus 'Population and social conditions' 2012; http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=961

18.   Poverty in Europe : Navigating safe passage through the labyrinth of poverty. Caritas Europa's paper on child and family poverty. Bruxelles, October 2010, p.16. http://www.caritas-europa.org/module/FileLib/ChildPovertyPaperfinal.pdf

19.   Esping-Andersen, G. (2004) 'Untying the Gordian knot of social inheritance', in A.L. Kalleberg, S.L. Morgan, J. Myles, R.A. Rosenfeld (Eds.), Inequality: Structures, dynamics and mechanisms. essays in honor of Aage B. Sørensen. Research in social stratification and mobility. Vol. 21, Elsevier, pp. 115-138.

20.   Poverty in Europe : Navigating…, p. 6.

21.   Poverty has two-fold impact on children's ability, says study. Guardian, Wednesday 13 June 2012.

22.   Poverty in Europe : Navigating …, p. 7.

23.   End child poverty, http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/why-end-child-poverty/the-effects, 2008.

24.   Esping-Andersen, Gosta (ed.) (2002) Why We Need a New Welfare State (with Gallie, D., Hemerijck, A. and Myles, J.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

25.   European Commission (2009) Dealing with the impact of an ageing population in the EU (2009 Ageing Report). Communication from the Commission. COM(2009) 180. 29 April 2009.

26.   European Commission (2011) Progress towards the common European objectives in education and training (2010/2011) – Indicators and benchmarks.

27.   European Commission (2011) Demography report 2010: Older, more numerous and diverse Europeans. Commission Staff Working Document.

28.   OECD (2010) Pathways to Success: How Knowledge and Skills at Age 15 Shape Future Lives in Canada. Paris: OECD. (Tracking Canadian students who had been part of the PISA 2000 reading assessment, this study found that PISA literacy scores were correlated with a number of positive economic and educational outcomes at the age of 21, and were strong predictor of earnings for both males and females.) & De Coulon A., Marcenaro-Gutierrez O. and Vignoles A. (2007) The Value of Basic Skills in the British Labour Market, Centre for the Economics of Education Discussion Paper CEEDP0077, London School of Economics; Vorhaus, J., Litster, J., Frearson, M. and Johnson, S. (2011) Review of

research and evaluation on improving adult literacy and numeracy skills. Research paper 61. London: UK Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

29.   Vorhaus et al, 2011 ; Parsons and Bynner, 2007; Carpentieri, J. and Vorhaus, J. (2010) 'The social value of further education in adult learning', in Colleges 2020. London: ippr.

30.   Hanushek and Woessmann, 2011.

31.   OECD (2010) PISA 2009 Results: What Students Know and Can Do; Parsons and Bynner, 2007 ; Bynner, 2004.

32.   Hanushek and Woessmann, 2011.

33.   Hanushek and Woessmann, 2011.

34.   OECD (2010) PISA 2009 Results: What Students Know and Can Do; OECD & Statistics Canada (2000).

35.   See e.g. ANCLI, 2008; UK Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2011.

36.   Due to the lack of data on adult literacy, this figure is based on the assumption that if PISA results show that around 20% of 15 year olds have weak literacy levels and the rate of adult participation in Europe is persistently low, these deficiencies continue into adulthood. PIAAC results in October 2013 should shed new light on this.

37.   Singleton, Chris (2009): Intervention for Dyslexia – A review of published evidence on the impact of specialist dyslexia teaching, http://www.4d.org.nz/school/dyslexia_intervention_research.pdf. Selection of effective schemes used in the UK: www.interventionsfordyslexia.org.uk

38.   Suchodoletz, W. von (2003) (Hrsg.): Therapie der Lese-Rechtschreib-Störung. Traditionelle und alternative Behandlungsmethoden im Überblick. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer.

39.   Singleton, Chris (2009): Intervention for Dyslexia – A review of published evidence on the impact of specialist dyslexia teaching, http://www.4d.org.nz/school/dyslexia_intervention_research.pdf. Selection of effective schemes used in the UK: www.interventionsfordyslexia.org.uk

40.   Tanner, E., Brown, A., Day, N., Kotecha, M., Low, N., Morrell, G., Turczuk, O., Brown, V., Collingwood, A., Chowdry, H., Greaves, E., Harrison, C., Johnson, G. and Purdon, S. (2011) Evaluation of Every Child a Reader (ECaR). Research Report DFE-RR114. London: UK Department for Education.

41.   Carpentieri et al, 2011.

42.   Garbe, C., Holle, K. and Weinhold, S. (2009) ADORE project: Teaching adolescent struggling readers. A comparative study of good practices in European countries. Scientific report. Lueneburg, Germany: University of Lueneburg.

43.   Functional illiterate is defined as a person who cannot engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning of his group and community and also for enabling him to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for his own and the community's development. (Source OECD/UNESCO).

44.   Martins, P. S. (2010). Can Targeted, Non-Cognitive Skills Programs Improve Achievement? Evidence from EPIS. IZA DP No. 5266. http://ftp.iza.org/dp5266.pdf

45.   Mourshed, M., Chijioke, C. and Barber, M. (2010) How the world's most improved school systems keep getting better. McKinsey and Company.

46.   http://www.natiperleggere.it/index.php?id=73

47.   Garbe et al.

48. Detailed description of the levels of performance in PISA: http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/10/61/48852548.pdf, p. 46/47.

49. Commissie Meijerink (2008), Over de drempels met taal en rekenen, Hoofdrapport van de Expertgroep Doorlopende Leerlijnen Taal en Rekenen.

50. Carpentieri et al, 2011.

51. Kağıtçıbaşı, Ç., Sunar, D., Bekman, S., Cemalcılar, Z. (2005). Continuing effects of early intervention in adult life: Preliminary findings of Turkish early enrichment project second follow up study. Istanbul: Mother Child Education Foundation Publications; Bekman, S. (2004). 'Early Home Intervention to Promote School Readiness: A Turkish Experience.' NHSA Dialog: A Research-to-Practice Journal for the Early Intervention Field, 7(1): 16-34.

52. Carpentieri et al, 2011.

53. Sylva et al, 2004.

54. See e.g. Sénéchal, Monique, and LeFevre, Jo-Anne (2002) 'Parental Involvement in the Development of Children's Reading Skill: A Five-Year Longitudinal Study', Child Development. 73, no. 1,: 445-460; Strommen, L. T. and B. F. Mates (2004). 'Learning to love reading: Interviews with older children and teens.' Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy 48(3): 188-200; Fan, Xitao, and Chen, Michael (2001) 'Parental Involvement and Students' Academic Achievement: A Meta-Analysis'. Educational Psychology Review 13, no. 1: 1-22.

55. OECD/PISA (2012) - Let's Read Them a Story! The Parent Factor in Education.

56. Wade, B. and Moore, M. (1998). 'An early start with books: literacy and mathematical evidence from a longitudinal study.' Educational Review, 50, 2, 135-45.; Wade, B. and Moore, M. (2000). 'A sure start with books.' Early Years, 20, 2, 39-46.

57. Cox, K. E. and J. T. Guthrie (2001) 'Motivational and Cognitive Contributions to Students' Amount of Reading', Contemporary Educational Psychology 26(1): 116-131.

58. Andrews and Smith, 2011.

59. EU Kidsonline: http://www2.lse.ac.uk/media@lse/research/EUKidsOnline/Home.aspx

60. Mourshed, M., Chijioke, C. and Barber, M. (2010) How the world's most improved school systems keep getting better. McKinsey and Company.

61. Coburn, 2003; Twist, L., Sainsbury, M., Woodthorpe, A. and Whetton, C. (2003) Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS): Research Summary. Slough: NFER (Highly centralised, tightly controlled teaching programmes that allow little room for teachers to be involved in decision-making do not raise standards).

62. Hall, K. and Harding, A. (2003) A systematic review of effective literacy teaching in the 4 to14 age range of mainstream schooling. London: Eppi-Centre Institute of Education.

63. Eurydice, 2011.

64. Bos, W., Hornberg,S., Arnold, K.-H., Faust, G., Fried, L., Lankes,E.-M., Schwippert, K., Valtin,R. (Hrsg.): IGLU 2006. Lesekompetenzen von Grundschulkindern in Deutschland im internationalen Vergleich, Münster: Waxmann 2007.

65. Eithne Kennedy, Elizabeth Dunphy, Bernadette Dwyer, Geraldine Hayes, Thérèse McPhillips, Jackie Marsh, Maura O'Connor, Gerry Shiel (2012) Literacy in Early Childhood and Primary Education (3-8 years) Commissioned research report. Research conducted on behalf of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.

66. The average yearly instruction time in 4th grades in the participat-

ing states ls 824 hours a year, ranging from 627 in Bulgaria to 1070 in the Netherlands, Bos, W., Hornberg,S., Arnold, K.-H., Faust, G., Fried, L., Lankes,E.-M., Schwippert, K., Valtin,R. (Hrsg.): IGLU 2006. Lesekompetenzen von Grundschulkindern in Deutschland im internationalen Vergleich, Münster: Waxmann, p.60; Mullis et al., 2007.

67. http://li.hamburg.de/sprachbildung/schwerpunkte/sprachfoerderung/

68. Barber and Mourshed, 2007.

69. Coburn, 2003; Twist, L., Sainsbury, M., Woodthorpe, A. and Whetton, C. (2003) Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS): Research Summary. Slough: NFER (Highly centralised, tightly controlled teaching programmes that allow little room for teachers to be involved in decision-making do not raise standards.)

70. Eurydice, 2011.

71. A brief survey of what the preparation of teachers to teach initial literacy looks like on the ground was carried out for the High-Level Group in early 2012 (Brooks, Dombey and Ellis, 2012). A call for information was sent out to the 31 member organisations of the Federation of European Literacy Associations, and a total of 12 responses were received from nine countries. These gave the impression of a range of content: some courses were heavy with theory, while others were weighted towards practice. Some respondents at the theory end of this spectrum expressed a wish for more attention to practice, while some at the practical end thought there should be more theoretical underpinning. Some institutions did seem to get the balance right. However, the sample was small and far from representative and a larger survey would be useful.

72. Eurydice, 2011.

73. Eithne Kennedy, Elizabeth Dunphy, Bernadette Dwyer, Geraldine Hayes, Thérèse McPhillips, Jackie Marsh, Maura O'Connor, Gerry Shiel (2012) Literacy in Early Childhood and Primary Education (3-8 years) Commissioned research report. Research conducted on behalf of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.

74. Garbe, C., Holle, K. & Weinhold, S. 2009. ADORE-project. Teaching adolescent struggling readers. A comparative study of good practices in European countries. Frankfurt: Peter Lang Publishing Group.

75. Garbe et al, 2009.

76. Hattie, John (2009) Visible learning: A synthesis of 800+ meta-analyses on achievement. Oxford: Routledge; Black, P. and Wiliam, D. (1998) Inside the black box: Raising standards through classroom assessment. London: King's College, London, School of Education.

77. Eivers, E., Shiel, G., Perkins, R. and Cosgrove, J. (2005) Succeeding in reading? Reading standards in Irish primary schools. Dublin: Department of Education and Science; Eurydice, 2011.

78. IQSH Institut für Qualitätsentwicklung an Schulen Schleswig-Holstein (2010). Niemanden zurücklassen – Lesen macht stark und Mathe macht stark: Ergebnisse der wissenschaftlichen Begleitung 2010 http://www.nzl.lernnetz.de/lesen/docs/NZL-Bericht_LMS_MMS_2010_web.pdf

79. http://www.euread.com/projects/details/book_time/

80. Eurydice, 2011.

81. OECD (2009) Creating effective teaching and learning environments: First results from TALIS. Teaching and learning international survey. Paris: OECD.

82. Eurydice, 2011.

83. Mullis, I. V. S., Martin, M. O., Kennedy, A. M., & Foy, P. (2007) PIRLS 2006 international report: IEA's Progress in International Reading Literacy Study in primary schools in 40 countries. Chestnut Hill,

MA: TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center, Boston College.

84. Mullis et al, 2007.

85. Rice, M. with BROOKS, G. (2004). Developmental dyslexia in adults: a research review. London: National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy. http://www.nrdc.org.uk/publications_details.asp?ID=11

86. We advocate putting the emphasis on educational, not medical, aspects of reading difficulties.

87. Singleton, Chris (2009): Intervention for Dyslexia – A review of published evidence on the impact of specialist dyslexia teaching, http://www.4d.org.nz/school/dyslexia_intervention_research.pdf. Selection of effective schemes used in the UK: www.interventionsfordyslexia.org.uk

88. Valtin, R. (2012): Dyslexia – a useful concept? In: Lis Pøhler (ed.) Dysleksi – en fælles nordisk udfordring, p. 85-92. Kobenhaven: Landsforeningen af Laesepaedagoger.

89. Suchodoletz, W. von (2003) (Hrsg.): Therapie der Lese-Rechtschreib-Störung. Traditionelle und alternative Behandlungsmethoden im Überblick. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer.

90. European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education: 'Dyslexia'– A small scale examination of issues relating to policy and provision in Agency member countries (2006).

91. OECD (2010) PISA 2009 Results: Overcoming Social Background – Equity in Learning Opportunities and Outcomes (Volume II).

92. Dronkers, J., R. van der Velden & A. Dunne (2011) The Effects of Educational Systems, School-Composition, Track-Level, Parental Background, and Immigrants' Origin on the Achievement of 15-Year-Old Native and Immigrant Students: a reanalysis of PISA 2006. ROA-RM-2011/6. Maastricht: ROA.

93. Grade retention accounts for approximately 15% of the variation in PISA countries' reading performance, after taking GDP per capita into account. OECD (2010) PISA 2009 Results: Overcoming Social Background – Equity in Learning Opportunities and Outcomes.

94. Among the 15 EU countries participating in PISA. The exception is Hungary. OECD (2010) PISA 2009 Results: What Students Know and Can Do.

95. European Commission (2008) Migration and mobility: challenges and opportunities for EU education systems. Green paper. COM(2008) 423. 3 July 2008.

96. Hornberg, S. & Valtin, R. (Eds) (2011). Mehrsprachigkeit. Chance oder Hürde beim Schriftspracherwerb? Empirische Befunde und Beispiele guter Praxis. Berlin: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Lesen und Schreiben.

97. Hornberg, S., Valtin, R., Potthoff, B., Schwippert, K., Schulz-Zander, R. (2007): Lesekompetenzen von Mädchen und Jungen im internationalen Vergleich. In Bos, W., Hornberg,S., Arnold, K.-H., Faust, G., Fried, L., Lankes,E.-M., Schwippert, K., Valtin,R. (Hrsg.): IGLU 2006. Lesekompetenzen von Grundschulkindern in Deutschland im internationalen Vergleich, Münster: Waxmann, p. -202.

98. Based on the arithmetic mean of the EU 25 PISA figures in table I.2.3 of PISA 2009 Results: What Students Know and Can Do: Student Performance in Reading, Mathematics and Science. The EU average gender gap (-42 point difference between boys and girls) is slightly higher than the overall OECD average gender gap of 39.

99. OECD, 2009 PISA. The percentage of low achievers among boys varies from 13% in FI to 50% in BG and RO.

100. OECD, 2010 PISA 2009 Results: What Students Know and Can Do.

101. Lafontaine, D. & Monseur, Ch. (2009) Gender Gap in Comparative Studies of Reading Comprehension: to what extent do the test characteristics make a difference? European Educational Research Journal Volume 8 Number 1 2009.

102. Eurostat, 2011.

103. OECD (2010) PISA 2009 Results: Overcoming Social Background – Equity in Learning Opportunities and Outcomes.

104. OECD/PISA in focus nr. 12: Are boys and girls ready for the digital age? http://www.pisa.oecd.org/dataoecd/29/22/49442737.pdf

105. Sulkunen, Sari (2007) 'Authentic texts and Finnish youngsters: a focus on gender', In: Linnakylä, P. and Arffman, I., editors: Finnish Reading Literacy: when quality and equity meet. Jyväskylä: Finnish Institute for Educational Research; University of Jyväskylä, 175-198; Young, J. P. and W. Brozo (2001). 'Boys will be boys, or will they? Literacy and masculinities', Reading Research Quarterly 36(3): 316-325.

106. Goldman, R. (2005) Fathers' involvement in their children's education. London: National Family and Parenting Institute.

107. http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/

108. Powell, D., & Dixon, M. Does SMS text messaging help or harm adults' knowledge of standard spelling? Journal of Computer Assisted Learning, 27(1), 58-66. Plester, B., Wood, C., & Joshi, P. (2009). Exploring the relationship between children's knowledge of text message abbreviations and school literacy outcomes. British Journal of Developmental Psychology, 27(1), 145-161. Wood, C., Plester, B., & Bowyer, S. (2008). A Cross-Lagged Longitudinal Study of Text Messaging and Its Impact on Literacy Skills: Preliminary Results. Poster Presented at the British Psychological Society Developmental Section Conference, Oxford Brookes University, September 2008.

109. Bynner, J., Reder, S., Parsons, S., & Strawn, C. (2008). The digital divide: Computer use, basic skills and employmTent: A Comparative Study in Portland, USA and London, England: Research Summary. London NRDC.

110. European Commission (2008) Digital literacy report: a review for the i2010 eInclusion initiative. European commission staff working document. Brussels: European Commission. In Iceland and Norway, older people were over 10 times more likely to use the Internet than their peers in Bulgaria, Greece and Italy.

111. European Commission (2008) Digital literacy report: a review for the i2010 eInclusion initiative.

112. Warschauer, Mark, & Tina Matuchniak. 'New Technology and Digital Worlds: Analyzing Evidence of Equity in Access, Use, and Outcomes'. Review of Research in Education 34, no. 1 (March 1, 2010): 179-225.

113. O'Brien, D., &Scharber, C. (2008). Digital literacies go to school: Potholes and possibilities. Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 52(1), 66-68.

114. PIRLS, 2006 Droop, M & Verhoeven, L (2011) Language proficiency and reading ability in first- and second-language learners, International Reading Association, Reading Research Quarterly,Volume 38, Issue 1, pages 78-103, January/February/March 2003.

115. Hart and Risley, 1995.

116. George, A., Hansen, K., and Schoon, I. (2007) 'Child behaviour and cognitive development', In K. Hansen and H. Joshi (eds.) Millennium Cohort Study Second Survey: A user's guide to findings. London: Centre for Longitudinal Studies.

117. Mullis et al, 2007.

118. PIRLS, 2006.

119. Heckman et al., 2009; Schweinhart.

120. Early childhood interventions – Proven results, Future promise, RAND, 2005.

121. Artelt et al, 2003.

122. Valtin, Hornberg et al., 2010.

123. Clark, Christina (2009) Why fathers matter to their children's literacy. London: National Literacy Trust.

124. http://www.hessenstiftung.de/projekte/papa-liest-vor.htm; http://www.lesen-in-deutschland.de/html/content.php?object=journal&lid=967&start=5&display=5

125. Carpentieri et al, 2011.

126. Leseman, Paul P.M. (2001) 'Lasting Effects of Home Literacy on Reading Achievement in School', Journal of School Psychology 39, no. 5 (September 2001): 389-414.

127. There is a positive relationship between 4th grade students' reading achievement and time spent in pre-primary education. (Mullis et al, 2007); In PISA assessments of reading literacy, 15-year-olds who attended more than one year of pre-school as a young child are almost one and a half years ahead of those who did not. Controlling for social background, the difference remains large, at slightly below one year. (OECD (2010) PISA 2009 Results: Overcoming Social Background); Heckman, J.J., Moon, S., Pinto, R., Savelyev, P. & Yavitz, A. (2009). The rate of return to the High/Scope Perry Pre-school Program. IZA Discussion Paper No. 4533; Schweinhart, L., Montie, J., Xiang, Z., Barnett, W., Belfield, C. and Nores, M. (2005) Lifetime effects: The High/Scope Perry Pre-school study through age 40. Ypsilanti: High/Scope Press.

128. European Commission (2011) Early Childhood Education and Care: Providing all our children with the best start for the world of tomorrow; Heckman et al, 2009; Schweinhart et al, 2005; European Commission (2006) Council Conclusions on efficiency and equity in education and training (OJ C 298 of 8.12.2006) In 2006, Council Conclusions on efficiency and equity in education and training asserted that investment in ECEC can bring the highest rates of return, especially for the disadvantaged.

129. Eithne Kennedy, Elizabeth Dunphy, Bernadette Dwyer, Geraldine Hayes, Thérèse McPhillips, Jackie Marsh, Maura O'Connor, Gerry Shiel (2012) Literacy in Early Childhood and Primary Education (3-8 years) Commissioned research report. Research conducted on behalf of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.

130. European Commission (2011) Early Childhood Education and Care: Providing all our children with the best start for the world of tomorrow; European Commission (2006) Council Conclusions on efficiency and equity in education and training.

131. Adams, M.J., Foorman, B.R., Lundberg, I. & Beeler, T. (1998). Phonemic awareness in Young Children. Baltimore: Paulh Brookes.

132. European Commission (2011) Early Childhood Education and Care: Providing all our children with the best start for the world of tomorrow.

133. OECD (2006) Starting strong II: early childhood eucation and care. Paris: OECD; OECD (2012) Starting Strong III: A Quality Toolbox for Early Childhood Education and Care. Paris: OECD Publishing. http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264123564-en

134. Nutbrown, C.E. (2012). Foundations for Quality: The independent review of early childhood education and care qualifications. Final report. London: Department for Education.

135. http://www.schule-bw.de/vorschule/isk/

136. European Commission (2011) Early Childhood Education and

Care: Providing all our children with the best start for the world of tomorrow.

137. European Commission (2011) Early Childhood Education and Care: Providing all our children with the best start for the world of tomorrow.

138. Leseman, 2002, 2009; Machin, 2006; Eurydice (2009) Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe: Tackling Social and Cultural Inequalities. Brussels: Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA).

139. Waldfogel, Jane (2006) What Children Need. Boston: Harvard University Press; Chiswick and De Burnam 2004; Bainbridge et al. 2005 in OECD 2007.

140. Eurydice (2011) Teaching reading in Europe. In Ireland, a survey of disadvantaged schools found that in the first year of primary school, nearly one of every eight children was taught by someone lacking basic teaching qualifications (Eivers et al, 2005).

141. Eurydice (2011) Teaching reading in Europe.

142. Mullis et al, 2007.

143. Bos, Schwippert, Stubbe, 2007, p. 234.

144.

145. Mullis et al, 2007.

146. Hornberg, S., Valtin, R., Potthoff, B., Schwippert, K., Schulz-Zander, R. (2007): Lesekompetenzen von Mädchen und Jungen im internationalen Vergleich. In Bos, W., Hornberg,S., Arnold, K.-H., Faust, G., Fried, L., Lankes,E.-M., Schwippert, K., Valtin,R. (Hrsg.): IGLU 2006. Lesekompetenzen von Grundschulkindern in Deutschland im internationalen Vergleich, Münster: Waxmann, p. 137.

147. Eurydice (2011) Teaching reading in Europe.

148. PIRLS 2001 and 2006 both found that only about 8% of students say they do not enjoy reading. (Mullis et al, 2007). There are large differences among EU countries participating in PIRLS. For example, looking only at fourth-graders, 64% of Italians, 60% of Romanians and 58% of Germans reported very positive attitudes towards reading. In contrast, fewer than 40% of fourth graders did so in Belgium, Latvia, Denmark and the Netherlands.

149. For example, in a study comparing children who liked to read with those who did not, both groups reported that their parents had taken them to the library when they were younger, but those who did not like reading said these visits had ceased once they started school – or that going to the library for pleasure (as opposed to getting books for assignments) had ended once they started school. (Strommen and Mates, 2004).

150. Reay, Diane (1998) Class work: mothers' involvement in their children's primary schooling. London: Routledge.

151. http://www.lireetfairelire.org/

152. Baráth, Á. and Sabljak, L. (2000). Bibliotherapy for healing war trauma in children and youth: experience from Croatia, 1991-98. 'Step by Step to recovery.' Koprivnica, Croatia: Croatian Reading Association.

153. EUkidsonline,2011; Mullis et al, 2007.

154. Kim, P., Miranda, T. and Olaciregui, C. (2008) 'Pocket School: Exploring mobile technology as a sustainable literacy education option for underserved indigenous children in Latin America', International Journal of Educational Development, 28(4), 435-445.

155. Ofsted (2010) Reading by six: how the best schools do it. Manchester: Office for Standards in Education. www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/100197.

156. Eurydice (2011) Teaching reading in Europe.

157. Eurydice (2011) Teaching reading in Europe.

158. Warschauer and Matuchniak, 2010.

159. Korte, Werner and Hüsin, Tobias (2006) Benchmarking access and use of ICT in European schools 2006. Bonn: empirica Schriftenreihe. It's easier to get computers into classrooms than it is to incorporate them into teaching and learning. Even in Member States with high levels of societal computer and Internet use, the majority of teachers use ICT in less than 5% of their lessons.

160. European Commision (2006) Council Conclusions on efficiency and equity in education and training.

161. Mullis et al, 2007.

162. Hall and Harding, 2003.

163. Snow, C.E, Burns, S.M. and Griffin, P. (eds.) (1998) Preventing reading difficulties in young children. Washington, D.C.:National Academy Press.

164. www.kodknackarna.se

165. OECD (2010) PISA 2009 Results: Learning to Learn – Student Engagement, Strategies and Practices (Volume III). http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264083943-en. Regarding achievement, there are decreasing marginal returns to reading for pleasure. In PISA, young people who spend 30-60 minutes per day reading for pleasure experience average gains in reading achievement only marginally smaller than those who read for more than an hour. Within this aggregate finding, there are significant country-to-country differences. For example, in Belgium, France, Sweden and Austria, reading for at least 30 minutes a day is associated with twice the achievement gains as in Spain, Portugal, Belgium, Romania and Greece.

166. Fawson, P. C. and S. A. Moore (1999). 'Reading incentive programs: Beliefs and practices', Reading Psychology 20(4): 325-340; Dweck, C. S. (1999). Self Theories: Their Role in Motivation, Personality, and Development. Hove: Psychology Press, Taylor and Francis Group.

167. http://www.coupdepoucecle.fr/

168. Volkholz, Sybille(2011): Lesepaten in Berlin oder wie man Bildung zur gesellschaftlichen Aufgabe macht. Münster: Waxmann.

169. Jacobs, J. E., Lanza, S., Osgood, D. W., Eccles, J. S., & Wigfield, A. (2002) 'Ontogeny of children's selfbeliefs: Gender and domain differences across grades one through 12', Child Development, 73, 509–527.

170. The reference is the EU 18 for which comparable reading results are available in PISA 2000 and PISA 2009. http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/130EN.pdf

171. OECD (2010) Overcoming social background.

172. OECD (2010) PISA 2009: Using available PISA 2009 data for 22 EU countries.

173. OECD (2010) Learning to Learn: Student Engagement, Strategies and Practices.

174. Id.

175. Id.

176. Id.

177. OECD PISA (2009).

178. Klauda, S. (2009) 'The Role of Parents in Adolescents' Reading Motivation and Activity', Educational Psychology Review, 21 p325-363.

179. Warrington, M. & Younger, M.M. (2006). Raising Boys' achievement in Primary Schools. Towards an holistic approach. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

180. Gee, J. P. (2003) What do video games have to teach us about literacy and learning? New York: Palgrave Macmillan .

181. European Commission (2010) A Digital Agenda for Europe. Communication from the Commission. COM(2010) 245.

182. As James Gee has argued. See e.g. Gee, J.P. (2010) New digital media and learning as an emerging area and 'Worked examples' as one way forward. Cambridge: MIT Press. See also Ito, Mizuko, Sonja Baumer, Matteo Bittanti, et al (2009) Hanging Out, Messing Around, Geeking Out: Living and Learning with New Media. Cambridge: MIT Press.

183. OECD (2010) Students On Line: Digital Technologies and Performance.

184. CBA/ANLCI http://www.anlci.gouv.fr/fileadmin/Medias/PDF/APPRENTISSAGE/PREPROGRAMME_MIS_EN_PAGE_5_JUILLET_A4.pdf

185. For many teens, adolescence is a period of gradual but ever increasing disengagement from (formal) reading and writing. During these years, many children, particularly boys, make the unfortunate transition from curious, active readers into demotivated teens. (Botzakis, S. and J. Malloy (2005). 'South America, Europe, South Africa, Pacific Asia, and North America', Reading Research Quarterly 40(1): 112-118).

186. Slavin, R. E., Cheung, A., Groff, C., & Lake, C. (2008) 'Effective reading programs for middle and high schools: A best-evidence synthesis', Reading Research Quarterly, 43(3), 290-322.

187. OFSTED (2011) Removing barriers to literacy. Manchester: UK Office for Standards in Education.

188. Lenters, 2006; Reeves, 2004.

189. Garbe et al, 2009.

190. In 2005, Reading Research Quarterly invited its international correspondents to name their region's most pressing literacy issues. The most often cited problem was the disengagement from literacy that takes root during late childhood and early adolescence, when many children, particularly boys, make the unfortunate transition from academically curious children into demotivated teens (Botzakis and Malloy, 2005).

191. Galbraith, A. and Alexander J. (2005) 'Literacy, self-esteem and locus of control', Support for learning, 20, p 28-34.

192. Eurydice (2011) Teaching reading in Europe.

193. Guthrie, J. T. and Davis, M.H. (2003) 'Motivating struggling readers in middle school through an engagement model of classroom practice', Reading & Writing Quarterly 19(1): 59-85.

194. Guthrie, J. T. and Davis, M.H. (2003).

195. Lenters, K. (2006). 'Resistance, struggle, and the adolescent reader', Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy 50(2): 136-146.

196. Lenters, 2006.

197. Reeves, A.R. (2004). Adolescents talk about reading: Exploring resistance to and engagement with text. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

198. Merisuo-Storm, T. (2006) 'Girls and boys like to read and write different texts', Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research 50(2): 111-125.

199. Reeves (2004).

200. Coiro, J. 2007. Exploring changes to reading comprehension on the Internet: Paradoxes and possibilities for diverse adolescent readers. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. University of Connecticut.

201. Mangen, A. 2008 Hypertext fiction reading: haptics and immersion. Journal of Research in Reading. Volume 31, Issue 4, 2008, pp 404-419.

202. The evidence from PISA indicates that if boys were as engaged in reading as girls, the achievement gap would shrink by an estimated 20 points, reducing it by slightly more than half. OECD (2010) Learning to Learn: Student Engagement, Strategies and Practices.

203. Smith, M. and Wilhelm, J (2012) 'Reading don't fix no Chevys': Literacy in the lives of young men. N.H.: Boynton/Cook.

204. SINTEF, 2008.

205. Eurydice (2011) Teaching reading in Europe.

206. Freedmon, B. (2003) 'Boys and literacy: Why Boys? Which boys? Why now?' Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Annual Meeting of American Educational Research Association.

207. Goldman, 2005.

208. Linnakylä, P.: How to inspire and engage students to read? Invited paper, 15th European Reading Congress, Berlin 2007.

209. Scieszka, J. (2002). 'Getting guys to read.' NEA Today 20(6): 23.

210. Carpentieri and Vorhaus, 2010.

211. International Adult Literacy Survey, 1995 and the Adult Literacy and Lifeskills Survey, 2006.

212. Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2011; Department for Education and Skills (2003) The Skills for Life Survey 2003. London: Department for Education and Skills. Lyon: The national agency to fight illiteracy (ANCLI); LEO – Level One Study – http://epb.uni-hamburg.de/de/forschung/projekte/3767; http://www.alphabetisierung.de/fileadmin/files/Dateien/Downloads_Texte/leo-Presseheft-web.pdf

213. European Labour Force survey.

214. Eurostat, 2011.

215. ANCLI, 2008. Among adults in France with poor literacy skills, 74% were using French only at home at the age of five. 6% spoke French and regional language, 3% spoke French and foreign language, 10% spoke a regional language only, and 7% spoke a foreign language only.

216. Vorhaus et al, 2011; Dearden, L. McIntosh, S, Myck, M. & Vignoles, A. (2000) The Returns to Academic, Vocational and Basic Skills in Britain. London: DfEE. Groot, M., Maassen van den Brink, H. (2007) Dormant Capital: a research into the social expenses of low literacy. The Hague: Stichting Lezen & Schrijven.

217. Vorhaus et al, 2011.

218. Parsons and Bynner, 2007; Parsons, S. and Bynner, J. (2008) New Light on Adult Literacy and Numeracy in Scotland. Evidence from the 2004 survey of the 1970 British Cohort Study (BCS70). London: NRDC. Parsons and Bynner, 2007. For example, females with poor literacy skills are much more likely than those with good skills to be a teenage mother, to have four or more children, and to be single mothers. These factors reduce the likelihood of low-literacy women being able to act on motivations to improve their skills – thus increasing the likelihood of the intergenerational transfer of poor skills.

219. Bynner, J. and Parsons, S. (1998) Use It or Lose It? The Impact of Time Out of Work on Literacy and Numeracy Skills. London: Basic Skills Agency.

220. Grigorenko, E.L .(2006).Learning Disabilities in Juvenile Offenders. Child and Adolescent Psychiatric clinics of North America, 15, 353-371; Samuelsson, S., Gustavsson, A., Herkner, B. & Lundberg, I. (2000). Is the frequency of dyslexic problems among prisons inmates higher than in the normal population? Reading and Writing: An Interdisciplinary Journal, 13, 297-312.Snowling, M.J., Adams, J.W., Bowyer-Crane, C. & Tobin, V. (2000). Levels of literacy among juvenile offenders: the incidence of specific reading difficulties. Criminal Behaviour and Mental Health, 10, 229-241. Svensson, I. Lundberg, I. & Jacobson, C. (2001). The prev-

alence of reading and spelling difficulties among inmates of institutions for compulsory care of juvenile delinquents. Dyslexia, 2, 62-76.

221. Bynner, 2004; Wolf, 2005; Bynner et al, 2008.

222. Bynner et al, 2008.

223. More than 80% of adults with low literacy scores on the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) rated their reading as good or excellent (van der Kamp, M. and E. Boudard (2003) 'Literacy Proficiency of Older Adults', International Journal of Educational Research 39: 253-263). For these individuals, literacy improvements are not a 'felt need', so motivation to improve is low (Rogers, Alan (2004) 'Adult literacy – adult motivation', Adult Education and Development, Vol. 61. dvv International).

224. Carneiro, 2011.

225. In the UK, research has found that, among adults who feel their literacy is poor, barely more than one in four adults would like to improve their skills. Only one in 25 of those who feel their literacy is poor has taken a course in an effort to improve (Bynner and Parsons, 2006).

226. Porter, K.E., Cuban, S., Comings, J.P., with Chase, V. (2005) 'One Day I Will Make It': A Study of Adult Student Persistence in Library Literacy Programs. NDRC.

227. Carneiro, 2011.

228. Carpentieri et al, 2011.

229. Brooks, G., Pahl, K., Pollard, A., & Rees, F. (2008) Effective and inclusive practices in family literacy, language and numeracy: A review of programmes and practice in the UK and internationally. Reading, UK: CfBT Education Trust.

230. Rubenson, Kjell, and Richard Desjardins (2009) 'The Impact of Welfare State Regimes on Barriers to Participation in Adult Education A Bounded Agency Model', Adult Education Quarterly 59, no. 3, January 5: 187-207; Veeman, M. N. (2004). Adult learning in Canada and Sweden: a comparative study of four sites, University of Saskatchewan.

231. Albrecht, J., Van Den Berg, G. J. and Vroman, S. (2005) 'The knowledge lift: the Swedish adult education program that aimed to eliminate low worker skill levels', SSRN eLibrary (February 2005).

232. Teachers and learners both report struggling if classrooms have too much differentiation. Learners need to be grouped by literacy level, based on initial assessment. In particular, language learners should not be grouped with literacy learners, as their needs are different.; A British study (Ofsted, 2011) of effective adult literacy provision found that quality and results varied significantly among colleges, but that the best education providers shared these characteristics.

233. Comings, J., Parrella, A. and Soricone, L. (1999) Persistence among Adult Basic Education Students in Pre-GED classes. MRDC; Comings, J. (2008) 'Student Persistence in Adult Literacy and Numeracy Programs', in S. Reder and J. Bynner (eds).Tracking Adult Literacy and Numeracy Skills: Findings from Longitudinal Research. London, Routledge; Porter et al, 2005.

234. The ILP records the goals of the learner, thus supporting problem-centred rather than subject-centred learning. Tuition is then focused on the objectives (or problem). Co. Donegal VEC has found that this focus works well in supporting learners gain skills and knowledge and improve their standard.

235. By 'uni-directional process', we refer to what Freire labelled 'banking education', in which knowledge and skills are 'deposited' by the teacher into passive students. This form of education is both inappropriate and ineffective when the students are adults with extensive and valuable life experiences. (Freire, Paulo (2000) Pedagogy of the Oppressed. Continuum International Publishing Group).

236. MacLeod, S. and Straw, S. (2010) Adult basic skills. Reading: CfBT.

237. Besser, S., Brooks, G., Burton, M., Parisella, M., Spare, Y., Stratford, S. and Wainwright, J. (2004) Adult literacy learners' difficulties in reading: an exploratory study. London: NRDC.

238. Ref? Buiskool, B.J., Broek, S.D., van Lakerveld, J.A., Zarifis, G.K. and and Osborne, M. (2010) Key competences for adult learning professionals. Contribution to the development of a reference framework of key competences for adult learning professionals. Zoetermeer: Research voor Beleid. http://ec.europa.eu/education/more-information/doc/2010/keycomp.pdf

239. Bailey.

240. Brooks, 2010.

241. Casey et al, 2006.

242. Comings, 2003. For adults attending at least 150 hours, the probability of progressing one grade level was 75%. In the UK, studies have found that learners who attend courses for more than 50 hours make more progress than those who attend less, and that regular attendance is correlated with better progress (Brookes, 2010).Learners who attend courses for more than 50 hours make more progress than those who attend less (Brookes, 2010).

243. In a study of effective practice in adult literacy education, Brooks et al (2007) found that an average of only 37% of class time was devoted to active reading instruction or practice, and that the most common activity within that time period was learners reading silently.

244. Reder, LSAL.

245. Grigorenko, E.L .(2006).Learning Disabilities in Juvenile Offenders. Child and Adolescent Psychiatric clinics of North America, 15, 353-371. Samuelsson, S., Gustavsson, A., Herkner, B. & Lundberg, I. (2000). Is the frequency of dyslexic problems among prisons inmates higher than in the normal population? Reading and Writing: An Interdisciplinary Journal, 13, 297-312. Snowling, M.J., Adams, J.W., Bowyer-Crane, C. & Tobin, V. (2000). Levels of literacy among juvenile offenders: the incidence of specific reading difficulties. Criminal Behaviour and Mental Health, 10, 229-241. Svensson, I. Lundberg, I. & Jacobson, C. (2001). The prevalence of reading and spelling difficulties among inmates of institutions for compulsory care of juvenile delinquents. Dyslexia, 2, 62-76.

246. Shelley-Tremblay, J., O'Brien, N. & Langhinrichsen-Rohling, J. (2007). Reading disability in adjudicated youth: Prevalence rates, current models, traditional and innovative treatments. Journal of Child Psychology, 46, 524-532. Brunner, M.S. (1993). Reduced recidivism and increased employment opportunity through research-based reading instruction. NCJ publication, vol. 141324.

247. Brooks, G., Adams, M. and Hall, H. (2009). TEXTNOW, 2008. Evaluation Report. London: Unitas. http://www.unitas.uk.net/Assets/Documents/TextNowEvaluationReport200809.pdf?1283939955

248. Youth Justice Board (2003). Youth Justice Board Intervention Programme: Education, Training and Employment. Central Evaluators' Final Report. London: Youth Justice Board.

249. Brunner, M.S. (1993). Reduced recidivism and increased employment opportunity through research-based reading instruction. NCJ publication, vol. 141324. Washington, D.C.: Office of Juvenile justice and Delinquency Prevention.

250. ANLCI, forum permanent des pratiques: http://www.fpp.anlci.fr/

251. Wolf et al, 2010.

252. Anandouia et al, 2004.

253. Ananiadou et al, 2004.

254. Wolf et al, 2010.

255. Wolf et al, 2010.

256. MacLeod and Straw, 2010.

257. MacLeod and Straw, 2010.

258. ANLCI, the Scale of Reference for key competences in different professional situations 2010.

259. http://ec.europa.eu/education/more-information/doc/2010/lowskill2.pdf. p.116-7.

260. OECD (2010) Recognising Non-Formal and Informal Learning: Outcomes, Policies and Practices. Paris: OECD.

261. European Commission, DG Education and Culture & Cedefop (2010) European Inventory on Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning 2010 Thematic Report – Validation for Specific Target Groups.

262. As found in Iceland in 'To take the step-back to school after validation' (2010), a Masters thesis by Auður Sigurðardóttir.

263. Carneiro, 2011.

264. Eurostat (2011) Internet use in households and by individuals in 2011 – Issue number 66/2011.

265. Eurostat (2011) Information Society statistics.

266. Bassanini, A., Booth, A., Brunello, G. DePaola, M & Leuven, E. (2005) Workplace Training in Europe.

267. McNair, Stephen (2009) Demography and lifelong learning. IFLL thematic paper 1. Leicester: NIACE.

268. Schlotter, M., Schwerdt, G., & Wößmann, L. (2008). The Future of European Education and Training Systems: Key Challenges and Their Implications. Analytical Report for the European Commission, EENEE.