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!
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!
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-minded 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
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 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.

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.

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.
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 policy-makers 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.
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 support 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 Educative Pour La Ville (AEFV)
- Association pour l’Enseignement et la Formation des Travailleurs Immigrés (AEFTI)
- Prof. W.G. Broux
- Education Scotland
- FloraHolland
- 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
EU HIGH LEVEL GROUP OF EXPERTS ON LITERACY

WHY LITERACY IS A BIG DEAL

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 fulfill these roles. An estimated 20% of adults lack the literacy skills they need to function fully in a modern society. An estimated 73 million European adults lack qualifications above upper secondary school level, many because their poor literacy makes educational progress impossible. 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 2019, 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. Even as literacy becomes more necessary, reading levels have stagnated.

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. 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. 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.
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.

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.

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 greater ability to evaluate information critically within the context of an essentially infinite universe of available options. 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 digitalised world. Writing has different aspects, including:

- the authorial side: constructing a text;
- the editorial 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. 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 raise the debate 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 reading and writing. 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 EVEN HIGHER LITERACY SKILLS

Changes in the economy have major impacts on the types of jobs 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. 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.
Increasingly, presuppose that citizens and consumers have assigned to a particular street, visited children's homes and schools across the European Union. One in ten children live in households where no one has a job. Without social benefits, children often find themselves permanently unemployable.

According to the Programme on schools disadvantaged areas, 25% of the European Union. One in ten school districts in Europe are called "Zones of Educational Priority" (ZEP), was launched in 2011, afternoon courses were added, including tuition for learning, playing and socialising to most of them. In recent years, the first students from the most vulnerable groups have managed to break out of the academic isolation and have been able to gain recognition of the importance of these skills.

For all of this, literacy skills are the foundation. From primary education onwards, students must be provided with tailored support in literacy and mathematics, and often did not speak Greek. Social workers, each day, face the challenge of helping children from poor families, who are then less likely to participate in ZEP.

Early identification, assessment and support in such situations are essential to improve outcomes for these children. Similarly, many homeschools are shifting their educational goals to online and distance learning. This may be a positive trend for students who are able to learn at their own pace and in their preferred environment. However, it is important to ensure that all students, regardless of their background, have access to quality education. The Internet can also increase direct access to information and support for parents and caregivers, particularly in rural and remote areas.

In a seamless global world, with human mobility on the increase, literacy becomes more multifaceted. The economy increasingly requires knowledge and innovation from most workers, even in positions traditionally considered 'low-skilled'. Today's jobs require better skills to function fully in society and in the workplace. Europeans increasingly need good literacy skills to support their children with their schooling because of their lower educational background.

Poverty and poor literacy are locked in the European Union. One in ten children live in households where no one has a job. Without social benefits, children often find themselves permanently unemployable. In some countries, such as Italy or Spain, the percentage of migrant children has risen five-fold over the decade from 2000 to 2010. Most European living arrangements with the over-65s. For every 10 children under the age of 15, there will be 20 people over 65; eight of them are over 85. This trend towards online services also means missed opportunities and a loss of resources for the poorest and most vulnerable groups.

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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. 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 earners, and increases their social and civic participation. 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. These are all essential goals if Europe is to be the world’s leading innovation society. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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 show the huge costs of low literacy in terms of opportunity to our societies, to the order of trillions of euros.

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CONCLUDING REMARKS

Literacy fulfills 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 threatens 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 must be overestimated. We need to act now. But first, we must ensure a starting point of common understanding.
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.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>MISCONCEPTIONS</th>
<th>THE FACTS</th>
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<tr>
<td>‘Low literacy is something that happens in developing countries, surely not in Europe?’</td>
<td>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.</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘Low literacy is a problem imported by migrants, not for those born and bred in European countries.’</td>
<td>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.</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘Poor literacy only affects those on the margins of society.’</td>
<td>One in five adults in Europe lack sufficient literacy skills and most of them are employed.</td>
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Almost everyone who struggles with reading and writing could develop adequate literacy skills, given the right support. Only people with the most severe cognitive difficulties are incapable of developing functional literacy.

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.

The diagnosis should be ‘struggling reader’, and the focus should be on solving the problem. Every child can, in principle, learn to read and write.

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.

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.

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.

2.2 CREATING CO-OWNERSHIP

There are thus compelling reasons that urge us to act: the large numbers of functionally illiterate 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 sub-oriented strategies that take into account the specific circumstances in each Member State. While such 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 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. 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 all 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.

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.
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’) involves the community in order to give children a better start. The programme has four elements: raising awareness, recognising literacy as the basis for education, creating sustained commitment, and involving the community in order to give children a better start. The programme recognises the need for good literacy for all. But to put the issue on the agenda, active engagement of the media is crucial. Europe needs large-scale 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, 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 an issue, thereby encouraging people with poor literacy to overcome the shame of admitting to their low literacy skills and seek help. The campaign has been extraordinarily successful, with over 450,000 people becoming 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 the Netherlands, ‘Stichting Leen & 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 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 (‘Farmen A to Z’). The approach can be certainly replicated in other countries.

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 in particular. 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 Competence) 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
A CO-OPERATIVE APPROACH

of Europeans can achieve level 3 literacy. We recognise that, the ‘Meijerink Commission’ (2008) NETHERLANDS visions and strategies.

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 FRANCE, the ‘Agence Nationale de Lutte contre l’Illétrisme’ (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 offices and public research institutes, provides more detailed analyses.

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, while the Commission should harmonise and support them, developing a common approach to national strategies and actions. 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.

In order to achieve the right to education, 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.

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, is the minimum threshold enabling people to achieve lifelong literacy requirements. 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, motivated 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. We therefore 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.

THE CHART ON THE NEXT PAGE SHOWS THE LATEST PICTURE CONCERNING 15-YEAR-OLD STUDENTS:

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 based 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 lifespan of a citizen; • include all different dimensions needed to address illiteracy, from reading, writing, and numeracy to participation; • be based on a sense of co-responsibility and co-ownership among all players.

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.

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.

In PORTUGAL, the 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 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. 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.

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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 be more harmful. Trends in society demand better literacy skills – and so society must find solutions. In order to achieve this, broad ownership across sectors, policy areas and political groups, service providers, stakeholders and organisations, and earnings is crucial. Furthermore, the success of such 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.
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 begins 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.

‘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
including when targeted at the most disadvantaged home(s). 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. Despite being effective and affordable tools for improving national literacy levels, family literacy programmes are under-used by policy-makers.

In France, the “Action educative familiale” is aimed at parents whose own reading skills need development. Nathalie Bernaud is a mother from Châteauroux: “The family education programme,” where I followed 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. Schools should provide a wide range of reading materials that attracts boys and girls of all ages and interests. School and public libraries 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.

- The availability of books is not a solution on its own. Books do not read the messages. Parents and teachers and others not only need to provide children with books, but also to take the time to read to them and engage them in story-telling. In addition to being read to, children need literacy role models. Families where reading is valued as a pleasurable activity, where there is a free conversation about books, provide a breeding ground for interest in reading.
- 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.

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 2\1/2, they showed greater engagement with books than a comparison group (and at this point the parents also showed a 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.

‘Lesenstart’ in Germany, is a three-stage project to promote reading to young children. The first stage from 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 Lesenstart books (and information) to three-year-olds. The final stage runs from 2016 onwards. Lesenstart books will be provided to primary schools.

In Finland, a maternity pack is available for free to all families with a newborn child including clothes and other necessary equipment for the newborn and the parents. The maternity pack also includes a baby’s first picture book, together with guidelines 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 public readings, and get them into the libraries, where librarians support the parents in reading activities with the children. Some programmes also include training the literacy level of the staff of ‘Consultatiebureaus’.

‘The First Book of My Baby’ in Poland, a project with educational films and libraries to be distributed for free among all mothers of newborns (yearly, 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, or encouraging people, or making reading materials more accessible to all people through libraries.

In 1998, the association Litteratü rensch, Sweden’s McDonald’s and Mondelez 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. 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, mansions or even the roof of a school.
3.2 QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

Every September, the International Reading Association organizes a National Book Fair. In hundreds of locations across the country, individuals can purchase books, attend seminars, and participate in discussions about literacy. The fair is a valuable resource for educators, parents, and the general public, offering a wide range of materials and information to support literacy development.

Learning to read and write does not just happen – people need to be taught how to do it, and they need to be taught according to their individual strengths and weaknesses. Effective teaching techniques, such as using structured reading programs and providing targeted support for struggling readers, are essential. Curriculum reforms and their implementation take time, but when they are successful, they can lead to significant improvements in literacy achievement. Literacy skills are viewed as dynamic and flexible, and learners must be encouraged to learn and grow in ways that suit their individual needs.
In Schleswig-Holstein, Germany, taking learners to catch up with their peers. Neither schools nor parents should accept the myth of the ‘late developer’. Instead, there is a high demand for remedial instruction in reading and writing. This is especially true in the UK, where there is a high proportion of students who struggle with reading and writing. Research has shown that early support from teachers with specialist literacy expertise is crucial to helping children who are falling behind. However, it is clear that there is a lack of qualified teachers and teaching assistants with experience in literacy. The situation is particularly acute in urban areas where there is a high proportion of students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

There is little doubt that teacher education programmes need to be strengthened. This is important for ensuring that students receive the best possible education. There is a need for more effective teacher recruitment policies, teacher training, and professional development. This is particularly important in low-literacy environments where there is a high proportion of students who struggle with reading and writing. There is also a need for more effective teacher recruitment policies and professional development.

One solution that has been suggested is the establishment of a high-quality teacher education programme. This would involve a combination of teacher training and professional development. It is important that this programme be evidence-based and that it is designed to meet the needs of students in low-literacy environments.

In conclusion, there is a need for more effective teacher recruitment policies and professional development. This is important for ensuring that students receive the best possible education. There is a need for more evidence-based teacher training programmes and professional development. It is important that these programmes be designed to meet the needs of students in low-literacy environments.
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. In fact, it can give an incentive not to address reading difficulties educationally, leading 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.

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.

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 gender gap, the digital gap and the inequality 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 pupils of all backgrounds with similar opportunities to learn. In contrast, school systems based on different expectations and directions for pupils tend to produce less equitable outcomes without improving overall scores. 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. By addressing the design of their school systems and monitoring the inter-school variance in achievement, Member States could greatly reduce the socio-economic gap in participation and achievement.
THE MIGRANT GAP

Migrant students have lower average reading levels in the language of instruction in all but Hungary. This is true even for second-generation migrant-background students and some ethnic minorities, especially Roma. Some of this under-performance is due to 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 are less likely to be literate in the language of instruction if they also develop excellent literacy in their native language. 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 uses 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 a 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 1993 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 directed towards 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 realised 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. On average, European girls are about one year ahead of boys in reading performance by the age of 15. 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.

This gender gap is much larger in reading than in mathematics and science—and is growing rather than shrinking in adolescence. 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. Gender differences persist across the lifespan. In adulthood, for example, males are less likely to read than females. At all ages, males are less likely to read for pleasure.

When talking about the gender gap, the main issues are motivation and engagement. This is consistent with the fact that the gender differences in online reading are much smaller. 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. 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. See also Chapter 4, Adolescents.
In the United Kingdom, the project ‘Premier League Reading Stars’ targets primary school pupils from Years 3 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 watch films in which 20 high-profile Premier League players set 100 literacy challenges, and pupils win on-line 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).10

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 understood 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.10

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.10 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. Where people live also influences their access: in Ireland and Norway, elderly people were over 10 times as likely to use the Internet as their peers in Bulgaria, Greece and Italy.10

Quality of use
- Some people use 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.11

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.11

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 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 not have 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.

These worrying 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...
ADDRESSING SPECIFIC LITERACY ISSUES:

LITERACY FOR ALL AGES

04

Young children
Primary school years
Adolescents
Adults
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.

4.1 YOUNG CHILDREN

‘Children are made readers on the laps of their parents.’

EMILIE BU DUWALD, AUTHOR

EMILIE BU DUWALD, AUTHOR
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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- There is a positive correlation between the 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.
- 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.
- 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.

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. 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 most likely to allow their children to watch lots of television, which goes along with poorer literacy development.

In most cases, small children are taken care of by women (in the home 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.

In Hessen, Germany, the programme ‘Mein Papi liest Wort! (My dad reads to me)’ promotes reading to children by male employees. This programme was developed by ‘Hessenstiftung – Familie hat Zukunft’ and by Stiftung Leien. 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.

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

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-giving 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. 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.

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 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.

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.

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.
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. Curricula should be age-appropriate and designed to meet the full range of children’s needs: cognitive, emotional, social, and physical. An emphasis on non-cognitive skills such as perseverance, motivation, and movement (physical) 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.

In France, the AFEV (Association de la fondation éducative pour la ville), an association of volunteer students, developed a programme that involves students taking care of a child at 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, 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.

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 older age groups.

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 children’s health 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’ (ISKI) (‘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).

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 shows broad range of cognitive, linguistic, social and emotional benefits, and among other things, develop better literacy skills. 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.

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

In Finland, municipalities are obliged to provide the services of the maternity and children’s health 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.
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.
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. 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. Particularly among parents who do not have strong literacy skills themselves, teachers are seen as the literacy experts. 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.

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 another hour browsing the Internet, primarily for school work.

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 under-exploited. 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.

Testing, 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.

→ WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?

THE FACTS

- Only 55% of fourth grade students (9-11 year-olds) are taught by teachers with degrees.
- Only 25% of fourth grade students are taught by teachers whose initial education had an emphasis on reading.
- 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.
- Fourth grade students who reported that they have more than 100 books at home scored 4.3 points higher in PIRLS than the peers who reported having fewer than 100 books at home.
- 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.
- Some gender differences in reading are already identifiable in the fourth grade, with girls doing better in reading literacy tests than boys in all countries.
- 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.
- Only 7.9% of fourth grade students have permanent in-class access to a reading specialist, while 36.7% sometimes do.
- 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. Particularly among parents who do not have strong literacy skills themselves, teachers are seen as the literacy experts.
- 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.
- ‘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 book-seller 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 cooperation with the Swedish Bookseller Association. The programme has since become nationwide.

EU HIGH LEVEL GROUP OF EXPERTS ON LITERACY > LITERACY FOR ALL AGES
4.2.2 INTEGRATE ICT DEVELOPMENTS INTO CURRICULUM DESIGN

While the early years of a child's life lay the groundwork for their literacy development and families play a key role in fostering reading, writing, and speaking, children's school experiences in primary education are critical. The European Commission's paper highlights the importance of integrating individualised support into the curriculum design to improve literacy outcomes for all children, focusing on strategies to support struggling readers.

**Struggling Readers Need Targeted, Individualised Support**

While the early years of a child's life lay the groundwork for literacy development and families play a key role in fostering reading, writing, and speaking, children's school experiences in primary education are critical. The European Commission's paper highlights the importance of integrating individualised support into the curriculum design to improve literacy outcomes for all children, focusing on strategies to support struggling readers. For instance, the Programme is different for every child, with additional support being given in a way that avoids labelling.

**Quality of Teaching and Learning**

High-quality teaching is noted as essential for successfully addressing reading problems, or – better – avoiding them altogether. The Programme is different for every child, with additional support being given in a way that avoids labelling. This will prevent growing gaps in secondary school. Primary school teachers should have extensive knowledge of the theoretical foundations of literacy learning, and be able to design and implement instructional strategies that have been proven effective.

**Specialist Reading Teachers Have a Gradation of Support**

Specialist reading teachers are a heterogeneous group, so no single solution is the right one for every child. Additional support is given in a way that avoids labelling. However, they may 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 of information that would have been unimaginable just a decade ago. Furthermore, as we highlighted at the start of this report, the range of impacts of digital media is changing the nature of literacy. A crucial question is whether the current digital divide is not whether primary age children are using digital tools, but the quality of their use. Currently only 12% of fourth grade pupils receive remedial instruction in literacy, so children should be monitored closely by providing them with as much support as possible, with individualised instruction works best when it is provided as early as possible during primary education. Such intervention should not be stigmatising: it should be embedded in reading tasks and within broad and rich literature experiences. Furthermore, they should be integrated into the pedagogy of information that would have been unimaginable just a decade ago.

**EARLY INTERVENTION IS BEST**

Primary school teachers should have the necessary knowledge of the theoretical foundations of literacy learning, and be able to design and implement instructional strategies that have been proven effective. Furthermore, they need to be trained in a wide range of instructional strategies that have been proven effective. However, what has been proved effective is often not necessarily what teachers are trained to deliver. This is why ongoing professional development is crucial:

- Parental, teacher, and student awareness of the importance of reading
- Regular, formative assessment of reading skills and progress
- Systematic teaching of so-called ‘grapheme-phoneme correspondences’ – also called phonics – should be part of reading assessment.

Additionally, as languages are complex, getting children talking while they are young is crucial. Early intervention is the most effective: so, children should be screened for reading readiness in the first year of primary education, on the importance of reading and the role of parents, so that the link has been completed.
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 (FLP)’ 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 not165. 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 stress clear of efforts that they feel have a chance of ending in failure166.

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 follow the progress of their child167.

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 reading168.
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, 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 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 [36].

• 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 [46].

• Within the EU, students with migrant backgrounds have, on average, lower reading achievement than native-born students [48].

• 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 two-thirds (64%) reported that they read only if they had to [49].

• 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 [50].

• Some 73% of girls and only 53% of boys report that they read for pleasure. 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 [51].

• 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 [52].

• As many as 82% of 15-year-olds in the EU never use a computer during their classes in the language of instruction [53].

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?

4.3.1 THE LITERATE ENVIRONMENT

INVEST PARENTS

Despite the common opinion that parents play a 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 [54]. 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 and informal learning [57].

4.3.2 QUALITY OF TEACHING

Adolescents devote more time to electronic and digital media (including television, computers and electronic games) than any other single activity [58]. Some 77% of 13- to 16-year-olds in Europe have a social networking profile [59]. Time spent online for purposes other than spending 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 [60].

Using the digital environment can be beneficial for reading efficiency: teenagers who spend more time browsing the Internet for fun at home have better digital reading results [61].

The digital environment is not used enough as a medium for reading promotion and for supporting the engagement of students 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 materials 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 and coherent learning environment, particularly if literacy skills are to be developed and maintained beyond the age of compulsory schooling [62].

IN THE WORKPLACE

In Estonia, the ‘Reading is Fun’ (Lugenda om monus) programme 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.

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 [63].

ALL TEACHERS ARE TEACHERS OF READING

Improved teaching has the biggest positive impact on improving literacy development among pupils in secondary school. 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 [64].

A number of local 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 [65]. 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.
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.

The Irish ‘National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy’ aims at ensuring that the literacy curriculum and teaching materials are relevant for boys.

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 indolence. We can read if we want to, this attitude suggests, we just don’t feel like it.’ The main de-motivating factor for struggling readers is lack of interest in school reading materials. Students 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 films versions of assigned books. A key danger here is that ‘learning to get by without reading can take precedence over ‘learning to be a better reader’, establishing a lifetime of disengagement from literacy.

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.

To define characteristics of adolescents who struggle with reading are a lack of confidence in their own capabilities and a lack of motivation. 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. For struggling readers, peer assessment can improve self-reflection and boost self-esteem, self-efficacy and motivation to read.

When students leave primary school, they are faced with a radical shift in which they are expected to read, and in the time they have to read. At school, pupils find that they have very little control over the books and materials they read. They are required to do more homework, leaving less time for leisure reading. For many teenagers, the stage at which reading takes an academic, competitive turn is the moment when the process of reading loses its pleasure.

While external factors are important, the main reasons for disengagement are personal. Many students who struggle with reading feel like it. They feel that they are not good at reading and that they are not capable of understanding the material. This can lead to a lack of motivation and a negative attitude towards reading. When students feel that they are not able to understand the material, they may start to avoid reading altogether.

The increased motivation to write, in turn, resulted in an increased motivation to read literature.

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.

Part of the problem is the limited range of reading materials. On average boys are better at reading non-fictional 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.

In Norway, the ‘Making space 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.

In the Irish ‘National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy’, it aims to ensure that the literacy curriculum and teaching materials are relevant for boys.

Disengaged adolescent boys also face other barriers to becoming engaged readers, including a lack of male modelling of 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. Reading may be seen as 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.

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 partnering the emphasis on fun, not achievement, and through activities that are dynamic and hands-on. Campaigns directed at boys specifically can help stimulate their reading motivation.

A FINISHING project supported by the Finlandia Foundation called ‘Boys’ Reading School’ was a major effort to motivate boys to read. With writing. School was a major effort to motivate boys to read. School was a major effort to motivate boys to read. School was a major effort to motivate boys to read. School was a major effort to motivate boys to read.
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. 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 the one involving a minority of European countries and took place in the 1990s and early 2000s. Only a few Member States, namely the UK, France, and Germany, have conducted national surveys.

- 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.

- 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.

- 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-immigrant population.

- 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 lead to less unemployment and higher earnings.

- 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. 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.

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

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

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.

- 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. 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.

- 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 been formed during childhood years. These are complex and poorly understood, yet potentially the most important factors influencing adult literacy motivation.

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 underestimated 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. 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. Others are afraid of failing, or consider improvement to be impossible. 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.

Motivation can be increased by focusing on the benefits, for instance being able to read one’s children or grandchildren, or to improve digital literacy skills. The accreditation of informal/non-formal learning has a strong impact on the adults’ motivation to pursue further lifelong learning endeavours. Contrary to what we said earlier about primary age children, reading 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. There is good evidence that these programmes attract adults who would not otherwise take part in education. 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 key 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.

In Sweden, the Adult Education Initiative, or ‘Knowledge Lifet, led to a sharp uptake in basic skills training.”
4.4.2. QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

Form of Learning

High-quality adult literacy courses are those that are well-prepared, connected, and committed to the needs of adult learners. Adult education and training provision, such as literacy learning, is crucial for economic development. For instance, the European Commission's Action Plan on Adult Learning (2011-2020) emphasizes the importance of lifelong learning for adults, particularly in the context of economic and social development.

Teaching adult learners requires adaptations to the traditional methods used for children. Many adult learners have specific challenges, such as low literacy levels, that require differentiated instruction. For example, adults who have spent most of their childhood in an informal education system may need more intensive and focused instruction to improve their literacy skills.

Learners require high-quality teachers who have the specific objectives for their literacy learning in mind. Effective teaching strategies include problem-centered learning, which is more likely to persist, as are those who purposefully monitor their learning. Moreover, learners benefit particularly from learning in collaboration with the teacher/trainer working in the specific field of literacy. Adult education and training, can improve both those aspects of the literacy programme, compared to one-to-one, while professional teachers work in classrooms. Literacy tutors and vocational tutors need to work closely together to develop and deliver courses. Much more needs to be done to develop desirable materials.

Creating more demand for literacy instruction will require not only financial incentives but also an increase in the supply of high-quality courses. Improving the effectiveness and impact on the beneficiaries of different programmes. It means being clear about the level of commitment required to produce long-term literacy improvements.

Measuring short-term proficiency changes may capture the full impact of provision, and is likely to differ between teachers, and those trained in the same profession. The literacy levels of both adults and young offenders are good, and a number of programmes in Europe have shown that adult literacy learners can improve literacy skills for offenders. However, in some cases, achieving proficiency gains is difficult to measure, even where there have been improvements.

For adults, recognising and validating non-formal and informal learning is important. As long as the adult literacy workforce is a mix of professional and non-professional teachers, the quality of the learning process should be assured. Learning from one's own experience and the experience of others is vital for the development of literacy skills. Just as in the context of economic and social development, there is a need to ensure that all the components of the learning process are interactive and cooperative. Literacy tutors and vocational tutors need to work closely together to develop and deliver courses. Much more needs to be done to develop desirable materials.

For instance, the European Commission's Action Plan on Adult Learning (2011-2020) emphasizes the importance of lifelong learning for adults, particularly in the context of economic and social development. For example, the Action Plan highlights the need for adult education and training to be more clearly connected to the needs of adult learners. This includes providing high-quality teachers who have the specific objectives for their literacy learning in mind. Effective teaching strategies include problem-centered learning, which is more likely to persist, as are those who purposefully monitor their learning. Moreover, learners benefit particularly from learning in collaboration with the teacher/trainer working in the specific field of literacy. Adult education and training, can improve both those aspects of the literacy programme, compared to one-to-one, while professional teachers work in classrooms. Literacy tutors and vocational tutors need to work closely together to develop and deliver courses. Much more needs to be done to develop desirable materials.
EU HIGH LEVEL GROUP OF EXPERTS ON LITERACY > LITERACY FOR ALL AGES

In the UNITED KINGDOM, the ‘To By To’ 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 is on a one-to-one tutoring by volunteers, but concentrates on reading and re-reading texts written in simple English but based on young people’s 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.

The acid test is whether such initiatives reduce re-offending rates, which is high. A British scheme called ‘INCLUD E’ carried out in 1999-2002 reported that two-thirds of the 135 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.

In the USA, it was found that offering inmates reading instruction can reduce the size of reoffending by 10%.

In GREECE, in the Doura 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 curricula 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 Cyber Base in Graudignan prison has offered 700 prisoners a basic computer training focused on reading, writing, e-Administration and job-seeking techniques, using ICT, in order to bridge more efficiently the digital divide and obtain their diplomas (for some of them) as a sign of acknowledgment of personal improvement.

### B. WORKPLACE

Throughout Europe, forward-thinking businesses recognise the value of having a modern, fully literate, 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.

#### 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 unaware 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 the 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 the 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 unsure 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. More skilled employees tend to stay rather than leave for another job. In fact, the opposite tends to happen: offering literacy training reduces staff turnover. More skilled employees tend to stay rather than leave.

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.

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. 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. Literacy courses also have a strong record of improving attitudes to education, giving many previously disadvantaged adults their first experience of enjoyable, personally satisfying education.

#### PROVIDE HIGH-QUALITY WORKPLACE LITERACY TRAINING

The potential benefits of workplace literacy programmes for both employers 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.

Workplace training should be based on real workplace situations. Since these adults often have negative prior experiences with formal education, providers should avoid using a school-based approach. There is often a lack of cooperation 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 businessess – whether they are large or 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 employer-focused for maximum gains for both employer and employee. Courses need to be long enough and provide adequate ‘time on task’.

NO WAY subsidises employers to provide basic skills starting with literacy for low-skilled employees. This helps address the continuing issue of who should have responsibility for employees’ literacy skills.

In FRANCE, employers’ and employees’ organisations have taken responsibility for organizing literacy training in each economic sector. ANLCI (Agence Nationale de Lutte contre l’Illétrisme) 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.

Collaboration between employees and employers’ 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...
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 disconnected 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 social 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. This sends a message that formal learning is less valuable. Validation of non-formal 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.

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 also had negative experiences of the formal education system. Participating in validation provides the opportunity to increase literacy skills, but it also provides benefits in increasing self-esteem and self-motivation.

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.

THE DIGITAL DIVIDIDE 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. 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 34% of employed persons in this age group, and even half of those in unemployment say that they plan to use the Internet in the future.

When in employment, older people are less likely to be offered training, as governments and employers view the potential returns on investment as limited. This has the potential to erode the literacy and digital divide, particularly given that, at present, older people in Europe tend to have poorer literacy skills than younger people.

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 missed if literacy education helps adults to improve their basic skills.

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

In Germany, the co-operation centre ‘Deutscher 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.

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 the ir 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 368,000 in 2015.

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 to 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 tickets and cannot 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 the training, I regained motivation to do another job, to do 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 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 able to make people speak, we will not succeed if women can work and not 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.
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. While this is a step on the way, we need to go further. We argue that a higher standard of literacy is a prerequisite for active participation in modern knowledge society. 

For this to become reality, Member States should redefine their objectives and should help ensure that all citizens, in due course, develop 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 that will boost literacy levels and reduce illiteracy among all ages.

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:

1. All citizens of Europe shall be literate, so as to achieve their aspirations, as individuals, family members, workers and citizens. 
2. Radically improved literacy will boost innovation, prosperity, social participation and cohesion and raise the life chances of all citizens.
3. Member States will provide all the support necessary to realise our vision, and this support will include all ages.

On this basis, we have developed a range of recommendations that will boost literacy levels and reduce illiteracy among all ages.

- "We cannot solve a problem with the same thinking that created it." 
  - Albert Einstein

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3. Member States will provide all the support necessary to realise our vision, and this support will include 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 educational and societal players such as municipalities, businesses, trade unions and NGOs.

• ACROSS GOVERNMENT

The main responsibility 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, 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 life-long time-span, stretching from early childhood to adulthood.

• INDEPENDENT OF POLITICAL TIMETABLES

Literacy development and policy 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 focusing 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 SOCIETAL-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.

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.
• Increase 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 materials 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 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.
5.4 SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS RELATING TO YOUNG CHILDREN

**A. YOUR 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 the ones 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.

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**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, play, home/school 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, vision 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 bookgifting programmes.

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**B. PRIMARY SCHOOL YEARS**

Our vision is of 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 reinvigorated 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 specialist support early on, based on their real needs and strengths. On this basis, several recommended actions can be identified.

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**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 at 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 learning 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 in which 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 adults using 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 adults’ 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 various 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 teaching and helping 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, local and regional authorities, and businesses and civil society to reduce institutional barriers.
- Use the results of international surveys, such as the forthcoming PIAAC, to stimulate policies.
- 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.

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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 policies. 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**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PLAYERS</th>
<th>YOUNG CHILDREN</th>
<th>PRIMARY AGE</th>
<th>adoLESCENTS</th>
<th>ADULTS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BUSINESSES &amp; LARGE AND SMEs</td>
<td>• Game developers and television programme makers to develop more educational content and concepts, more specifically including language games.</td>
<td>• Use the digital environment as a medium for reading promotion.</td>
<td>• Raise awareness about literacy, encouraging employees.</td>
<td>• Invest in literacy training – it reduces staff turnover and increases productivity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>CELEBRITIES</td>
<td>• Get involved in campaigns on reading and writing promotion.</td>
<td>• Raise awareness of illiteracy and promote the importance of books, reading, writing etc. through unconventional methods such as cabaret, music, movies and television series.</td>
<td>• Develop programmes to support parents in their role in their children's development, including speech and reading, before and after childbirth.</td>
<td>• Engage parents in recognizing and addressing literacy problems of children.</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECEC MANAGERS</td>
<td>• Develop programmes to support parents in their role in their children's development, including speech and reading, before and after childbirth.</td>
<td>• Diagnose oral language proficiency problems and emergent literacy skills at early stages of learning to spot intervention needs.</td>
<td>• Engage parents in recognizing and addressing literacy problems of children.</td>
<td>• Help parents (when help is needed) to facilitate the natural development of pre-literacy skills.</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECEC STAFF</td>
<td>• Test young children's hearing and sight in order to recognize possible barriers to developing literacy skills.</td>
<td>• Reach out to schools and parents to engage children and families in reading activities – also offering digital materials and computers.</td>
<td>• Reach out to engage adolescents in reading activities, by providing diverse reading materials and mobilising press – also offering digital materials and computers.</td>
<td>• Develop inter-generational reading activities for older people and children.</td>
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<tr>
<td>HEALTH PROFESSIONALS</td>
<td>• Work together with ECEC facilities in order to provide them with books and hands-on support, guidance and advice for parents and ECEC teachers.</td>
<td>• Reach out to schools and parents to engage children and families in reading activities – also offering digital materials and computers.</td>
<td>• Develop activities and incentives for older people to stay in reading.</td>
<td>• Develop digital reading opportunities for adults and older people.</td>
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<td>LIBRARIES</td>
<td>• Reach out to engage adolescents in reading activities, by providing diverse reading materials and mobilising press – also offering digital materials and computers.</td>
<td>• Develop inter-generational reading activities for older people and children.</td>
<td>• Develop activities and incentives for older people to stay in reading.</td>
<td>• Develop digital reading opportunities for adults and older people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEDIA</td>
<td>• Raise awareness about the issues at stake, and break the vicious circle of illiteracy as a taboo subject.</td>
<td>• Create 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.</td>
<td>• Create and foster a wide culture of reading.</td>
<td>• Develop activities and incentives for older people to stay in reading.</td>
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### EU High Level Group of Experts on Literacy

**Players**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NGO’s</th>
<th>Young Children</th>
<th>Primary Age</th>
<th>Adolescents</th>
<th>Adults</th>
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</table>
| • Set up parental awareness campaigns to encourage a culture of reading for pleasure at home.  
  • 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. | • 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.  
  • Read aloud 15 minutes every day.  
  • Continue to read with their children while they are at primary school.  
  • Establish high aspirations and emotional support for their children. | • Make reading a social activity, sharing and discovering books with adolescent children. | • | |

**Peers**

| Provide free, top-quality ‘playful learning’ facilities for all children.  
  • Develop more extensive, larger and better coordinated family literacy initiatives to engage parents and help them support their children’s literacy development.  
  • Put one institution in charge of the family literacy policy.  
  • Develop a strategy to make the development of young children a part of the education system, with a developed curricula, high-quality staffing and parental involvement.  
  • Develop clear standards for the qualifications 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.  
  • Integrate critical literacy and evaluation of reading material in curricula of primary education.  
  • Provide targeted support for disadvantaged parents who do not have strong literacy skills themselves.  
  • Provide parents with information and resources on their literacy support role.  
  • Empower parents to support their children and their literacy development.  
  • Develop national literacy action plans and put literacy at the heart of primary education. | • Recognise the literacy problem among adults and gather and analyse data at national level. | • Promote support for parents with adolescent children.  
  • Ensure initial teacher education and further education are provided to secondary teachers in the role as literacy teachers.  
  • Provide support for parents with adolescent children.  
  • Ensure initial teacher education and further education are provided to secondary teachers in the role as literacy teachers. | • Promote support for parents with adolescent children.  
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PUBLISHERS</td>
<td>• Set up book-gifting schemes in order to get books into the home. Include hand-on support, guidance and advice for parents.</td>
<td>• Develop and publish age- and gender-appropriate reading material.</td>
<td>• Provide adult learners with 'easy to read', materials, books, newspapers, and websites.</td>
<td>• Support awareness raising campaigns.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Provide teachers with extensive training on digital material.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Develop books for people with special needs (eg. Braille).</td>
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<tr>
<td>SOCIAL AND YOUTH WORKERS</td>
<td>• Engage and motivate young and/or disadvantaged families to undertake reading activities at home.</td>
<td>• Address literacy issues when working with adults.</td>
<td>• Get training to recognize problems and methods to help others to oversee individualized support.</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCHOOL GOVERNMENT BODIES</td>
<td>• Implement reading across the curriculum with the notion that every teacher is a reading teacher.</td>
<td>• Ensure all schools see literacy as their core business and develop visions for literacy within their school.</td>
<td>• Ensure all teachers have the knowledge and skills to recognize and remedy literacy problems at an early stage.</td>
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<td>• Ensure all schools see literacy as their core business and develop visions for literacy within their school.</td>
<td>• Provide financial resources for school and classroom libraries, computers, etc.</td>
<td>• Provide extensive training for teachers to recognize and remedy literacy problems at an early stage.</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCHOOL AND EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION LEADERS</td>
<td>• Ensure primary schools focus on reinforcing motivation and emphasize reading for pleasure.</td>
<td>• Support all teachers within the school to teach reading.</td>
<td>• Ensure classes are small without too much variation in learners’ literacy levels.</td>
<td>• Ensure all teachers have the knowledge and skills to recognize and address literacy problems at an early stage.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Support all schools’ core business and develop visions for it.</td>
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<td>• Provide classes at convenient times.</td>
<td>• Integrate online materials, digital technologies and crossing literacy in curricula for teacher education and CPD.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Develop school-wide literacy strategy.</td>
<td>• Ensure schools are small without too much variation in learners’ literacy levels.</td>
<td>• Ensure suitable course length and intensity.</td>
<td>• Ensure all teachers have the knowledge and skills to recognize and address literacy problems at an early stage.</td>
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<tr>
<td>TEACHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS</td>
<td>• Provide extensive training for teachers to recognize and remediate literacy problems at an early stage.</td>
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<td>• Integrate online materials, digital technologies and crossing literacy in curricula for teacher education and CPD.</td>
<td>• Ensure all teachers have the knowledge and skills to recognize and address literacy problems at an early stage.</td>
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<tr>
<td>VOLUNTEERS</td>
<td>• Get involved in reading promotion activities in schools, homes, libraries, etc.</td>
<td>• Get involved in reading activities in and outside schools to support children with reading difficulties and to promote reading for pleasure.</td>
<td>• Art as role-models by promoting reading and supporting literacy efforts among adolescents and adults.</td>
<td>• Obtain volunteer qualifications for improved instruction.</td>
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### CROSS-COMPETENCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVELS OF LITERACY</th>
<th>ENABLING AND FACILITATING COMPETENCES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MULTIPLE LITERACY</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FUNCTIONAL LITERACY</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BASELINE LITERACY</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MULTIPLE NUMERACY</td>
<td>The ability and willingness to use mathematical modes of thought (logical and spatial thinking) and presentation (formulas, models, graphs, charts) that enable a person to fully function in a modern society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FUNCTIONAL NUMERACY</td>
<td>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.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BASELINE NUMERACY</td>
<td>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.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### DIGITAL COMPETENCE
- The ability to use ICT to retrieve, access, produce, present and exchange information.
- The ability to communicate and participate in collaboration networks via the Internet.

### COMMUNICATION
- The ability to express and interact linguistically in an appropriate and creative way in a full range of social and cultural contexts.
research and evaluation on improving adult literacy and numeracy skills.

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 are at or below Level 1 in reading, it provides a rough measure of the numbers of adults likely to need improved literacy skills, based on empirical evidence on the impact of specialist dyslexia teaching, or further evidence that can be readily obtained.

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The evidence from PIRLS indicates that boys’ engagement in reading is closer to girls, the achievement gap would shrink by an estimated 20 points, reducing by slightly more for girls. OECD (2010) Learning to Learn: Realising Engagement, Strategies and Practices. Smith, M. and Wilhelm, J. (2012) ‘Reading don’t ofâix no Chevys’: Language and Numeracy: An interdisciplinary thematic paper 1. Leicester: NIACE. Brookes, 2010. 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 learner reading silently.

Bynner et al, 2008. More than 80% of adults with low literacy scores on the International Literacy in the lives of young men. N.H.: Boynton/Cook. Ananiadou et al, 2004. Wolf et al, 2010. ANLCI, the Scale of Reference for key competences in different national). Carneiro, 2011. In the UK, research has found that, among adults who feel their education providers shared these characteristics. Teachers and learners both report struggling if classrooms have too much differentiation. Learners need to be grouped by literacy level, based to active reading instruction or practice, and that the most common activity within that time period was learner reading silently.


266. Bassanini, A., Booth, A., Brunello, G. DePaola, M & Leuven, E. (2008) Dormant Capital: a research into the social expenses of low literacy. The Hague: Stichting Lelkes Diensten. Brookes, 2010. 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 learner reading silently.

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