



Declaration of European Citizens' Right to Literacy

Renate Valtin



The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was proclaimed in 1948 and sets out, for the first time, that fundamental human rights are universally protected.



- When reading the Human Rights which should be universally protected I found out that probably one of those rights was not protected properly – at least for all ELINET members who prepared this conference:
- **Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours. 😊**

Why do we need a literacy declaration?

Article 26 of the Universal Declaration is too unspecific with regard to literacy:

- “(1) Everyone has the right to education...
- (2) Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality...”

Literacy has been recognized as a human right for over 50 years in several international declarations and initiatives. Since its creation, UNESCO has promoted literacy as a right: 1975 Persepolis Declaration, 1997 Hamburg Declaration, 2006-2015 Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE), with a focus on those countries that face the biggest literacy challenges, mainly in Africa and Asia.

Why do we need a European literacy declaration?

- Literacy is a tool that empowers and enriches the well-being of individuals, families, communities and nations.
- Literacy is both a right in itself and an instrument for achieving other rights.
- In Europe we face serious literacy challenges: one in five 15-year-olds and nearly 55 million adults lack basic literacy skills and in the last 10 years there has been little improvement in the levels of literacy in Europe.

The ELINET Task Force

- The ELINET management board has established a Task Force to develop a declaration.

I am honoured and proud of being the chair because I am a long-term advocate for literacy rights. While I was president of the German Association of Reading and Writing we launched a declaration of

- “Zehn Rechte der Kinder auf Lesen und Schreiben” (10 rights of children to read and write) adopted from the International Reading Association (<http://www.dgls.de/die-dgls/zehn-rechte-der-kinder.html>)

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Basic Literacy Right of European Citizens

Every European citizen has the right to acquire literacy. EU Member States should ensure that citizens of all ages, regardless of social class, religion, ethnicity, origin and gender, are provided with the necessary resources and opportunities to develop sufficient and sustainable literacy skills in order to effectively understand and use written communication be in handwritten, in print or digital form.

11 conditions required to put the right to basic literacy into practice

1. **Young children** are encouraged at home in their literacy acquisition.
2. **Parents** receive support in helping their children's language and literacy acquisition.
3. **Affordable high-quality preschool or kindergarten** fosters children's language and emergent literacy development.
4. **High-quality literacy instruction** for children, adolescents and adults is regarded as a core task of all educational institutions.

11 conditions required to put the right to basic literacy into practice

- 5. All teachers receive effective initial teacher education and professional development in literacy teaching** in order to be well prepared for their demanding tasks.
- 6. Digital competence** is promoted across all age groups.
- 7. Reading for pleasure** is actively promoted and encouraged.
- 8. Libraries** are accessible and well resourced.

11 conditions required to put the right to basic literacy into practice

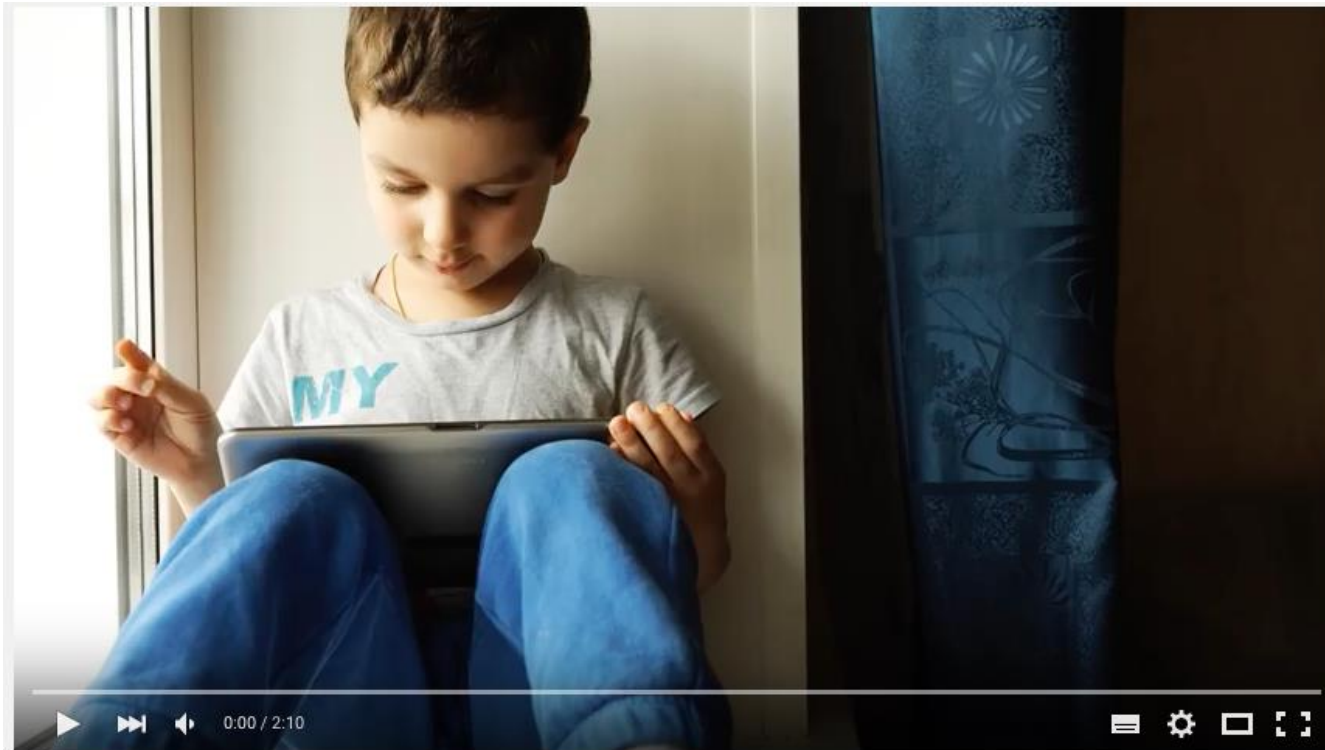
9. Children and young people who struggle with literacy receive appropriate specialist support.

10. Adults are supported to develop the literacy skills necessary for them to participate fully in society.

11. Policy-makers, professionals, parents and communities work together to ensure equal access to literacy by closing the gaps in social and educational levels.

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[Video clip](#)





The ELINET Task Force expects that the Declaration of Citizens' Right to Literacy in Europe gets the support of all stakeholders.

Thank you.

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