



ELINET COUNTRY REPORTS

FRAME OF REFERENCE

MAY 2015

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE

This document is the frame of reference for all of ELINET's country reports. Each of those reports presents the information on literacy specific to one country, using both quantitative and qualitative data. For each quantitative indicator used, the reports give a brief description of the significance of the indicator and some Europe-wide data for comparison. For both forms of data the sources are named. Otherwise the country reports are kept as brief as possible, compatible with intelligibility. All the background and contextual information for the country reports is therefore contained in this document.

1.2 BACKGROUND

One in five 15-year-old Europeans, as well as nearly 75 million adults, lack basic reading and writing skills. Not only does this make it hard for them to find a job, but it also increases their risk of poverty and social exclusion, by limiting their opportunities for cultural participation, lifelong learning and personal growth. Literacy is fundamental to human development, as it enables people to live full and meaningful lives and contribute towards the enrichment of their communities. "Literacy is a basic human right", as Kofi Annan claimed; it is the "bridge from misery to hope".

The European Literacy Policy Network, ELINET, aims to improve literacy policies in its members' countries in order to reduce the number of children, young people and adults with low literacy skills. The ambitious aim that inspires all ELINET work is for every European citizen to achieve functional literacy, defined as the ability to read and write at a level that enables personal development and functioning in society, the home, school and work.

ELINET continues the work of the **European Union High Level Group of Experts on Literacy** which was established by the European Commission in January 2011 and reported in September 2012¹. That group examined how to support literacy throughout lifelong learning, identified common success factors in literacy programmes and policy initiatives, and came up with proposals for improving literacy.

ELINET was established by the European Commission in February 2014, and is funded until January 2016. It is coordinated by the University of Cologne, and has 77 partner organisations in 28 European countries. One of its major aims is to produce reliable, up-to-date and comprehensive reports on the state of literacy in each country where ELINET has

¹ In the following, the final report of the EU High Level Group of Experts on Literacy is referenced as "HLG report".

one or more partners, and to provide guidance (recommendations) towards improving literacy policies in those countries. The reports are based (wherever possible) on available, internationally comparable performance data, as well as reliable national data provided (and translated) by our partners.

Some states have marked differences in educational systems in different regions. We have therefore produced two reports for Belgium (Flemish and French communities) and the UK (England and Scotland – there are no partner organisations in Northern Ireland or Wales). For Germany, however, there is one report generalising as far as possible across the 16 Länder.

ELINET's perspective is lifelong (and lifewide); consequently, the country reports cover the lifespan from birth to old age ('cradle to grave'), and within that are organised in sections relating to children, adolescents, and adults. The section on children is further divided into the pre-primary and primary years, with the 'boundary' between these varying according to the age of entry to formal education in each country. Similarly, the boundary between young children and adolescents varies between age 10 and age 12, and that between adolescents and adults between age 16 and age 18, depending on the relevant datasets and on national systems.

Three overall points about the distribution and nature of the data used for the reports should be noted immediately. First, there is a necessary difference in the sources of data between the pre-primary years and later stages. For students aged 9-11 and 15, and for adults, there are (some) data from international surveys of reading performance, but the pre-primary section instead assembles information on prerequisites to the successful initial acquisition of literacy.

Secondly, while ELINET works with a definition of literacy that includes both reading and writing, all the available international survey data concern attainment in reading – there are effectively none on writing. The only international survey of attainment in writing, of pupils aged 13/14 in 1983, was deliberately constructed and reported to make quantitative comparisons impossible. A recent review of research on writing commissioned by the EC (Carpentieri 2011) found little to analyse, but we intend to search out anything more recent and produce an update, if time and resources permit.

Finally, there is much less relevant information on adults than on the younger age-ranges. In particular, there have only ever been three international surveys of adults' attainment in reading, in 1994-98, 2002-04 and 2008-13, and even in the last of these only about half of all European countries took part; thus data from the earlier surveys are not reported. Consequently, the adults sections of all our reports are shorter and simpler in organisation than the other sections, and many have substantial gaps.

In the chapters on primary-age children, adolescents and adults, existing data from international surveys of reading literacy were used to provide information about reading

performance, the proportions of students and individuals who can be considered as struggling readers, and gaps in reading achievement according to gender, socioeconomic status and migration background. In each of these surveys, a representative sample of the population under consideration was tested using a variety of texts, reading processes, situations, purposes, and question formats. IEA-Pirls (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study, 2001, 2006 and 2011) tested pupils attending grade 4 in primary education (their ages ranged from 9 to 11); 24 EU countries participated in Pirls. OECD-PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment, 2000, 2003, 2006, 2009 and 2012) tested 15-year-old students, whatever grade they were in; all the EU countries took part in each PISA cycle. OECD-PIAAC (Programme for International Assessment of Adult Competencies) was conducted between 2008 and 2013 in 33 countries (among them 17 EU countries), and tested adults aged 16 to 65 in their homes.

Several indicators have been selected consistently across the different age groups, in order to reflect not only the average performance in the country (effectiveness), but also equity issues (% of struggling readers, gaps according to socioeconomic status, migration background and gender). Close attention is paid to trends over time (from 2000 to 2012) in achievement and gaps, as well as to changes across age groups (from primary education grade 4 to the oldest adult group).

Three teams of experts (researchers and practitioners) on the different age groups (children, adolescents, and adults) worked together on the country reports; they agreed on a common outline for them, namely that each would begin with an *Executive Summary* containing the most important performance data and the main findings and recommendations. There would then be one section each on pre-primary children, primary-age children, adolescents, and adults. The sections on primary-age children and adolescents are written to a common framework, but the different nature of the information for pre-primary children and adults dictated that those sections have frameworks which differ from that for primary-age children and adolescents, and from each other. However, the use of the three frameworks across countries ensured that both valid comparisons and gaps in the evidence base could be identified.

The structure of the rest of this Frame of Reference document is as follows:

The remainder of this chapter states ELINET's overall theoretical framework. Then chapters 1-4 deal in turn with pre-primary children, primary-age children, adolescents, and adults. They first state the rationale for, and forms of, information that was collected (much of the section on this in the primary-age chapter also applies to adolescents). Each of these chapters also has sections on policy, and all but the pre-primary chapter discuss performance data; the pre-primary chapter instead discusses data on prerequisites to literacy development. Each chapter ends by identifying the most salient and important gaps in the research base for that age-group.

The final chapter outlines the process by which examples of good practice were collected from across Europe. The most convincing examples are published separately from the country reports on the ELINET website, as they come from all our member countries.

1.3 OUR VISION FOR A LITERATE EUROPE

Just as ELINET sprang from, and continues, the work of the European Union High Level Group of Experts on Literacy, so ELINET shares the vision for literacy in Europe set out in their report:

“Our vision for a literate Europe:

- All citizens of Europe shall be literate, that is, able to read and write at a level that enables them to function and develop in society, at home, at school and at work, in order 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.”

To give substance to the aspiration that “All citizens of Europe shall be literate” in practical terms, ELINET recommends that all countries involved in the network should strive to:

- reduce the proportion of 15-year-olds in the lowest level of reading skills in the 2018 PISA round – as a step towards achieving the current EU target of reducing the proportion of low-achieving 15-year-olds below 15% by 2020;
- work strenuously towards all adult citizens having reading ability at Level 2 of the international IALS/PIAAC scale.

1.4 OUR THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.3.1. WHAT IS LITERACY?

“...the ability to understand, evaluate, use and engage with written texts to participate in society, to achieve one’s goals, and to develop one’s knowledge and potential”
(PISA and PIAAC definition of reading literacy)

In ELINET, we build on the multi-layered definition of literacy, from baseline literacy to functional and multiple literacy, which the HLG report provided:

“Baseline literacy means 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.

Functional literacy stands for 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.

Multiple literacy corresponds to 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.”

(HLG report 2012, p. 103)

1.4.2 WHY IS LITERACY SO IMPORTANT NOWADAYS?

As ELINET focuses on *struggling readers and writers* among children, adolescents and adults, it is important to understand that those persons identified as “low achievers” by national and international assessments (such as PIRLS, PISA and PIAAC) are not *analphabets* (*illiterates*), but persons who *struggle* with the increasing literacy requirements of contemporary societies: “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” (HLG report 2012, p. 23). Furthermore, the report sees digitisation and the Internet as the most important factors to have radically changed the nature and frequency of reading and writing, both in the workplace and in private settings. Due to digitisation, the written word pervades everyday life even on the most fundamental levels, which is why Langenbucher (2002) describes modern societies as “mercilessly demanding in terms of literacy”. Also the HLG report (p.21) states: “Literacy is more essential than ever before.” This is why ELINET intends to draw the attention of policy-makers, stakeholders, professionals and volunteers active in this field to literacy as a fundamental skill and basic human right.

2 PRE-PRIMARY CHILDREN

2.1 EMERGENT LITERACY – WHAT DO YOUNG CHILDREN NEED FOR THEIR LITERACY DEVELOPMENT?

This part of the country report deals with children from birth until the beginning of primary school, which starts – depending on the country – between age 5 and age 7.

In contrast to other age groups, it is not possible to describe literacy performance in this age group since children have (mainly) not yet had any literacy instruction or been tested. Instead we discuss data on prerequisites to literacy development, and first a casual framework which provides the rationale for the forms of data collected. We have kept in mind the three key issues which the HLG claimed all EU 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, inclusion and equity*”

(HLG report, 2012, p. 38; the term “equity” was added by ELINET).

However, the sections of this chapter cut across these issues.

2.1.1 A CAUSAL FRAMEWORK OF FACTORS INFLUENCING EMERGENT LITERACY AND OF RELATED POLICIES

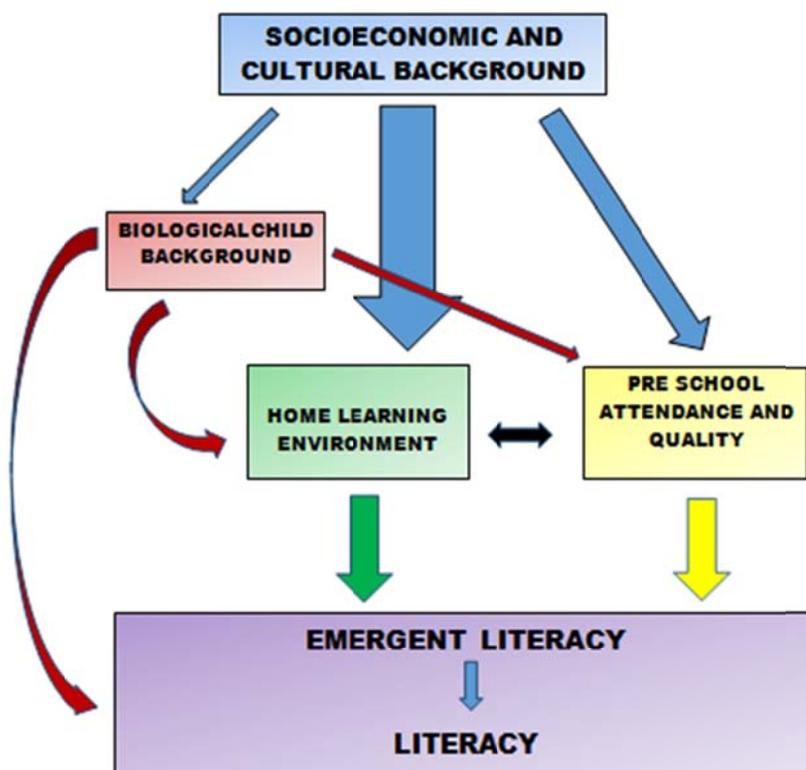
Here we describe, based on the available information, the factors influencing emergent literacy and the policies that may influence them positively (or negatively). By identifying these factors and by understanding the mechanisms through which they influence first the family environment, then the child’s emergent literacy, and ultimately literacy, we can provide a solid basis for policies and interventions aimed at promote literacy from the first years of life.

The proposed framework (Figure 1) is an attempt to identify the main factors influencing emergent literacy and their causal pathways. The framework is based on an ecological and bio-psycho-social approach and identifies four main groups of factors influencing emergent literacy.

For each main group of factors, core indicators were chosen, most of which could be calculated based on current statistics or data provided by national institutions – thus providing comparability across countries. The indicators are useful for describing the situation in each country not only in terms of current status, but also of current policies (e.g. policies to increase access to early day care, or to support generic parenting skills or specific ones, such as reading aloud). Besides quantitative indicators, qualitative information was used (e.g. for describing literacy curricula in preschool institutions). For more information on the criteria for the choice of the indicators, see **Appendix A**. **Appendix B** contains, for each indicator, a table of the data of all European countries participating in ELINET to provide an overview.

Figure 1:

Causal framework of main factors influencing emergent literacy



1. The child's **socioeconomic and cultural background** has a strong impact on literacy. Material poverty and educational level, particularly of the mother, are well-recognized main factors influencing literacy (World Bank 2005, Naudeau et al. 2011). Socio-economic background also influences biological risks to children, by determining early exposure to risk factors and increased susceptibility (Jednoróg et al. 2012). The primary language spoken at home also influences literacy development (Sylva et al. 2004).

2. **Biological child background.** Inherited genetic factors, such as those determining intellectual or language impairment or acquired brain damage, consequent on adverse pregnancy and perinatal conditions, may lead to impaired functioning in key areas such as hearing, language and interpersonal communication. These conditions altogether may affect as many as 5% to 6% of children, including developmental disabilities among very low birth weight/ very premature babies, and cognitive impairment due to genetic syndromes or acquired diseases (Cattaneo et al. 2012). The combined effect of genetics and pre- and post-natal events influences the child's neurobiological features and thus vision, hearing, executive functions and consequently language (articulation, vocabulary, grammar), as well as verbal intelligence and general cognitive development (concepts).

For this main factor the following indicators were chosen: very low birth weight and severe prematurity, factors that are associated with developmental disabilities including reading and writing disabilities.

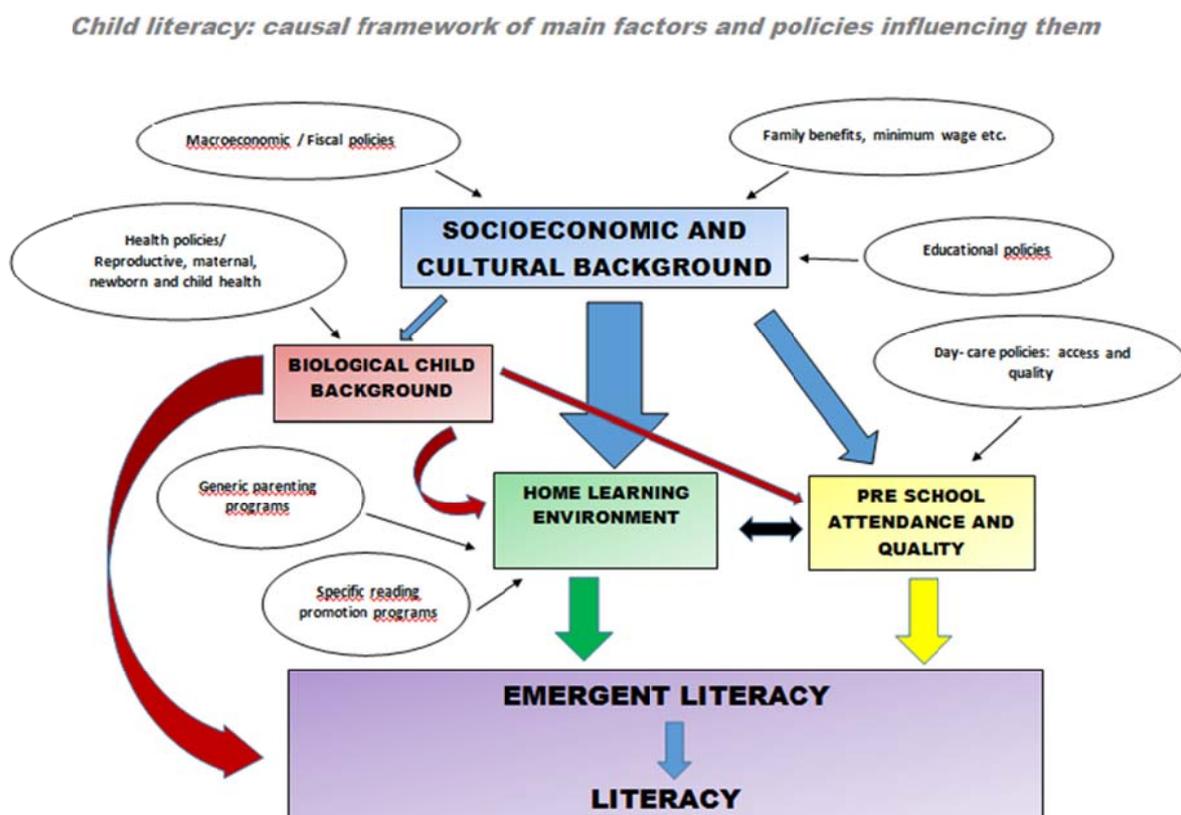
3. The **home learning environment**, particularly in the first three years, is extremely important (Brooks et al. 2012). It determines the quantity and quality of interactions between the infant and the primary caregivers, which are the most powerful determinants of language development, both receptive and expressive, in the first three years when experience-dependent creation of synapses is maximal. We know that the more words the children are exposed to, the more they learn. Caregiver-child relations in their turn strongly influence the ability to learn, by influencing self-esteem, general knowledge and motivation.

4. **Preschool attendance** is also associated with the development of emergent literacy and literacy. The earlier and the longer the exposure, the greater the effect, as shown by many studies and by the PIRLS results (Mullis et al. 2012). Of course, it is not only a matter of quantity but also of quality of day care, and quality standards, starting from teachers' qualifications and children to educator ratios, make a big difference, although they are certainly more difficult to measure and compare.

All four groups of factors interact with each other in ways that may differ from one population group to another, and even from one individual to another. Factors may play a bigger or smaller role depending on the influence of other factors. Favourable conditions in one main domain may represent protection against adverse situations in other. It is also well recognized that early investment in human capital produces great and sustainable benefits for social and economic development (Carneiro and Heckman 2003, World Bank 2005) and is crucial for fighting inequity.

Fig. 2 shows how policies in a variety of domains can influence the factors outlined in our model. The aim of this expanded causal framework is to identify policies that create an enabling environment for the development of family literacy, emergent literacy, and ultimately child literacy. Policies may require different time spans to produce effects. For example, policies in the upper part of the schema, most of which are typically adopted by the whole government, usually require a longer time frame to produce results, but their effects are more sustained. Policies in the lower part, by improving literacy-relevant family practices (such as parenting programmes) or improving access and quality of day care and preschool institutions, may produce more immediate effects. The proposed schema may be helpful in classifying the policies aimed at improving family literacy and children’s emergent literacy.

Figure 2:



For the sake of consistency with the areas indicated by the EU High Level Group of Experts on Literacy, the factors and the related tables are grouped according to five areas in which specific literacy-related policies are identified:

1. Addressing the socioeconomic and cultural background factors of early literacy;
2. Creating a supportive home learning environment;
3. ECEC – Creating an enabling environment to encourage universal preschool attendance;
4. ECEC – Improving the quality of teaching for all preschool activities;
5. Children “at risk”. Ensuring participation, inclusion and equity.

2.2.2 A CLOSER LOOK AT THE FACTORS INFLUENCING EMERGENT LITERACY

2.2.2.1 Addressing the socioeconomic and cultural background factors of early literacy

The socioeconomic and cultural background has a strong impact on literacy. For this main factor the following indicators were chosen:

The **Gini index** is the most commonly used measure of inequality, and represents the income distribution of a nation's residents. The Gini Index is associated with inequality in literacy outcomes.

Child poverty is a major determinant of child development, which consequently influences child literacy (World Bank 2005, Naudeau et al. 2011).

Mother's education level: Maternal education level is more strongly associated with child literacy than father's education (McClelland et al. 2003).

Teenage mothers: Children of teenage mothers are at risk of being exposed to a disadvantaged home literacy environment and are at greater risk of school failure (Burgess 2005).

Single parent: Having a single parent may put limits on literacy resources at home and on parental involvement (Carpentieri et al. 2011). Children who have divorced parents are at increased risk of special educational need.

Migrant parents: Migrant status has strong impacts on reading literacy (Carpentieri et al. 2011). This factor is strongly associated with the primary language indicator, although it includes many other aspects than just language. The child is faced with language and

cultural differences between home and school, and this may affect or influence motivation (McClelland et al. 2003).

Primary language spoken at home different from language used at school:

Children whose primary language(s) spoken at home do not include the language spoken at primary school and kindergarten are disadvantaged with respect to other children in literacy development. Children speaking two or more primary languages, irrespective of whether one of the two is the language spoken at school, are at initial disadvantage in acquiring emergent literacy skills, although there is plenty of evidence that later on the benefits on overall language development, and on other life skills, outweigh this initial disadvantage (Hornberg and Valtin 2011).

RELATED POLICIES: Addressing the socioeconomic and cultural background factors of early literacy includes programmes and initiatives against poverty, specialist support for children whose home language is not the language of school, specific programmes for teenage mothers or for single mothers or fathers, and policies to help the poorest parents, e.g. funds for free book distribution, breakfast clubs, etc.

2.2.2.2 Creating a supportive home learning environment

Parents play a central role in children's emergent literacy development. They are the first teachers, and shape children's language and communication abilities and attitudes to reading by being good reading role models, providing reading materials, and reading to the child. For this main factor the following indicators were chosen:

Parental attitudes to reading: Children who live in a supportive home environment where parents like reading books read more and read better (Mullis et al. 2007).

Number of children's books in the home: Children living in homes with more children's books performed better in PIRLS 2006 (Mullis et al. 2012).

ELA (Early Literacy Activities) Scale before beginning primary school: Engaging in early literacy activities is strongly associated with school achievement (Mullis et al. 2012). Research has shown that children socialized in reading retain or even increase their advantage in language performance compared to their classmates when entering primary school (Kloostermann et al. 2009).

Parents read to their children before the beginning of primary school: Reading aloud to children raises their interest in reading and learning. It develops children's language and reading skills (Bus et al. 1995, Duursma et al. 2008). Shared book reading experiences have a

special role in fostering early literacy development by building background knowledge about the world and concepts about books and print.

RELATED POLICIES include family literacy programmes, such as general parenting programmes to support parenting skills or programmes with a focus on supporting parents and carers in understanding and fostering the literacy development of their children. Also of interest are programmes for introducing parents and children to libraries and bookshops.

2.2.2.3 ECEC: Creating an enabling environment to encourage universal preschool attendance

While early childhood education has long been neglected as a public issue, nowadays early childhood education and care (ECEC) has been recognized as important for “better child well-being and learning outcomes as a foundation for lifelong learning; more equitable child outcomes and reduction of poverty; increased intergenerational social mobility; more female labour market participation; increased fertility rates; and better social and economic development for the society at large” (OECD 2012, p. 9). And in all European countries pre-primary education is an important part of political reflections and actions.

Pre-primary education (ISCED 0) is defined as the initial stage of organised instruction. It is centre or school-based and designed for children at least three years of age. In most European countries, ECEC is split into two separate phases according to age; the age break is usually around 3 years old. The two preceding sentences contradict each other – someone please sort out The responsibility for ECEC governance, regulation and funding is divided between different authorities.ⁱ

In recent years the focus of most EU-level action has been on increasing the quantity of childcare and pre-primary places to enable more parents, especially mothers, to join the labour market. At the 2002 Barcelona European Council, Member States agreed by 2010 to provide full-day places in formal childcare arrangements to at least 90% of children aged between three and compulsory school age. In 2011 the European Commission reinforced this approach by setting a new European benchmark for at least 95% of children between age 4 and the start of compulsory education to participate in ECEC by 2020.

In the country reports the following indicators are considered: the participation rates in ECEC and the average duration of preschool attendance. Children who start attending day care or preschool institutions early have less difficulty when entering primary school (World Bank 2005). Duration is another important indicator for better learning outcomes in the later stages of life. The duration of attendance is associated with greater academic improvement (Mullis et al. 2012). Also of interest is the question whether preschool education is free for all children. All children should be able to benefit from ECEC. No child should be excluded from

preschool because parents cannot afford to send their children to preschool/kindergarten institutions if they have to pay. The potential benefits of high-quality ECEC are particularly significant for children from disadvantaged groups.

RELATED POLICIES refer to programmes to encourage universal preschool attendance.

2.2.2.4 Improving the quality of teaching for all preschool activities

The EU High Level Group of Experts on Literacy stated:

“Increasing investment in high-quality ECEC is one of the best investments Member States can make in Europe’s future human capital. ‘High quality’ means highly-qualified staff and a curriculum focused on language development through play with an emphasis on language, psychomotor and social development, and emerging literacy skills, building on children’s natural developmental stages.”

(HLG report, 2012a, p. 59).

Two recent European reports deal with components of ECEC quality and are therefore a good source for our analysisⁱⁱ.

While there is no internationally or Europe-wide agreed concept of ECEC quality, there is agreement that quality is a complex concept and has different dimensions which are interrelated. In this report we focus on *structural quality* which refers to characteristics of the whole system, e.g. the financing of pre-primary education, the relation of staff to children, regulations for the qualifications and training of the staff, and the design of the curriculum. There are some data concerning structural quality, but there is a lack of research and data about process quality, practices in ECEC institutions, the relation between children and teachers, and what children actually experience in their institutions and programmes.

The following indicators for structural quality of ECEC are used in this report:

Annual expenditure on pre-primary education: More investment in pre-primary education may offer better quality in teaching.

Ratio of children to teachers in pre-primary school: Small preschool class size can increase educational effectiveness. When groups are smaller and staff-child ratios are higher, teachers provide more stimulating, responsive, warm, and supportive interactions (Barnett et al. 2004). Children in smaller classes had greater gains in receptive language, general knowledge, cooperative behaviour, and verbal initiative, and showed less hostility and

conflict in their interactions with others (Espinosa 2002). The effects of class size have been found to be larger for younger children (Barnett et al. 2004).

Percentage of males among preschool teachers: Improving the gender balance of ECEC staff is one of the quality criteria proposed by the Commission on Early Childhood Education and Care (COM/2011/0066 final). The ECEC profession is still predominantly female. It is widely acknowledged that young children, especially boys, need male role models for social behaviour and attitudes toward literacy.

Preschool teachers' qualifications: ECEC staff play the key role in ensuring healthy child development and learning (OECD 2012, p. 11). There is growing evidence that teacher preparation is a powerful predictor of children's achievement, perhaps even overcoming socioeconomic and language background factors. Furthermore continuing professional development is seen to be important for staff working with younger children. Of interest is the minimum required level to become a qualified teacher, the length of initial teacher training, and whether Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is obligatory.

The minimum qualification for becoming a teacher at pre-primary education is in most European countries a tertiary education degree at bachelor level. However, for some countries the minimum required qualification is a post-graduate degree at master's level (e.g. Italy, France), but for some others only an upper secondary or non/tertiary post-secondary level of education is required (e.g. Malta). The length of initial teacher training varies from 2 to 5 years, but for most countries 3 or 4 years of training are required (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/ Eurostat 2014, p. 98-102). In most countries, CPD is generally considered a professional duty for the staff.

Concepts of literacy curricula in pre-primary education (age 3 to 6)

It seems evident that the nature and the quality of the preschool programme have an impact on later literacy achievement in school. Up to now we do not have measures of quality of literacy curricula. However there are attempts to describe programme types. Our analysis builds upon two reports which have analysed steering documents concerning curricula in pre-primary education and listed components of the curricula.

In this report we have a closer look at **language and literacy curricula in preschool institutions**. A framework of curricular content was developed taking into consideration linguistic features of written language and cognitive-developmental knowledge of how young children gradually acquire literacy (Downing and Valtin 1984, Valtin 1997, Clay 2000). A relevant theoretical model on the acquisition of reading and spelling was outlined by Downing (1984) in his theory of cognitive clarity: the learner must reconstruct the linguistic insights possessed by the inventors of the alphabetic script. During this process the learner has to gain cognitive clarity or insight into the function of print (that the squiggles on the page are a visual representation of language and not merely a set of symbols whose content

is arbitrary), and the structure of our alphabetic system, that is the recognition of certain linguistic units represented in print. Various studies (Downing and Valtin 1984, Clay 2000) have demonstrated that children before entering school have vague concepts about both the function of reading and writing and the concepts of print (what is a letter, a word, a sentence?). Learning the alphabetic code requires the ability to shift from content to form and an analysis of speech: segmenting utterances into words, words into sounds. Children acquire these insights only gradually, mostly by direct instruction and their experience with print. Longitudinal studies (among others Valtin 1997) demonstrate the existence of a developmental sequence, which is the result of an interaction between the child's emerging insights, the structure of orthography and the teaching method. Preschool children normally lack insight into the mechanisms of reading and they imitate the outer behaviour by "pretend reading" and scribbling.

In preschool, children can be prepared for formal instruction in school. Kindergarten teachers should provide a literacy environment where children learn and engage in the communicative functions of reading and writing with the aim of developing curiosity and motivation to learn to read and write in school. Reading books aloud, telling stories, presenting picture books, using writing in communicative contexts (e.g. the teacher writes down words or sentences from the child's dictation) – these are all well-known methods.

In our framework for assessing and developing emergent literacy skills the following aspects are regarded as important and should be **components of a literacy curriculum**:

- **Oral language and vocabulary 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 range as well as their communicative abilities. Kindergarten teachers should provide situations where children can experience different functions of language, in social play and role play in conflict situations, and problem solving.
- Familiarisation of children with the **language of books** (e.g. reading and telling stories) with the aim of getting them familiar with decontextualized language and the tighter syntax of written text.
- **Motivating children for literacy related activities:** "Reading" picture books, preparing picture books, using writing in communicative contexts, exploring different materials for painting, drawing, scribbling or "writing". These activities also help children develop their fine motor control, which is needed for good

handwriting and use of the keyboard. Curricula should state explicitly that children should not only be engaged in these literacy-related activities but motivated to practise and learn literacy.

- Providing a **literacy-rich environment**. Engaging children in literacy-related activities should imply the provision of a literacy-rich environment. However, this aspect is so important that in the curriculum there should be an explicit statement.
- **Concepts of print**. Children should develop the awareness that print carries meaning. By having their attention drawn to features of print, e.g. direction of print, letters, words, punctuation, children get to know the technical vocabulary of units of print (page, line, word, sentence, number, letter) and of literacy-related activities such as reading, writing and painting (Downing and Valtin 1984; Clay 2000).
- **Language awareness** (metalinguistic awareness). We prefer the broader concept of language awareness to the widely-used but vague concept of phonological awareness (Downing and Valtin 1984, Valtin 2012). The ability to shift attention from content to form may be fostered in language games, by using rhymes, tongue-twisters and poems, and by singing and clapping syllables. With specific tasks, embedded in playful contexts, children can be prepared for phonemic awareness, the ability to analyse words into sounds and to synthesize sounds into words, which is an essential part of word recognition (“I spy with my little eye something beginning with... [initial sound]”).

Pre-school programmes should focus on developing children’s emergent literacy skills through playful experience, not by systematic training in phonics and teaching the alphabet. There is no evidence that systematic instruction of reading in preschool has any benefit for future learning (Suggate 2012).

In the country reports, steering documents are analysed as to whether there exists a literacy curriculum for preschools at all and, if so, which components are referred to. The overall impression from the general objectives statements in relation to curriculum and teaching and learning is the lack of explicit attention to reading and writing in preschool curricula. It may be that more explicit attention to reading and writing, while being careful to ensure developmentally appropriate requirements, could be a recommendation from ELINET and a basis for future action – keeping in mind that there could be a gap between good intentions and misguided or neglected application. Therefore solid preschool teacher training is essential.

Digital environments / use of technology in education. Is digital equipment used in pre-primary education?

RELATED POLICIES include attempts to develop literacy curricula for preschool education, as well as initiatives to measure and ensure the quality of ECEC. The Working Group on Early Childhood Education and Care under the auspices of the European Commission proposes that there should be a European benchmark alongside the existing Education and Training 2020 benchmark on the quantity of ECEC provision. This new benchmark on quality would be “at least 90% of ECEC provision is of good quality or better as measured by the national or regional criteria” which are based on the principles of the proposal for a Quality Framework (Proposal for key principles of a Quality Framework on Early Childhood Education and Care).

2.2.2.5 Ensuring participation, inclusion and equity

It is well documented by the international literacy surveys that in all countries, though to different degrees, there exist differences in literacy achievement – known as the social, migrant and gender gaps. To achieve fairer and more inclusive participation in literacy learning we need to close these gaps, which already start in early childhood, by supporting children “at risk”. The groups of children “at risk” mainly comprise those from poor and disadvantaged homes. Also many, but not all, migrants have lower literacy levels in the language of the country they have moved to. They must have access to language screening and flexible language learning opportunities in preschool, tailored to individual needs. Furthermore early support for children with special needs is necessary. The EU High Level Group of Experts on Literacy suggested:

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

(High Level Group Report 2012b, p. 10).

Children at risk are also those with very low birth weight and severe prematurity, factors that are associated with developmental disabilities, including reading and writing disabilities

(Hack et al. 2002). The report asks whether children with “special needs”/“children at risk” get early support. Are there screenings/assessments to identify children at risk in their language development? Is there specialist support for children with delays in their language development? Are trained specialists for children with special needs available?

RELATED POLICIES include programmes and initiatives to ensure that children with special needs get early support (ensuring that all young children have their hearing, eyesight and speech tested at the appropriate ages, and that problems are corrected as soon as possible). Also of interest are systems for early screening for language and pre-literacy skills, and for identifying and reaching out to those who risk lagging behind or being excluded.

3 PRIMARY-AGE CHILDREN

3.1 CONTEXT

Primary school age, mostly from age 6 to age 12, is a critical time to lay the foundation of reading and writing ability, to go from “learning to read” to “reading to learn”, and to close any gaps in language and literacy development that are already present when children start school. It is also an important phase for developing and maintaining children’s motivation to use written language.

In this report the focus is on *struggling readers* because we believe that this is the most important area for development in terms of literacy policy for this age group. A struggling reader may be defined with regard to reading competency levels or international benchmarks, as described in PIRLS (Mullis et al. 2012a, p. 64ff). Struggling readers are students whose performance at the end of grade 4 equals the low international benchmark: when reading texts they are able to retrieve information when it is explicitly stated or easy to locate. They are not (yet) able to solve more demanding reading tasks such as distinguishing significant actions and information, making inferences and interpretations with text-based support, and evaluating content and textual elements. Struggling readers have difficulties in word decoding and fluency. They lack knowledge of efficient reading strategies.

But also the group of children at the intermediate benchmark (they are able to retrieve information and make straightforward inferences) needs attention because their competence level is not sufficient for “reading to learn” and coping with written texts in other school subjects. As PIRLS and TIMSS 2011 reveal, there is a high correlation between difficulties in reading and difficulties in mathematics (Valtin et al. in press). The High Level Group recommended aiming at 100% functional literacy (High Level Group Report, 2012a, p. 34); therefore also this group of children needs targeted support.

3.2 WHAT DO PRIMARY CHILDREN NEED FOR THEIR LITERACY GROWTH?

The early foundation phase of reading and writing development is a crucial stage in pupils' literacy acquisition. In order to grasp the alphabetic code, pupils must gain cognitive clarity about the function and structure of written language (Valtin 2000). Explicit teaching of

grapheme-phoneme correspondences (or phonics knowledge) is essential so that children grasp the symbol-sound relationships between the oral and written forms of language, and use them in decoding words when reading and in analysing words into phonemes when writing. Higher-level phonics instruction may include syllabification and use of prefixes and suffixes, depending on the character of particular languages and their orthographies.

Languages differ in their degree of consistency of orthography. In languages with less consistent orthographies, the rate of learning development of beginning readers is slower, as the EU-project PROREAD (Blomert), for example, showed.

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

(HLG report, p. 66).

Initial reading instruction should use a balanced approach: reading for meaning and understanding should not be taught separately from direct instruction about grapheme-phoneme relationships, and learning to read and to write should be parallel activities. Instead of “reading wars” between phonics and whole-language approaches, a balanced method in initial reading instruction is favoured by many researchers: Children are confronted with words/texts and with explicit instruction about grapheme-phoneme correspondences. They receive explicit instruction in how to grasp the alphabetic code, but embedded in reading texts.

Pupils should be taught to read and write not only accurately but also fluently. Without fluency or automaticity the reader or the writer lacks cognitive capacity that is needed for comprehension or for composing a text.

After children learn to read and write in the first grades of primary school it is important that the newly-acquired reading skills are practised in pleasurable contexts. Some of the competences that need to be developed in this phase (roughly speaking between the ages of 8 and 12) are: Developing a “pleasure expectation relating to age-appropriate narrative texts through extensive reading”; developing the ability “to get emotionally involved in stories with the help of various identification mechanisms and temporarily live in a

transitional room of fantasy” and story-related daydreams; developing the “ability to develop preferences for certain genres” (selection competence) (Garbe, Holle and von Salisch 2006, English version, p. 28).

From reading biographical research we know that in middle childhood the central acquisition task related to building stable reading motivation and habits is developing “*independent literary practices*” in order to become an *autonomous reader* (and writer). In contrast to depending on “competent others” in early childhood, when children cannot yet read and write for themselves, now the child as a reading (and writing) individual is in the foreground. So this stage is characterized by the concept of the individual getting more and more independent in dealing with words and texts. Ideally, the child’s reading motivation could be expressed in a sentence like: “*I want to become a reader in order to read alone all that I like to read*” (Garbe et al. 2010, p. 35). Building up stable reading *motivation and engagement* and a stable *self-concept as a reader* (including *reading for pleasure*) can be considered as central *acquisition tasks* in literacy development in childhood and adolescence.

In the next paragraph (2.1 Creating a literate environment) methods are outlined to stimulate reading motivation and engagement for children of this age-group.

3.3 LITERACY POLICY FIELDS

Here we address the various aspects of literacy at primary school age within the three key issues which the HLG claimed all EU Member States should focus on as they work on their own literacy solutions:

- “1. Creating a more *literate environment*
2. Improving the *quality of teaching*
3. Increasing *participation, inclusion and equity*”

(HLG report, 2012: 38; the term “equity” was added by ELINET).

Within each of these account is taken of the following categories of information:

1. Participation / Literacy Provision
2. Quality monitoring / National benchmarks / accountability
3. Literacy curricula / reading instruction
4. Screenings / assessments to identify struggling literacy performers
5. Support for low performers with special needs (e.g. second language learners,

migrants...)

6. Environments to stimulate reading / writing motivation & engagement
7. Digital environments / use of technology in education
8. Teachers' working conditions and professional roles
9. Teacher education (pre-service and in-service training).

The chapter ends with a section identifying the major gaps in the evidence base.

3.4 CREATING A LITERATE ENVIRONMENT

Facts: In general, children in primary schools enjoy reading. In PIRLS 2011 only 8% reported that they did not like reading. However, there were huge differences between countries.

The EU High Level Group of Experts on Literacy stated the following in relation to "creating a more literate environment":

"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."

(HLG report, p. 41).

Schools play an important role in offering a literate environment for primary-age children. Schools may foster reading motivation and reading for pleasure by establishing school and classroom libraries, offering a wide variety of books and other reading material in different genres, providing sheltered and comfortable spaces for individual reading activities (like reading clubs), and not forcing children into having to express and exchange their individual (intimate) reading experiences. In this phase, sustained silent reading formats (such as reading Olympics) can be productive, provided basic reading skills and fluency are sufficiently developed. In currently developed formats like "scaffolded silent reading" (Reutzel et al. 2008) these problems are taken into account. A literate environment can also be created by incorporating digital devices into the school environment.

However, schools do not have sole responsibility. A broad range of actors may shape literacy motivation, from parents and peers to libraries. Parents may provide role models and influence children's attitudes towards literacy practices. As PIRLS 2011 showed, pupils had

higher reading achievement when their parents had a favourable attitude towards reading, and when they had many learning resources in their home.

Also, libraries have a vital role if they offer free books, especially for families who cannot afford to buy books. Regional or national campaigns may inspire children and their parents to engage in reading activities. The Eurydice report on "Teaching Reading in Europe", however, highlights one problem which especially impacts the "promotion of reading outside school" (ch. 3) and is known in reading research as the "Matthew effect" in reading development (Stanovich, 1986): The rich get richer, the poor get poorer:

"A plethora of large-scale state-funded programmes exist in Europe which promote reading either across the whole society or in particular sections. However, many reading promotion initiatives take the form of literacy activities which may largely attract those already interested in reading. Targeted programmes for groups with low literacy levels, or for boys, appear to be rare."

(Eurydice et al. 2012, p. 133).

In the country reports the following topics/questions will be addressed. Most of the information stems from PIRLS 2011 where parents, pupils, teachers and principals were questioned.

- Home learning environment: Parents attitudes to reading, home resources for learning
- Is reading for pleasure emphasized in the intended language/reading curriculum?
- Resources teachers use for teaching reading
- Availability and use of classroom library
- Creating the digital environment: availability of computers and computer activities during reading lessons
- Are there regional or national campaigns to foster reading habits? Are these campaigns targeted at struggling readers?
- Are there specific activities in public libraries with the focus on struggling readers?

While literate environments may inspire the motivation to read and write, it is also important to note that motivation is correlated with success or failure in literacy achievement. The experience of being competent and successful leads to better attitudes towards reading, resulting in a "virtuous circle". To support engagement and motivation is also an important aim in reading *instruction*.

3.5 IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF TEACHING

It is agreed among researchers and practitioners that the **quality of teachers' work** is a key determinant of students' educational success. To improve the quality of teaching, important aspects need to be considered: high-quality reading instruction, coherent literacy curricula, highly qualified teachers, and early intervention and support for children with literacy difficulties. Especially crucial is the quality of teaching and of teachers, as the McKinsey report "How the world best performing school systems come out on top" (McKinsey et al. 2007) report states: "The quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers." (McKinsey et al. 2007)

Below, relevant information is presented in order to explain which questions were formulated in the country reports.

3.5.1 TEACHING APPROACHES IN READING INSTRUCTION

While most literacy researchers have clear concepts about effective literacy instruction, we do not know much about what is actually going on in classrooms in European countries. There is a noteworthy shortage of data on actual reading instruction in school, with the exception of self-reports by teachers which might not be valid and may be biased by social desirability. In order to describe the practice of reading instruction we would need extensive observational studies. However, there are only rare observational studies (Philipp 2014). In PIRLS 2006, fourth-grade reading teachers reported about instructional materials, strategies and activities. In a latent class analysis Lankes and Carstensen (2007) identified 5 types of instruction:

Type 1: Teacher-directed instruction in the whole class without individual support

Type 2: Individualized child-centred instruction, seldom whole-class instruction

Type 3: Whole-class instruction with little cognitive stimulation and little variety in methods, without individual support

Type 4: Variety of methods with high individual support

Type 5: Highly stimulating whole-class instruction with didactic materials.

There were significant differences between countries concerning these types of instruction (Lankes and Carstensen 2007). Also, the analysis of PIRLS 2011 teacher self-reports revealed differences between the approaches to reading instruction in European countries (Mullis et al. 2012a, Tarelli et al. 2012). While PIRLS at least offers some insights into self-reported

activities of reading teachers in fourth grade, there is a remarkable lack of comprehensive, comparative data on how initial literacy is actually taught in the European countries.

The Eurydice Report about Teaching Reading in Europe” (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2011) offers information about approaches in reading instruction by providing an overview of the academic research literature on reading instruction with a focus on teaching methods and activities which are helpful for struggling readers. In the academic literature we find a general consensus about the following components and aims of reading instruction:

- **Helping the child to grasp the alphabetic code** and thus establishing a good foundation of early literacy development

- **Fostering creative writing or inventive spellings:** Children who are encouraged to write spontaneously have fewer difficulties in understanding the alphabetic code (Valtin 2000). Through spontaneous writing children experience the communicative function of written language. In literacy learning programmes reading and writing should be integrated.

- **Developing reading comprehension:** While literacy instruction in the early years is more focused on code-based skills, in later stages it is important to develop and foster a wide range of comprehension strategies with all children (Duke and Pearson 2002). Learners need explicit or formal instruction in the application of comprehension strategies. Explicit teaching of comprehension strategies may improve reading comprehension among readers with different levels of ability. These strategies include:

- Drawing inferences or interpretations while reading text and graphic data
- Summarising text and focusing selectively on the most important information
- Making connections between different parts of a text
- Using background knowledge
- Checking/monitoring own comprehension
- Constructing visual representations
- Pupils reflecting on their own reading process.

(Eurydice 2011, p. 55).

Research shows that the teaching of comprehension strategies is more effective when it takes place in a context where multiple strategies are explained, demonstrated and practised (Eurydice 2011, p. 62). However, as PIRLS 2011 found out, reading teachers, in order to develop the reading comprehension skills of pupils, sometimes rely on a single strategy, with a pre-dominance of summarising (Mullis et al. 2012a).

- **Ensuring instruction engages students in learning:** PIRLS 2011 demonstrated that students whose teachers used instructional practices to engage students' learning in most lessons (items: summarizing the lesson's goals, relating the lesson to students' daily lives, questioning to elicit reasons and explanations, encouraging students to show improvement, praising students for good effort, bringing interesting things to class) had higher scores in reading than when such practices were used in only about half the lessons or less (Mullis et al. 2012a, exh. 8.6, p.220).

- **Allowing adequate time for language and reading instruction:** School curricula should allow adequate time for language and reading instruction (however, this is dependent on the quality of instruction).

- **Using formative assessment as an integral part of teaching reading:** Effective assessment tools upon entry to primary school will help teachers identify literacy skills from the very beginning of formal education. Regular formative assessment throughout primary school will ensure that literacy problems do not continue to go unrecognised, and that students receive the support they need through teaching that matches their learning needs. This should prevent children leaving primary school with unrecognised literacy problems (EU High Level Group of Experts on Literacy 2012a, p. 67).

- **Establishing age-specific achievement goals and standards:** All EU countries have defined learning objectives in reading to be reached at the end of primary and secondary education cycles. However, only a few Member States have detailed standards at each grade (school year) which form the basis of assessments allowing early identification of reading difficulties and allocating attention and resources accordingly. These standard-based assessments allow teachers and school leaders to judge children's progress and to target additional reading support.

The High Level Group suggested:

"Such standards should be integrated in the curriculum and adequately reflected in assessment tools. Minimum standards should be adopted, entitling pupils who are not yet able to meet them to receive special support. It is essential that all assessments against age-specific achievement goals and standards give access to extra support where they show this is needed."

(HLG report, p. 43).

3.5.2 LITERACY CURRICULUM

Curricula provide a normative framework for teachers and guidelines for their teaching aims, methods, materials and activities. However, one should keep in mind that there is a difference between the intended curriculum, as outlined in official documents, and the implemented curriculum – what actually happens in schools. The Eurydice report “Teaching Reading in Europe” offers a broad range of information about the content of reading literacy curricula and official guidelines (European Commission/EACEA/ Eurydice 2011).

In order not to duplicate this work only two aspects were addressed in the ELINET country reports whose importance might not yet be acknowledged and therefore might be missing in the literacy curricula and official guidelines. The first aspect relates to explicit instruction of grapheme-phoneme correspondences (phonics): Do reading literacy curricula and official guidelines in primary schools foster use of grapheme-phoneme correspondences not only in the first year but also in the higher grades?

The second aspect relates to reading strategies. Because the teaching of reading comprehension is more effective when several strategies are combined we asked: Do reading literacy curricula and official guidelines in primary schools include a wide range and a combination of several reading strategies? According to the Eurydice report “Teaching Reading in Europe” (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2011) the literacy curricula and official documents mainly mention the first three of the strategies mentioned above under ‘Developing reading comprehension’ (drawing inferences or interpretations while reading text and graphic data, summarising text and focusing selectively on the most important information, making connections between different parts of a text). References to the other reading strategies are less frequent. Since self-monitoring of comprehension or reflecting on one’s own reading process is a very important aspect in reading comprehension, it is remarkable that it is rarely mentioned in literacy curricula.

In the country reports the following questions are posed concerning **Literacy Curricula / Reading Instruction / National Benchmarks**:

- Does the country have a national curriculum specifically for reading (literacy?), or is reading usually taught as part of the national language curriculum that also includes writing and other communication skills (Reading as a separate curriculum area²)?

² “Only six countries had a national curriculum specifically for reading, namely France, Hungary, the Netherlands, Northern Ireland, the Russian Federation, and Sweden. Reading usually is taught as part of the national language curriculum that also includes writing and other communication skills”. (Mullis 2012a, p. 12)

- Do reading literacy curricula and official guidelines in primary schools – besides word recognition and fluency which are normally an element – foster the use of grapheme-phoneme correspondences not only in the first year but also in the higher grades?
- Do reading literacy curricula and official guidelines in primary schools include a wide range and a combination of several strategies?
- Which reading strategies do teachers use to develop students' reading comprehension skills?
- Which Instructional practices do teachers use to engage students' learning?
- How much instructional time is spent on language and reading, as reported by principals and teachers?
- Are there detailed standards at each grade (school years) which form the basis of assessments allowing early identification of reading difficulties?
- Does the Language/Reading Curriculum prescribe Assessment Standards and Methods?
- Do teachers use formative assessment?

3.5.3 HIGH-QUALITY TEACHERS AND INSTRUCTORS

To improve children's performance and establish cognitive and affective bases for their future development as life-long readers, teacher quality and the quality of teacher education are increasingly regarded as critical.

The European Commission (2008) confirms that the quality of teaching staff has implications for shaping the future of Europe in terms of economic and social development. Within this perspective, the Ministers of Education agreed in 2007 to give high priority to sustaining and improving the quality of teacher education. This is a very effective way of influencing student performance according to the OECD because there is "...substantial research indicating that the quality of teachers and their teaching are the most important factors in student outcomes that are open to policy influence" (OECD 2005b, p. 9).

Internationally, there is a growing recognition that pre-service teacher education is a crucial stage in teachers' development as lifelong learners (see Framework for TALIS 2013, OECD 2005b), and that the identification of relevant competencies **or** standards serves to strengthen the work of beginning and established teachers (e.g. International Reading Association Standards for Reading Professionals, 2007).

The McKinsey Report on "How the world's best performing school systems come out on top" (2007) identified the three biggest impact factors. Two of them are related to teacher education:

“(1) Getting the right people to become teachers, (2) developing them into effective instructors, (3) ensuring that the education system is able to develop the best possible instruction for each child” (Source to be added!).

The aim of having high quality teachers requires **selective teacher recruitment policies**. OECD (2005) suggests broadening the selection criteria for new teachers to ensure that the applicants with the greatest potential are identified, by interviews, preparation of lesson plans and demonstration of teaching skills in selection processes for new teachers, and consideration of characteristics such as commitment and sensitivity to student needs. However, according to Key data on Teachers in Europe (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2013), only a third of all European countries have specific selection methods for admission to initial teacher education in place. Overall, admission to initial teacher education seems to be governed by the general entrance requirements for entry to tertiary education.

In addition to the importance of high entrance requirements, there is widespread agreement that teachers need a **solid mastery of the content** they teach. Still not all literacy teachers in Europe have a **solid training in literacy**. According to PIRLS 2011, fourth-grade students are typically taught reading by general-purpose primary school teachers who are responsible for teaching all basic subjects. Most primary school teachers were not required to have training in teaching reading per se (Mullis et al. 2012b, PIRLS 2011 Encyclopaedia, pp. 15-16).

Concerning the training of literacy teachers, the country reports contain the following information **on Initial Teacher Training and Continuing Professional Development:**

- Are there specific selection methods for admission to initial teacher education?
- What are the entry qualifications?
- What is the length of the required training?
- Do all teachers of reading (normally classroom teachers) have a training in language/ literacy?
- Is there compulsory continuing professional development (in-service training) for teachers which focuses on literacy development?
- How much time has been spent on professional development related to reading in the past two years?
- Are there courses for enhancing teachers’ skills to deal with struggling readers?
- How is its quality assured?

Important teacher competences are a) the assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of each individual student they teach, b) selection of appropriate instructional methods, and c) instructing in an effective and efficient manner. The results of PIRLS 2011, however, provide evidence that in some countries there exist shortfalls in teaching skills and difficulties in dealing with heterogeneous groups (gender, migration background, students from lower

social classes). All these findings point out to the necessity of **better professional development of literacy teachers**. International studies such as TALIS (2013) provide comparative data on European teacher education systems, and many theoretical and empirical studies provide information on good literacy teaching, but no study exists which helps to identify **the quality of initial education of future teachers of literacy**.

Based on reviews of the academic research literature (IRA 2007, Eurydice 2011) the following elements of the **content of teacher preparation** might be distinguished:

- Foundation in theory and research concerning children's language and literacy development, learning theory and motivation
- Instructional strategies at the word and text levels
- Reading–writing connections
- Instructional approaches in remedial reading and materials
- Assessment techniques
- Training in educational research methods and practice.

For the ELINET country reports we focus on those aspects of knowledge and skills that are important for preventing literacy difficulties and helping struggling readers:

- To what extent does initial training particularly emphasise the teaching of reading?
- Is tackling reading difficulties a subject in ITE?
- Is assessing pupils' reading skills a topic in ITE?
- Teaching practice for prospective teachers of reading: What is the duration of in-school placement in ITE?

3.6 ENSURING PARTICIPATION, INCLUSION AND EQUITY

The PIRLS results have demonstrated gaps in literacy achievement in specific groups of fourth-grade pupils. Most alarming is the social gap with an average difference across participating countries ofscore points on the PIRLS reading test. Next comes the migrant gap with ... difference. In primary school there is also a gender gap but the difference is rather small (....points)

The **socio-economic gap** in literacy refers to the fact that pupils from disadvantaged families have lower mean performance in reading than students from more advantaged families (Mullis et al. 2012). However, the degree to which family background relates to reading literacy performance varies from one country to another even in Europe (Sulkunen 2013, p. 532). Family background, whether measured as parents' educational level and/or occupation (Linnakylä et al. 2004, Mejding and Roe 2006) or measured as economic, social and cultural status (Fredriksson et al. 2012, Sulkunen and Nissen 2012), is one of the most important predictors of reading literacy performance. However, there is evidence that the economic status of the family is a less important predictor of reading performance than cultural capital and social capital (Jensen and Turmo 2003). This means that low appreciation of culture and reading at home – reflected in the number of cultural items and books – is a risk factor for low performance in reading, even if the family is a relatively wealthy one (Sulkunen and Nissen 2012).

The **migrant gap** refers to the unequal distribution of learning outcomes between native-born students and immigrant students: in most countries immigrant students have lower levels of performance in reading (Mullis et al. 2012). In many countries the migrant gap is associated with the socio-economic gap, but this explains only a part of it, because the migrant gap is also associated with having a home language different from the language of instruction at school, which increases the risk of low performance in reading.

The **gender gap** refers to differences between girls and boys in reading performance. In PIRLS 2011, girls outperformed boys in reading in nearly all the European countries (Mullis et al. 2012), and boys are frequently overrepresented among the low performers.

It is crucial that teachers provide support measures to help struggling readers (Brooks 2013). Countries differ widely in their approaches, from in-class support with additional support staff (reading specialists, teaching assistants, or other adults) working in the classroom together with a teacher, to out-of-class support where speech and language therapists or (educational) psychologists offer guidance and support for students with reading difficulties. In some European countries, students needing to learn the language of instruction are offered various levels of support, including separate classes, preparatory classes, support teachers, and "bridge classes" (Mullis et al. 2012b).

The country reports provide information about relevant data concerning the identification of and support for struggling readers:

- Are there regular screenings for reading competence to identify struggling readers?
- Do all pupils receive remedial instruction when needed?
- Is there a legal right for support for struggling readers?
- Are successful strategies and practices for tackling reading difficulties addressed in the curricula?

- What support is offered? Is there provision for additional instruction time? Is that support delivered by special needs experts/literacy experts?
- Additional staff – what is the availability of support persons?
- Are there national initiatives or programmes for parents who struggle with literacy?
- What support is available for pupils whose home language is not the language of the school?

3.7 GAPS IN THE RESEARCH BASE

We have three identified three major gaps, which logically depend on each other and which therefore all need to be tackled together:

- Lack of knowledge about initial literacy teaching methods. Downing's book "Comparative Reading", published in 1973, is to the best of our knowledge the only serious in-depth analysis we have – except for the Eurydice report "Teaching Reading in Europe" which, however, presents more general information. Especially little is known about the initial phases of reading instruction in the first weeks and months of school. How are children taught the alphabetic code? Do children start with letters, words, or texts? How are grapheme-phoneme correspondences taught (if at all)? Is the initial vocabulary controlled for orthographic regularities (in languages with deep orthographies), and therefore intended to be decodable? Are there differences between countries whose languages have deep and shallow orthographies? How are the first pages of reading primers organized? What is the relationship between the teaching of reading and writing? Many more questions may arise when considering the theoretical and didactical models underlying these instructional methods.
- Lack of observational studies. We do not know much about what is actually going on in classrooms in European countries. There is a noteworthy shortage of data on actual reading instruction in schools, with the exception of self-reports by teachers, which may not be valid and/or may be biased by social desirability. In order to describe the practice of reading instruction extensive observational studies would be needed. However, there are only rare observational studies (Philipp 2014).
- Virtually no comparative information is available on reading teacher education for primary teachers in Europe, apart from brief descriptions of national education systems in the encyclopaedias published by PIRLS. The report on the teaching of reading across Europe published by European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice (2011) provides valuable basic information, but it is based solely on official government documents. Barely any research comparing methodologies for preparing teachers

and their underlying assumptions has been published. This is confirmed by a recent meta-analysis of the research in this area by Risko et al. (2008), who found that just three of the 298 studies they reviewed had been published outside the United States (although their search was confined to articles published in English). The lack of a research base to support reading literacy education may hamper efforts to strengthen links between educational institutions in Europe and encourage mobility of teachers across national borders. It also means that relatively little is known about factors that influence the content of teacher education programmes in reading (for example, political ideology), and what research findings, if any, are made available to students in different countries.

- The situation is somewhat different in mathematics education, where the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) is currently implementing a Teacher Education and Development Study in Mathematics (TEDS-M), though regrettably just four EU countries (Germany, Norway, Poland and Spain) are involved. The study is taking an in-depth look at the characteristics of teacher education policies, institutions and programmes, the relationship between beliefs about mathematics of teacher educators and future teachers, and the kinds of practice arrangements and school experiences that are most effective in preparing future mathematics teachers (Tatto et al. 2008; Blömeke et al. 2014).
- We believe there is a pressing need for comparative quantitative and qualitative data on teachers' initial preparation to teach reading, situated in the context of their early years in as teachers, and for an agreed set of carefully validated European standards for preparing beginning teachers of reading.

4 ADOLESCENTS

4.1 CONTEXT

When we talk about adolescents we think about 12- to 18-year olds, i.e. students in the secondary grades, which might comprise grades 6 to 12. According to the “International Standard Classification of Education” (EURYDICE, EACEA, & European Commission, 2012), adolescents are allocated to ISCED 2 (lower secondary education) and ISCED 3 (upper secondary education). Upper secondary education can comprise both the more specialized preparation for tertiary education and vocational secondary education in preparation for future employment. In the EU-funded project ADORE (“Teaching Adolescent Struggling Readers – A comparative Study of Good Practices in European Countries”, 2006–09), the study partly included pre-adolescents (10- to 12-year-olds, 5th and 6th graders) as well as post-adolescents (18- to 20-year-olds) (Garbe et al. 2010, pp. 25–26). This might occasionally be necessary for our report as well, as secondary schools start and end in different grades in the EU countries.

4.2 WHAT DO ADOLESCENTS NEED FOR THEIR LITERACY DEVELOPMENT?

In order to identify the key elements of good practice in literacy policy for adolescents’s literacy development, it is important to be aware of the “developmental tasks” (Havighurst 1953, Dreher and Dreher 1985) of this age group. International research and numerous reports, studies and programmes on adolescent literacy provide us with a rich knowledge base about this topic. Especially in the Anglo-Saxon world “adolescent literacy” has been the subject of many studies, reports and programmes since the 1980s (see, for example, Christenbury et al. 2009, Hinchman and Sheridan-Thomas 2008, International Reading Association 2012).

In Germany, Garbe et al. (2006) combined findings from developmental psychology with literacy and literary socialization research, and outlined a model of literacy acquisition consisting of three different “plateaus” in early childhood, childhood and adolescence. However, they proposed to use the term “acquisition tasks” instead of developmental tasks: “(...) we will not speak about developmental tasks but about acquisition tasks, because we

start out from normative standards”, i.e. from the desirable final condition of fully literate children and adolescents (Garbe et al. 2006, p. 13, English version). Within adolescence Garbe et al. conceptualized the two major acquisition tasks in literacy and literary socialization as the acquisition of “functional literacy” and “reflective literary practices”.

Where functional literacy is concerned, Sulkunen states that it is “assumed” or “expected” that adolescents have already successfully mastered these literacy acquisition tasks:

Adolescents are in a crucial phase in their lives from the perspective of their education and literacy development. In most European countries, they are about to leave or have recently left basic education, assuming that they *master functional literacy* required for further studies, citizenship, work life and a fulfilling life. They are expected to *master basic reading and writing skills*, but also to use their literacy for various purposes in all their roles in their immediate and broader communities. Most importantly, they are expected to use and develop their literacy as a *key competence for lifelong learning* in a changing world.

(Sulkunen 2013, p. 538, emphases added)

International assessments like PISA show, however, that many adolescents have not mastered those skills even by the end of compulsory schooling, which brings Sulkunen to conclude her article about “Adolescent Literacy in Europe” by saying that “An Urgent Call for Action” is needed.

Whereas “functional literacy” first and foremost refers to the essential literacy skills needed to thrive in a modern society, “reflective literary practices” comprise both personal and social dimensions. On the personal level, reflective literacy means reading as a way to develop one’s own identity and personality, as well as a means to reflect narratives and representations of one’s own self through literature. On the social level, then, these narratives gain added value through communication with others about reading and about personal readings of literary texts. The term “literary” is meant here in its broad sense: including literature and other media (like TV, film, video games) which are used to build and reflect one’s own personal and cultural identity.

4.3 LITERACY POLICY FIELDS

The various aspects of literacy growth in adolescence (and at secondary school age) are addressed within the same three key issues as for primary-age children, namely:

- Creating a literate environment
- Improving the quality of teaching
- Increasing participation, inclusion and equity.

4.4 CREATING A LITERATE ENVIRONMENT FOR ADOLESCENTS

4.4.1 LITERACY PROVISION IN ADOLESCENCE AND PARTICIPATION IN SECONDARY SCHOOLING

One important, but certainly not sufficient, precondition for raising performance levels in literacy for adolescents is literacy provision during secondary schooling, as functional literacy is mainly acquired in school-based learning. Thus, the provision of secondary education for all adolescents and the prevention of early school leaving may serve as indicators for the opportunities of adolescents to improve their literacy performance especially related to basic functional literacy.

Our questions in the country reports concerning “participation / literacy provision”:

- How many students drop out from secondary schools?
- What policies are there to prevent early school leaving and/or to support adolescents’ engagement in secondary studies?

4.4.2 DEVELOPING READING ENGAGEMENT AND A STABLE SELF-CONCEPT AS MEMBER OF A LITERARY CULTURE

In addition to the focus on functional literacy, related to formal education in secondary and vocational schools, holistic approaches based, for example, in reading socialization/reading biographical research highlight another aspect: adolescence is a crucial phase in life where young people develop long-term *identities and self-concepts* which include media preferences and practices (*media identity*). In this perspective, it is of great importance that families, schools and communities offer young people rich opportunities to encounter the *culture of reading* and develop a stable *self-concept as a reader/writer* and member of a literary culture. This includes access to a broad variety of reading materials (in print and

electronic forms) and stimulating literate environments in and outside of schools; it also includes opportunities to get actively involved in engaging with texts, communicating, reflecting on and exchanging ideas about texts with peers and 'competent others', e.g. teachers or parents.

In their reading-acquisition model for childhood and adolescence, Garbe, Holle and von Salisch (Garbe et al., 2006) emphasize that "reading for pleasure" – connected with "literary practices" – is in itself developing and thus changing its character and conditions of support in the different age-groups of early childhood, middle childhood and adolescence.

In **adolescence**, reading of fictional and non-fictional texts can develop into a valuable source of nurturing ideas about one's own identity and place in the world. After the phase of *intimate reading for pleasure* through daydreaming in childhood, adolescents turn towards the outer world, as this phase is characterized by establishing and exploring relationships with others: "Consciously reflected experience of otherness now becomes accessible and enhances the formation of the young person's own identity, as well as the readiness to open up towards the concerns of the world." (Garbe et al., 2010, p. 36)

The prototypical core of expected *literary* competence in adolescence can be defined as the ability to explore *other* perspectives, destinies and worlds through the medium of literary/fictional or theoretical texts, and to refer these reflectively to one's *own* life and one's *own* world interpretation. Reading biographical research shows that modes of identification and reflection change in adolescence (Graf 1995, 2005, 2007): The adolescent reader "oscillates between identification and alienation; this results in intellectual stimulation and forges a desire for discussion" (Graf, 1995, p. 121). Garbe et al. called this stage the development of *reflective literary practices*.

Promising practices in reading promotion targeted at adolescents have to take into account those features of adolescents' *reading for pleasure* connected with reflective literary practices. First of all, they have to offer **a broad variety of reading materials** for adolescents:

There should not be a hierarchical ranking of reading material. Books, comic books, newspapers, magazines and online reading materials are equally valid and important entry points to reading for children and adults alike. A literate, motivating environment is one that encourages and supports a wide **diversity of reading materials and reading practices**. Books and other printed texts are important. But in recognition of the digital opportunities, people should be encouraged to read what they enjoy reading, in whatever format is most pleasurable and convenient for them. This includes reading and writing online. (HLG report, p. 42)

Besides the criteria of *multi-modal texts* and *multiple genres* (without canonical hierarchical selection) reading materials should also take into account *gender differences* in reading preferences between boys and girls and *ethnic diversity*.

Secondly, promising **reading environments** to stimulate pleasure-reading among adolescents should offer spaces for communication and exchange of ideas – either face-to-face (like in reading clubs) or online, e.g. in social media. It is very important that those environments are truly *open spaces* which invite adolescents to authentically express what they think and feel about a topic (and not only act in standardized formats). A broad variety of approaches to texts should be offered including creative reader-response-interactions so that adolescents feel appreciated in their individual approaches to texts. The “three-pillar model” of good reading environments for adolescents developed by the ADORE-team outlines those three aspects: “interesting reading offers”, “motivating reading locations” and “diverse reading orientations” (Kruse & Sommer in Garbe et al. 2010, p. 134f.).

As an important provider of reading materials and environments alongside schools and families, **public (and school) libraries** have an important role to play within reading promotion outside school. Literacy policies and programmes addressing libraries (book and media equipment, rooms and spaces for reading, qualification of staff, specific reading promotion offers) should be investigated under the criteria emphasized above.

Our questions in the country reports concerning “reading environments to stimulate reading motivation & engagement”

- Do schools (together with community institutions) offer attractive / diverse / gender-sensitive reading materials and environments in print and non-print?
- Is there systematic cooperation with parents, libraries, bookstores et al in reading promotion for adolescents?
- Are reading / writing activities part of regular extra-curricular activities in school programmes?

4.4.3 DIGITAL LITERACY / MULTIPLE LITERACIES

In the 21st century, reading and writing happen in various environments, not only via pen and paper or with books. Learning and teaching have changed significantly with **digitization** (Goodwin, 2012, p. 85, Lafton, 2012, p. 174) and development of media (Stadermann & Schulz-Zander, 2012). The digital, interconnected and mobile character of media not only alters the ways of accessing knowledge and sense-making but also the forms of communication. Thus, further competences in literacy and media literacy are needed (Bearne, 2003). That is the reason why we actually mean “**multi-literacy**” when we talk about “literacy” (Cazden, Cope, Fairblough, & Gee, 1996). Because the boundaries between production and reception have shifted, digital media offer new possibilities of participation and designing: by already using tablets or smartphones children can produce multimodal

documents combining written texts, visual elements, audio and video clips. Supported by this kind of technology, they can communicate easily with the world, even before being able to write and read and without pre-existing technological knowledge. Communication means using language (not only verbal but also body language) and it always comprised more than only spoken or written words (Hausendorf, Mondada, & Schmitt, 2012; Knoblauch, 2013). Digitization has once again revolutionised communication. We thus better speak of "documents" or "designs" (Cazden et al., 1996, p. 73) in order to mark the difference between words organised into texts on the one hand and texts organized in a multimodal way (comprising pictures, audio, film, ...) on the other (Bezemer & Kress, 2008; Kress, 2010).

E-learning today means **m-learning (mobile learning)**, i.e. having access both to all kinds of means to express ideas and to inform oneself and to the internet throughout the learning process. So far m-learning mainly takes place in informal situations out of school (Pachler, 2007, p. 4): adolescents communicate with peers and/or access data via smartphones and tablets. On the one hand, this means that learning settings are no longer limited to the formal setting of classrooms. On the other hand, until now (children and) adolescents act on their own, so that it is not always guaranteed that adolescents use media in a responsible and critical way. Usually schools and teachers would not be aware of adolescents' literal practices, their competences, interests and abilities or they would not accept them as literacy. Therefore, adolescents themselves often do not recognize their literal engagement as literacy practice. While using digital technology, they do not perceive themselves as readers and writers. Many adolescents seem to think that school literacy has nothing to do with them, their lives, their needs and concerns (Wiesner, 2014).

School has to close that gap instead of broadening it even more (Bearne, 2003; Cazden et al., 1996). Even though curricula claim to teach literacy as multi-literacy, so far only a few efforts are to be observed or have been made in small projects. Teachers are still quite insecure about how to use digital technologies in classrooms. Often they think of digital media as tools they have to work with on top of the subjects instead of integrating digital media into teaching and learning processes (Wiesner & Schneider, 2014). Literacy at school should be a central point and part of the adolescents' world, and not a separated senseless exercise:

The need is to move away from a monocultural and monomodal view of literacy. One way in which teachers, curriculum, and policy can respond to this task is to broaden the diversity of signs and cultural meanings that circulate in the classroom. Multimodal texts may be used by teachers in the classroom as the basis for critical engagement, redesign, or the explicit teaching of how modes construct meaning in specific genres. (Jewitt, 2008)

10. Our questions in the country reports concerning “digital environments / use of technology in education”:

- Is digital literacy part of the curriculum?
- How are secondary students supported in acquiring digital literacy resp. how are secondary students supported in contributing with their skills and knowledge?
- What classroom resources (books, notebooks, internet...) are used to support the development of adolescents’ digital literacy?

4.5 IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF TEACHING

Our questions in the Country Reports concerning

Quality monitoring

- Is there an inspection service to monitor the quality of secondary education institutions (including classroom practice)?
- Are there national quality standards for the quality of secondary education institutions?

National benchmarks / accountability

- Are there national benchmarks / standards for adolescents’ literacy performance? How is adolescents’ progress in reading and writing assessed / monitored?
- What accountability measures are in place for secondary education institutions?

Literacy curricula / reading instruction

- Are advanced literacy skills part of the national curricula in all school subjects and grades?
- How is the transition from “learning to read/write” to “reading/writing to learn” in secondary grades organized?
- Is “content area literacy” / disciplinary literacy incorporated in the teaching of all subjects?
- Is there a specific focus on literacy in VET provision for adolescents?
- What is known about the ‘implemented’ curriculum?

Teachers

- What are the professional roles within secondary education?
- What is the status / reputation of teachers and other professionals who work in secondary schools?
- What are their working conditions?
- How do salaries compare to the national average?

Teacher education

- What are the statutory qualification requirements for secondary educators?
- What are the entry requirements for ITE?
- Who pays for training?

- Is there a curriculum for initial teacher training? Are there quality standards?
- Are there compulsory (or optional) language and literacy modules in secondary ITE?
- Is “content area literacy” a compulsory part in initial teacher training of all secondary teachers?
- What is the length of the required training?
- Is there compulsory continuing professional development (in-service training) for teachers which focuses on literacy development?
- What is the take-up among teachers?
- Who delivers this training?
- How is its quality assured?

4.5.1 CURRICULA: INCORPORATING CONTENT AREA LITERACY ACROSS ALL SUBJECTS

Acquiring *functional literacy* is more than mastering the decoding processes of reading in elementary school. Actually, mastering functional literacy includes the transition from “learning to read (and write)” in the primary grades to “reading (and writing) to learn” in all subject areas in the secondary grades. More specifically, adolescents are exposed in and outside schools to a variety of increasingly complex texts – written texts as well as “non-continuous texts” (a combination of text, graphs, diagrams, tables, illustrations etc.) – in different “content areas”, which means different disciplinary fields with highly specialized academic vocabulary, different text structures and different ways of producing and constructing knowledge. This kind of non-continuous text is actually quite common and can be encountered frequently in everyday life. Adolescents therefore need to develop a high level of “content area literacy” which means that the literacy skills acquired in school are not just connected to one school subject, e.g. mother tongue education. Developing content area literacy has to be supported by *teaching discipline-specific literacy skills in all school subjects in all grades in secondary schools*. Because content area literacy is such an important issue spanning all subjects, it is worthwhile having a closer look at the school curricula and which role literacy plays there.

4.5.2 INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION

To lay the foundations that all students can thrive in every subject, the High Level Group of Experts on Literacy recommended: “Make every teacher a teacher of literacy” (HLG report, p. 92). The experts identified three main obstacles which need to be addressed when it comes to teaching literacy:

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.” (HLG report, p. 73)

Given the particularly complex task that is the teaching of reading, this practice requires that prospective teachers develop resources on these three dimensions of time, training and leadership already in their initial education. Future teachers and those already in service need specific knowledge and skills regarding *“foundational knowledge on reading and writing processes and instruction: curriculum and instruction; assessment and evaluation; diversity; literate environment; professional learning and leadership”* (International Reading Association, 2010). The relevance of the content area teacher to “support their students in understanding, critiquing, and designing a variety of texts” (Wilson, Grishma, & Smetana, 2009, p. 156) lead to the inclusion of a new role in these 2010 IRA standards: “The middle and high school content teacher”.

Research has shown that teachers frequently demonstrate limited understandings of the ways in which literacy can be content-specific (Conley, Kerner, & Reynolds, 2005, p. 28). Tanya McCoss-Yergian and Loddie Krepps in their study about teachers attitudes regarding literacy in content area classrooms give account of several studies that conclude that discipline teachers „would like to teach reading but do not know how”, and do not feel “qualified to teach reading to their students” (McCoss-Yergia & Krepps, 2010, p. 6). According to the findings of McCoss-Yergian and Krepps, teachers “do not believe they have sufficient knowledge, abilities or preparation for integrating literacy instruction into their content area classroom” (McCoss-Yergia & Krepps, 2010, p. 7). Because these authors share with Carol Santa (2006) the belief that “teachers who demonstrate an explicit understanding of literacy can impart that insight to his or her students and, thereby, directly affect their academic success” (McCoss-Yergia & Krepps, 2010, p. 4), they suggest a list of Recommendations for Practice among which some particularly target ITE [Initial Teacher Education]:

1. Undergraduate and graduate education programs must develop, embed and require a significant content area reading strategy training component; 2. Undergraduate, graduate and continuing education programs must create instructional paradigms which teach that comprehension must be equal to content in core and elective disciplinary classrooms; (McCross-Yergia & Krepps, 2010, pp. 14–15)

4.5.3 CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF SECONDARY TEACHERS

Providing teachers with the skills they need to be confident literacy teachers regardless of their specific subject is not only a matter of initial teacher education. We know from research that it is very important that teachers continue to foster their professional skills in **professional development** opportunities after they have completed the induction phase of their training. Following the TALIS definition, professional development activities “aim to develop an individual’s skills, knowledge, expertise and other characteristics as a teacher” (OECD, 2014c, p. 86) and are as such key to improving classroom instruction and student achievement (Yoon, 2007, p. 44). Furthermore, teachers’ continuing professional development is central to education policy debates “...because it is highly relevant both for improving educational performance and effectiveness, and for enhancing teachers’ commitment, identity and job satisfaction.” (European Commission, p. 113; European Commission, p. 9)

Since the teaching profession today needs to “be able to constantly reflect on and evaluate their work and to innovate and adapt accordingly” (OECD, 2014c, p. 97), professional development needs to be more than what happens from time to time in a workshop. “Improving literacy instruction through professional development is an ongoing process involving all of the members of a schoolwide literacy team in activities that will help them become more effective in what they do.” (Strickland & Kamil, 2004, p. vii) On the dimension of time, this means that “successful professional development involves a long-term perspective” (EURYDICE et al., 2012, p. 87) and that “one-shot approaches” have almost no effect on changing classroom practice of teachers. (Garbe 2012, BaCuLit Handbook for Trainers, p. 51)

On the dimension of involvement, research also suggests that “high-quality professional development in teaching skills for reading literacy also entails a collective dimension across the school”. Biancarosa and Snow go on to state: “Professional development in teaching reading must be inclusive (involving not only classroom teachers but also literacy coaches, learning resource personnel, librarians, and administrators). It should also be team-oriented, where school personnel create and indefinitely maintain a whole-staff approach to improving instruction and institutional structures that promote improved adolescent literacy”

(Biancarosa & Snow, 2004). Such a perspective is related to the notion of a “professional learning community” (EURYDICE et al., 2012, p. 87). Scholars can also propose some findings how successful professional development should be structured: professional development should involve teachers in learning activities that are similar to the ones they will use with their students in order to enhance their skills for research-oriented and reflexive teaching practices (OECD, 2005). Action research into one’s practice should be a focus of study in initial teacher education programs and in continuing professional development. (Stanovich & Stanovich, 2003) Generally, teachers need opportunities and tools to systematically reflect on their own practices as they move towards change.

All these valuable insights into the importance of continuing professional development would be worthless if teachers do not have the chance to participate in CPD activities. Across various OECD countries, “teachers’ most commonly reported reasons for not participating in professional development activities are conflicts with work schedules and the absence of incentives for participation.” (European Commission, p. 86) This is an issue which can certainly be addressed by educational policies.

4.6 INCREASING PARTICIPATION, INCLUSION AND EQUITY

The High Level Group of Experts on Literacy drew attention to persistent gaps in literacy, namely the gender gap, the socio-economic gap, and the migrant gap (Final report of the EU High Level Group of Experts on Literacy, pp. 46–50). These gaps derive from the reading literacy studies that repeatedly show unequal distribution of results among groups of adolescents (OECD; OECD Publishing, 2010).

The **socio-economic gap** in literacy refers to the fact that adolescents from disadvantaged families have lower mean performance in reading than students from more advantaged families (OECD, 2011). However, the degree to which family background relates to the reading literacy performance varies from one country to another even in Europe (Sulkunen, 2013, p. 532). Family background measured as parents’ educational level and/or occupation (Linnakylä, P., Malin, A., & Taube, K., 2004; Mejding & Roe, 2006) or measured as economic, social and cultural status (Fredriksson, U., Rasmusson, M., & Sundgren, M, 2012; Sulkunen & Nissen, 2012) is one of the most important predictors of reading literacy performance. Family background also explains some of the performance differences between schools (Alverini, 2013; Myrberg, M., & Rosén, M., 2006).

However, there is evidence that the economic status of the family is a less important predictor of reading performance than cultural capital and social capital (Jensen & Turmo, 2003). This means that low appreciation of culture and reading at home – reflected in the number of cultural items and books – is a risk for low performance in reading even if the family is a relatively wealthy one (Sulkunen & Nissen, 2012). Most adolescent struggling readers grow up in surroundings where reading is of little or no importance at all for everyday media use (Pieper et al., 2004). These adolescents grow up in families with no or hardly any newspapers or magazines available, and frequently there is a predominance of audiovisual media and audiovisual use of digital media (e.g. video gaming). Thus, these adolescents do not see that reading is valued in their families and cultural surroundings, and they do not experience that reading or being read to can be a pleasurable activity. Against this background, school demands concerning literacy are often perceived as strange and threatening since they have little or nothing to do with the students' own learning pre-conditions and cultural practices.

One of the most alarming gaps in reading literacy in many countries is the **gender difference**. For example in PISA 2012 assessment, girls outperformed boys in reading in all the European countries (OECD 2010a, p. 382), and boys are frequently overrepresented among the low performers (Fredriksson, U., Rasmusson, M., & Sundgren, M, 2012; Linnakylä, P., Malin, A., & Taube, K., 2004, 2006). PISA 2009 results showed that these differences are associated with differences in student attitudes and behaviours that are related to gender, i.e. with reading engagement, not to gender as such (OECD 2010a, p. 199). Reading engagement (defined in PISA as enjoyment of reading, diversity of reading and time spent reading) in fact mediates more than 40 percent of the gender differences in reading (Chiu, M. M., & McBride-Chang, C., 2006). OECD has estimated that if boys had had the same average of reading for enjoyment in the PISA 2009 study as girls, the gender gap would have been reduced significantly, and in many countries it would have been reduced to less than half. In some countries it would have almost disappeared (OECD 2010a). Therefore also the gender gap is related to growing up in a family or in an environment that values reading and learning and considers reading as a meaningful activity.

The **migrant gap** refers to unequal distribution of learning outcomes between the native students and immigrant students who in most countries have lower levels of performance in reading than the native students (OECD, 2011). In many countries the migrant gap is associated with the socio-economic gap but this explains only a part of it, because the migrant gap is also associated with home language differing from the language of instruction at school which increases the risk of low performance in reading. This is evident in the PISA 2009 study for the four Nordic countries participating in the study (Fredriksson, U., Rasmusson, M., & Sundgren, M, 2012; Sulkunen & Nissen, 2012) and also in earlier PISA studies (Linnakylä, P., & Malin, A. 2007; Linnakylä, P., Malin, A., & Taube, K., 2004, 2006). It is noteworthy that even language minorities with high status in the society (and above-average socioeconomic background) show below average performance if the language of school is

not supported at home (e.g. Harju-Luukkainen, H. & Nissinen, K., 2011) which signals the importance of a good command of the language used at school.

As pointed out in the HLG report, these gaps are very persistent. For instance there are only a handful of European countries that have managed to decrease the gender gap in reading literacy performance from 2000 to 2012 (OECD, p. 385). Additionally, these gaps mean that when we focus on adolescent struggling readers we are focusing on groups of students that are more likely from disadvantaged families than from advantaged ones, more likely boys than girls and more likely immigrant students than native ones. It is to be noted, however, that low-performing students are not a homogeneous group of students. Their difficulties in reading literacy may derive from a number of reasons.

On the level of the individual adolescent, boys and girls alike, whether they come from disadvantaged or advantaged families, native or immigrant ones, may have difficulties on very diverse level, some of them still struggling with basic reading skills (accuracy and fluency), others with reading comprehension and meta-cognitive skills (monitoring and adapting their reading and comprehension to the text complexity), others may struggle with critical evaluation of texts, with digital literacy and communication skills or may lack basic engagement in reading and a stable self-concept as readers (Garbe et al., 2010, pp. 26). Their difficulties may also be any combination of these. Furthermore, adolescents with reading problems typically look back on school careers marked by repeated failure, and high levels of frustration. Understandably then, aversion to school, lack of motivation to learn and read, and little confidence in their own abilities resulting from these past failures constitute the biggest barriers on the path to a positive development. For this reason, the changing of the negative reading-related self-concept must take priority in any sustainable program for the enhancement of adolescent struggling readers reading literacy (Garbe et al., 2010, p. 30).

It is then necessary to ask if there are effective literacy policies to support reading skills of adolescent struggling readers who represent the disadvantaged groups in terms of family background, gender and migrant status in the European countries. Additionally, in search for these literacy policies we must ask if they appreciate the various types of difficulties the low-performing students may have, i.e. if they respect and build on the adolescent's individual needs, and aim to strengthen their self-efficacy.

Our Questions in the Country Reports concerning:

Screenings / assessments

- Are there regular screenings for reading (& writing) competence? At what age / grades?
- How are struggling readers identified?

Support for adolescents with special needs (SLLs/migrant families; low SES families, gender...)

- Is there a legal right for support for struggling readers?
- What support is offered? Are there provisions for additional instruction time? Is that support delivered by special needs experts/ literacy experts?
- What support is available for students whose home language is not the language of school?
- Are adolescents whose home language is not the language of school taught alongside native speakers? Is there a focus on supporting them to access the curriculum or on developing their language skills?

5 ADULTS

5.1 CONTEXT

5.1.1 ADULTS

The ELINET country reports on adult literacy focus on people aged 16 years and over who have left compulsory secondary education; the school leaving age in countries varying between 15 and 18 years old. Three sub-groups are important, both in terms of education and training strategy/policy and in terms of empirical data collection and analysis:

The “young adult” population, aged 16-24 years – these adults are likely to be continuing their post-school education and training in some form (higher education, further education, apprenticeships, initial and continuing vocational education and training).

The “working age” population, aged 25-64 years.

The “post-retirement” population aged 65+. (Again, retirement age varies between countries, and in many countries is higher for men than for women.)

5.1.2 ADULTS WITH LOW LITERACY SKILLS

Evidence from the OECD’s PIAAC Survey of Adult Skills (OECD 2013b) suggests that across the 17 European countries that took part, one in five adults (aged 16-64) had a low level of achievement in literacy. While the proportion of adults in each country that scored at or below Level 1, the lowest rung on the scale, differed, the data suggests that each country has significant numbers of adults lacking in the literacy skills deemed necessary to function effectively in daily life.

PIAAC data also suggests that current understanding of the low literate target group is less than accurate, with the danger of stereotypes unhelpfully informing policy in this area. Research has shown correlations between levels of skills and poor life outcomes in areas such as employment, wages, health and many others (Bynner references³). However, the relationship between poor literacy and life outcomes is not as straightforward as we might imagine. Such stereotypes may apply to the majority of participants in adult literacy classes, but not to the majority of adults with poor literacy skills, with important consequences for attempts to improve skills levels.

³ http://nrdc.org.uk/publications_details.asp?ID=78. *New Light on Literacy and Numeracy: full report*.

Author(s): Bynner, John, Parsons, Samantha

5.1.3 THE ADULT LITERACY EDUCATION SYSTEM IN EUROPE

As stated in the introduction, the adult sections of the country reports are shorter than the sections on the younger age ranges as there is less relevant information to draw on. This is partly a consequence of the limited attempts to collect data on adult literacy compared with children and young people (see section 5.4.3 below). But it also evidences a crucial distinction between adult literacy and school phase literacy: in many countries there is not a “system” for adult literacy education. Such a system has many parts: awareness and recognition of need; laws, policies and regulations; public funding; quality monitoring; a professionalised workforce; recognised qualification frameworks; and curricula and other teaching resources. Although individual countries may have some or all of these component parts in place, there is no consistency or coherence across countries. Adult literacy initiatives, where these exist, differ from country to country, in basic criteria such as who learns, where they learn, what they learn, who funds their learning, and who they learn from. These differences, and the considerable “gaps” in provision, make adult literacy a highly complex area. This complexity pervades each section of our reporting framework.

It is lastly important to emphasise that, unlike school education, where systems are long established, the landscape for adult literacy education is evolving. Recently, PIAAC results have stimulated some new thinking and, while it is likely to contribute to a number of policy developments in the participating countries, its full impact on adult literacy policy is not yet known.

5.1.4 POLICY-MAKING

Adult literacy education and learning cuts across multiple policy areas and impacts on multiple areas of people’s lives. Support strategies for adults with low basic skills can be part of education and training or skills policy, but also welfare or employment policy. Improved literacy facilitates adults’ access to healthcare, enhances the support they can provide for the learning of their children, as well as preparing them for employment.

Effective policy making in this area requires inter sectoral cooperation. Adult literacy education and learning should be embedded in lifelong learning policies and consideration of literacy should inform the development of policy in other areas. It is important to increase participation in adult literacy education. Among other approaches, policy makers should listen to adult learners and giving them ‘... a say in how policies and educational programmes are designed’ (Schreuer & Buysens, 2011, p.3).

5.2 A MORE LITERATE ENVIRONMENT

5.2.1 THE LITERATE ENVIRONMENT

One of the important messages emerging from analysis of PIAAC data centres on the importance of adults' literacy practices - what people do with reading and writing and how often, at work and (even more strongly) outside work. PIAAC provides rich data on the use adults make of their skills. Practices appear to have a positive relationship with performance in literacy. The OECD's preliminary analysis of PIAAC data found that *"Adults who read frequently ... outside work have higher scores on the literacy scale, on average, than their counterparts who rarely engage in such activities"* (OECD 2013b, p.190). It can be argued that adults' literacy practices contribute to the development and maintenance of their skills.

However, large numbers of adults are not engaged with reading, others not with writing at work. Many others are not engaged with some of these domains of practice outside work. In the same way as use of skills appears to develop proficiency, data from PIAAC on prior educational attainment suggests that skills can also decline over time: 15% of adults who scored at Level 1 and below had completed tertiary education and 33% had completed upper secondary.

Encouraging adults to engage in literacy practices, and supporting them to do so, should be central to any strategy to improve literacy levels. Such literacy practices will be carried out with reference to the literate environment in which particular adults live and work. The literate environment constitutes the demands on and supports for adults' literacy in any particular domain. Consideration of the literate environment is one of three central recommendations that the High Level Group made; in policy terms, this means proactively fostering and creating more, and better, opportunities and supports for literacy engagement in all areas of individuals' and families' lives. Taking into consideration that adults read and write in all their domains of life, it is clear that the literate environment involves many institutions and that policy-makers need to enhance systematic cooperation.

It is important that adults are offered a broad range of reading and writing opportunities so that they are motivated to make use of their literacy skills. The literate environment includes written materials, electronic and paper, that we see in our daily lives on walls and noticeboards, through print and broadcast media, in emails, and social media posts, or that we engage with at work, or in the home, or to pay our taxes or vote in an election.

The primary objective of policy-makers in engaging with the literate environment should be to influence it to increase skills use by encouraging and supporting engagement in reading and writing practices. This requires the cultivation of a culture of literacy, increasing the visibility and availability of reading materials and promoting reading and writing in all its forms, through diverse materials, online and on paper.

5.2.2 THE DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT

The literate environment is subject to constant change. Recent years have seen an increase in our need to interact with texts in digital form.

Reder has proposed a Digital Inclusion Pathway to help us conceptualise barriers to adults developing their digital literacy (REF). The first barrier he identifies is **access to technology**. The digital divide between those who do and those who do not have access to ICT can manifest itself in gaps in the availability of broadband infrastructure (usually between densely populated urban areas and sparsely populated rural areas); or in the gap in broadband take-up between certain demographic groups, with socio-economic factors often being key drivers. The gap in the availability of broadband infrastructure is diminishing in importance – since 2008, the share of households with access to broadband Internet in Europe has doubled (EU High Level Group, 2012, p.50) – for adults, the demographic digital divide is strongest, with older age groups and the unemployed particularly affected. The use of ICT by learners can therefore help sustain and enhance their literacy skills.

However, Reder does not just focus on access to ICT as a barrier, he also identifies the importance of adults developing an **interest and confidence** in computer use, before they are ready to develop **basic operating skills** and from there develop their **digital literacy**.

There is debate as to whether digital literacy is just literacy in a new format or whether it should be *"regarded as a set of social and sense-making competences associated with interacting with digital tools, where the central issue is about the literacies needed to communicate and collaborate with others and make sense of the available information"* (Lankshear & Knobel, 2008).

The concept of digital literacy can be broken down into three elements: **digital competence** – the capacity to use digital tools is an important element of digital literacy; **digital critical thinking**, the ability to question and analyse information and apply reasoning and logic to a text; and **digital social engagement**, constructing and/or maintaining effective social or professional relationships online.

5.3 QUALITY OF TEACHING

5.3.1 PROVISION

Adult learning in Europe is fragmented and diverse. As adults enter and exit education when they (or their employers) choose, and at varying stages through their lives, participation can be hard to quantify, achievement hard to measure and learning journeys hard to track (Litster et al 2010). The same observations are true for adult literacy learning, making it

difficult both to define and difficult to locate. In talking about adult literacy provision, that is, provision that aims to improve reading and writing skills.

The adult sections of the country reports refer to a broad spectrum of opportunities available to meet the needs of adult learners. A Eurydice report on *Adult Basic Education and Training in Europe* (Eurydice: 2015) describing the main types of provision for adults with poor basic skills in Europe, suggests that such programmes are varied in approach. They involve a range of providers and types of provision, delivered in a variety of settings including dedicated adult education and training providers, the workplace and the community.

This provision may take the form of formal courses, working within countries' qualifications frameworks and structures and leading to recognised qualifications, but they may equally be non-formal, with the main aim being to build confidence and to engage adults who may have had negative prior experiences of learning, and for whom a formal course is inappropriate.

Provision can be embedded, combined with vocational or other programmes of study; discrete, focused exclusively on literacy; or part of a more general course in basic skills alongside numeracy and perhaps ICT. Some are centrally controlled, and with others there is a great deal of local autonomy. Funding for such programmes varies greatly across the countries.

The Eurydice report notes that *"the effectiveness of basic skills programmes should be evaluated over an extended period of time since adult learners, in particular those facing difficulties with basic skills, do not tend to follow a direct or uninterrupted learning path."* This supports the findings of other research, such as the NRDC Adult Learners' Lives project (Barton et al 2006⁴) which shows us how adult literacy learners often 'dip in and out' of different programmes and resources in response both to changing and developing life circumstances and goals, and to the relevance and effectiveness of the provision available to them at the time. This is often particularly true of people in community settings, whose lives are often characterised by disadvantage, and difficult and unpredictable events and situations. From the perspective of educational provision this can be seen as failure or 'drop-out', but within the broader picture of these individuals' lives it is often a positive and necessary step. Often, they are exploring new possibilities for their lives and learning, developing confidence in accessing formal learning, or accumulating social capital, as well as developing their literacy practices. The effects of this engagement are not always apparent at the time but can be seen unfolding over longer periods.

Accordingly, higher drop-out rates in literacy programmes should not be regarded as a programme failure. Indeed, attending a short course, or even part of a course, can represent

⁴ http://www.nrdc.org.uk/publications_details.asp?ID=48#

an important milestone in the learning pathway of an adult returning to education or training

Adult literacy provision should be accessible to all learners, whatever their financial means. It is important that appropriate guidance on how to access such educational opportunities is available.

5.3.2 IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF TEACHING

The EU High Level Group placed great importance on the quality of the teaching available for adults with literacy needs. Improving the quality of adult education and training means improving all the components that shape it, including learner recruitment and assessment processes, pedagogy and curricular strategies, teacher recruitment and training, and support for particular groups. It also means being clear about the level of commitment required to produce long-term literacy improvements.

5.3.3 LITERACY CURRICULA

A curriculum is a systematic articulation of the values of a society identifying the needs for learning, training and competence development, and constitutes a framework of orientation for the whole process. A curriculum encompasses: (i) policy; (ii) course contents (learning objectives, e.g. what kind of literacy competences are to be gained; (iii) guiding principles; and (iv) pedagogical approaches (see for example [Braslavsky, n. d.; Jonnaert and Therribault 2013](#)).

Curricula for adult literacy should allow for the heterogeneity of educational settings in which adult literacy provision takes place, and the varied learning needs of participants. We are of course concerned with literacy curricula and approaches to developing adult reading *and writing*.

From a lifelong learning perspective, a curriculum for adult literacy education focuses on literacy activities that are relevant for adults and adult lives. The Eur-Alpha Manifesto, developed by a trans-national group of adult literacy learners (Schreuer & Buysens., p. 6) lists some of these: dealing with administrative texts, Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), education, travel, safety, work, and civil rights.

In developing an adult literacy curriculum, thought needs to be given to the breadth of what literacy means or involves for different adults, and the ever-present question of who or what determines literacy curricula and who decides what is relevant for adults and their lives. We need to ask how it has been created, and what else it may be linked with, besides school curricula.

There are many methodologies for the teaching of adult literacy. Some of these are research-based and others have been developed locally by practitioners working with specific groups

of learners. Practitioners learn about methodology formally through teacher education programmes, and informally through engagement with other practitioners. In some countries there will be one dominant methodology, with tried and tested methods, in others a variety of methods, with supporting resources, will be employed.

5.3.4 TECHNOLOGY IN EDUCATION

The High Level Group recommended making use of digital practices in education and learning, be it in or outside the classroom, as measures to close the digital gap. Policies that regulate access and use of ICTs and the realm of adult literacy education and learning are linked in this regard. We should think about which groups may be excluded from which digital practices and why, and examine whether instances of exclusion are primarily driven by lack of skills/knowledge, lack of interest/involvement in certain life or literacy practices, or by finances (i.e. someone may have the skills to use a laptop but may not be able to afford one).

5.3.5 TEACHERS

In Europe and elsewhere, there is a backlog in the professionalisation of the infrastructure and human resource development of adult literacy provision (EU High Level Group, 2012, pp.60, 66, 73, 80, 83; UIL, 2010, p.13).

Practitioners who work directly with adults supporting them to enhance their literacy skills work under many different labels within and across countries. In English they may be called teachers or trainers or tutors, and other languages have a similar range of titles. Different kinds of professional may act as teachers for adults' literacy skills, depending on the social context (work, leisure, educational institution, religious institution, etc.), and because of the inter-sectoral nature of adult education and learning.

There are distinct roles within the provision of adult literacy teaching and learning. As well as a teacher who designs and delivers learning in a classroom setting, there are also learning support assistants who support a particular learner one-to-one, and outreach workers who engage with communities and guide individuals in their learning.

5.3.6 TEACHER EDUCATION

The selection of teachers and their pre-service and in-service training should be priorities for adult literacy policy-makers. Teaching adults is complex, and teaching adult literacy even more so; frequently, adult literacy teachers work with learners for whom traditional or simple methods of learning to read or write have not worked. Acquiring the level of knowledge and expertise required to support such adults takes time, and involves a combination of theoretical and practical knowledge.

In order to ensure quality, there should be clarity about the expectations regarding the qualification of teachers and what is considered good quality adult literacy teacher training. Multiple entry points for adults to become adult literacy teachers can be useful, due to the heterogeneity of the educational environment for adults, and to the fact that many practitioners come to adult literacy teaching as a second career.

Funding mechanisms need to be in place so that adult literacy teachers can afford their own initial education and continuing professional development.

Literacy is an issue that cuts across all subjects. The use of reading and writing is important in all subjects in educational contexts. Thus, teachers in all content areas of adult education should be supported in identifying and teaching the literacy skills that are needed in their respective subject area.

5.3.7 SCREENINGS/ASSESSMENTS/SUPPORT

In the adult education context, screenings, assessment and support may be distinct. A learner may undertake an initial assessment to be placed in appropriate provision, a diagnostic assessment to inform their programme of learning, and on-going formative assessment as they proceed with their literacy learning. If we understand 'screenings' as assessments for particular learning or other disabilities or difficulties, such as dyslexia, these screenings may happen at the beginning or later on in an adult's participation in provision.

Literacy is a spectrum rather than a binary system of literate/illiterate. Illiteracy, defined as total inability to read or write, is relatively rare in European countries, where most adults have a degree of knowledge of literacy practices in their social context, and are therefore literate to a degree. In order to design appropriate educational programmes, it is important to fully understand adults' existing literacy skills and practices; their prior knowledge should be recognised and their learning motivations and needs identified.

However, adults with low literacy levels often feel ashamed that they find reading and writing difficult. They may have had previous negative experiences with education, and/or may be vulnerable because they belong to minority or marginalised groups.

Literacy skills are part of people's linguistic repertoire, which, in today's multilingual and multicultural societies, can be diverse and multiple. For example, adults with low literacy levels in the official language of their place of residence may be literate in one or more other languages, or they may use a variety of the official language other than the 'standard' form. In this process it is paramount that adult learners are treated with respect.

Given that we are dealing with adults who all have particular difficulties with reading and writing, it may be more useful to focus on screening for particular reading, visual or other disabilities, as well as identifying other relevant factors such as (mental) health issues,

addiction, use of medication and other disabilities which may make access to literacy provision more challenging.

5.3.8 QUALITY MONITORING

Quality of provision is not static but instead evolves constantly. Accordingly, it is important that there are systems in place to continually monitor adult literacy provision, so that adjustments can be made (UIL 2010, p. 8). The adult country reports include data on monitoring measures which are subject to national policy-making.

The central requirement of any Quality Monitoring system is that it is effective in both identifying strengths and weaknesses in the system and promoting improvements. As such it should incorporate elements of Quality Assurance as well as Quality Improvement. It should take place at all levels from the classroom to institution and system-level, and should focus on the extent to which the needs of learners are met. A quality assurance framework should combine peer review and self-evaluation, acting as a vehicle for the sharing of experiences and reflections. It should also specify and organise objective data collection, and encourage and facilitate more efficient use of those data across teaching, management and administrative staff.

The aim, therefore, should be to seek measures of quality that take into account the variability of teacher/learner engagement and of learner motivation and ability, and give learners an appropriate stake in the process of improving their own learning. Good quality assurance instruments should become part of normal working practices improving communication and collaboration among colleagues; creating new levels of understanding and mutual interests between them; equipping staff to take on change confidently; and developing in them a sense of professional self-awareness and pride. Levels of accountability should be clear, and measures put in place to support staff to meet academic and professional requirements.

Quality assurance often includes an element carried out by an external body. However, regular self-evaluation and participatory and formative approaches also often make up part of the system. Adult literacy provision may also sit within other quality monitoring frameworks or types of provision.

5.4 PARTICIPATION, INCLUSION AND EQUITY

5.4.1 EQUITY AND INCLUSION

Adult literacy provision is often for vulnerable adults. Good provision is inclusive, eliminates barriers for disadvantaged or marginalised groups, and supports life-wide (extending across all domains of adult life, including family life, work and leisure) and lifelong learning within a sector-wide and inter-sectoral approach (see for example EU High Level Group, 2012, p.93; UIL, 2010, p.7). Within this adults should be offered the opportunity to continue their educational pathways throughout the life course (UIL 2013, p.35), with pathways on to other forms of education, academic or vocational. Participation is eased when adult literacy learning is embedded in everyday adult life, in workplaces, the community, the home and other arenas of family life (EU High Level Group, 2012, p.93; Schreuer and Buysens, 2011, p.8). It is important that appropriate guidance on how to access such educational opportunities is available.

Where adult literacy provision exists, countries *"tend to pay specific attention to groups where the lack of skills and qualifications may be of particular concern, namely the unemployed, young people, older workers, immigrants or ethnic minorities"* (Eurydice, 2015, p.8). However, as that Eurydice report goes on, policy references to inclusion for these target groups are rarely accompanied by *"definite objectives and targets to be reached"*.

The overall participation rates in formal and non-formal adult education and training differ substantially between countries. The European Adult Education Survey (Eurostat AES, 2012) showed that Scandinavian and some western European countries perform better than most OECD countries in terms of participation in adult education. Formal education has a strong influence. In all countries those with the highest levels of education participate more in formal and non-formal adult education.

"Participation in adult education and training is determined by several factors, in particular educational attainment, employment status, occupational category, age and skills: adults with low level or no qualifications, those in low-skilled occupations, the unemployed and economically inactive, older people and the least skilled are less likely to participate in lifelong learning. In other words, the adults most in need of education and training are those with the least access to lifelong learning opportunities" (EC 2015, p.8).

5.4.2 SPECIAL SUPPORT FOR SECOND-LANGUAGE LEARNERS/MIGRANTS

There is increasing need for many European countries to improve their support for the language and literacy needs of adult migrants. Migrants need to be able to understand and communicate in the official language or languages of the country in which they live. Special

support needs to be given to those who do not yet have this ability so that they can participate fully in their new society. Such support should be developed within the framework of a national language policy that establishes the status and use of language(s) and the rights of the speakers of the languages in question, including those spoken by migrants.

In designing such provision it is important to bear in mind that the needs of bi-/multi-lingual learners are hugely varied. Adult migrants who already have literacy skills in their home language will have different needs from those who have few or no literacy skills in their home language. When the official language of a country is the second or third language of a learner, and the learner is still gaining command of it, second/foreign or bi-/multi-lingual language teaching and learning theory and experience gained from practice are important for policy-making and curricula development.

5.4.3 DATA GAPS

Data on the need for and use of adult literacy is very poor. A few countries have attempted national level surveys France (IVQ 2004 & 2011), England (Skills for Life Survey 2006 and 2011), Germany (Leo 2011). There have only ever been three international surveys of adult literacy: the Adult Literacy and Lifeskills Survey, 1994-98 (ALL; OECD 2005a) the International Adult Literacy Survey 2002-04 (IALS), and the OECD's Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies 2008-13 (PIAAC). Participation of European countries in these surveys has not been uniform – only 17 participated in PIAAC. Even when countries participate, little systematic use is made of the data by countries in developing policy in this area. The High Level Group report warns that "not all countries are using international literacy survey results as a real input in policy-making, often due to lack of capacity to analyse data and construct evidence-based policies and recommends cooperation between countries in making better use of data.

6 BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLES

ELINET requested its partner organisations, and all interested parties, to supply examples of “good practices” covering different areas and age groups, but aiming at the common objective of increasing *all* European citizens’ access to high-quality literacy provision. They are grouped according to different literacy policy areas, based on the *European Framework of Good Practice in Literacy Policy*, which ELINET has developed. The good practice examples cover one or more of the following areas:

1. Programmes and initiatives to allow **participation in literacy education and development opportunities**
 - **Prevention programmes** aiming to decrease risk factors of early literacy in the pre-school age,
 - **Intervention programmes** supporting families from disadvantaged backgrounds, e.g. family literacy programmes, book-gifting programmes, languages courses for parents who do not speak the language of instruction
2. **Literacy curricula**, e.g. (national) core curricula based on clear educational standards and embedding literacy instruction and promotion systematically in all school subjects and all grades, in pre-school language and in emergent literacy programmes.
3. **Screening / assessment tools** or programmes to systematically monitor childrens’ / adolescents’ or adults’ progress / performance in basic literacy skills as a basis for individual support
4. **Comprehensive literacy programmes** where literacy growth of students (and special support of struggling readers) is at the centre of the programme. We understand “comprehensive” to encompass both performance and motivation.
5. **Reading instruction:** Programmes targeted at improving reading skills and strategies
6. **Reading animation programmes:** Programmes in schools, libraries and in cooperations fostering reading for pleasure and motivation for reading
7. Programmes / projects fostering **digital literacy** and multi-literacy skills of children, adolescents or adults
8. **Initial teacher education** programmes which systematically build literacy expertise for teachers of all school subjects and grades with the aim to diagnose and support poor readers and writers
9. **Continuous professional development programmes** for teachers which systematically build / expand literacy expertise for teachers of all school subjects and grades with a focus in identifying and supporting struggling readers and writers

10. **Closing the gaps:** Support for literacy learners with special needs (e.g. second-language learners/ migrants/ students from disadvantaged families) (preventive) **Programmes / projects addressing struggling literacy learners** (also boys)

The good practice examples are published separately from the country reports on the ELINET website.

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