

## at risk of illiteracy

functional



Alphabetter - learning tools for preventing functional and secondary illiteracy Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union



Funded by the European Union. However, the views and opinions expressed are solely those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union or the National Agency (NA). Neither the European Union nor NA is responsible for them.

## **Table of contents**

Introduction

A common framework for a universal support methodology for people at risk of functional illiteracy

How do we understand functional illiteracy in this project?

What are the general literacy concerns in each context?

**POLAND ITALY** 

**AUSTRIA CZECH** 

REPUBLIC

**Community-Based Literacy Equity Design Framework** 

A framework for designing community literacy equity

**Engaging social partners Bibliography** 



#### Introduction

The study handed over to the reader presents a methodology for supporting social groups at risk of illiteracy. The document describes the methodology of interactions from the process of operationalization of problems, through social diagnosis, to the preparation of an action strategy tailored to the specifics and needs of a particular target group. The methodology is universal - it can be used by all professionals working with people affected by or at risk of functional illiteracy. Also for this purpose, the document has been translated into five languages, including the leading English version. With the proposed solutions, educational activities aimed at adults will become simpler and, above all, more effective. The developed methodology is also tailored to the needs of users from the academic world, allowing innovative improvement of traditional courses in pedagogy, andragogy, anthropology or sociology.

The impact strategy described in the document is cross-cultural in nature. Already during the joint work on the development of the application, we realized that although the general framework for understanding the phenomenon of functional illiteracy of each partner is essentially similar, our indepth ways of understanding its nature, causes and counteracting strategies are deeply conditioned by socio-cultural contexts and historical experiences. After all, the goal of the project was to innovatively adapt American achievements in countering functional illiteracy on European soil. Therefore, despite the initial diversity of intellectual traditions in the project proposal, we decided to adopt a universal working understanding of the phenomenon of functional illiteracy, which made it possible to start a joint action: exchange of ideas and creation of a work plan for adaptation of American solutions. Consequently, the first stage of the project team's work, which involved partners from five countries, thus became the agreement of basic assumptions and understandings of the constructs to which the methodology would apply. The process of establishing a common precise operationalization of the concepts used by the creators of innovative solution implementations is a standard procedure of joint work, especially if we take into account that the solution is to be universal in nature, and people from countries where traditions of counteracting functional illiteracy are very different from each other are working on it. In the case of the Alphabetter team, this part of the joint work was done during the first two project meetings, which took place in Poland and the US. During these meetings, it became clear that although the concept of functional and secondary illiteracy appears in all partner countries, the traditions of understanding it, formulating goals and creating policies to counter it are very different. In order to move forward with a meaningful methodology and practical tools that meet modern standards for countering the phenomenon, it became necessary to agree more precisely on a common framework for understanding what functional and secondary illiteracy is.

Each subsequent element of the project was worked on in a similar way: we agreed on a common solution during face-to-face meetings, workshops and online working meetings. As a result, the support methodology allows for the simultaneous development of all eight key competencies (which is an innovation), in line with the EU Council recommendations on key competencies for lifelong learning:

- 1) In terms of understanding and creating information,
- 2) In terms of multilingualism,

3) in the field of numerical thinking and in the fields of science, technology and engineering,

- 4) digital,5) Personal, social and learning,
- 6) Citizens,
- 7) In the field of entrepreneurship,
- 8) In terms of cultural awareness and expression.

5

According to modern trends of intellectual achievements in the area of functional illiteracy, reducing it to only "competence and ability to read and read with comprehension" must be considered a shot that does not promote innovation. Nowadays, even the assumptions on which the classic international comparative studies carried out by UN agencies (the so-called PIAAC) are based are sometimes questioned. They give a certain picture of the general situation, and are a great inspiration for public policies, but their unreflective translation into practical solutions is at the same time strongly questioned. The understanding of the concepts of functional illiteracy is also influenced by cultural, historical factors and current social problems of a country. We therefore sought, through the joint work of all partners and joint discussion, to develop a way of operationalizing the main concepts that would, on the one hand, meet the highest standards accepted in the field, and at the same time be universal and maximally inclusive. This task did not turn out to be easy, as the most innovative American solutions initially seemed to go far beyond the framework outlined by the traditional and colloquial understanding of functional and secondary illiteracy (the members of the project consortium were also organizations not associated with the academic world). In the end, we adopted a common conceptual framework on which our further work was based. We adopted assumptions in line with the so-called multimodal approach to functional illiteracy and the concept of the Community-Based Literacy Equity Design Framework presented to project participants by University of Califormia, San Diego professor Megan Hopkins and Professor Cheryl Forbes, director of the UC San Diego Department of Education Studies. Alphabetter partners, participating in a series of study visits, had the opportunity to gain practical insight into the programs developed by the University of California to support literacy levels in migrant communities. The assumptions and practical aspects of creating universal solutions to counteract the problem of functional illiteracy in particular were presented, which, although closely related to the social context of California, can be treated as the subject of adaptation to the context of individual European countries:

- Community-Based Literacy Equity Design Framework;
- Integrated & Designated ELD: Primary Grade Video Example;
- UCSD Bilingual Teacher Preparation System;
- CA English Language Arts ELD Framework & Standards
- CA Teaching Performance Expectations (TPEs).

U.S. best practices then became the subject of joint work in on- line and face-to-face communication meetings, partial implementation projects, pilots and consultations.

In particular, as a result of substantive discussion and decisive intervention by the US partner, archaic solutions based on educational-quantitative approaches that do not meet the requirements of social equality (understood as equity) were rejected, as the tools used are most often ethnocentric and can lead to assimilation instead of socio-cultural integration. As an example, tools based on the diagnosis of functional illiteracy on the basis of overly normative and insensitive to the cultural difference of migrants school tests, which are still used and described in the literature. In other words, we found that the understanding of what is innovative in the European discourse surrounding the concept of functional and secondary illiteracy is not innovative from an American perspective. To make this claim more concrete, one can point to specific points where our approach, after taking into account the knowledge and experience gained from working with a US partner, became innovative. In the Alphabetter project, we made the following assumptions, which we considered to set standards and directions for our work:

a) The current state of research shows that education and literacy training primarily affect the consistency and development of semantic, phonological and syntactic processing, which, rather than "literacy with understanding," are the essence of the problem of functional and secondary illiteracy. The goal of the activity should be to promote symbolic processing in all possible forms and modalities.

b) The boundaries between functional illiteracy and its absence are arbitrary and contextual - there are no universally accepted standards for its diagnosis; however, often archaic and ethnocentric diagnostic tools become the basis for social practices of stigmatization and discrimination that contribute to exclusion and marginalization. In some accounts, the use of such contextually inappropriate approaches is treated as a form of racism.

c) However, the problem of combating functional illiteracy can be reduced to increasing individual literacy levels. We decide to assume that the basic strategy for combating functional illiteracy is to take measures that lead to an increase in literacy levels. The goal of the project, therefore, is to increase the literacy level of groups identified as affected by or particularly at risk of functional illiteracy.

d) The English word "literacy," which functions as a construct in the discourse surrounding the problem of functional illiteracy, cannot be translated into other languages as "the ability to read and write or read and write with understanding" (although that is how popular online translators translate it).

e) Literacy is the ability to understand and communicate knowledge of advanced mental states (both one's own and other people's) or cognitive instructions expressed through symbolic codes (mainly natural language), which is related to the quality of functioning in mainstream society.

f) Literacy is linked to social adaptation in a particular social environment, so it is assumed that improved literacy leads to better social adaptation and a better quality of life; improved literacy means improved expertise in a particular field of communication in mainstream society, provided it leads to better social adaptation.

g) Literacy is the sum of individual skills in all languages spoken and in all symbolic domains relevant to social functioning in mainstream society; learning a new language has an additive effect on the overall level of literacy;

h) Low literacy can conventionally be called "functional illiteracy," but the clear boundaries between literacy and functional illiteracy are always debatable;

i) Certain groups (e.g., refugees, minorities, economic migrants) may be at high risk of functional illiteracy in the near future, so it seems prudent to start taking preventive measures. This is the basis of the US approach.

j) Early childhood is crucial for the development of literacy and the prevention of functional illiteracy in adulthood, although the phenomenon of functional illiteracy is usually described in many concepts as identifiable in adolescents and adults; the solutions we proposed were therefore also aimed at families with children - in order to counteract functional illiteracy in the next generation, adults responsible for the socialization process must be educated;

k) In the multimedia environment of modern society, linguistic communication can be improved through a variety of modalities: visual, auditory, behavioral and spatial; this means that multimodality is a basic literacy strategy.

The methodology is innovative in nature. It goes beyond the usual patterns of thinking about the problem of illiteracy. The proposed methodology and its matching tools have the character of a comprehensive tool allowing application after adaptation at different stages of

adult development and in different social environments. Instead of focusing solely on the effects of functional illiteracy, it allows for effective prevention. In addition, the tools created are adapted to the real existential conditions of modern society, which consist of progressive networking and a variety of digital technologies. Most of the elements of symbolic communication that modern people have access to, for example, YouTube videos, social media posts and articles on websites, are no longer "texts to read," but include various modes of communication such as videos, images and sound. Modern communication is much more than writing and speech, and literacy is much more than language. In order for the recipients of our results to master today's

world of text, they need much more than the ability to read and write words and sentences. Writing and speech are just two of the many modalities used in modern communication as part of the symbolic code.

It is worth noting that in designing the impact methodology we had the pleasure of working with the most prominent American researchers from the University of California, San Diego. This globally renowned center - located on the US-Mexico border, in a city where the problem of migrants' adaptation and research on their problems and ways of support are particularly developed - organized a series of workshops for Alphabetter project participants, showing examples of the application of the universal methodology for increasing literacy levels in migrant communities. The experience of these workshops was used in the further work of the consortium. It is worth noting, however, that the proposals of the American partner were not adopted uncritically or unreflectively by the other participants in the consortium. The final line of action was adopted as a form of rational compromise between the expectations of the various national teams.

In the solutions adopted, we clearly emphasized the need to undertake activities addressed to migrants who are particularly vulnerable to the problem of functional illiteracy. This meant introducing into the methodology high standards of care for cultural and linguistic adaptation of the designed activities, as well as the need to cooperate with the communities targeted by the specific adaptation of the created solution, the so-called "Community-Based Literacy Equity Design Framework", the principles and procedures for implementation of which are described in the methodology document (in particular, the involvement of communities and families in the use of the developed impacts). According to the standards of the developed universal methodology, any practical action aimed at countering functional illiteracy should be preceded by careful cultural and linguistic adaptation.

### A common framework for a universal support methodology for people at risk of functional illiteracy

#### How do we understand functional illiteracy in this project?

The first goal of this chapter is to provide a comprehensive overview of the ways in which functional illiteracy is understood in educational policy theory and practice. Against this background, we would like to present the concept adopted in our methodological strategy to define the impact of the project. We intend to address not only those already affected by functional illiteracy, but also those at risk of it in the near or distant future. This means that safeguarding against functional illiteracy may be one of the main goals of the project.

It should be noted that the phenomenon of functional illiteracy is, on the one hand, one of the most popular issues in discussions of modern education, and on the other hand, it is an extremely difficult construct to define and operationalize. According to David Davenport and Jeffery M. Jones (2005), the concept of functional illiteracy was developed in the 1960s, in connection with the growing need for industrial progress and the recognition of the inadequacy of compulsory primary education to provide a sufficient level of literacy needed for future socioeconomic development. This problem has manifested itself in different ways in different national education systems.

The most common understanding of functional illiteracy is that a person cannot use reading, writing, numeracy or other symbol processing skills. Functional illiteracy has significant negative consequences not only for personal development, but also in economic and social terms. Although functional illiteracy has received a great deal of publicity in the mass media in recent years, scientific knowledge about those described as functionally illiterate is limited; the definition, assessment and differential diagnoses for related numerical and linguistic impairments are usually controversial.

The phenomenon of functional illiteracy and the interest in it on the part of researchers and public policy makers is closely related to the concept of literacy and general educational practice. The approach of teaching skills is often seen as routine repetition of the alphabet. While the emphasis on recognizing and naming letters is an important part, the skills-based approach has evolved into a whole series of blocks in which students first learn basic skills and systematically add other tasks. The process begins when students begin to identify connections between sounds and symbols, thus breaking down the language "code." According to David Davenport and Jeffery M. Jones (2005), the teaching of meaning has also evolved over the years. Until the late 1960s, meaning teaching meant the "word" or "see and tell" method, in which children learned individual words separately, in sentences and stories, and eventually mastered - intuitively or explicitly - specific skills to identify parts of words. Whole language - using written language as a whole, rather than as a collection of individual words - added a clear focus on the content of what children read. As a result, whole language reinforced and even encouraged a shift from meaningless texts to literature that was meaningful to students. Whole language gained considerable popularity in the late 1980s and early 1990s, when teachers responded to new research that more directly linked pedagogical methods with educational psychology.

Considering a particular person as suffering from functional illiteracy should be considered relative or arbitrary in any case. There is no universally accepted definition of functional illiteracy or any absolutely reliable way to measure it, which is why there are so many different criteria for assessing it in practice (Bulajić, Despotović, Lachmann 2019). The problem of functional illiteracy, however, is one that social policy makers continue to relate to difficulties with reading and correct spelling in everyday situations, which is its most obvious manifestation. Functional illiteracy can manifest itself, for example, in a limited ability to understand printed instructions, correctly draft a complaint or fill out a job application. There is no doubt that, in characterizing a knowledge-based society, this approach to the problem of functional illiteracy is neither complete nor sufficient. In most Countries over the past century have conducted nationwide tests to assess reading skills in scores. For example, one of the criteria for assessing functional illiteracy classifies people as

"illiterate" if they read below the eighth grade level. Another criterion takes the last year of high school, the twelfth grade, as the basis.

Another criterion takes the last year of high school, the twelfth grade, as its basis. In many countries, conducting nationwide tests causes the most problems: "literacy testing leads to the detection of illiteracy."

A strong impetus for the further development of the functional literacy concept was the lifelong learning paradigm, as well as large-scale national and international research on literacy. This research, widely introduced in the second half of the 20th century, "reinvented" the subject of illiteracy (Goffinet, Damme, 1990) and led to the need to "adequately provide educational solutions in unconventional and innovative ways," based on "the principles of lifelong education on the one hand and the development of appropriate literacy and basic education practices on the other" (Fuchs-Brüninghoff, Kreft, Kropp, 1986).

As mentioned above, the concept of functional illiteracy has been rather resistant to attempts to define it in a more operationalized way. A huge number of definitions are used in current research areas, making these studies often incomparable to each other.

One of the main reasons for defining functional illiteracy only as a broad descriptive narrative is that functional illiteracy is a dynamic concept shaped by current cultural and discursive events. The concept is usually defined normatively, according to the needs of the time and cultural context, social development or specific requirements of the labor market and further education (Bulajić, Despotović, 2018). In particular, European authors believe that functional literacy is not just a set of basic skills, but rather a complex set of knowledge and skills, a strategy for personal development in the context of lifelong learning, and the basis for the development of an integrated and educated European community (see Mukan, Fuchyla, 2016). Moreover, these broad definitions emerging from adult education seem to equate functional literacy with a broader concept of lifelong learning competencies, such as those defined in the European reference framework for such key competencies.

Studies show that literacy education and training primarily affect the consistency and development of semantic (quantitative differences), phonological and syntactic processing. The nature of the stimulus used in cognitive tasks also appears to influence differences in performance between illiterate and non-literate learners.

The Survey of Adult Skills, popularly known as PIAAC, developed by UNESCO, was largely conceptually and methodologically influenced by previous IALS. The first round of the survey was conducted in 2012 (OECD, 2013a; OECD, 2013b), the second in 2014 and 2015 (OECD, 2016), when nine additional countries (33 in total) joined the survey. The main focus of the PIAAC was information processing skills, which consisted of language skills (reading only), numerical skills and problem solving in technology-rich environments, with the latter mainly representing ICT (information and communication technology) or digital skills. PIAAC's definition of language skills is based on the more specific and experiential cognitive skills of reading and writing - seeing literacy as encompassing "a range of skills, from decoding written words and sentences to understanding, interpreting and evaluating complex texts" (OECD, 2013b, p. 20). Although PIAAC does not use the term functional illiteracy, we suggest that functional illiteracy can be placed on the levels of the PIAAC language skills scale. PIAAC distinguishes between the following three cognitive strategies for decoding and processing written text: accessing and identifying (locating relevant information in a text), integrating and interpreting (combining the various pieces of information found in a text into a meaningful whole, enabling appropriate conclusions to be drawn), and evaluating and reflecting (relating textual information to other information, knowledge and experiences).

Functional illiteracy is characterized by the ability to identify and understand individual letters, words and sentences, albeit with a low level of comprehension in terms of

about reading continuous texts (Grotluschen, Riekmann, 2011; Russeler, Gerth, Boltzmann, 2011; Vagvolgyi et al. 2016), According to (Bulajić, Despotović, & Lachmann) in a more general look at reading and functional illiteracy, we refer to a functional coordination framework that describes the cognitive processes involved in reading (Lachmann, van Leeuwen, 2014; Lachmann, 2018). This framework includes four stages: recruitment, modification, coordination and automation. When learning to read, a person first reverts to already existing components and skills, which are mainly auditory and visual. These skills are then modified to be optimized for the reading context. Existing patterns of visual and auditory perception are adapted and expanded to enable the acquisition of written material. During the third stage, phonological skills (grapheme-to-phoneme conversion) and letter perception analytical strategies (Lachmann et al., 2012) achieved in the second stage are coordinated. This coordination is automated (Nicolson, Fawcett, 2018) for several years during the final stage (Froyen et al., 2009).

Based on the framework of the model, we can hypothesize that functionally illiterate adults have not fully achieved full coordination of processes from the modification phase, and, most importantly, have not properly or fully automated the entire process. This can be inferred from their ability to read single words and sentences, but their lack of ability to comprehend longer text in its entirety. Functionally illiterate adults operate with low efficiency and performance at the text level because they invest more cognitive load in reading single words and sentences due to their lack of automated reading. As a result, they have less residual cognitive ability to comprehend at the test level. Alternatively, the reading process in some functional illiterates may be automated, but the modification or coordination of the skills underlying reading is underdeveloped. Illiteracy in this sense should not be seen as meaning that those affected cannot read or write at all.

Literacy acquisition is a long-term process of conceptual and procedural I e a r n i n g that must integrate many pre-existing cognitive functions to achieve full proficiency. As a cultural imperative, literacy has been increasingly imposed on individual cognitive systems since the establishment of compulsory primary education.

In the process of mastering literacy, individuals go through several stages of intensive learning, beginning with acquiring conceptual knowledge of letters and then how words are put together, which in turn creates sentences and texts.

This is followed by the acquisition of procedural knowledge about the automation of cultural reading and writing practices in a more or less everyday way. The acquisition of this behavioral aspect forces the individual to adapt and reorganize cognitive structures to create/integrate the new system underlying written language. Functionality refers to a level of literacy sufficient for integration into (post)modern industrial society, as well as personal well-being and lifelong learning, social and economic development (level of social integration/development).

Large-scale literacy research understands functionality as the level of effective and fluent reading/writing, sufficient to manipulate and comprehend prose and documentary texts that are ecologically important for daily functioning (behavioral level). The cognitivist approach emphasizes functionality referring to established and developed cognitive processes underlying reading skills, such as phonological awareness, orthographic processing and reading strategy based on lexical pathways (cognitive level).

As a result of the above review, we propose the following working definition: functional illiteracy is the inability to understand complex texts despite adequate education, age, language skills, basic reading skills and IQ.

Nor can these incapacities be fully explained by sensory, cognitive disorders of a general-domain, neurological or psychological nature. At the same time, given the difficulties in operationalizing the conceptual scope of functional illiteracy, we decide to assume that the basic strategy for combating functional illiteracy is to take measures leading to an increase in the level of literacy. The goal of the project is therefore to increase the level of

literacy in groups identified as affected by or at high risk of functional illiteracy. Our working definition of literacy is as follows:

Literacy is the ability to understand, create and share sophisticated mental states (one's own and others') or cognitive instructions through symbolic codes (mainly natural language), which is associated with functioning in a majority society. In the project, this is reduced to interaction using literacy or operating with linguistic meaning.

We also made a number of common assumptions about the nature of the literacy phenomenon, which further clarify the scope and nature of the project's activities:

 Literacy is linked to social adaptation in a specific environment social environment, so assumes is assumed, That improvement of skills literacy leads to better social adaptation and a better quality of life; improving literacy means improving expertise in a particular field of communication in mainstream society, provided that this leads to better social adaptation.

Literacy is the sum of individual skills in all languages spoken by language users and in all symbolic domains relevant to social functioning in mainstream society; learning a new language has an additional impact on overall literacy levels;

- **1.** Low levels of literacy can be called " functional illiteracy, " but the clear boundaries between literacy and functional illiteracy are always debatable;
- 2. Some groups (e.g., refugees, the Roma minority, economic migrants) may be at high risk of functional illiteracy in the near future, so it seems prudent to start preventive measures now (they may be our target group);
- **3.** Early childhood is crucial for the development of literacy skills and the formation of resilience to functional illiteracy in adulthood (prevention of functional illiteracy); this means that young children can be our focus group), although the phenomenon of functional illiteracy is usually described in many concepts as identifiable in adolescents and adults;
- **4.** A safe level of literacy requires constant practice, so promoting continuous improvement of literacy skills is a form of safeguarding against functional illiteracy;
- **5.** In the multimedia environment of modern society, language communication can be improved through visual, auditory, behavioral and spatial modalities; this means that multimodality is an essential strategy for improving literacy.

#### **B.** What are the general literacy concerns in each context?

#### Poland

The role of competencies in the 21st century - the age of globalization, information societies, knowledge-based economies and technological advances - is becoming increasingly crucial. Skills and the quality of human capital that is conditioned by them are essential to maintaining the potential necessary for economic growth and improving the well-being of the population. Moreover, in light of current demographic processes resulting in a decline in the number of people of working age in many countries, the quality of human capital becomes all the more crucial. The necessary competencies to evaluate and analyze information from various sources and use it, thus enabling the acquisition of all kinds of specialized skills and expanding knowledge, are essential in professional, private and school life.



Assessment of the level of competence of the population, including the identification of groups at risk - people who do not have the minimum level of skills to function efficiently in various spheres of life, therefore becomes essential for the formation of policies and their instruments based on a sound diagnosis of the situation (evidence-centered approach).

While illiteracy has been virtually eliminated in Poland today, and literacy is taken for granted in developed countries, information literacy and reading comprehension competencies are not. Low levels of information literacy associated with functional illiteracy, which should also be taken into account in countering the phenomenon of functional illiteracy.

Without information competence or at a low level, it is difficult to function in the environment of the market economy, it is difficult to be an informed and active recipient of media messages, keep up with technological innovations or realize the postulate of lifelong learning.

The definition of information literacy by experts from UNESCO, the International Federation of Library Associations and the National Information Literacy Forum, among others, was developed in this spirit. This definition indicates that information literacy enables "people of all professions and backgrounds to effectively find, evaluate, use and create information to achieve their personal, social, professional and educational goals." Moreover, they are even said to be

"a light ' for the information society'" (Dabrowska, Drzewicki, Jasiewicz, Lipszyc, Stunża, in Lipszyc [ed.], 2012).

#### According to the last census conducted in 2011, only 1.4% of Poles aged

13 years and older have incomplete primary education or no schooling (CSO, 2013). Compared to other European countries, Poland has a very low percentage of young people who drop out of education, and more than 40% of 19-24 year olds are studying at universities. However, the level of essential information competence of Poles still seems to be far from the level we would like. This is evidenced, among other things, by the results of the PIAAC survey - the Program for International Assessment of Adult Competencies, conducted in 24 countries by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. A total of 166,000 randomly selected adults a g e d 16-65 took part in the survey, including nearly 9,500 Poles. Interviewers visited these individuals in their homes and conducted interviews with them, part of which included direct measurement of competencies based on a set of internationally comparable tasks. The PIAAC survey is a follow-up to the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS), which was conducted in the 1990s. With 22 countries, the ALL (Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey) covered 11 countries in the first decade of the 21st century. The IAALS and ALL, in turn, build on the earlier experience of competency surveys conducted in Canada and the United States.

Poland has participated in the IALS and PIAAC surveys, which allow us to assess changes in the level of information literacy of Poles over the past 20 years. This section presents the results of these surveys as a background for understanding the specifics and determinants of functional illiteracy in Poland.

It is also worth noting the recurring term in the English-language names of the mentioned studies

"literacy", which has no clear equivalent in Polish. The antonym of "literacy" is the term

"illiteracy", which is translated into Polish as illiteracy. On the other hand, the antonym of illiteracy in Polish is literacy, which, however, in no way reflects the object of study of the competence under discussion. The meaning of the English term "literacy" has evolved with the spread of education and the decline of illiteracy in developed countries, and in some contexts it also refers to basic mathematical skills, the ability to media use or information literacy in general. It seems that in the Polish language with regard to the terms "literacy" and "illiteracy" an analogous process has not taken place.

A big step towards broadening the scope of the word illiteracy is the addition of the term

"functional", however, English-language publications on the research in question do not refer to people who are " illiterate", but to people with low levels of " literacy". Therefore, the term " functional illiterate" can be replaced ( understood as - in the context of Poland - "phrases like" people with low information/key/basic competencies" dichotomous classification of the population into people with and without the studied competencies.

The history of population competency research is not long, dating back only to the 1980s. Research conducted during this period in the United States and Canada combined survey methodology with psychometric research methodology - a field that, in turn, welds together psychological test research and statistics. The competency surveys considered here, like social surveys, obtain information from randomly selected individuals belonging to the population under study about their socio-demographic characteristics. In addition, as in sociological research, respondents solve sets of tasks, which are then used, in accordance with psychometric methodology, to estimate the level of competence of the population or selected groups in the population under study.

Initially, 9 countries, including Poland, expressed interest in participating in the IALS survey. These countries were required to prepare research tools (personal questionnaire and tasks), draw a representative sample of the study population - people aged 16-65, and conduct field surveys in accordance with established guidelines and provide coordinating institutions with a dataset containing information from at least 3,000 people. completed interviews.

It is important to emphasize the importance of adequate preparation of survey instruments so that they are integral and comparable across countries and languages, particularly with regard to measuring key competencies related to the ability to work with continuous text, documents and perform simple calculations. According to the study's authors, this goal was achieved, and the number of tasks that did not meet the conditions of adequate psychometric quality was much lower than the assumed number of tasks to be discarded. However, after the study was completed, there were voices about the cultural burden of the measurement tasks used, among other reasons, because they came mainly from American and Canadian studies, and did not correspond to a large extent to the realities of European countries (e.g., Hamilton and Barton, 2000, Gomez 2000).

Interviews were conducted mainly in 1994 (Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland, the United States). Another 5 countries, encouraged by the success of the project, joined the second round of the survey in 1996, and a third round of IALS was held in 1998.

The IALS showed differences in the levels of IL ( defined according to the concepts of the U.S. surveys) between countries, with Poland, Chile and Portugal ranking last, and the Scandinavian countries at the top of the international ranking. The results also provided information on differences in the levels of IL in the countries surveyed.



Percentage of population aged 16-65 at each prose literacy level, 1994-1998

Sweden Norway Finland Netherlands Canada Australia New Zealand Denmark United States Belgium (Flanders) Germany Switzerland (French) United Kingdom Ireland Czech Republic Switzerland (Italian) Switzerland (German) Hungary Slovenia Portugal Poland Chile

Chart 1. Percentage of respondents at different levels of functional skills - prose (verbal tasks). Results for each country.



Percentage of population aged 16-65 at each prose literacy level, 1994-1998

Sweden Norway Denmark Netherlands Finland Belgium (Flanders) Germany Czech Republic Canada Australia Switzerland (French) Switzerland (German) Switzerland (Italian) United States United Kingdom New Zealand Ireland Hungary Slovenia Poland Portugal Chile

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4/5
---------	---------	---------	-----------

Figure 2: Percentage of respondents at different levels of functional skills - tasks with documents. Results for each country.



Percentage of population aged 16-65 at each prose literacy level, 1994-1998

Sweden Denmark Norway Czech Republic Germany Netherlands Switzerland (French) Finland Belgium (Flanders) Switzerland (Italian) United States New Zealand United Kingdom Hungary Ireland Slovenia Poland Portugal Chile

Level 1 Level 2 Level 3 Level 4/5

Figure 3: Percentage of respondents at different levels of functional skills - problems with numbers. Results by country.

Discussing the results of the survey, the author of their implementation in Poland compares the results obtained by Poles with those of residents of other countries and describes these results as alarming.

- On the three scales at the lowest level (level 1-3), Poles are the most numerous, and at the highest level (4/5) the lowest. At the same time, the differences between Poland and other countries are huge.
- An analysis of the factors affecting functional literacy shows that the most important relationship is with the educational level of respondents, while age, attitude toward reading, lifestyle, occupation and gender are also strongly related.
- The significance of variables such as place of residence was not demonstrated
- Interpreting the results of the survey directly, one can come to the disturbing conclusion that at that time the majority of Polish society was functionally illiterate: Not only did people have difficulty understanding relevant texts and information, but they also could not cope in offices and could not exercise their full civil rights.
  - This, in turn, caused the researchers to distance themselves and raised doubts about the objectivity of the study (the adequacy of its results).
  - In fact, different areas are assigned different meanings.

After the success of the survey, however, there was interest in changes over time in the level of information literacy. A response to this was the ALL survey, the first round of which was conducted in 2003 and the second round in 2006-2008. Poland did not participate in this survey.

The number of countries participating in the ALL study was half that of the IALS study. While the second round of ALL was underway, work began on another international project, PIAAC. Many of the countries observing ALL began preparations to implement PIAAC. The data collection period was set for August-March 2012, and most of the 24 countries that joined the survey met this deadline. However, this was only the first round of the survey, the results of which were announced in October 2013. Another nine countries joined the second round.

The domains studied in the first IALS International Adult Competency Survey were taken from the previously mentioned US and Canadian studies.

We call these skills functional reading skills and define them as the ability to understand and use printed information in both verbal and graphic form. The IALS study distinguished three areas of competence: understanding continuous texts (prose literacy), learning documents and forms (document literacy) and performing quantitative literacy. All of the tasks used in the IALS survey were based on materials that respondents dealt with in their daily lives. In the case of comprehension of continuous texts, these were newspaper articles or textbooks.

The ALL study repeated the measurement of comprehension of continuous text and comprehension of documents and forms. Performing simple calculations was replaced by numeracy, which covers a broader range of skills than previously studied in the IALS.

In this perspective, mathematical reasoning involves not only operations on numbers, but also mathematical information conveyed in other forms. ALL distinguishes five areas requiring reasoning

mathematical: quantity and number, dimension and shape, formula and relationship, data and probability, and change (OECD and Statistics Canada, 2011).

The competencies surveyed in PIAAC were largely related to the critical competencies from IALS I ALL. In defining the scope of competencies to be measured, the main goal was to capture critical competencies in the 21st century, in a world with exponentially increasing amounts of information and evolving new forms of communication. However, the comparability of results with previous studies was not forgotten. The PIAAC survey was designed as a computer-based competency measurement survey. This was a pioneering approach - in earlier surveys, respondents solved tasks measuring their skills in paper notebooks.

As a result, the PIAAC survey covered three areas of competence: literacy, numeracy and the use of information and communication technologies, ICT (problem solving in technology-rich environments). The latter competencies are considered and defined as " the ability to use a computer and the Internet to obtain and analyze information, communicate with others and perform practical tasks in private, professional and social contexts." Measurement of ICT competencies does not focus on computer skills, but on their use to perform various types of tasks.

In this sense, technical skills are a means to facilitate problem solving, not an end in themselves.



Since Poland participated in the IALS and PIAAC surveys, we can assess changes in the population's reading comprehension skills over 17 years. Analysis of the results shows a clear increase in Poles' reading comprehension skills between the surveys (see Figure 6). However, the increase in the average skill level in the population is not the rule. In several European countries - Denmark, Germany and Sweden - reading comprehension worsened, which should be a worrying sign, while in several countries no change was observed. Poland saw the most significant improvement in population skills among the countries studied. It is worth noting that despite this, Poland's average score in the PIAAC survey places us among the worst OECD countries (only the French, Italians and Spaniards have lower skills). This paradox is easy to understand by looking at Poland's score in the IALS survey. At that time we were more than 40 points away from the OECD average, now we are 6 points away, so the distance to catch up was considerable. The researchers stress that in the early 1990s the information environment of a modern market economy was new to Poles.

Poles were just getting used to the overwhelming amount of information in the form of flyers and advertisements, as well as various documents, such as tax returns. This may indicate a potential cultural bias in the survey results in Poland, which should be kept in mind when interpreting the results.

Comparing the results from Poland, there are key findings:

- The skill level of Poles aged 16-65 is lower than the average skill level of residents of OECD countries (which took part in the survey). Poland's score in reading comprehension is 6 points away from the OECD average (267 points vs. 273 points), and in mathematical reasoning

   by 9 points (260 points vs. 269 points).
- Poles' ICT skills are also lower than in OECD countries: 38% of Polish adults have low levels of ICT skills, and high - only 19%, compared to 27% and 34%, respectively, in OECD countries. In Poland, nearly 15% of adults have low levels of reading comprehension and mathematical reasoning, and another 13% have low levels in either area.
- Almost all of these people have low or no ICT skills. At the same time, 14% of adults score very high in at least one of the skill areas tested.
- The average skill level is lower among the elderly.
- In Poland, as in other countries, there is a decline in the level of competencies tested from around the age of 30.
- Poles aged 16-24 and 55-65 scored as high as 32 in reading comprehension and 25 in mathematical reasoning.
- 38% of young people are highly skilled in ICT, compared to only 3% of older people.
- In Poland, women outperform men in reading comprehension (a difference of 6 points), while in mathematical reasoning the differences are insignificant.
- Women's performance in reading comprehension and mathematical reasoning varies less than that of men. More men are highly skilled in the use of information and communication technologies.
- The relationship between skills and education is strong. In Poland, the difference between the average scores
  of those with higher education and those with secondary education or less is 70 points
  in reading comprehension and 74 points in mathematical reasoning.
- Some 37% of those with higher education have a high level of skills in using ICT, compared to 2% in the group with the lowest education. Differences between the results in Poland and OECD averages for groups with similar educational attainment are smallest or non-existent for tertiary education.



Figure 6: Summary of the results of the IALS-ALL-PIAAC study.

- A comparison of the results of PIAAC and IALS, a survey conducted in Poland in 1994, shows a clear increase in the level of Poles' reading comprehension competence (by 35 points).
- Poland had the most significant improvement in performance of all the countries that took part in both surveys.
- While in 1994 more than 40% of adults aged 16-65 had shallow literacy levels, in 2011 the percentage had dropped to 19%. At the same time, three times as many now have high levels of literacy (3% in IALS versus 10% in PIAAC).

Information society, information civilization, information age - these terms often appear in journalism, scientific papers and everyday conversations. Fundamentally related to these terms is the notion of information competence, which one must possess in order to belong to an information society. The role of information literacy as a condition for social cohesion and economic development is increasingly emphasized. Although the educational level of the population of developed countries has never been as high as it is today, the percentage of people with low information literacy is high, as the results of the studies presented above show. The declines in the average level of information literacy in some developed countries outlined above could threaten their future competitiveness.

One cannot hope to improve the population's basic information skills as a result of raising the average level of the population's formal education, since they cannot grow indefinitely. A greater role can be played by lifelong learning policies, which should not only be systematically implemented and developed by governments, but whose need should also be felt by citizens. And those who often see no obstacles to their further professional development, despite low skills, often deviate from the results of objective measurement with their subjective assessment of skills. The study of the population's information literacy presented in this paper serves precisely to provide a reliable diagnosis of the situation, which in turn should be used to shape policies and their instruments. Poland currently does not have a comprehensive policy for lifelong learning and skills development. Thus, there is still much to be done.

19

#### ITALY

Functional illiteracy generally refers to language (literacy) and/or arithmetic (numerical) knowledge that is inadequate for performing assigned tasks or fitting favorably into social life. Increased functional illiteracy can lead to a lack of self-sufficiency in people who are unable to understand basic texts or perform even the most basic arithmetic calculations. The problem has been known for a long time, and in recent years has attracted the attention of national and supranational institutions, which have attempted to quantify the level of functional illiteracy (or its opposite: knowledge) in various European and non-European countries. But how is the level of functional illiteracy assessed?

According to OECD procedure, literacy and numeracy levels are measured using paper or digital questionnaires for those who request them.

The score of each of the two types of tests (literacy and numeracy) is assigned to a score measuring the test taker's level of knowledge (proficiency). Six levels have been defined (less than 1 and from 1 to 5, where 1=worst; 5=best), which correspond to the test score values in the classes:

Level<1: score below 176: total or almost total illiteracy Level 1: score from 176

but less than 226: severe functional illiteracy Level 2: score from 226 but less

than 276: functional illiteracy Level<1: score below 176: total or almost total

illiteracy Level 1: score from 176 but less than 226: severe functional illiteracy

Level 2: score from 226 but less than 276: functional illiteracy

Level 3: score of 276 and above but less than 326: sufficient or barely sufficient knowledge

Level 4: score of 326 and above but less than 376: good knowledge

Level 5: score of 376 and above: high/very high level of knowledge.

Functional illiteracy in Italy is currently at a very high level. This is confirmed by the most reliable data, that of the 2019 Piaac-Ocse survey, the latest available on the subject. According to the ranking, about 28% of the population aged 16 to 65 in Italy is functionally illiterate. This is one of the worst indicators in Europe, second only to Turkey, where the problem affects 47% of the population. There are 773 million young people and adults worldwide who cannot boast basic literacy skills. In the year before Covid, only 0.6% of Italian 15-year-olds, compared to an OECD average of 1.1%, reached the highest level of preparedness. But with the pandemic, the numbers are worse, as 62.3% of young people have switched to remote education.

According to the OECD and ISFOL 1, functional illiteracy does not affect a specific segment of the Italian population; it affects different demographic groups in all areas. Nevertheless, the data allows a fairly precise identification of those most susceptible to the phenomenon:

- In terms of age, one in three people is over 55; only one in six young Italians does not fully understand the meaning of what they are reading. A large percentage are adults over the age of 55;

- From a professional point of view, most are unemployed or in the vast majority of cases do manual and routine work (such as unpaid housework) or work in the informal economy or in precarious jobs where on-the-job training is not provided;

- From an educational standpoint, they are generally poorly educated. Many of them have left school early;

1 Istituto per lo sviluppo della formazione professionale dei lavoratori (Institute for the Development of Professional Training of Workers).

- Geographically, the south and northwest of the country are the regions with the highest percentage; these areas are home to more than 60% of unskilled workers.

This phenomenon should be reduced among future generations, but also among middle-aged people. This phenomenon is often referred to as "secondary functional illiteracy."

This phenomenon occurs when a person, having not exercised his or her creative and critical intelligence (through learning, reading or information) for an extended period of time, suffers a real reduction in previously acquired skills. There seems to be a real breakdown of the brain as we age, probably due to the lack of exercise and limited high education in our youth by today's "seniors." Perhaps people in the "third age" should be encouraged to engage not only in leisure activities, but also social or recreational activities that engage the mind, such as playing bridge (widely recognized as a valuable "retarder" of brain aging), chess or puzzles. Greater social participation can also help "not forget" or acquire and, above all, not lose the desire to learn/memory.

To counter the spread of this social scourge, the major research institutes in the field suggest essentially the same strategies:

- Updating educational pathways to provide the necessary tools to understand as accurately as possible the - changing - reality that surrounds us;

- Discouraging early entry into the labor market by investing more and more in the public education system;

- Cultural education in the so-called "lifelong learning" approach. This philosophy encourages continuous consolidation of skills, even among adults;

The fact is, however, that in Italy even university students, i.e. those with at least a high school diploma, show serious difficulties with the language, so much so that 600 university lecturers, researchers and linguists have written a heartfelt letter to the government to organize "remedial courses" at some universities. According to the researchers, in fact, "the overwhelming majority of students lack sufficient knowledge of basic language tools. "2 Perhaps it should be emphasized that something like this does not occur, at least not to such a significant degree, in the other OECD countries studied. Socio-familial and cultural contexts have a huge impact on learning and skill levels. Among these factors, the most correlated are:

- parents' education;
- The number of books owned during adolescence;
- family status.

The data reveals the following results: those with parents with lower secondary education have an average literacy score of 243 in Italy; those with at least one parent with upper secondary education have an average score of 268, while those with at least one parent with tertiary education have an average literacy score of 283. It should be noted that in all three cases the respective OECD average scores (255, 279 and 295) are higher than in Italy and always to the same degree.

The same trend occurs, both in Italy and in OECD countries, for numerical scores. The difference in scores between those who have at least one parent with a college degree and those who have no parent with a college degree is around 40 points, both in Italy and in OECD countries, and peaks in the US, where the difference is around 57 points. Illiteracy turns out to be functional for both organized crime - which has a large recruitment pool in NEET - and corruption. Organized crime always tries to influence the outcome of local elections in its favor in order to have support in the administration. It is therefore clear that it supports the party most likely to win, and among its candidates, those who are less educated and more easily corrupted.

2 Source: National Press - quotation from la Repubblica online of February 4, 2017

IT illiteracy is also widespread in Italy. This phenomenon particularly affects the "third age": only 10% of Italians "over 65" (source: European Central Bank, ECB: Statistical Data Warehouse:) are able to use the Internet. European Central Bank, ECB: Statistical Data Warehouse: http://sdw.ecb.europa.eu/) is able to use information technology, nullifying any efforts made by the central public administration to create online services. One need only go to any post office in the first days of the month, especially in small towns, to see a crowd of "old people" standing in line for their pensions, while for some time, and recommended by INPS 3 itself, targeting bank accounts that can also be accessed and managed digitally (home banking).

Another testament to this form of functional illiteracy is the very low use of cards (credit, debit or prepaid) in Italy compared to other European countries: in Italy, 80% of consumer goods transactions are still done in cash and only 20% (or less) via cards (source: ECB - European Central Bank); in countries such as the UK and the Netherlands, the ratio is exactly the opposite.

The OECD recently published a report entirely devoted to Italy: Diagnostic Report on Skills Strategies - Italy 2017, available on the institution's website4.

The report, after welcoming the progress made through some of the reforms that have been completed - particularly the Employment Law5 - and those that are underway or planned, presents Italy with a rather salacious bill for widespread functional illiteracy and a lack of commitment to upskilling and retraining workers. It suggests, or rather dictates, four "pillars" (pillars) on which to build and no fewer than ten challenges (challenges) to overcome:

- Pillar 1: Developing the right skills
- Pillar 2: Activating the supply of skills
- Pillar 3: Effective use of skills
- Pillar 4: Strengthening skill systems

Challenge 1: Ensure that young people across the country have the necessary and sufficient knowledge [skills] for further education;

Challenge 2: Increase access to higher education while creating conditions for its effective use;

Challenge 3: Increase the skills of low-skilled adults; Challenge 4: Remove existing labor

market barriers between supply and demand; Challenge 5: Encourage women and

young people to participate in the labor market; Challenge 6: Make better use of

individual skills in the workplace;

Challenge 7: Use employees with advanced knowledge to promote innovation;

CHALLENGE 8: INCREASE university-business cooperation to improve the performance of advanced studies;

Challenge 9: Plan the training of young people to avoid conflicts or specializations that are not aligned with labor market requirements;

- 3 Istituto Nazionale della Previdenza Sociale (National Institute of Social Security).
- 4 Diagnostic-report-Italy.pdf (oecd.org)

5 The Jobs Act is the labor reform wanted by the Renzi Government in 2015, that introduces a series of measures aimed at renewing the labor market. The new rules affect both workers, companie and also candidates.

Challenge 10: Invest in advanced training.

Page 51 of the aforementioned report reads: "Italy has made significant progress in improving the quality of schooling in recent years, with average scores rising overall in reading, math and science. While math scores are now in line with the OECD average, Italian 15-year-olds still lag behind their peers in other OECD countries in reading and science (OECD, 2017a; OECD 2016b). Further efforts are needed to improve these results, given that basic skills are the foundation for future learning and, as such, affect both the ability to acquire other skills, such as digital and vocational skills, and to expand their portfolio of skills in later life."

In the OECD report, two aspects emerge significantly in Italy: a close correlation of acquired skills according to parents' level of education; significant differences in knowledge levels according to geographic area.

The significant differences in skills (proficiency) between Italy's various regions - again according to the aforementioned report - are also largely due to the poor management of local institutions responsible for secondary education. The fragmentation of local authorities delegated to secondary education, second only to France among all OECD countries, probably bears the greatest responsibility for Italy's significant regional differences in performance.

Among the remedies for a country like Italy, it would certainly be necessary to increase the number of schools, improve curricula that would also include good "civic education" (starting with studying the Constitutional Charter), initiatives to reclaim and include NEETs. Perhaps most of all, it would help if there were a definite improvement in the quality of education, which is rather lacking, except in elementary schools, as evidenced by the mediocre results Italian students achieve in international "contests."

Perhaps an increase in the age of compulsory education should also be considered, since the lower secondary school (junior high school) certificate currently seems insufficient to guarantee the minimum level of skills necessary for proper integration into the complex civil society of the third millennium: almost no one with a lower secondary school (junior high school) certificate attends the third level, and very few people with a junior high school certificate manage to do so.

#### **AUSTRIA**

#### Individual Competency Measurement PLUS (IKM PLUS).

"iKMPlus is a tool for recording subject competencies and assessing students' inter-subject competencies. iKMPlus can be divided into individual compulsory and optional modules that are specifically tailored to the respective requirements of primary and secondary education" (cf. IQS, 2022).

One of the goals of iKMPlus is to record competencies and observe learning progress. The results are reported immediately after the test, and the next educational steps to achieve goals and promote strengths are adjusted. Together with parents, children and the responsible teacher, further educational goals and specific steps for the child are agreed upon. Feedback on the classroom helps teachers reflect on and develop their teaching.

Schools use the information to further develop school quality. The iKMPlus results will not be used in performance evaluations or as a criterion for admission to high school. They are used for individual student support, further instructional development, and school development and quality (cf. IQS, 2022).

Teachers can voluntarily participate in various training courses designed to provide the knowledge necessary to properly measure competencies, read and interpret students' results, and derive further (supportive) actions based on students' results (cf. ibid., 2022).

#### **International research**

The Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) measures the competence of students aged 15/16 in reading, math and science. In 2000, 2009 and 2018, the focus was on reading. In PISA 2015, performance was below the OECD average and therefore ranked 25th. In PISA 2018, the OECD average dropped, so Austria ranked in the middle (cf. Rechnungshof Österreich, 2020, p. 20).

To date, Austrian students have participated in the International Reading Progress Study (PIRLS) three times. Austria's reading performance is mostly below average (cf. Rechnungshof Österreich, 2020, p. 18). Austria had a rather low percentage of high-performing readers (8%), while the percentage of low-performing readers was 16%, slightly below the EU average (cf. ibid., 2020, p. 18).

School reading risk groups consist of the following contextual factors

- Disparities by gender: There were significant differences between girls and boys in reading. More girls than boys achieved the best reading scores. The percentage of boys in the high-risk group was significantly higher than the percentage of girls.
- Migration-related differences: Children without a migrant background performed significantly better on average than students with a migrant background. According to PISA 2018, the disadvantage in reading comprehension among adolescents with a migrant background in Austria was analyzed in the bottom third of 26 comparison countries (EU/OECD countries). According to PISA 2018, the unfavorable situation in reading comprehension among migrant adolescents in Austria was analyzed in the bottom third of 26 comparison countries (EU/OECD countries). -> Trend analyses showed in PIRLS 2016 that in the ten-year comparison, reading skills among native children increased significantly, while they remained about the same among immigrant children. This trend widened the achievement gap (nearly two years of schooling) between children with and without immigrant backgrounds.
- Social differences: Education in Austria is largely inherited, as various studies have shown. Family education
  has a strong influence on children's success in school and their educational careers. Students whose parents
  have low formal qualifications are overrepresented in at-risk groups. In contrast, children with parents with
  higher education are underrepresented in risk groups (cf. Rechnungshof Österreich, 2020, p. 24).

#### **Organizational anchoring of reading promotion**

In Austria, a large number of entities have implemented measures and programs to promote reading and spelling, both in and out of school. A Pedagogical Coordination Office for Reading Skills has been set up in the ministry to deal with issues related to reading promotion.

Office Coordination Reading (KsL), nationwide network bringing together experts in the field of teacher education, representatives of school supervision and school practice, which, as part of this network, cooperates with other reading institutions and disseminates the latest findings on reading didactics.

The Buch.Zeit Association has been contracted by the ministry to serve as a service agency for school libraries in general compulsory schools throughout Austria. (Rechnungshof Österreich, 2020, p. 40). In reviewing the curricula for primary and lower secondary schools, the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research should ensure that they can be used as a comprehensive and practice-friendly basis for specific teaching work (cf. ibid., 2020, p. 48).

# 1. Salzburger LeseScreening (SLS) of reading skills.

Measured Outcome Domain: SLS measures basic reading skills using the natural incentive to read. It primarily measures reading speed. Reading accuracy is measured indirectly and with less accuracy.

Concept: Children read a list of sentences silently. At the end of each line, they mark whether the sentence is correct or incorrect. The raw score is the number of sentences read correctly in 3 minutes.

Possible uses: The SLS can be used as a screening test for basic reading skills. For this purpose, the procedure has the positive property that it is suitable as a group test, meaning that all children in the class can work on the test at the same time. Summarizing the results of the children's test, statements can also be made about the level of classroom performance. Because of the parallel forms available, the test can be repeated at short intervals to detect changes in basic reading skills.

Scoring options: In addition to the number of correctly scored sentences as a raw score value, reading quotients (LQs) can be determined using norm tables. The LQ indicates how much the reading skill deviates from the average of the normalization sample. The scale chosen for the LQ corresponds to the scale known for the intelligence quotient (mean 100, standard deviation 15). Since the same sentence material is used in all grades, the lag in reading proficiency can also be expressed in years of instruction.

Parallel forms: there are two parallel versions, constructed from different but comparablesentenceswwith referencetorequirementsregardingreading.Eachof the two versions of the sentence exists in two variants with slightly different sentence order.EachEach

Effort: SLS, including instruction, distribution and collection of test booklets, takes about 15 minutes (pure processing time is 3 minutes). Evaluating the test booklets using slides takes about 1-2 minutes per child. Therefore, with an average class size, the entire SLS implementation and evaluation results in an effort of 2-3 minutes per child.

Current method screening detects differences basic reading skills. w Means i effortless this flawless, fast reading. Not about reading comprehension, which is related to language skills and knowledge requirements, but rather the technical aspect of reading (cf. Mayringer et al., n.d.).

Weakness in basic word reading skills can seriously harm the school career and educational development of those affected. The screening procedure contributes to the detection of existing reading weakness (cf. ibid., n.d.).

### 2. Hofer Reading Initiative "Bildung fängt mit Lesen an"

"Our reading initiative focuses on encouraging children and young people to read," Hofer's statement reads. Reading is one of the most important skills of our time. Nevertheless, one in five young people in Austria cannot read. Nevertheless, one in five young people in Austria cannot read with comprehension. To change this and give children better tools for the future, Hofer has joined forces with the Austrian Youth Book Club to launch a new initiative to promote reading and language skills among children and young people. With the reading initiative, "Education Begins with Reading," children should enjoy reading (cf. Hofer, 2022).

Initiativereadingfocusesisonpromotingskillslanguageand reading skills of children and teens, so Hofer has expanded its offering of h i g h - q u a l i t y , affordablebooks for children and teens to 500 per year.Each of the children's books

and young people are checked by the Austrian Youth Book Club for quality, content and age-appropriate standards. Books that are particularly suitable for promoting reading are given the book club's seal of approval. In this way, even the youngest among our customers receive the best reading material that encourages them from the very beginning (cf. Hofer, 2022).

Gerhard Falschlehner, managing director of the Austrian Youth Book Club:

"The goal of the cooperation between HOFER and the Book Club is to promote reading in the sense of family literacy. It targets families who are far from reading, allowing us to reach children who otherwise have little or no access to reading material. It works very well in a familiar supermarket."

Hofer's reading selection, which was tested by the Book Club, offers children's books that are easy to understand, appealing and popular, as well as interesting and appealing to families who do not practice reading (cf. ibid., 2022).

#### CZECH REPUBLIC

The topic of functional literacy has not been given as much space in the Czech professional discourse as it deserves, although interest in the subject is gradually growing. In terms of quantifiable results, the following sources are important sources of information for the Czech Republic:

- SIALS (Second International Adult Literacy Survey), which brings the main results of the International Adult Functional Literacy Survey, which also included respondents from the Czech Republic (1996-1999).
- PIAAC (Programme for the International Assessment of A d u l t Competencies) survey conducted by the OECD since 2013.

It should be mentioned that at the time of this writing, data collection is underway in the Czech Republic for the next round of the PIAAC survey, with an expected completion date in 2023.

#### SIALS study

The survey was preceded by the IALS International Adult Literacy Survey, which was organized in 22 countries in the 1990s. It was the first international comparative study of the skills of adults (aged 16 to 65). The survey took place in three phases, namely in 1994, 1996 and 1998. The project was supported by important global organizations (OECD, UNESCO, EUROSTAT) and was conducted by Statistics Canada and the Educational Testing Service.

The Czech Republic participated in the third phase in 1998, and the survey was called SIALS (Second International Adult Literacy Survey, referring to the second and third phases together as the second wave).

In order to understand the results of the study on measuring the level of functional skills, it is necessary to present some characteristics of the research approach. The study used a categorization of functional skill scores into five levels based on the functional skill test score (from 0 to 500 points),

- Level 1 0 225 points A person who has reached this level can, at most, find precisely defined information in a clear and short text (for example, he can find out how often to take a medicine from instructions), perform a simple and precisely defined calculation operation (usually addition and subtraction).
- Level 2 226 275 points A person at this skill level can, on the basis of a simple comparison, usually find the required information according to a single criterion in a simple and very clearly structured text or document. For simple numerical operations (usually addition and subtraction), he can find the necessary

Values in a text or document. Can find a simple contradiction or a completely clear contradiction in information.

- Level 3, 276 325 points Achieving this level means that a person is able to arrive at the required information on the basis of assessing the importance of certain conditions or on the basis of combining multiple pieces of information found in different parts of a text or document. He can separate important from irrelevant information and recognize misleading information. He can also perform more complex arithmetic operations with the data to be searched, or select from a larger number those that correspond to a specific task. Only at this level does the ability to actively work with information begin.
- Level 4/5 326 375 points/376 500 points A person who has reached this highest level, which is formed by combining two levels (4 and 5), can recognize correct information of a more general nature in a document with a complex structure based on the evaluation of a number of conditions. He can separate relevant from irrelevant information and generalize relevant information. Can select the necessary arithmetic information for which to find the correct values. It can be said that a person who has reached this level has truly adopted an active approach to working with information.

Functional literacy tests were divided into three components in terms of content, namely literary, documentary and numerical literacy, and the result (average) of all three components was total literacy.

The average total adult literacy score in the Czech Republic was 283.5; scores in other comparator countries ranged from 304.3 (Sweden) to 216.2 (Chile). The average total literacy in all countries that participated in the tests is 267.8. Rabušicová (2002, p. 75) recalculated the point values of Czech respondents in relation to the best score and the average score of all countries. She found the following: Czech adults achieved 93% of the best score (Sweden) and 106% of the average score of all countries that took part in the survey.

The reported data shows that the overall performance of Czech adults is satisfactory. They have reached the third literacy level, which corresponds to the minimum skills needed to cope with the demands of daily life and work (Literacy, 1995, cited by Rabušicová, 2002, p. 75). However, we are still in the area of the arithmetic mean, by means of which we are unable to identify potentially risky groups of people whose literacy skills can be described as insufficient from the above point of view.

It should be said that the average results of the literary, documentary and numerical skills tests were relatively satisfactory for the Czech Republic. Czech respondents did best on numerical tests, ranking third among all countries surveyed. In literacy, Czech adults ranked seventh, the third best among 22 countries and regions. The Czech Republic ranked just behind the middle of the pack (in twelfth place) in terms of literacy skills. literacy. If we will remember, That illiteracy literary is related to the skills needed to understand, retrieve and use information from a text, we can certainly relate this fact to the situation of Czech schools, which are often criticized for not teaching students to actively work with texts.

Given that IALS and SIALS research reports have identified level three as the minimum limit at which a person can withstand the demands of daily life and work, the Czech Republic's performance becomes a problem that needs to be solved. Another view expressing the proportions of the adult population in each literacy level shows that 54% of the Czech population is unable to cope with the demands of daily life without some difficulty in literacy, 42% of the population is affected in this way for document literacy and 31% for literacy.

#### **PIAAC** study

The Programme for International Assessment of Adult Competencies - PIAAC (Programme for International Assessment of Adult Competencies) is part of an important OECD strategy focused on the development and activation of skills and their effective use (OECD Skills Strategy). The strategy is a response to the fact that recent decades have seen major changes that affect many aspects of the professional and private lives of people in developed countries. Statistics show that the number of jobs with higher educational and flexibility requirements is growing. People working with disabilities increasingly have to cope with radical changes in workload resulting from job restructuring and unexpected changes in the labor market, accompanied by the need to change jobs frequently. Related to this is the need to keep up with new technologies and materials and to learn new and increasingly complex skills.

The International Survey of Adult Competencies - PIAAC assessed the level of literacy, numeracy and problemsolving skills in an information technology environment among people aged 16-65. The assessment used cognitive tests and questionnaires, which were administered in households by trained interviewers. Data collection, which involved a total of 24 countries including the Czech Republic, took place in late 2011 and early 2012. The results were published on October 8, 2013.

Looking at the overall results, it is clear that, in general, there is not much difference between the participating countries. Republic Czech Republic has achieved above-average score in numeracy and an average score in reading and solving problems. We can however observe significant differences in individual countries. differences Republic Czech Republic can boast of relatively small between the best- and worst-performing adults in reading and numeracy. Of particular importance in this context is the high

5th percentile in reading and numeracy (one of the highest in international comparison). This value shows that the Czech Republic manages to maintain its literacy and numeracy skills at a relatively good level among the group of people who show the lowest competence, i.e., there are few people with very poor reading competence in the Czech Republic.

A comparison of reading literacy scores in the IALS and PIAAC surveys showed that between 1998 and 2012, the total reading literacy scores of the population aged 16-65 in the Czech Republic were comparable

The average score in the PIAAC study was 274 (1.0), in the IALS study 277 (1.0). However, the situation changed in individual year groups. There was a clear deterioration results of the youngest 16-24 age group and a further deterioration in the results of the 35-44 groups

and 45-54. At the same time, the performance of the oldest 55-65 a g e group improved.

## 2. involving social partners

#### A. A framework for designing community literacy equity

#### Motivation

Europe's population has experienced significant changes over the past century as a result of global political, social, economic and environmental factors, resulting in an ever-growing multicultural, multiethnic, multiracial and multilingual population (Burns & Roberts, 2010). These dynamics, including the growing number of migrants and refugees arriving in Europe, are placing new demands on public institutions and social services (Jonatan Castaño-Muñoz et al., 2018). Moreover, navigating/accessing existing services, requires that newcomers, as well as socially and economically marginalized populations, possess certain knowledge and skills - with literacy at the forefront.

Limited literacy or illiteracy has been found to be a barrier to basic human rights such as access to education and equitable health care (Lebano et al., 2020). This is a reality for millions of adults across Europe who lack the literacy skills necessary to function fully and independently in society (Carpentieri, 2012). The inability to communicate effectively and navigate social relationships can also contribute to social exclusion, affecting an individual's socioeconomic opportunities, health, well-being and overall quality of life (Kluzer & Rissola, 2009) - effects that can negatively impact their families or dependents. Given that 16% of the EU population, 19 million of whom are children, face poverty (Kluzer & Rissola, 2009) - an important risk factor for social exclusion - interventions that can address social exclusion and promote economic opportunity are c r u c i a l.

Adult literacy development is seen as a key tool for promoting economic and social growth as well as mobility, active citizenship and health equity (Benavot, 2015; Carpentieri, 2012; Marques, 2021). This development has recently been brought to the forefront of the European policy agenda, with a priority focus on low-skilled adults from vulnerable populations (Zarifis, 2019). However, critics argue that contemporary language policies and programs fail to take into account the increasingly pluralistic and diverse populations present across Europe, often promoting an assimilationist, monolingual agenda (Guofang Li & Pramod Kumar Sah, 2019; Nieuwboer & van 't Rood, 2016). This not only ignores the cultural and linguistic richness (González et al., 2005) present in these populations, but also inadequately prepares them to succeed in their communities, and to deal with the tensions that arise in relation to cultural identity, gender, and social and immigration status (Guofang Li & Pramod Kumar Sah, 2019; Nieuwboer & van 't Rood, 2016). In light of these requirements, Burns and Roberts (2010) argue that there is an urgent need for meaningfully designed and socially and culturally responsible educational and language programs for immigrants, migrants, refugees, and other socially and economically vulnerable populations.

#### Project framework

The Alphabetter project uses a community-based literacy equity design framework developed by our partners at the University of California, San Diego (see Figure 1). The framework provides a conceptual guide for developing socially and culturally responsible educational and language programs and tools. Dividing the design process into four iterative and mutually reinforcing steps: 1) Understanding key literacy skills; 2) Engaging community partners; 3) Designing solutions; and 4) Testing and refining, ensures that our work actively engages the communities we serve in developing programs that serve their unique needs.

We approach literacy development from the perspective of a multidimensional concept that goes beyond basic reading, speaking and writing skills to include the development of civic, digital, financial, health, legal and cultural skills. This is in line with the declaration made by the Parliamentary Assembly of the European Council (2014) that socially relevant functional language skills that encourage communication and integration are more important than simply developing proficiency in the target language. Research indicates that processes to promote greater social inclusion among vulnerable groups and migrants require the development of a wide range of intercultural competencies in social interactions with peers and the wider community (Krumm & Plutzar, 2008; Nieuwboer & van 't Rood, 2016).



Understanding key literacy skills

Civic Financial Digital Basic Health Legal Cultural Engaging Social Partners

Integration of community knowledge

Identification of existing services and

resources Assessment of challenges and

needs

Solution design Adaptable tools

Implementation guidance Testing

and refinement

Feedback from the community Iterative

verification

We work to engage community partners, including members of our identified target populations, at all stages of design and implementation to ensure relevant, effective and impactful program design and implementation. By investing pre-design time in identifying existing services and resources, we avoid duplication of our efforts and promote greater synergy and collaboration among institutions and programs in our communities. We also take an asset-based approach to literacy development, recognizing and generating opportunities to recognize the cultural and social richness in the populations we seek to serve. Drawing on the "funds of knowledge" framework and the scholarship of Moll and colleagues (González et al, 2005; Moll, 2019; Moll et al, 2013; Moll et al, 1992), we seek to emphasize opportunities and skills embedded in culturally diverse communities. This builds on the work of Brokert and colleagues (2018) who highlighted the complex social and digital skills of resettled refugees to Europe as a way to counter prevailing deficit perspectives on migrants and refugees and to promote literacy practices that recognize and integrate community knowledge.

The Alphabetter project team is committed to using this knowledge and understanding in the design of solutions and in the testing and refinement stages of the project. Given the complex and diverse cultural and political contexts in which each partner operates, we prefer to design adaptable tools with implementation guidance to serve community partners who regularly serve low literacy populations. To ensure that what we create meets the needs of the community, we plan to engage with iterative forms of piloting, feedback collection and revision in accordance with a design-based approach to implementation (Penuel et al., 2011). We will share insights from our contexts as we engage in these processes to offer generalized information in the field related to promoting basic literacy skills for adult populations with special needs across Europe.

#### **Engaging social partners**

Flight or political displacement represents a sudden, usually forced and unplanned break in people's biographies. Particularly for children and adolescents, unprepared separation from family, circle of friends, educational institutions, social and cultural environment marks a decisive turning point from previously experienced daily routines and familiar situations that shaped the child's life in the past and made it seem classifiable.

To illustrate the peaceful participation or preparation of refugee children for inclusion in the Austrian education system, a pilot project, organized and carried out on a volunteer basis using an educational approach, will be presented and used as an opportunity for good practice in the design of low-threshold educational offerings in collective housing facilities.

In 2015-2016, the pilot project "School in the Transition Quarter" offered escorted refugee children and youth an after-school educational space oriented toward multilingualism, diversity, peace, democracy and the individual resources of all participants, which developed in accordance with the basic conditions of the Transition Quarter.

In addition to facilitating children's guaranteed right to education and participation (cf. Unicef 2021, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 1990, Articles 28, 29; Articles 12, 13, 14), the education initiative focused on peace education and creating an open educational space for refugee children and youth. The target group was also jointly prepared for the upcoming individual transition to the Austrian education system.

#### Attention:

The literature sources used in this article were originally written in German. Direct and indirect references have been translated into English for a deeper understanding of the text in this article. However, the original citations are entirely in German. In addition, this scientific contribution is based on three published articles by the author herself (cf. Michitsch 2020a, 2020b and 2022).

Preliminary considerations - Educating children between arrival and departure

From September 2015 to February 2016, a total of 53,528 people applied for asylum in Austria, including 484 unaccompanied refugee minors under the age of 14 and 3,731 unaccompanied refugee minors between the ages of 14 and 18 (cf. Bundesministerium für Inneres 2015 and 2016).

The situation of refugee children and youths and their families' asylum requests go unnoticed when applying for asylum in Austria.

Unaccompanied refugee minors flee with their parents or primary caregivers. Although they are accompanied and cared for by familiar people, they are exposed to many dangerous situations while fleeing or in shared accommodation.

In order to illustrate the participation and inclusion of refugee minors in the education system, as well as their transition and successful placement, it is necessary to take even greater account and socio-political expression of interest in this group as early as the asylum application stage.

The relevance of this issue can be seen primarily from the fact that children and adolescents who have run away are affected by sudden gaps and longer interruptions in their educational biography. Due to individual

stories of flight, which can last several years, it is very common for such conditions to be a barrier to accessing the future education system. However, what is of interest at this point is not only the interrupted educational path, but the whole network of developed individual coping mechanisms that help refugee families and their children cope with difficult life situations in the best possible way (Schulze & Spindler 2017, p. 253).

When fleeing, adolescent refugees also find themselves in the precarious position of having to leave the country where they are "staying" with their families and continue their journey. Deep experiences of uprooting and inability to reach their destination arise along with questions about their destination and the uncertainty that comes with it. According to Zimmermann (2012, p. 45), the constant sense of having to be on the move can be described as a "chronification of temporariness," which in the absence or uncertain "prospects of staying does not allow for a stable normalcy" (Leitner 2017, p. 115) underscores the unique legal situation and associated "precarious residence situation in the host country" (Zimmermann 2012, p. 14) faced by refugee children and their families (see Rechtsinformationssystem des Bundes 2020; Bundesgesetz über die Gewährung von Asyl 2005).

**Precarious living conditions** - Collective housing as a temporary living environment for fleeing children and parents

When fleeing, fleeing families and their children usually find refuge in places of collective accommodation (such as the federal government's transitional quarters), where there is very little opportunity to find conditions suited to the needs of fleeing children and adolescents. The living conditions of children and adolescents in collective accommodations are further complicated by social escalation that resembles real-life risk scenarios experienced in the country of origin and the various collective experiences associated with them: because young refugees are usually in transit with their families and many others, they are rarely able to separate themselves from their own, often psychologically burdened parents or other refugee survivors of trauma, (cf. Gitschier 2017, p. 32) or find time to play in a safe environment and exchange ideas with their peers. Like refugees of all ages, refugee children and adolescents also suffer from "psychological disorders and traumatization with corresponding behavioral limitations that further strain their lives together" (Weiss 2009, p. 63).

Like refugees of all ages, refugee children and adolescents also suffer from "mental disorders and traumatization with corresponding behavioral limitations that put additional strain on living together" (Weiss 2009, p. 63), and because of their developmental stage, they are also at crucial times when they are particularly v u l n e r a b l e. The stresses experienced, the extraordinary "social and health conditions of life" (Behrensen & Westphal 2009, p. 50), can also lead to concentration problems and learning difficulties that severely worsen "the educational situation of young refugees" (ibid.) and, in many cases, hinder organized educational offerings for children and adolescents in collective housing (cf. Michitsch 2020a, 2022).

Due to the many individual experiences of flight and the associated traumatization, lack of space, lack of time, and the socioeconomic and familial insecurity they face during their travels, it is nearly impossible for young refugees to take advantage of or participate in educational opportunities. The lack of space, privacy and safe shelter is coupled with a lack of school supplies, age-appropriate toys, related school materials and educational opportunities that meet a child's right to education in a needs-based manner.

Like refugees of all ages, refugee children and adolescents also suffer from "mental disorders and traumatization with corresponding behavioral limitations that put additional strain on living together" (Weiss 2009, p. 63), and because of their developmental stage, they are also at crucial times when they are particularly v u I n e r a b I e . The stresses experienced, the extraordinary "social and health conditions of life" (Behrensen & Westphal 2009, p. 50), can also lead to concentration problems and learning difficulties that severely worsen the "educational situation of young refugees" (ibid.) and, if necessary, hinder organized educational offerings for children and adolescents in collective housing (cf. Michitsch 2020a, 2022).

Due to the many individual experiences of flight and the associated traumatization, lack of space, lack of time, and the socioeconomic and familial insecurity they face during their travels, it is nearly impossible for young refugees to take advantage of or participate in educational opportunities. The lack of space, privacy and safe shelter is coupled with a lack of school supplies, age-appropriate toys, related school materials and educational opportunities that meet a child's right to education in a needs-based manner.

Despite the precarious living conditions, the assumed lack of prospects for permanent residence, and the lack of space and time in places of collective accommodation, it is essential to create conditions of stability and security in places of collective accommodation for children and adolescents in transit, which complement the initial humanitarian and medical care provided by state aid organizations (such as the Red Cross) in education.

As effective ways of accompanying the educational and transitional processes of young refugees in an actionoriented and lifeworld-oriented way, the creation of (socio-)pedagogical structures and framework conditions that enable children to play, do pedagogical and educational work, or the possibility of separating young refugees and adapting existing spatial concepts (even if this often seems difficult due to the lack of space in places of collective accommodation) for use and design in pedagogical terms can be seen (cf. Michitsch 2020a).

#### Six action areas of effective, world-oriented co-creation education -

From cooperation to collaboration The fields of action of participatory, interest-based educational cooperation of people on the ground concerned not only children and adolescents, but also all people interested in educational offerings, while no selective distinction was made in the perception of "refugees." "helpers" or "teachers."

The six areas of action for local educational cooperation are as follows (Michitsch 2020a, 2022; Figure 1):



The transition quarter developed in accordance with these six parameters into a space for individually designed and perceived access to education, in which the individual competencies of children and young people were actively exposed on an equal footing, if desired and desired by them. The goal of the daily, interactive educational initiatives was to best anchor children's self-selected educational content in the community and shift children's competencies from invisibility to visibility. Strategies for making the inclusive concept of competence visible were found w language figurative, interactive activities music and dance, theater education or in the written, spoken or heard word (cf. Michitsch 2020a, 2022).

#### **Conclusions and outlook**

The jump into the deep end paid off for both children and adults

Due to their humanitarian nature, collective shelters rarely offer inclusive, resource-oriented educational cooperation for refugees on site. On-site medical and physical care comes to the fore. Moreover, recognizing education as a resource for refugees in a humanistic sense corresponds to a democratic human rights obligation that can be implemented in a low-threshold and therefore highly effective manner through (community) education initiatives.

In the case of "School in the Transition District," the structural, logistical, personnel and idealistic efforts more than paid off. During the seven months in which the educational initiative was conducted and developed, some 1,000 to 1,500 people received regular educational opportunities. Since education was rotated seven days a week for about ten hours a day, it was possible to ensure that the educational content covered the entire area and the needs of the students. Education time and educational goals were flexibly oriented to the target group, which participated with interest in the educational offerings (cf. Michitsch 2020b, 2022).

#### Empowerment and self-efficacy in different age groups

Experience own effectiveness designing programs education, as w well as in imparting professional competence and contributing their own ideas, surprisingly motivated increasingly more adults to children accompany and adolescents to learn, to be coaches and mentors for them, and thus to learn for themselves. This was accompanied by a desire for recognition and importance of sustainable investments in children's educational biographies (cf. Michitsch 2020b, 2022).

In addition to the high level of social responsibility that the adult community successively assumed, children and adolescents in turn assumed the role of educational motivators and encouragers, provided they encountered adults sincerely interested in educational offerings. The participatory and motivating effect of role models from children and youth created an inspiring and responsible sociodynamics in which education was experienced as a bonding group experience. In addition, the children's interest motivated many adults to participate in educational offerings so as not to disappoint the children in their euphoria. This observation clearly demonstrates the relational and social motivational nature of successful educational processes, as well as a sense of belonging that expands and intensifies in the a sense of together experienced experiences educational i success in the community. In this way, not only children and adolescents benefited from educational offerings, but also many adults (cf. Michitsch 2020b, 2022).

#### Education is about belonging: ".... because everyone goes to school...".

The growing willingness of children and adults to participate in educational activities could be recognized by the fact that friends and acquaintances also participated. The reason given by many participants

"[...] because everyone goes to school [...]" opened up a lively influx of educational offerings. In addition to intrinsic motivators, these were mainly socially induced, extrinsic factors for participating in the offerings. Reasons for participating in low-threshold educational offerings, as well as helping to shape them, were motivated by social and emotional factors related to morals and values, as well as work and employment (Michitsch 2020b, 2022 Figure 2):



Figure 2: Michitsch 2020 b, 2022: Reasons for participating in educational cooperation.

The entire educational initiative "School in the Transition District" abandoned the path of purely educational work and instead followed the path of developing successful educational cooperation. The sustainability of the project was based mainly on smooth, resource-oriented cooperation, mutual support and the meeting of all participants without prejudice. The open educational space became a stable and diverse platform for resource-rich diversity and sustainability despite (or because of) the unstable, biographical living conditions and upheavals of young refugees. In this way, an important field of action of educational cooperation related to the lifeworld could be initiated in the Transition Quarter through the opening of a designed educational access that was maintained for a period of seven months (cf. Michitsch 2020b, 2022).

To sum up, it can be said that interactive educational initiatives require not only enthusiasm and belief in the success, is ensitivness of the offerings, but first and foremost, the active cooperation of all local residents who a r e the addressees of the educational work. It is necessary to use all the competencies and human resources of children, adolescents and adult refugees, as they are the guarantors of educational cooperation oriented to the needs and appropriate for the target group. The resource-oriented encounter of the educational team with each other is also central to the transcultural view of education, which, in addition to self-education, first and foremost recognizes an increase in the quality of diversity-conscious cooperation as a milestone of successful integration.

#### **Bibliography**

- Beckord, S. (2011): Qualitätsprofil "Frühpädagogik" Fachschule/Fachakademie. München: WiFF.
- Behrensen, B. & Westphal, M. (2009): Junge Flüchtlinge ein blinder Fleck in der Migrations- und Bildungsforschung. Bildung junger Flüchtlinge als Randthema in der migrationspolitischen Diskussion. In: Krappmann, L., Lob-Hüdepohl, A., Bohmeyer, A. & Kurzke-Maasmeier, S. (Ed.), Bildung für junge Flüchtlinge - ein Menschenrecht. Erfahrungen, Grundlagen und Perspektiven (pp. 45-58). Bielefeld: Bertelsmann.
- Bundesministerium f
  ür Inneres (2015): Asylstatistik 2015. Republik Österreich, Sektion III Recht. Accessed on 11.02.2021 under www.bmi.gv.at/301/Statistiken/files/Jahresstatistiken/Asyl\_Jahresstatistik\_2015.pdf.
- Bundesministerium für Inneres (2016): Asylstatistik 2016. Republik Österreich, Sektion III Recht. Accessed on 11.02.2021 under www.bmi.gv.at/301/Statistiken/files/Jahresstatistiken/Jahresstatistik\_Asyl\_2016.pdf.
- Bundesverband Alphabetisierung und Grundbildung e.V. (2011): Funktionaler Analphabetismus im Kontext von Familie und Partnerschaft. Münster: Waxmann.
- Hofer (2022): Leseinitiative "Bildung fängt mit Lesen an". Online. Accessed on 09.05.2022 URL: https://www. hofer.at/de/heute-fuer-morgen/fokusthemen/weitere-themen/leseprojekt.html.
- Gitschier, L. (2017): Die prekäre soziale Lage junger Flüchtlinge Eine strukturell bedingte Wirkungsgröße der extremen Belastungssituation. In: Bleher, W. & Gingelmaier, S. (Ed.), Kinder und Jugendliche nach der Flucht. Notwendige Bildungs- und Bewältigungsangebote (pp. 22-38). Weinheim und Basel: Beltz.
- IQS (2022): Individuelle Kompetenzmessung PLUS. Online. Accessed on 07.05.2022 URL: https://www.iqs. gv.at/themen/nationale-kompetenzerhebung/ikm-plus.
- Mayringer, H.; Wimmer, H.; Auer, Michaela; Gruber, G. (o.J.): Salzburger Lese-Screening 5-8 (SLS). Handbuch. Online. Accessed on 08.05.2022 URL: https://lesen.tibs.at/sites/default/files/lesekompetenz/ SLS/Handbuch%20SLS%205-8.pdf.
- Michitsch, V. (2020a): Bildung auf Augenhöhe. Partizipativ gestaltete Bildung für Menschen auf der Flucht. Die Österreichische Volkshochschule. Magazin für Erwachsenenbildung, 2019/2020 (269). Accessed on 10.02.2021 under http://magazin.vhs.or.at/magazin/2019-2/269-winter-201920/schwerpunkt-interessegeleiteteslernen-interesse-entwicklung/bildung-auf-augenhoehe/.
- Michitsch, V. (2020b): Bildung auf Augenhöhe. Das Transitquartier als personalisierter Bildungsort. Die Österreichische Volkshochschule. Magazin für Erwachsenenbildung, 2020 (270). Accessed on 10.02.2021 under http://magazin.vhs.or.at/magazin/2020-2/270-sommer-2020/bildungsthemen/bildung-auf-augenhoehe/.
- Michitsch, V. (2022): Education at Eye Level: Transitional Quarters as Educational Spaces for Participatory Learning Processes of Accompanied Refugee Children and Adolescents. In: Hermansen, M.; Aslan, E.; Akkilic,
  - E. (Ed.): Peace Education and Religion: Perspectives, Pedagogy, Policies. Springer VS: Wiesbaden.
- OECD, European Union, UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2015): ISCED 2011 Operational Manual: Guidelines for Classifying National Education Programmes and Related Qualifications. OECD Publishing. URL: http:// uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/isced-2011-operational-manual-guidelines-for-classifyingnational-education-programmes-and-related-qualifications-2015-en\_1.pdf [abgerufen am 22.09.2022].
- Rechnungshof Österreich (2020): Leseförderung an Schulen. Bericht des Rechnungshofes. Online. Accessed on 07.05.2022 URL: https://www.rechnungshof.gv.at/rh/home/home/004.714\_Lesefoerderung.pdf
- Rechtsinformationssystem des Bundes (2005): Bundesgesetz über die Gewährung von Asyl. Bundesrecht konsolidiert: Gesamte Rechtsvorschrift für Asylgesetz 2005. Accessed on 31.08.2020 under www.ris.bka. gv.at/GeltendeFassung.wxe?Abfrage=Bundesnormen&Gesetzesnummer=920004240.
- Rechtsinformationssystem des Bundes (2020): Gesamte Rechtsvorschrift für das Schulpflichtgesetz 1985.
   Rechtsinformationssystem des Bundes (2020): Bundesrecht konsolidiert. Accessed on 31.08.2020 under www.ris.bka.gv.at/GeltendeFassung.wxe?Abfrage=Bundesnormen&Gesetzesnummer=10009576
- Roth, X. (Hrsg.) (2013): Handbuch Bildungs- und Erziehungspartnerschaften Zusammenarbeit mit Eltern in der Kita. Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder Verlag.
- Schulze, E. & Spindler, S. (2017): Schule als sicherer Ort. Flucht als Herausforderung f
  ür Soziale Arbeit und Schule. In: Gewerkschaft Erziehung und Wissenschaft (Ed.): Die Deutsche Schule. Zeitschrift f
  ür

Erziehungswissenschaft, Bildungspolitik und pädagogische Praxis: Flucht und Bildung, 2017 (109/3). pp. 248-259. Münster: Waxmann.

 Unicef (1990/2021): Die UN-Kinderrrechtskonvention. Regelwerk zum Schutz der Kinder weltweit. Accessed on 10.02.2021 under https://www.unicef.de/informieren/ueber-uns/fuer-kinderrechte/unkinderrechtskonvention.

