

**EXTENDED  
SCHOOL STRATEGY DOCUMENT  
FOR ENCOURAGING A READING  
AND WRITING CULTURE BASED  
ON INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY  
VALUES**



ACCESOPHIA

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1. Why is it beneficial for schools and why is it important to have a STORYWEB strategy at school. Refer to the general overview of country's situation, pandemic and country's specific background.

## UK

(instils literacy, develop empathy, celebrate difference and equality, a powerful tool to challenge stereotype and discrimination, creative writing, improve confidence, help build vocabulary and literacy, enable young people to have the space to let their imagination run wild and become creative through creative thinking, storyboarding, storytelling, art or poetry)

Boosting literacy is at the heart of our approach, needed more than ever in the current situation, for disadvantaged children in particular, not only because of existing low literacy levels in English schools, but because the Covid pandemic has seen the gap in literacy levels get worse, affecting achievement overall.

In the United Kingdom, research has shown that one in five children in England cannot read well by the age of 11, when they make the transition from the primary to the secondary school system, with only 35 per cent of 10-year-olds in England saying that they like reading “very much”.

Further research shows that the situation does not improve significantly as children get older. 18 per cent of 15-year-olds across the UK do not have a minimum level of literacy proficiency. And children from disadvantaged backgrounds are falling behind too.

40 per cent of disadvantaged children were unable to read well by the time they left primary school at age 11, double the overall proportion. And the older children get, the wider this gap becomes. By the final year of compulsory schooling in England, at age 16, the reading skills of children from disadvantaged backgrounds are on average almost three years behind those from the most affluent homes.

We now know that competence and confidence in literacy, including competence in grammar, spelling and the spoken word, are essential for progress in all areas of the curriculum; Students are less able to learn other curricula if they do not develop sufficient reading skills by the middle of primary school.

We therefore see this literacy gap feeding through into overall results, with only 40 per cent of disadvantaged students achieving good grades in English and maths GCSEs (the exams taken in English schools at age 16, which act as the gateway to higher level school studies and university), compared with 64 per cent of all students.

The pandemic, which saw schools closed for long periods both in 2020 and in early 2021, has made these attainment gaps worse. According to the Education Policy Institute think tank, this lengthy disruption to education in England “swept away a decade of progress in closing the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers”. The gap at primary school has increased for the first time since 2007 and disadvantaged pupils in England are now 18.1 months of overall learning behind their peers by the time they finish their GCSEs at age 16.

A focus on literacy is therefore a key element in addressing increasing disadvantage, and should be seen as a vital component of the UK government’s desire to “build back better” post-pandemic. This is not only about academic achievement, but also because without the foundation of literacy, full participation in society is impossible – all the more important in the context of continuing discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, disability and sexuality, as well as refugee/asylum-seeker status - discrimination which has been bolstered, and increased, through the UK debate on Brexit and its aftermath. Alongside an alarming rise in far-Right movements in the UK, the number of race-hate incidents has significantly increased after the Brexit referendum in 2016, and misogyny and homophobic bullying in schools is also increasing.

Our approach is therefore also about challenging discriminatory stereotypes and celebrating difference, using literacy work to improve confidence and expand creativity and empathy – benefiting all students whatever their background or personal circumstances. In this way our strategies for the development of Weaving Webs of Stories can also be an important component of schools’ policies and practices encouraging equalities and inclusivity.

## **BULGARIA**

Reading books, writing stories, encouraging creativity and providing a space where children of different ages, backgrounds and levels of literacy can communicate in a safe environment is a task that schools of today have managed to somehow neglect. Focus being set of academic areas and encouraging children to strive for a better performance in them, the Bulgarian system of education is setting high expectations for all children. In general, reading and to a greater extent writing, have fallen behind maths, analytical essays, standard testing and simply reproducing facts and figures that have been memorised.

Why with STORYWEB do we shift the focus to reading and creative writing, then? Research shows that students who write more frequently perform better not only in essay exams or other tests that require writing but also on multiple-choice tests in many other subjects. By engaging children in activities that inspire them to write or create stories and poetry, by giving them positive feedback, editing and revision, they will start building their reasoning and thinking skills. So, other academic areas which are not falling into the scope of this project

might also be a subject of improvement. We cannot monitor these results but a better performance in social studies, science and mathematics could be a side effect of developing writing skills in children. Besides, writing somehow always supports reading skills and all the above-mentioned disciplines involve reading a lot. Our experience shows that children with reading disabilities show much poorer progress in maths, for instance, because most of the tasks require a profound understanding of the question and slow reading or writing comprehension would impede the solving of the respective drill.

Bulgaria is a country with an overall population of 7 million people, population aged 14 years and younger represents 15% of the total and compulsory education lasts 11 years from age 5 to age 15. There is an alarming rise in the number of out-of-school children and illiterate people aged 15-24. (According to UNESCO Institute of Statistics).

Traditionally, Bulgaria falls behind all the countries screened by PISA – 44% of Bulgarian children aged 15 - 16 are able to do only basic calculations and cannot apply theoretical knowledge in maths into practice. Reading is even less developed - in Bulgaria, 53% of students attained at least Level 2 proficiency in reading (OECD average: 77%). At a minimum, these students can identify the main idea in a text of moderate length, find information based on explicit, though sometimes complex criteria, and can reflect on the purpose and form of texts when explicitly directed to do so. Reading builds skills related to critical thinking and innovativeness. Students who embrace reading are able to solve more questions and carry out tasks quicker and in a more versatile manner, which usually leads to them emerging as the best in class. When reading is started at an early age and students have a firmly installed reading culture by the time they reach secondary and upper secondary education, they will easily conduct research, which is otherwise often feared and avoided, because research itself is a reading process. Reading generally makes it easier to make meaning out of the information collected or presented, hence making one's own analysis and conclusions possible, quick and which is most important – as adequate as possible. Due to the fact that the reader processes information quicker and easier, he or she thus has the chance to go through more sources and larger contents of data, before making one conclusion or another.

Having set the initial data, and having managed to establish connections with schools and children, and following the above thoughts we had to face the pandemic and all our plans and ideas had to be re-considered.

The focus, however, remained the same – by encouraging children to read, act out and create stories we are to give children a space where they can feel safe to think, read, make mistakes, learn important lessons about empathy and equality, how it feels to be different and what friendship means to us. And by creating a safe space where we can share thoughts and feelings, we can also find a very subtle way to discuss and promote the values outlined by the Weaving Webs of Stories Project.

Luckily, our remastered endeavour actually proved to be a good aid to the time and efforts teachers are devoting to online education, which is making the educational process, especially

for the younger students, more challenging. Reading and telling stories in an online story-club proved to be a fun, pleasant, intriguing and motivating way to hold the children's attention and assist the process of improving their literacy.

## **LITHUANIA**

The updated Lithuanian General Framework for Basic Education states that "the content of education should encourage pupils to develop a tolerant attitude towards physical, religious, social, cultural and human differences", and the "expected results" section notes that the pupil "respects and tolerates people of different cultures, social groups and age groups of both sexes and both genders, is aware of his/her own and others' rights and duties, and understands himself/ herself as a member of the community and the society". In 2013, Lithuania adopted the Plan of Measures for Improving Lithuanian Language and Cultural Literacy Teaching 2013-2016, which aims to improve the quality of literacy and to create a supportive public attitude towards Lithuanian education.

The context of research on the level of tolerance and education prior to 2010 shows that there is a lack of research on the level of respect and socio-cultural tolerance among 13-16 year olds, both in Lithuania and worldwide. The discrepancy between the educational goals in terms of tolerance and respect among adolescents and the actual educational means to achieve them encourages the development of research to find the underlying assumptions in the discourse on tolerance education and the development of new approaches.

Since the restoration of Lithuania's independence, the moral aspects of education have been drawn in a particularly sharp line. The importance of values-based education is not accentuated in today's Lithuanian and European education legislation by accident: scientific research supports the impact of moral values on pupils' achievement, thinking and positive social behaviour. The study suggests that moral values are moderately important in current educational practice: moral values (respect, tolerance, responsibility, trust, communication and cooperation) were explicitly stated in nearly a quarter of the teachers' reflections, and implicit in nearly a third of the teachers' written statements.

The survey reveals that various pedagogical difficulties have an impact on pupils' value education: by mentioning values, teachers highlight the problems they face in organising education, recognising pupils' emotions, and understanding the reasons for pupils' behaviour. It is evident that educators have to devote considerable effort to making sense of pupils' activities, to creating the conditions for pupils to adopt instrumental values. It is noticeable that the school usually has only short-term goals and the best understanding of the pupil's current moral situation. Teachers rated the relevance of socio-cultural differences in the content of the subjects they teach. In almost all schools, differences related to disability and

ethnic diversity are the most emphasised. In general, socio-cultural differences are most important for teachers in Klaipėda and least important for teachers in Vilnius. In all schools, disability, ethnic and religious diversity are the most important issues, while sexual orientation differences and gender inequality are the least.

The distribution of the debate on gender inequality is mixed. They are more often discussed only sometimes or never. Homosexual people are also rarely discussed. Almost one in two teachers in Vilnius (49%) discuss gender inequality only sometimes or never. Up to 78% of educators surveyed in Vilnius hardly discuss homosexual people. Gender inequality is also not a favourite topic among younger educators who have been working in schools for less than 5 years. Almost one in two of them (46%) stated that they rarely or never discuss this topic with their pupils during lessons. The topic of homosexual social groups is rarely or never discussed by 62% of educators under 35 and 67% of educators with 6-10 years of schooling.

Teachers usually discuss the material in the textbook about different socio-cultural groups, use supplementary material and talk about discrimination and its causes. The situation of discriminated groups in other countries is the least often analysed, and almost a third of teachers rarely talk about stereotypes, their origins and consequences, and rarely analyse the situation of discriminated groups in Lithuania or the history of socially excluded groups. This study does not reveal the reasons why one or another topic is rarely analysed. This is likely to be related to the training of educators, a lack of knowledge and tools, and a lack of subjective assessment of the importance of these issues.

Most of the time, teachers collect methodological literature, articles, photos or videos about different ethnic groups, but less often they work with pupils to create visual material or organise excursions to foreign countries. Other multicultural education activities are very rare. Lack of knowledge, experience, imagination or time means that less attention is paid to more creative and engaging methods and projects.

In summary, there is a lack of attention in schools today to issues of social and cultural diversity and respect for human rights. This view is shared by almost one in two (47%) of the teachers who took part in the survey. In summary, a large proportion of pupils (between one-third and two-thirds) are not exposed to multicultural awareness-raising activities at school. The learning environment does not pay enough attention to issues of socio-cultural diversity and respect for human rights (40% of the pupils surveyed think so), especially to presenting these issues in creative and engaging ways.

## ROMANIA

(instills literacy, develop empathy, celebrate difference and equality, a powerful tool to challenge stereotype and discrimination, creative writing, improve confidence, help build vocabulary and literacy, enable young people to have the space to let their imagination run wild and become creative through creative thinking, storyboarding, storytelling, art or poetry) Literacy lies at the basis of human development: it is not only a sine qua non for learning but also it enables people to enjoy a decent and active life in their communities and society. Literacy impacts all aspects of life, from school to employment and from health care to social life. Literacy difficulties cause problems. Literacy difficulties lead to inequalities in society by increasing the risk of poverty and social exclusion. However, given the right support, everyone can develop adequate literacy skills to participate in society.

According to UNESCO Romania has an adult literacy rate of 98.84% (the percentage of people aged 15 and above, who can both read and write short simple statements about their everyday life). The female literacy rate is 98.6% compared to male literacy which is 99.11%. The literacy rate **has increased in recent years**.

Romania - Literacy rate						
Date	Adult literacy rate female	Adult literacy rate male	Adult literacy rate	Adult literacy rate 15-24 female	Adult literacy rate 15-24 male	Adult literacy rate 15-24
2018	98.60%	99.11%	98.84%	99.44%	99.42%	99.43%
2011	98.21%	99.03%	98.60%	98.98%	99.01%	99.00%
2002	96.27%	98.40%	97.30%	97.78%	97.74%	97.76%

However, the numbers are alarming in terms of the rate of functional illiteracy: **42% of 15-year-olds are functionally illiterate (PISA), that is** although these young people know how to read, write, and make basic calculations, **their ability to understand what they read or to solve simple math and science exercises is limited**; this makes it more difficult for them to function in society. At the same time, according to a EU Country Report published in 2020, 'the education system in Romania continues to face significant challenges in terms of quality and inclusiveness'. The main causes stem from the curriculum and learning methods based on memorization and not on understanding the concepts.

The coronavirus pandemic has deepened the crisis, according to an analysis conducted by Save the Children Romania. The functional illiteracy has deepened since the COVID-19 crisis, while the dropout has increased. Many students cannot adapt to the new learning methods or they do not have the possibility of attending online classes.

The European project, Weaving webs of stories, is expected not only to improve young people's literacy skills but also to develop a broader understanding of inclusion and equality, and enhance children's creativity, self-confidence and motivation to learn and become lifelong readers. The STORYWEB strategy enables teachers to gain skills in storytelling and teaching creative writing with a view to improving children's literacy skills, stimulating their motivation



to study and boosting their pride and self-confidence. Schools gain both an understanding of strategic approaches to improving literacy and fostering positive attitudes to inclusion and equality, and the expertise to sustain activities and positive outcomes. The STORYWEB strategy at school is a powerful tool to challenge stereotype and discrimination, develop empathy and celebrate difference and equality. The STORYWEB strategy enables young people to have the space to let their imagination run wild and become creative through creative thinking, storyboarding, storytelling, art or poetry.

<http://uis.unesco.org/en/country/ro>

## **GREECE**

Incidents of intolerance, bullying, oppression, injustice and racism are unfortunately very common in European reality today. And Greece is not an exception. But is education, literacy, and reading habits related to the above facts?

Interestingly, yes!

Studies in psychology draw a strong connection between reading fiction and better performance on widely used empathy and social acumen tests. Scientists tested participants on their ability to recognize author names, which helped them gauge how much fiction they read. Then, participants completed the Interpersonal Reactivity Index, which scores people across different dimensions of empathy.

Participants also took the “Mind of the Eyes” assessment, which tested people on their ability to detect and understand visual cues of other people’s thoughts and emotions. In this test, participants matched words of emotions to photos of people’s eyes. The team found that the more names of fiction authors that participants knew — and the more fiction they presumably read — the higher they scored on empathy tests.

Although there are many ways to cultivate empathy, they largely involve practising positive social behaviours, like getting to know others, putting yourself in their shoes and challenging one's own biases. And stories — fictional ones in particular — offer another way to step outside of oneself.

Fiction and storytelling has the capacity to transport you into another character’s mind, allowing you to see and feel what they do. This can expose us to life circumstances that are very different from our own. Through fiction, we can experience the world as another gender, ethnicity, culture, sexuality, profession or age. Words on a page can introduce us to what it's like to lose a parent, be swept up in a war, be born into poverty, or leave home and immigrate

to a new country. And taken together, this can influence how we relate to others in the real world.

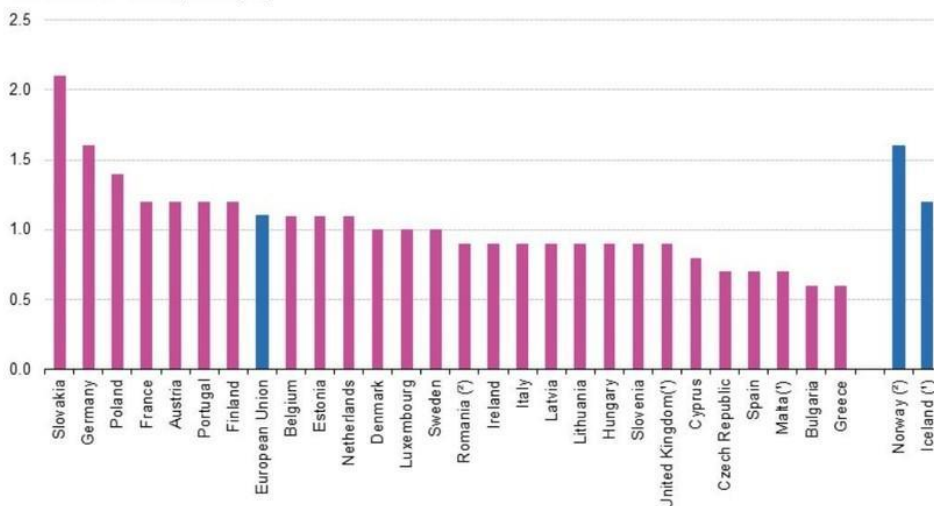
“Fiction and stories do a lot of things for us,” says William Chopik, a psychologist at the University of Michigan. “They expose us to uncomfortable ideas ... and provide us with the opportunity to take other peoples’ perspectives in a safe, distanced way. In that way, fiction serves as a playground for exercising empathic skills.”

Weaving Webs of Stories project, aims at creating a reading culture at schools, where as we all know children start to socialise, understand themselves as parts of the bigger group and enrich their personalities.

Especially in Greece, where less people spend money on books and newspapers compared with other countries (see diagram) it's important to introduce a literature habit in the early years.

The literature sessions in Greek schools are limited and they are usually suppressed, giving priority to the curriculum. Thus a Weaving Webs of Stories strategy is essential in order to support children to understand each other, develop problem solving mentality and cultivate an environment of understanding and respect.

Share of newspapers, books and stationery in total household expenditure in the EU Member States, 2016 (%)



Especially during the period of pandemic, where the stress and oppression became even bigger and affected the well-being and psychology of the most vulnerable, stories could help children imagine a better tomorrow, comfort the stress for the continuous changes and the unknown future, turn their boredom into creativity and express themselves in a distant safe way.

## FINLAND

Even though Finland is seen as quite a homogenous country, there have been many cultures present in Finland throughout history - Swedish is the second official language in Finland due to historical reasons, and Swedish-speakers comprise 5.2 % of the population, whereas the Sámi are indigenous people living in the north of Finland. Approximately 7.1 % of the residents in Finland are of foreign background, i.e. they speak a language other than Finnish, Swedish or Sámi. The majority of foreign nationals living in Finland are from the neighbouring countries, Russia and Estonia, but there are also large groups from very different cultures; the next largest language groups are Arabic, English, Somali, Kurdish, Persian, Chinese, Albanian and Vietnamese. In addition to more recent Iraqi and Syrian refugees, there is a long history of political refugees from Somalia since the early 1990s, and now the second generation are native Finnish speakers and more integrated into the Finnish society.

Due to these very different backgrounds of the migrants in Finland, and the fact that so many areas that used to be homogenous have become more multicultural in recent years, it is important for schools to take part in increasing awareness of diversity and promoting cultural inclusion. Storytelling workshops dealing with these issues in a practical, playful and fun way is an excellent method and resource for schools, where they can include students from different backgrounds without them having to necessarily be on the same level of literacy or language skills.

Storytelling not only develops literacy and language skills, vocabulary and writing, it also improves imagination, creative thinking and confidence in telling and creating your own stories, as well as social connections. It is important for young students to learn to know each others' background and origin and develop mutual understanding and empathy. This is what the storytelling workshops aim to achieve with sharing and cooperation.

## SPAIN

Our WWS project was developed practically in the middle of the global pandemic of COVID-19. On the one hand, this confronted us with the challenge of rethinking, remodeling and gradually adapting the strategy and content to the changing situation. On the other hand, the negative effect of the pandemic intensified the problem with reading comprehension specifically and reading in a broader sense. We can confirm, however, that our implementation of the project "step by step", in some cases following the specific needs that

arose over these two years, and in others, even anticipating them, was an experience to all test, more solid and in w sometimes some deficiencies have led to important improvements.

According to a study by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), more than 100 million children will have fallen below the minimum proficiency level in reading as a result of school closures due to the pandemic. of COVID-19. The number of students with this lack was decreasing before the emergency, but the figure shot up to 20% and canceled the advances of twenty years.

In this sense, the UN has referred to the effect of the pandemic on education as a "generational catastrophe" that would last decades with a negative impact. This problem is, without a doubt, much more pronounced in disadvantaged groups. The WWS strategy aims precisely to counteract this reality.

The fifth edition of the International Congress on Early Childhood and Primary Reading Comprehension (CICLIP), an initiative carried out in Spain by the Leobien Association in collaboration with the Supertics Method and Edebé, which aims to promote reading and improve reading comprehension, reveals to us the status quo in the matter, along with the greatest challenges and possible solutions.

According to data from the CICLIP 2021 Barometer on reading comprehension in Early Childhood and Primary, based on more than 3,000 surveys with teachers, 60% of teachers consider that their training is not sufficient to develop strategies that improve the current level of reading comprehension of his students. The majority of teachers (80%) are in favor of receiving more training to adapt to the needs of each student. The teachers interviewed recognize a large number of leisure alternatives available - mobile phones and video games - as the main cause of demotivation for reading. In this sense, through our contents of the WWS Project, we have opted to integrate digital alternatives and developed on screens, without detriment to the promotion of traditional reading on paper, such as, for example, our Booktubers module where students had to recommend their favorite book for a Youtube channel.

Both the number of books read and the number of hours dedicated to promoting reading is reduced in schools. 9 out of 10 teachers, according to the CICLIP Barometer, express the need to reinforce reading comprehension outside the hours of conventional subjects, considering it transversal and key to student performance. The document collects evidence that dedicating a greater number of hours to reading in schools is associated with better behavior in all the indicators associated with it. Several teachers highlight the fact that reading competence has a very important "pragmatic utility: being able to use it in our day to day life to understand the world in which we move".

Several experts participating in CICLIP point out the importance for the development of reading comprehension of three skills that have to do with both linguistic and psychological aspects: attention, memory, and inference. Precisely these have been very relevant when it comes to structuring our content, by trying to combine the greatest number of possible factors that bring us closer to our objectives.

2. Values to be promoted: lifelong reading and young people's active engagement in standing up for equality, inclusion, and diversity. Why we have chosen these values: meaning and impact.

## UK

We want to promote literacy - reading for pleasure particularly; and, at the same time, enable young people to challenge stereotypes and intolerance and become advocates for inclusion and equality (after gaining creative writing and storytelling skills through their participation in the WWS Project).

At the heart of our strategy are the values of equality and inclusion, without which our education systems will continue to fail large numbers of children. This is based on the understanding that inclusion and equality have to be taught as an ongoing activity throughout the school year, and that improving literacy is central to this, along with addressing shortfalls in the content of the wider curriculum. Weaving Webs of Stories is trying to demonstrate the importance of this through our pilots in our countries.

In relation to questions about racism and racial equality, for example, the focus has often been on activity related to Black History Month, as research by the Runnymede Trust research institute and think tank has found. Work to mark Black History Month and celebrate the contribution of Black people was often dependent on individual teachers, rather than being institutionalised in school practice, according to Runnymede. "While Black History Month (BHM) offers a useful catalyst for the centring of race, and specifically blackness, it is telling that BHM was often the totality of what teachers were able to say about race, diversity and anti-racism in the curriculum," their research found.

Our strategy sets out that the curriculum has the power to change views and adopt positive attitudes. A well-sequenced, knowledge-rich curriculum, based around subject disciplines, can help students to acquire a sense of place and a framework for understanding cultural diversity. Unfortunately, the UK government has refused to accede to the increasing demands to revise

the curriculum (with books and resources to teach children inclusion and equality) from academics, educationalists and education NGOs.

In fact, there is growing concern about the narrowing of the curriculum and the lack of an inclusive curriculum, increasing under the influence of the Black Lives Matter movement which has won significant support in the UK. According to education consultant Prem Patel: “Through no fault of their own, our curriculum leaves one group of children feeling inferior and another group with a sense of superiority. Black children don’t see themselves reflected back, and end up feeling they can’t be the person they see in the inspiring story.”

As Demie says: “The evidence from research suggests that the British school curriculum focuses on British culture and history and ignores ethnic minorities, special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and disadvantaged and excluded pupils in the curriculum...In particular, students from minority backgrounds continue to face challenges in the schooling system with regards to adequate representation and their experiences are rarely reflected in the curriculum, while those from dominant sociocultural groups are often centralised and normalised in the school curriculum in England.

“I would argue that in a multicultural society there is a need to develop and use an inclusive curriculum that recognises that students in schools come from a range of different backgrounds and differ by age, gender, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, faith and SEND. An inclusive curriculum understands that this diversity is a key strength which provides learning opportunities for all our students and staff.”

The damage that can be caused by a narrow approach has been well expressed by Nigerian novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, in a lecture focusing on literacy and the power of stories, to “empower and humanise”, or alternatively the power of a “single story” to “dispossess and to malign” and to “break the dignity of a people”.

She says: “The consequence of the single story is this: It robs people of dignity. It makes our recognition of our equal humanity difficult. It emphasizes how we are different rather than how we are similar. So that is how to create a single story, show a people as one thing, as only one thing, over and over again, and that is what they become.

“It is impossible to talk about the single story without talking about power. There is a word, an Igbo word, that I think about whenever I think about the power structures of the world, and it is "nkali." It's a noun that loosely translates to "to be greater than another." Like our economic and political worlds, stories too are defined by the principle of nkali: How they are

told, who tells them, when they're told, how many stories are told, are really dependent on power.”

Our approach therefore is about telling everyone’s story, not the “single story” that encourages consideration of difference, and discrimination in the interests of the powerful.

It also builds on the growing body of evidence about the importance of “deep reading”, of the kind that occurs in effective English classrooms as students engage with texts that tackle complex themes such as racism, otherness, and colonialism.

As New Zealand’s Education Hub network has pointed out: “Deep reading enables people to not only encounter but also to inhabit, through their immersive engagement with a written text, different lives, different perspectives and different worlds. Reading books and longer articles also is one of the best ways to learn how to think critically, understand complex issues and separate fact from fiction.”

Our strategy, fundamentally, is about literacy as a human right; the right to tell our own stories, and the right of all of us to hear those stories.

## **BULGARIA**

Reading should be used as an instrument promoting active engagement and the development of an open mind, recognizing inequality, stereotypes and discrimination when such appear in the environment. If we want our children and young people to start with their adequate social contributions to a better future for all, we need to be properly present in their lives and to gently help them in their choices of literature. Why? Because in order to achieve the desired mind-set, we need to lead our young readers through books delivering quality content, regardless of the form of delivery. It can be prose, poems, comic books or cartoons, as long as the message is right – any medium fits. Reading should impose no limitations as to what we love to read. Otherwise, the love for reading will either wither or not blossom at all.

As we already mentioned, books can be used for promoting values and morals. It is therefore important for the book reading facilitator to have a rough outline of what those values and morals would be. Naturally, no one can be exhaustive in this list, but there are some basics, mentioned in the title of this chapter, that need to find their place in the literature the teacher or facilitator covers. In the best-case scenario, the values and virtues the selected books promote, are reflected in the lives of the significant adults walking the path besides the child. It is really hard even for the best book to serve its purpose, if the living example shouts a different message.



The teacher or reading workshop facilitator should be equipped with a variety of reading materials for the different levels of maturity and/or literacy. Every child, regardless of its specific status at a current point of its development or regardless of its special needs, should be acquainted with adequate content, passing on the desired message.

The message of the book should be delivered in an intriguing way – a mere list of commandments or recommendations would do no one any good. So, find those literary examples, which manage to wrap the desired values in engulfing content that stimulates the mind and imagination. The reading workshop facilitator should remember that good books encourage a child's self-education. That is, they should foster further conversation about the story and provoke questions about why the characters are acting one way or another. Good books make the reader or listener think, wonder, and want to find out more and the chances for planting those values firmly grow immensely.

The facilitator should also be careful about the manner of sharing values with the children, because if we approach this with the confidence that we have no blanks for filling, this would mean that we are indeed far from the values we want to promote and that the chances of preaching and teaching exactly what we know would lead to limiting the child's knowledge on a certain subject. The child should be given a chance to understand the topic on its own and formulate the understanding in a way, which the child owns and can live by.

The values, which have been selected to be covered by the WWS project - equality, inclusion and diversity – when upheld and lived by - unlock human potential to its fullest and create an accepting, nourishing and cherishing environment, which can allow this potential to reach its maturity and give the fruit that everyone would enjoy.

Equality does not mean that people are the same, even, indistinguishable. It means that they have the equal liberties, status and rights, among which civil rights, freedom of speech, property rights, and equal access to certain social goods and social services. Social equality requires the absence of legally enforced social class or caste boundaries and the absence of discrimination, motivated by an inalienable part of a person's identity.

The practice of making equality work is inclusion – allowing equal access to those liberties, status and rights, which can help you flourish, regardless of background, skin colour, ethnos, religion, disability, etc.

Diversity is the ultimate manifestation of what happens when equality and inclusion are working. Diversity feeds society with what is necessary in order to be progressive, to widen perspectives, to imagine solutions and to prevent problems that would need to be solved.



The books we have chosen are not singularly dedicated to promoting these values, since most children's books are designed with a message and a moral, so we need to focus on discussions about the values we are promoting, not on advertising them.

## LITHUANIA

We use non-formal learning methods and build on the active participation and personal experiences of children. The participation of the children and their cooperation are helpful in building group cohesion and breaking down prejudices between group members. They increase the understanding of complex terminology, improve problem-solving skills and promote creativity and practical relevance.

Adults should not be misled into assuming that, as educators, they are in possession of the ultimate truth. Children will bring their experiences into the educational process, and those who want to keep their interest and ensure their successful development must actively refer to these experiences. Questions and even conflicts should be viewed as elementary educational resources that should be assessed positively.

Children are indeed very busy with their immediate social environment, their culture and their friends, but they are also curious about the world: about other cultures, other regions and other people. In our workshops, stories and situations from many regions with different cultural backgrounds are used. This colorful diversity prompts the children to think about different cultures and to develop a stable identity on this basis. As the British educator Reva Klein explains, children don't just acquire knowledge about the lives of other children, they empathize, show solidarity and understand their role as actors on a more global scale.

## ROMANIA

The main values to be implemented are equality, diversity, and inclusion, which are in line with the evolution of our world. 'Diversity' defines the very diverse nature of our society. Diversity is about recognising and valuing difference, where everyone is respected for who they are regardless of their social class, gender, disability or ability, family status, etc. The project takes into account differences and aims to remove barriers people may face, in relation to ethnicity, religion, disability, gender, belief or sexual orientation. We believe that diversity is a strength, which should be respected and valorised.

'Equality' relies on the recognition, respect and acceptance of the diversity of individuals and group needs. Equality is about creating a fairer society based on access, participation and benefits for all citizens, where everyone can participate and contribute to the welfare of the society and where everyone has the opportunity to achieve their potential.

‘Inclusion’ promotes an educational environment where each child is welcomed and included so that they feel a deep sense of belonging and can progress to their full potential.

We believe that literature is an invaluable tool which can be used to enable teachers to develop practices and approaches that embrace diversity, equality and inclusion and, through this, to create an inclusive culture where all children can flourish and realise their potential. We believe that literature is an invaluable tool which can be used to enable children to explore and understand the richness of diversity of our world. We believe that literature is an invaluable tool which can be used to enable children to develop lifelong inclusive practices. Stories embracing diversity, equality and inclusion topics are a rich vital learning source for our children. Stories promote positive attitudes and behaviours towards equality and diversity; they also set examples of previous practices which can be followed and adapted to the new contexts. Stories can help educators build an inclusive environment, where equality and diversity are respected and children are supported to build positive identities, develop a sense of belonging and realise their full potential. Stories can help educators to raise awareness about diversity, equality and inclusion, generate discussion about bias and discrimination, challenge our thinking and make us reflect on our attitudes and values.

The project promotes literacy - reading for pleasure particularly, and through its activities enables young people to challenge stereotypes and intolerance and become advocates for inclusion and equality.

## **GREECE**

Ideas, customs, stereotypes and values that consist of the status quo of every place and time, are being challenged continuously.

Ideas about the role of women in society, about homosexuality or disability, differ from country to country, according to its ethics, customs, political - economical situation etc.

Wishing to create a Europe where every citizen will be respected and included, independently of his colour, gender, sexual orientation, disability or social status, we aim to address the problem at the roots and create open-minded and inclusive attitudes starting with children at schools. Through stories and literature, we intend not only to cultivate a “reading - for – pleasure” culture, but let children think and reflect on critical issues of equality and anti-racism.

Through well organised workshops by experienced tutors, we gave to the children all the necessary tools in order to go deep into a story, connect with the heroes, use their fantasy to reach a win-win solution and express themselves, by writing their own stories that will be included in a common book with works from children of the 7 partner-countries.

This initiative made the children feel that they have some power over the situation, they can influence their future for the better, they can consider themselves members of a broader European family and promote their self esteem and self respect.

## FINLAND

It is important to promote empathy, understanding and cooperation from an early age, to make students understand that everyone comes from a different background and to respect them despite the differences. In our workshops, creating close connections and sharing stories means getting to know each other as individual and thereby breaking any stereotypes and developing empathy and respect towards other students coming from varied backgrounds.

## SPAIN

Reading to children, even before they can understand, teaches them to associate books with love and affection. When this crucial connection is established from the earliest childhood, it is easier to keep the habit of reading as a natural and effective tool of values education both at home and at school. The WWS Project has chosen the three core values of **equality, inclusion, and diversity** as interconnected pillars of a more cohesive society, which is a key element of successful countries.

**Social equality** is a fundamental right that promotes the recognition of parity before the law, that is, equal opportunities and before any personal condition for all individuals. The concept of "social" presents different conceptions depending on the culture and the country. Beyond these differences, social equality pursues the concept of social justice that holds that all people should have the same political and civil rights and access to social welfare (education, health, and work). Social equality as a concept of the right of all human beings, arises in the eighteenth century along with the values of freedom and fraternity. The concept has been transformed over time, along with the evolution of human mentality and culture. Thus, the Declaration of Human Rights (1948) was constituted, the basis on which modern democracy developed. Social equality, like freedom, is a right of the human being, although it does not mean that everyone should be equal, quite the opposite. Social equality states that the differences or characteristics that distinguish people from each other are not a reason for them to be deprived of their rights. The WWS Project promotes values education starting from this key fundamental human right, putting also an emphasis on bridging the **gender equality** gap which is still present in our societies although the achievements in this field through time.

To guarantee social equality is vital to promote **social inclusion**. The UE defines this concept as "a process that ensures that those people who are at risk of poverty and social exclusion have the opportunities and resources necessary to participate fully in economic, social and cultural life, enjoying a standard of living and well-being that is considered normal in the society in which they live. It emphasizes the right of people to "have an associated life as a member of a community". The exclusion borders are wide and diverse. From exclusion due to access to economic resources, poverty, to exclusion due to gender, nationality, race, or ethnicity, for being an immigrant, for being young, for being limited in physical or mental capacities, for difficulty in accessing water, housing, education, digital literacy, etc.

Finally, it is impossible to conceive of social inclusion without raising awareness on the importance of **diversity** in our societies, providing tools on how to appreciate it. Respect for diversity is a deeply interpersonal skill and can be defined as the understanding that people participate equally in a common ethical world, under their human condition, while recognizing the uniqueness and differences of each individual. Respect for diversity goes beyond tolerance and understanding as it implies recognizing and actively promoting the equal value of all people, without condescension.

The core values of equality, inclusion, and diversity required for a more cohesive society are also imperative for creating a positive classroom climate where children can unleash their talents and are empowered to be the future game-changers for a better world. The WWS Project advocates for the implementation of these values in the learning environments organically by fostering reading and writing skills in a multidimensional manner. On one hand, we introduce and clarify concepts and theories simply and attractively. On the other, we use icebreakers, brain exercises, real-life examples, etc. We also deliberately choose book and story resources related to these three specific core values. Finally, we encourage group discussion and team building.

### 3. Best practices – examples of literacy used to promote inclusion from previous experience and what other people have done. Previous experience in the field.

#### **UK**

Every Child have extensive experience in developing non-formal learning activities with inclusion and equality at the heart. Education NGOs across the country have a history of challenging prejudice and promoting equality at schools and within the communities.

In terms of good practice at policy level, our teaching unions, elected members of Parliament (all party group), educationalists and education NGOs have been calling for the literacy and history curricula to be revised to promote inclusion.

More than 600 of English schools have signed up to a diverse and anti-racist curriculum that has been developed by teachers and municipal staff in London Borough of Hackney.

The Ofsted (School Inspectorate) Chief for England has so far resisted demands to change the curriculum. Wales is the only nation in the United Kingdom to announce that all schools must teach black history.

The problem is prejudice and negative stereotypes still persist in our country and after Brexit vote there has been an alarming increase in prejudicial statements and activities.

This project was conceived with the intention of contributing to attempts at local and national levels to develop strategies, lessons, resources and guides so that the power of literacy to change attitudes can be fully utilised. The pilot curricula that the WWS project partnership have developed have developed and are currently delivering at schools will, we hope, help schools to embed this provision in their inclusion strategies and practices. We have Black History Month every year, however, if we are to seriously combat stereotypes and prejudice, it must be an ongoing activity for the whole school throughout the year.

## **BULGARIA**

There are some examples, presented within a 2017 publication on the School education gateway - <https://www.schooleducationgateway.eu/en/pub/latest/practices/improving-literacy-at-differen.htm> - which however refer to slightly older initiatives, reviewed and selected by the European Literacy Policy Network (ELINET).

**The first initiative “Buchstart Burgenland, Austria: Growing up with books” is already not accessible online. It is inspiring though, not only because of “*I have always imagined that Paradise will be a kind of library*”, a remark by Argentinian writer and poet Jorge Luis Borges, which triggered the Austrian project idea, but also because it aimed to engage children with libraries from an early age, even before they start attending school. According to the project team, the younger the age, at which children begin reading books and literature, the easier it will be for them to learn, read and write.**

The project involved the whole family and promoted libraries as meeting places where children of all ages can discover the world of books and learn the value of reading. For children, books become bridges, which introduce them to different cultures and generations. The

project was funded by the federal government of Austria and even though it is finalized, its message is still valuable.

**Another interesting project was “Boost for Reading, Sweden: Training teachers to improve students’ literacy skills”**. According to the reporters, while the PISA rate of underachievement in reading for the EU in general went up, Sweden managed to reduce it by 4.3 percentage points between 2012 and 2015 thanks to a programme called “Boost for Reading” (Läsluftet - <https://www.skolverket.se/skolutveckling/kurser-och-utbildningar/laslyftet-i-skolan>).

The project began in 2014, and aims to increase students' reading comprehension and writing skills by strengthening and developing the quality of teaching. The project encourages the continuous professional development of teachers, and tries to enrich their literacy competences and give them examples of effective teaching models to boost their confidence. It has three levels of implementation: training of facilitators, training of teachers in collegial learning, and teaching students to become better readers.

The participants share material through an online platform - <https://larportalen.skolverket.se/#/>. More than 700 schools have so far joined the project, and the feedback is quite positive.

This project was financed by the Swedish National Agency for Education, [Skolverket](https://www.skolverket.se/), and ran until 2018.

The same information source presents a couple of projects, focused on ethics and values, the first one entitled **“Ethika: ethics and values education in schools and kindergartens”**. In this project the teacher shows the children pictures of several motifs (a dog, a ball, an airplane, a superhero, etc.). She/he tells the children that after she/he counts to five, they have to quickly put their index finger on the picture they like the most. Since the number of cards is smaller than the number of participants, more than one child will point out the same picture. The teacher then asks them: “If I were to tell you that you will be taking this picture home, which of you would have the right to take it?” This retold exercise comes from the Learning Materials and Tools that form the bulk of the Ethika project. The target audience is broad, ranging from preschool to early adolescence. These resources already demarcate the purpose of the Ethika

project: giving teachers the necessary competences to teach values in their classroom. According to the organisers, societal problems are at heart ethical problems, and can be solved through ethical education. The project is not directly related to literacy though. Ethika was a 3-year Erasmus+ project developed by six countries and concluding in 2017.

The **“eTwinning Tree: exploring European values through digital storytelling”** is a different story. In this initiative, participants throughout Europe praised the unifying influence of the eTwinning Tree. “Many partner schools have migrant children and familiar stories from their own background”, which fosters solidarity, according to a teacher from the Madeira Islands. Another teacher from Finland highlighted the project countries during geography class, so that they assumed “personal meaning for his pupils”. *The project took the approach of exploring European values and identity through collaborative storytelling.* Its centerpiece was a joint effort in the form of the eTwinning Tree book. First, the students of all participating schools looked for a special tree in their region; then they wrote stories about it and illustrated them. The best ones were copied to the eTwinning Tree book – also dubbed the travelling book, because it passed through the entire continent. The eTwinning Tree initiative ran from 2015 to 2017 and involved primary schools from 29 countries. It earned 23 National and a European Quality Label.

Another interesting project, not related to the School education gateway, is the **“Literacy”** project - <https://www.literacyprojectfoundation.org/vision-and-mission/> - in the USA, which aims to remove the impediment of illiteracy from the lives of our most vulnerable children with the help of teachers, volunteers, mentors and role models. The initiative has been growing organically while developing new strategies, products and tools that are usable, verifiable, and sustainable. They strive to foster in the US children the life-long love of reading, for it is the doorway to learning and achieving the American Dream. The project mission is to eliminate the literacy gap of emerging 2nd-graders who are functionally illiterate. The goals of The Literacy Project are to enable these children to become self-sufficient, productive and contributing members of American society.

The Bulgarian context also offers a number of positive examples.



Such is the **“Reading is possible”** initiative of Regional library “Partenij Pavlovich” and non-formal group “Diogenes” in Silistra, Bulgaria. The initiative aimed at developing interest towards reading via campaigns and literary games, part which have never been carried out in the city and the country.

Action “Draw me a story” included asphalt drawings, inspired by favourite fairy tales in the beautiful Silistra Danube park – about 200 participants with 43 drawn fairy tale heroes, 6 books were read out loud, 5 poems were recited and many songs were sung.

Action „I paint with words” included reading of favourite poems in front of paintings in the city art gallery. 35 participants, 37 poems were read.

Action „Reading to a pet” was one of the most amusing activities and was really interesting for the participants. It included reading of Bulgarian or English stories to house pets. In addition to improving reading and communication skills, this activity also has therapeutic effects and is applied in the USA, Canada and Great Britain. 33 children participated with 7 pets, 9 fluffy toys and 21 artistic works were read.

Action “Reading relay games”, which aimed at attract and educate more young readers from primary education level to the reading cause. The format of the game is unusual. The children fill in a participant form and a reader’s diary. Then the authors are selected. They should have a minimum of 3 books in Bulgarian and not be included in the summer reading lists. The books are secured and arranged on bookshelves together with an information board on the relay and the author. There are badges and work with teachers and librarians. Relay one included Roald Dahl books and 27 participants. Relay two included the series by Fabian Lenk “The Time Detectives” with 68 participants. The third relay included Beverly Cleary “Beezus, Ramona and Henry” with 102 participants.

Activity “D.E.A.R. Day” (drop everything and read), which takes place every year on April 12<sup>th</sup>, joined by millions of children across the world to celebrate a special day – Beverly Cleary’s birthday. While she blows her candles, all her young admirers drop everything else and join the book party.



Activity “With a favorite book by the Danube” – a part of the reading marathon activity. It included reading by the Danube and the creation of the longest readers’ diary – 150 meters long, written by 750 children and young people. The event was joined by students from 7 primary schools, 2 vocational high-schools and 5 kindergartens.

The “**Knigovishte**” project - <https://www.knigovishte.bg> - is a new initiative, an online platform for encouraging reading among children and youth. It is a place where kids can create an individual profile, lead and reader’s diary, but which is most important, compete against the computer on questions and answers related to the books they have read, thus accumulating points and competing against their peers.

The objective is to address the so-called functional literacy, which is the ability to understand text, to apply the material read in other contexts, to make connections between the texts. The proposed games address this illiteracy among the children and youth. The platform is oriented towards users between 6 and 16 years of age.

One of the methods, used for educational purposes in Bulgaria and by the Bulgarian team in the WWS, is **Suggestopedia**. Suggestopaedic teaching methods (in foreign languages and other school disciplines) are completely different from all other methods of teaching. After continuous research twenty UNESCO experts from different countries came to the following conclusion: (Published in the USA: The Journal of the Society for Accelerative Learning and Teaching, volume 3, issue 3, Fall, 1978, p.211): There is consensus that Suggestopedia is a generally superior teaching method for many subjects and for many types of students, compared with the traditional method. In-depth training and experience with this method has shown its results. Previous experience with ethnic minorities, illiterate adults and children was an asset. With the help of stories, pictures, classical music and games, reading has been taught quite successfully. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dn7sN-vmBxY>

## **LITHUANIA**

### **Know Your State Project (2018)**

Socio-political activities are a mandatory part of the educational process. These activities promote students' social solidarity and civic national activism, and develop their civic competence, which is important for participation in a constantly changing society. During the project, the students got acquainted with different areas of Lithuanian public governance, discussed and debated current national and regional issues, and actively contributed to solving the problems of the local community. Participants in the Know the State project strengthened their political literacy, critical thinking and problem-solving skills (both students and teachers). Each team in the project 2 identified a problem of interest to them and visited local and national public sector institutions where they worked with experts to find solutions.

**Multilingual Kindergartens (2016)** Publication "Multilingual Kindergartens. A Guide to Good Practice" is aimed at kindergarten managers, teachers, specialists, assistants, parents and anyone interested in pre-school and pre-primary education. The aim of the publication is to contribute to multilingual and multicultural education in kindergartens by providing relevant information, descriptions of good practice, recommendations, methodological materials and examples of how to organise activities. The publication was prepared within the framework of the project "Modernisation of multicultural pre-school and pre-primary education methods", implemented by the Language Centre of the State Institutions in cooperation with its partners - the Norwegian Bergen High School, Klaipėda University, the Centre for Special Education and Psychology, and in consultation with the kindergarten "Saulės gojus".

**Project "Inclusion Model for Dynamically Improving Schools (Good Practice Guide)" (from 2018)** The project involves 5 general education schools in Raseiniai district, the consulting school Vilnius Gabija Gymnasium and two consultants. The need of the project is to improve the general education indicators of pupils by developing innovative ideas for the organisation and improvement of education by adapting them to the latest trends, which is the common goal of all partners. The issues raised in this project are that the existing methods of organising general education in mathematics are not innovative, do not motivate pupils enough to achieve better learning results, there is a lack of choice in non-formal education activities, there is insufficient involvement of the school community in the achievement of a common goal uniting this group, and inclusive education is not developed. The target group of the project is pupils in grades 6-8, whose mathematics achievement results will be assessed after the implementation of the project. Project activities: 1.1 Development of a pre-inclusion model (best practice guide) for a dynamically improving school; 1.2 Implementation of an inclusion model (best practice guide) for a dynamically improving school.

## **ROMANIA**

**Romanian Literacy Association** promotes, develops and sustains educational programmes and projects that lead to better educational services offered by learning organizations in Romania and abroad. It develops and implements educational programmes to reduce functional illiteracy among students, develops and delivers training programmes for teachers to improve teaching and to enhance understanding and learning in the classrooms. RLA offers training programmes and workshops for teachers in the first 5 years of teaching to become professional teachers (with a focus on literacy) promoting an inclusive environment in their school.

-Reading clubs, national projects on stimulating all children's interest in reading, providing opportunities for all children to have access to books (rural schools - book donations)

-Programmes run by schools and school libraries/ Romanian writers' memorials houses: involving children in activities aiming to enrich vocabulary, develop reading skills, promote and embed principles of inclusion, empathy and equality: reading out loud sessions, discussing books, exhibitions with children's paintings of their favourite characters/ posters about favourite books, competitions (Reading race)

- Programmes for teachers on how to stimulate all children's interest in reading

-Reading challenge (British Council) The challenge aims to get children to read a wide variety of books on different themes. They can choose what they want to read from a list that is on offer. The challenge inspires children to read for fun, pleasure, and personal achievement. The element of challenge gives them an incentive to read, and a sense of achievement on finishing them.

### **European projects**

**Experience a tale (2019-1-LT01-KA229-060701)** **The project** aims to reveal the value of senses in children's development and creativity through stories, fairy-tales, theatre and to encourage preschool teachers to create, tell and integrate selected, up to date, fairy-tales and stories.

**Parsifal (2018-1-PL01-KA201-050865/Website: <https://parsifal.pixel-online.org>)** **The main aim of the project** is to improve secondary school students' achievements in literacy and digital skills referring to their cultural heritage surroundings and the values they stand for; these are presented to other European students through traditional tales and stories.

**TIK - Tradition and Innovation in Kindergarten** (Website: <https://tik.pixel-online.org>). The project addresses pre-school teachers and students and it is based on the presentation of local traditional tales having a strong and direct connection with the cultural and historical heritage (statues, palaces, churches, objects etc.). The project uses images, drawings, pictures, easy media products as pedagogical and communication tools.

**Chainstories** is meant to create an international framework within which children can discover what multilingualism is, what it means for their particular contexts and how they can model it to achieve their goals. Through observing the similarities and the differences within the same

language family children better understand the connections between the diverse countries. This also includes a cultural component helping children acquire new information on their international partners. This means children are not only learning about their foreign friends but they are also trying to create a story to fit their reading and understanding needs and abilities.

**FEEL** -Finding Emotions and Equality with Literature Actiune: KA2 Strategic Partnerships for school education –Exchange of Good Practices. Project: 2014-1-FI01-KA201-000773

Emotional and social skills play an important role in building one's self-awareness, self-esteem and identity. The Project objectives are to promote reading skills and more importantly the habit of reading; to get to know other countries' national stories (folk stories, national epics) and find similarities in them; to recognize and name emotions, first by finding the feelings in the stories and then gradually (depending on the students' abilities) in their own lives; to enable students to practise and value collective working both in their schools and wider communities and through international partners and by this promote the sense of equality.

## **GREECE**

### **The bookbox**

Children from the highest classrooms are entitled to read stories to children to 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. Each one of the older boys keeps a box of shoes, with some items and small texts that connect to the book he has chosen to read. The smaller kids inspect the boxes and decide which book they would like to listen to too, depending on what they find in the boxes.

<https://www.dadavan.com/idea-in-the-classroom-1-book-in-a-box-project/>

### **Photography Contest – EXTREME READING**

The director of a UK Primary School decided to run a photography contest, in order to promote reading in students of all classrooms. During the contest, the children should take a photo of themselves reading in the most crazy places or postures. All the photos would be uploaded in a specific digital platform that the school created for this purpose, and the most "Extreme Readers", would win coupons for free books and other miscellaneous (bookmarks, pens etc). The schools report that there was an increase in children's discussions about the contest and about books in general, the parents were also involved since they had to help their children take the pictures, and it seems that the contest created a joyful atmosphere around reading and increased the interest towards books.

<https://www.stjosephsschool.org/news/world-book-day-extreme-reading-photos/>

## **FINLAND**

**Let's Read Together** is a national network that support immigrants', especially women's, Finnish language skills and integration. The network offers Finnish, Swedish and literacy teaching to immigrants all around Finland. Website: <https://luetaanyhdessa.fi/english/>

**Cafe Lingua in Helsinki** is a popular language cafe event in Helsinki that begun already 15 years ago, and it is organised in cooperation between different migrant organisations and associations in Finland. The aim is to have different tables for speaking different languages and tutors where possible. Finnish is the most popular language and it is spoken on different levels from beginners to advanced. This is an informal approach for language learning also focusing on creating social connections. Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/CafeLinguaHelsinki>

**The Literacy Movement** ([lukuliike.fi](http://lukuliike.fi)) is a government-sponsored program that promotes literacy among Finnish residents, focusing on children and adolescents. The program aims to promote both multiliteracy and multilingualism. When launched, the movement included different reading projects, workshops and author visits to schools around Finland. They also created their own material (in Finnish) to support reading. In 2020, the project aimed to launch a new program to better integrate reading into school curriculum. The materials for the project are available in two official languages - Finnish and Swedish.

<https://lukuliike.fi/the-literacy-movement/>

Municipalities also organise many reading groups and language groups for migrants for learning the basics of Finnish (or more advanced language skills), for example in libraries.

<https://minedu.fi/maahanmuuttajien-luku-ja-kirjoitustaidon-koulutus>

## **SPAIN**

**1./ Casa del Lector (Reader's House)** is a cultural center run by the **Germán Sánchez Ruipérez Foundation**, a Spanish non-profit organization, established in 1981. Its main mission is to make readers and reading its fundamental protagonists, as well as the promotion of reading and the training of intermediaries. They have been promoting reading among children and youngsters through numerous activities.

In 2021 they co-organized ***"You're worth it! I Seminar on children's literature and education: How (not) to educate through children's literature"***, together with the Embassy of Sweden in Spain in collaboration with the Swedish Institute.

Some of Casa del Lector latest workshops: *“Spinning stories, weaving networks”* (two specialists in fibers and words respectively, weave an interdisciplinary session of stories and knowledge). *“With voice and ink”* ( Seven authors and a common thread, to thread voices and words). <https://casalector.fundaciongsr.org/>

## **2./CICLIP, The International Congress on Children's and Primary Reading**

**Comprehension** was born in Spain in 2016 with the aim of promoting reading and improving reading comprehension in children between 3 and 12 years old. It is aimed at both teachers and educational centers, preschool and primary education, as well as parents with children between the ages of 3 and 12. <https://ciclip.com/>

## **3./Libros a la Calle**

Libros a la Calle (Books on the street) is a veteran (25 years old) cultural initiative of Asociacion de Editores de Madrid whose basic objective is to promote reading through the participation of all users and lovers of literature. Its most popular and loved facet has been realized in Metro de Madrid, Public transport, etc. It is a recreation to travel to all possible worlds with the word, turning the daily journeys of travelers into an invitation to literature. One of its latest activities has been “Choose your destination, Madrid Metro Literary Map”: What if all the stations changed their name to the title of our favourite books? With what title would we rename our Metro station? Based on the proposal drawn up by the Association's 300 publishers, more than 800, Metro users and literature lovers chose through their votes their favorite titles, used for the Madrid Metro Literary Map. <https://www.editoresmadrid.org/plano-literario/>

## **4./ The Participation and Integration Centres for Immigrants (CEPI, Centro de Participación e Integración de Inmigrantes) implemented by the Government of the Community of Madrid from 2005 to nowadays.**

The CEPIs are places for working towards coexistence and integration. These Centres are a pioneering initiative in Europe where the new citizens of Madrid, together with those who have always been here, have access to hundreds of training courses (business entrepreneurship, computer skills, English, Spanish and other languages, cooking, support for dependant people, tourism, etc.) and workshops (on finding employment, immigration law support, standardization studies, etc.). There are also cultural, sports, and leisure activities. Some of these Centres have been implementing a **Tutoring Programme** for second grade of primary school for vulnerable groups, mostly immigrant students and students from disadvantaged backgrounds (low-income thresholds, unstructured families, etc.). Aims at the learning of children that are behind the rhythm of the majority of students in their class (mostly, children with a mother tongue different from the Spanish language), supporting

them with their homework and enhancing their learning abilities to their highest potential. It allows students to consolidate and expand their knowledge by enriching cultural and social experiences, which helps them overcome the present barriers and acquire the required skills. Some CEPs have also offered **an Adult Literacy Programme**, a learning space for reading and writing, as well as mathematics and basic knowledge. The main objective of this initiative was to teach or improve the literacy qualities of non-literate adults and expand the general culture of the participants.

### **5/ Colegio Escolapios Soria school**

In recent years Colegio Escolapios Soria school has surpassed, in the PISA for Schools test, the results of countries that usually lead the PISA ranking, such as Finland and Singapore. And they have achieved it through innovation and the reinforcement of reading comprehension. Its director, Óscar Abellón Martín, tells El País daily that a little over 15 years ago the center began "an important pedagogical transformation", focusing not only on content but also on the development of skills such as creativity, critical thinking, leadership, entrepreneurship or resilience. "Numerous methodologies were incorporated that allow students to develop a series of skills that we believe the 21st century requires of us, such as digital competence or reading comprehension," he explains. "For all this, good reading comprehension is necessary. Therefore, in this model that is giving us so many good results, reading is fundamental", he argues.

The Plan for the Promotion of Reading in ESO was awarded by the Ministry of Education. There have been subsequent modifications to enrich its content with innovative current activities. Other activities have been extended or adapted according to the needs of the rest of the stages. Among these activities, the following stand out: Literary breakfasts; Literary routes through the surroundings of their city related to different legends, all of them with didactic booklets prepared by the teachers, with activities for the students; Festival of legends with productions and shadow theatre, etc.

. <https://www.soria.escolapiosemaus.org/>

### **6./ DiversAnima, Animating in Sexual Diversity Project**

ACCESOPhía has previous experience in this area through DiversAnima, Animating in Sexual Diversity Project, an initiative of the ARCOS Corporation (Chile) and ACCESOPhía, funded by the National Institute of Human Rights of Chile and the European Union and held in Chile in 2015. It promoted sexual diversity and human rights through animation workshops in vulnerable schools in Chile by a prominent cartoon director. On the basis of the creation of short animated stories, the creativity of the students was promoted, while at the same time raising awareness about the problem of sexual diversity.



4. Avoid to “learn” and learn to “unlearn” stereotypes: tools for schools through literacy curriculum, books, documentaries, and activities. What techniques can the schools or can you offer to undo ingrained stereotypes or inbuilt discrimination attitudes.

## **UK**

This has been an issue in every country in the world, which the partnership will explore further when we meet face to face. Although our focus is on “unlearning stereotypes”, a number of psychological studies have raised doubts whether it can be achieved. We are all brought up with stereotypes and they do creep in even though we are against them.

Therefore, as we have done, by starting with enabling young people to gain a solid understanding of stereotyping and the harmful effects they can have on individuals and groups, we believe that the beneficiaries will have gained a positive and inclusive attitude towards “difference” and the skills and diplomacy to question and challenge (in a calm and positive manner) discrimination and prejudice.

## **BG**

According to psychologists, stereotypes are something which cannot be avoided as they are a function of the brain, which cannot be shaken off.

It is a major problem however, when egalitarian values get socialized into the culture to such an extent that children, who usually learn stereotypes very early in childhood (arguably even around the age of 3, 4 and 5 years old) ingrain them firmly and eventually activate and practice them frequently, spontaneously, unintentionally, to the point that people are not even aware that there are stereotypes activated.

This is an interesting predicament, because the values that are usually and officially taught are quite opposite to these spontaneous reactions.

So, if we agree that having stereotypes is not something we have a choice about, then let us also agree that what we do have a choice about is engaging with them.

The possibility to unlearn stereotypes is disputable. One can reject gender bias, race bias, and a number of other types of biases, but one can also instantaneously recognize the stereotypes. We know that we should not act based on the stereotypes, but this does not mean that our awareness or knowledge of those stereotypes can just go away.



There exists a correlation between implicit bias and discriminatory behaviour. A list of strategies, developed by psychologists, for helping recognize and overcome unintentionally biased thinking, are very closely related and can be supported via reading.

One strategy is perspective taking, which involves reflecting on the experiences of groups that have been historically stigmatised and may continue to experience stigmatisation. Reading could be used here for understanding what it would be like to have your scientific abilities questioned just because you are female, or be denied employment, because you are blind, or be thought of as a terrorist because you are Muslim, or be considered hostile and aggressive because of your skin colour and not because of anything that you have done.

Another strategy is to get involved into more contact with representatives from stigmatised groups. If we try to connect that with reading again, finding people from stigmatised groups to read to or with the children and answer questions afterwards or act as living libraries, would be an excellent idea for getting the kids to actually meet and get to know people.

According to Patricia Devine, a professor of psychology and the director of the Prejudice and Intergroup Relations Lab at the University of Wisconsin-Madison "What we say is that you detect it, you reflect about it, you reject it, and then you can replace it with a type of response that is more congenial to your values". Reading is one of our best chances we have at passing this to children and thus increasing the chances of them automating reactions and behaviour, which disallow stigmatisation and discrimination.

## **LITHUANIA**

Because participatory methods assume that all people have the right to their own opinion and that individual differences are respected, they have proven to be particularly effective for our projects. A learning process that goes beyond the objective content also includes skills, attitudes, values and actions, needs "horizontal" rather than "hierarchical" structures. All individuals are included in the democratic structures of creative education and are enabled to think and interpret independently. This encourages critical analysis of everyday situations and can lead to careful and appropriate action to promote and protect human rights.

The methods described below are used in a wide variety of learning settings, both formal and non-formal, and on an unlimited number of subjects. However, they have certain characteristics in common that make them particularly suitable for human rights and literacy education with people of all ages:

- Respect for the children's experiences and recognition of different opinions
- Promotion of personal development, self-esteem and respect for the individual child
- Empowering the children to determine for themselves what they want to know and to search for information independently

- Active organization of their own learning process by the children and as little passive listening as possible
- Support for non-hierarchical, democratic, collaborative learning environments - Encouraging reflection, analysis and critical thinking
- Integration of subjective and emotional reactions and cognitive learning - Encouragement to change one's own behaviour and attitudes
- Emphasis on the acquisition of skills and the practical application of what has been learned
- Recognizing the importance of humour, fun and creative play in learning

Various methods and techniques are combined with these characteristics in the IO2 activities. When facilitating, you should always make sure that some methods are unsuitable for some groups with a multicultural background or special needs (e.g. body contact, drawing and painting) or that they do not require resources (e.g. access to the Internet or a library). When facilitating, the methods of the individual activities should be adapted to the needs of the children and their everyday cultural and social environment.

Attitudes and values that go hand in hand with communication, critical thinking, partiality, responsibility, tolerance and respect for others cannot be taught to anyone; they have to be learned through personal experience. For this reason, IO2 activities encourage collaboration, participation and active learning. Your goal is the holistic integration of the children's head, heart and hand. Children will only take personal responsibility to protect the human rights of others if they can empathize with other people and understand that human rights arise from basic human needs.

The art of facilitation not only requires a changed focus, but also a high degree of self-awareness. Because children / adolescents are strongly influenced by the behaviour of adults, facilitators must ensure that they themselves exemplify the human rights values they want to convey. For example, an activity about gender stereotypes is in vain if the facilitator constantly expresses gender-specific prejudices. For this reason, facilitators must recognize, admit and consciously acknowledge their own prejudices and biases - even more so if they are directed against children in the group.

## **ROMANIA**

**Co-operative Learning** Project work has proven to be a very effective tool in building up teams and developing intergroup harmony. The class is set into heterogeneous groups and given projects that require group cooperation and interaction based on the expertise of each member. Students learn through the process that they need each other to do the task successfully. They learn that each member's contribution is important to the achievement of the common task.

**Role-playing and simulation activities** provide students with opportunities to learn through experience. Such activities can reduce prejudicial attitudes and are powerful on an affective level as students get engaged in their new roles. Discussions with students on their experiences must be included as an integral part of the simulation to clarify any confusing or ambiguous situations.

### **Critical Thinking Skills**

Prejudice and stereotyping in many instances are the result of illogical thinking (rarely from feelings of low esteem, bigotry and a sense of superiority as most people would think). Teaching critical thinking skills, (having intellectual curiosity, being objective, having an open mind, following a systematic and logical line of reasoning) enables a student to become anti-prejudicial. Endowed with critical thinking skills, students learn to decode media messages, to challenge bias in curriculum and to be sceptical of stereotypes.

**Videos and films** that are realistic and present authentic characters that students can identify and empathise with can be effective tools. These characters represent role models whose positive attitudes or behavioural development can be appreciated and supported by students. They also trigger discussions on the negative effects of prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination. The most effective videos and films are authentic films, not explicitly designed to “teach about prejudice and discrimination”.

### **Use of Positive Role Models in School Curriculum**

The use of positive role models helps in reducing prejudice and preventing stereotyping and discrimination. We learn stereotypes through our experiences by interacting with others. These experiences lead to generalizations about groups of people, which may develop into stereotypes and may be further reinforced by media. Keeping in mind the impact of positive role models in reducing prejudice and preventing stereotyping and discrimination teachers should have a careful selection of resources.

### **The study of culture**

Culture is a broad complex and dynamic concept. The study of other cultures does not lead to increased intergroup harmony because the understanding of other cultures goes through the understanding of one’s own culture. It is when you become familiar with the customs, traditions, values and beliefs of your own culture that you accept and get authentic unbiased insights into other cultures. Teachers should start by encouraging students to learn about their own cultures. When introducing other cultures start by looking first at the similarities and then the differences between cultures.

## **GREECE**

Stereotypes are really difficult to challenge, since they have deep social roots. Books can help children understand that there are many sides of one story, choose the most humane and inclusive and re-examine the existing norms.

The use of positive role models helps in reducing prejudice and preventing stereotyping and discrimination. Also, exploring one's culture and trying to find similarities with other cultures can create awareness of how we all connect to each other and tackle stereotypes.

Here is a list with important books that can support teachers in their inclusive literacy strategy

- I am Enough, by Grace Byers
- Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Black boy, by Tony Medina,
- When we were Alone, by David Robertson
- The day you begin, by Jaqueline Woodson
- A map into the world by Kao Kalia Yang
- The rabbit Listened by Cori Doerrfeld

### **FINLAND**

Éamonn Dunne (2016) understands “unlearning” not as an antonym of “learning”, but instead as a disruptive process, breakages, and surprise of learning. Dunne (2016, 20) writes that “learning begins when knowledge gets suspended”. The philosophy of this approach is that learning has neither an end-goal nor any abstract aim such as creating “lifelong-learners”. Instead, it creates spaces of breakage and disruption, a way of thinking about the future without knowing what the future will bring. In addition, this approach suggests that as teachers, we can never truly know what effect our teaching is having on the students, or when and how this effect will manifest. As such, the act of teaching and learning becomes an intense process of contemplation and co-creation.

This approach can be particularly fruitful with younger students, whose views of the world have not solidified and who still have both the capacity and the freedom to imagine. This is why activities that encourage disassembling and reassembling can be particularly useful. This includes approaches such as creating collages, where students are encouraged to “destroy” a book/magazine by cutting it to pieces and using the pieces of text and images to create their own narratives. Similarly, games where non-verbal forms of communication can encourage these breakages - e.g. pictictionary or charades.

### **SPAIN**

It is important to approach the fight against stereotypes and prejudice from the perspective of different disciplines that allow us to better understand why we act intolerantly. In the work “The Nature of Prejudice”, published in 1954 and still considered relevant in the study of stereotypes and prejudice, the American psychologist Gordon Allport focuses on the cognitive

processes present in the formation of stereotypes and prejudices. From social psychology comes to this day the concept, established in the 1980s, of prejudice as the inevitable result of normal mental processes. In recent years, research has been carried out focused on understanding the neural mechanisms of stereotypes and prejudice.

Evolutionary theories stress the fact that human beings can be genetically influenced by mechanisms learned over millions of years that would lead to prejudice. Thus, the implicit prejudices would be activated automatically, without the person realizing it.

The Implicit Project, an international network of researchers studying implicit social cognition, is seeking new ways to understand attitudes, stereotypes, and other hidden biases that influence perception, judgment, and action. His tests measure the time it takes for the participant to associate images or words. For example, associate the words “feminine” and “masculine” with other words. Or associate images of black and white faces with positive and negative words.

Although we are exposed to this type of automatism, we can rationalize, modify and, ultimately, make a conscious decision different from these automatisms and follow our principles and values.

Many studies show that it is possible to reduce these implicit biases and limit their impact through what is known as bias self-regulation. The first step is that there is a motivation for it. When a person becomes aware of the reactions that are produced by the unwanted activation of prejudice, they will tend to make a "compensatory effort". All disciplines can contribute in different ways to a less peaceful and more egalitarian society.

There is also research that indicates that implicit prejudices or stereotypes are not only due to internal cognitive processes but that culture plays a very relevant role.

We believe that another way to fight against stereotypes and prejudices is to be in favour of diversity, inclusion, equality. That is why we consider that our work through the WWS project strategy lies in helping children and young people to be aware, speak, discuss, explain these

two aspects: against stereotypes and in favour of diversity. We firmly believe in the power of literature, writing, of language itself, to make the participants in our workshops aware of the importance of valuing and appreciating themselves and others equally. Through our careful selection of content, we focus on achieving our goals in the most organic way possible. In this way, "unlearning" would be achieved by more "new" learning.

5. **STORYWEB training programme.** A short list of the curriculum of activities proposed. Make the process fun and enjoyable. Ways of encouraging staff and teachers to implement this. How to make it attractive.

## **UK**

As already mentioned, only 35 per cent of 10-year-olds in England say that they like reading "very much". It is important to overcome this reluctance, so an informal, out-of-school learning approach is fundamental, where the children participating are encouraged to understand they are in a space where they can be free to be creative without judgement, and are able to confront and overcome the intimidation and even fear they may feel when tackling literacy.

A broad approach is recommended, looking at different types and styles of creative work, analysing and practicing different styles, emphasising creativity and collaboration at every point. This sort of approach means that the key skills participants develop extend beyond the specific skills of language and communication and visual literacy, to include empathy, responsibility, working together and teaching each other in the informal setting.

Specifically, activities in the curriculum will include: Using specified texts, written and visual, to explore inclusion, diversity and the way that stereotyping works, so that participants can develop ways to avoid and learn to "unlearn" stereotypes.

These activities will include separate sessions on disability, including invisible difference, disability and mental health, gender equality and LGBTQ issues, race, immigration and the impact of war, with a specific focus on the Black Lives Matter movement, and on the way that stereotypes apparent in older children's literature can be challenged.

At a more technical level, sessions will explore different forms of literacy, including visual literacy, language and cultural story-telling, different ways to tell a story, from journalism and comics, to drama, computer games, art, poetry and aural storytelling, and the structure of story-telling, including character and plot, motivation, beginnings and endings.

From this basis, participants will use the knowledge, techniques and the confidence they have gained, to begin creating their own stories, individually and collectively.

## **BULGARIA**

If third-party facilitators are to be allowed to work with students, the teachers and administration of a school need to receive a proposal for a programme that will be followed and a demonstration of the approaches, which are going to be used in the process of work with the children. Therefore, before starting the workshops for the children, the team needs to present the WWS idea to the respective school staff and to get them on board, if the practice is to be incorporated sustainably.

The meetings with the children, as we already mentioned, should follow a certain predefined agenda, however, at least in the beginning, while the facilitator is still in the process of getting to know the children, this agenda should be as flexible as possible. A good facilitator should not stick to the programme if the children are not interested, the proposed activity is not attractive or if the level of comprehension and readiness to participate is different.

The agenda, initially proposed by the Bulgarian team, was developed for face-to-face meetings and at the start of it all, envisaged a whole meeting dedicated to the elaboration of a cosy working corner for the groups, a collection of signs, which could be used and common rules to be followed. The pandemic sent all our plans into the “impossible” folder.

The whole proposed agenda can be studied in IO2. Here we are going to give just a few examples of activities/techniques/approaches that have been very successful with our participants:

- Reading as if we were a whale, a horse, a rabbit – brings so much joy to the children and is always something to look forward to and uplift the participants if the energy is down;
- Visualizing the text that is being read or the story that is being told by one participant by having the others make movements and faces that convey the same messages;
- Analysing what makes a good story after each presentation, by asking questions “What did you like best?”, “What is your favourite word from those used in the story?” and others, leading the children to those elements and approaches, which do make one story distinguishable and intriguing;
- Creating 5 sentence stories about “What I first see in the room” helps children to think on their feet and to unleash their creativity and imagination;



- Speaking through a stuffed animal or favourite toy, which brings about a sincerity and openness, which, especially in the beginning, is tough to achieve;
- Encouraging the children to always have something to draw or write on/with, because there are many kinaesthetic participants who need to keep their hands busy with something at all times and this does not inhibit their participation in any way, quite the contrary;
- Creating a story together (e.g. chain story telling) as well as writing stories individually (assigning homework on a certain topic) – groups at different levels of literacy and experience approach the story making process differently;
- Experiencing book/story reading following a suggestopaedic approach combining the pure and simple joy from listening to a good story with the enhanced learning that suggestopedia always achieves;
- Having a set of books and stories to put on the table that focus the attention towards the values, which are important for the project;
- Discussing equality, diversity and inclusion

Our experience has taught us that children are much more receptive to the values we aim at passing on to them, if we adopt the non-didactic approach. If we create a story with their favourite stuffed toys, for instance, and one of the toys needs help, needs understanding, support and empathy – it is much easier to start the discussion on empathy. Empathy helps build relationships, prevent bullying and succeed at work. It promotes the growth of leaders, entrepreneurs and managers. “Empathic” teenagers tend to be more successful because they are more oriented towards the goals compared to their more narcissistic peers. Instead of competing, the children involved in WWS Project practise the culture of motivation to improve, measured exclusively in relation to themselves. Then there is collaborative learning, which consists of bringing together children with different strengths and weaknesses in different subjects to make them help each other in class, working together on various projects. The latter method teaches children from an early age that one cannot succeed alone and that helping others leads to better results. A child who still struggles with reading at the age of 10 or 11, if encouraged by its friends and the teacher, can quickly and unnoticeably improve its reading comprehension and lose the fear of reading in front of an audience.

## **LITHUANIA**

The Training Programme is intended as a sourcebook, allowing readers to make their own journey around it. It might be read from first page to last, or raided for inspiration as necessary. Everyone has the option of inventing their own exercises; hopefully the IO2 book will make it easier for readers to do that. All activities have an interest in two key questions



which we hope to address: *How can a facilitator use the literature medium to enable a group to speak, learn and empower itself? And How can a group collaborate to create a story which is rooted in the group members' experiences?*

The creation of text material for a story takes place in several phases. The following paragraph shows the phases we do during a project: There are two or three writing phases in the process, in each of which new impulses are given. Texts are converted into other genres, discussions are held, discarded, changed, redesigned. From these phases of the writing workshop, a wealth of material emerges that can be used in story and/or stage production. The phases of text creation are shown below.

**Attunement:** The facilitator provides content-related impulses, and (biographical) stories are told spontaneously in a predetermined theatrical sequence.

1. **Writing workshop:** The players write (biographical) texts based on the written impulses of the facilitator.

**Topic finding:** The players assign the (biographical) texts of the 1st writing workshop to specific emotional topics.

**Genre change I:** The players choose a foreign (biographical) text and rewrite it in a different genre.

**First dramaturgical condensation (reading and discourse):** The (biographical) texts are read out in the large group and condensed dramaturgically in dialogue (also with the facilitator).

2. **Writing workshop:** As in the first writing workshop, (biographical) texts are written on given content-related impulses from the facilitator (deepening the topic).

**Genre change II:** Here the players rewrite the texts of the 2nd writing workshop in a different genre.

3. **Writing workshop (optional):** On the basis of these first phases, the facilitator develops new, further content-related impulses, which in turn are processed by the players into further (biographical) texts.

**Genre change III:** The players now convert the texts of the 3rd writing workshop into another genre.

**Scenic implementation in the group:** The players implement previously created (biographical) texts scenically in the group and create further (biographical) texts that are based on their scenic reflections (line versions of earlier texts, new and changed texts, inserts).

Creation of images / drawings: After each scene is presented, the players draw an image or write few words about it. These words or images go beside the created story.

Creation of the final written story: All texts, drawings and words are put together and a story line emerges. If the story has missing parts, the group can search for the emotions which are still missing. The facilitator then gives more content related impulses for creating the missing parts.

The activities proposed in IO2 facilitate playfulness which revitalises our inner energies and extends our self-perceptions. And for many groups, 'to play' is sufficient. It facilitates individual and group expression and involves the pleasurable breaking of taboos around touch and language. The experience is invigorating; it allows for inner selves, inner personalities denied elsewhere, to emerge.

The activities also allow us to research behavioural conflict. Some activities can freeze time, travel in space and speculate about the future. So we're able to put recurring conflict situations under the microscope. What we are placing under scrutiny are our impulses, triggers to anger, perceptions and projections.

On the other hand these activities may recognise that below the surface we have aspirations and imaginings which never fully find expression within day-to-day living. And through the daily grind, we suppress and dishonour these dreams. Stories, through its transformations, can provide means to publicise these powerful, imaginative contents. And crucial to this is a sharing process, working together as a group in a way which allows a loosening of our individualities sufficient to develop a creative, liberating momentum. Through the use of selected imagery, character and incident, a storytelling tradition allows a group to express subversive ideas without the exercise becoming pedantic or overtly pedagogical. When the group makes up its own stories, they begin to celebrate what is culturally distinctive and unique about their world. In our practice, that we invite you adopt and adapt, we invite the group to make up a story, in the moment, collectively. The rules of the exercise force the group to project its view of the world into the story format. An avoidance of censorship by the facilitators results in a tale which stitches together mundane and fabulous elements into the same tapestry. When the story is acted out, it works as theatre on a number of levels: as social commentary, as exploration of the archetypal world and as celebration of shared experience.

## **GREECE**

Weaving Webs of Stories training programme aims to create a more peaceful, inclusive environment in schools, through literature.

Activities like role-plays, drama, games, drawing, discussion etc. that will accompany every narration or reading, are going to bring to the school an atmosphere of fun, creativity, joy and co-operation.

Values that are essential in order to promote inclusion and diversity without a strict, didactic method that usually is easily detected and rejected from the kids.

A typical workshop of Weaving Webs of Stories includes ice breaking games and team building activities, narration, introduction to creative writing tools and methods, as well as methods for active comprehension of the story, such as role plays, drama, arts and crafts, etc.

Skype meetings with other groups of children that take similar workshops in other countries during WWS, will bring a multi-national atmosphere in the workshops, help people connect and relate with other children outside their small everyday routine, feel part of a bigger family and start looking forward to contributing with their stories in the book.

## **FINLAND**

The STORYWEB training programme can introduce the participants to different elements of storytelling: genre, plot, characters, location, etc. They are then encouraged to use these elements to create their own story in a cooperative manner. To facilitate this, several techniques and exercises are used to help the students think collectively without losing their individual perspective.

The programme can start with introductions and getting to know each other, through icebreakers. There is a general discussion about stories and what are the participants' favorite stories and why. Using image cards representing different aspects and elements of the story (e.g. "magic", "adventure", "scary" "funny") the students create a mini collage that conveys what kind of a story they want to tell. At the same time, students are introduced to the concept of "genre".

Games such as charades and a "cover game" where they are shown book covers without titles and asked to think up a story based on the cover art can help develop understanding of different ways of telling stories. While a folding over story, where each student writes one line of a story, folds it over and passes it on to the next student to write a line can be a great way to help students cooperate in storytelling. To integrate multiculturalism and social equality into the process, several general themes (gender equality, climate change, democracy, social equality, family, migration, etc.) can be written out on poster boards. Together the teachers and students discuss these themes, so that students understand what they mean. The students are then encouraged to write different associations they have with these themes on

post-it notes and add them to the poster boards. At the end of the exercise, the students are asked to select the elements and themes that they want to incorporate into their stories.

Character creation for the story can be achieved through using character sheets. Character sheet describes the appearance, relationships, interests, personality, and goals of the characters. It is likely that the students would have different ideas who the story should be about. Using the goals section of the character sheets, the students can work out the plot of the story. To continue developing the characters, students are asked to write short dialogues between the characters. Depending on the number of the students and the type of characters they have created, two different exercises could be used. First, students could write a short dialogue between two characters of their choosing, where the characters meet for the first time. Second, students can be given a scenario where several characters have to do something. The students then write a short scene. They can even perform the scene, doing the parts of the different characters.

Using image cards with pictures of different settings/locations (desert, ocean, outerspace, cafe, etc) students can be asked to place their characters into these settings and write a short little story about what would happen there.

Students are asked to create a mindmap of the story they want to write. Using post-it notes or just colorful pieces of paper, the students build their story one piece at a time. On these notes they write characters, settings, events. And then create a mind map, locating characters in settings or events, and connecting the elements with string, to signify progression of the story.

Once the basic elements of the story are covered (setting, characters, plot outline), the students can continue writing without too much interference from the teachers.

## **SPAIN**

*“Attention is a very limited resource so we need to “kidnap” it and treat it with the sensitivity it deserves”, states Chema Lazaro, awarded Best teacher in Spain (2013). In order to “kidnap” and maintain the attention, he explains that The Brain loves:*

**Surprise and Narratives** (“Do you remember this teacher’s unforgettable class where he was leading you (Weaving Webs OF “ROADS”- this of course is our “supplement” to the idea) to a magical space? The brain loves so much this experience that it activates completely”. **Things out of the routine. Games. Cooperation:** The brain is more active when it works interconnected with other brains, especially in the initial phases of a task. **Cognitive dissonances** (He gives as an example Escher’s paintings, where for example a staircase can be going up or down depending on the individual visual interpretation.)

**Laughing** (Laugh has been proven to renew the attention).

**Curiosity** (Studies suggest that when some curiosity has been awakened one hour before a task, pupils show better results)

To the above we add Joyce Carol Oates’s advice to start with shorter forms and things that students can finish relatively fast. “We need the satisfaction of the uplift we get psychologically from finishing something”, American writer states. She also insists that everybody has at least one story to tell. Writing should be **pleasurable, fun, exploratory**.

Based on these premises, we’ve chosen several techniques we find dynamic, entertaining and inspiring that are at the same time short and playful. They also develop some additional skills such as digital, emotional intelligence and involves different areas: literature, music, geography, high tech.

Finally, we also use Bill Lucas’s **Five Dimensional Model of Creativity**. Bill is a professor of learning in the University of Winchester, co-chair of the PISA 2021 Test of Creative Thinking and an academic adviser to Arts Council England on creativity in education.

**(1) Inquisitive.** Clearly creative individuals are good at uncovering and pursuing interesting and worthwhile questions in their creative domain.

- Wondering and questioning—beyond simply being curious about things, questioning individuals pose concrete questions about things to help them think things through and develop new ideas.
- Exploring and investigating—questioning things alone does not lead to creativity. Creative individuals act out their curiosity through exploration and follow up on their questions by actively going out, seeking, and finding out more.
- Challenging assumptions—a degree of appropriate scepticism is important; not taking things at face value without critical examination.

**(2) Imaginative.** At the heart of a wide range of analyses of the creative personality is the ability to come up with imaginative solutions and possibilities.

- Playing with possibilities—developing an idea involves manipulating it, trying it out, and improving it.
- Making connections—the synthesizing process brings together a new amalgam of disparate things.
- Using intuition—the use of intuition allows individuals to make new connections tacitly that would not necessarily materialize given analytical thinking alone.

**(3) Persistent.** Creative individuals do not give up easily.

- Sticking with difficulty—persistence in the form of tenacity is important, enabling an individual to get beyond familiar ideas and come up with new ones.
- Daring to be different—creativity demands a certain level of self-confidence as a pre-requisite for sensible risk-taking.

- Tolerating uncertainty—being able to tolerate uncertainty is important when actions or even goals are not fully set out.

**(4) Collaborative.** In today’s world complex challenges—for example, unraveling DNA, understanding climate change—require creative collaboration. Creative individuals recognize the social dimension of the creative process.

- Sharing the product—creative outputs matter, whether they are ideas or things and create impact beyond their creator.
- Giving and receiving feedback—this is the propensity of wanting to contribute to the ideas of others, and to hear how one’s own ideas might be improved.
- Cooperating appropriately—the creative individual co-operates appropriately with others. This means working collaboratively as needed, not necessarily all the time.

**(5) Disciplined.** As a counterbalance to the more intuitive side of creativity, there is a need for knowledge and craft in shaping the creative product and in developing expertise.

- Developing techniques—skills may be established or novel but the creative individual will practice in order to improve.
- Reflecting critically—once ideas have been generated, evaluation is important. Such “converging” requires decision-making skills.
- Crafting and improving—taking pride in work, attending to details, correcting errors indicate people whose creative skill is of the highest order (Berger, 2003; Ericsson et.al., 1993).

Based on all the above were designed a Programme Frame exclusively for the WWS project. **The 12 modules:** New Normality Stories; Booktubers; Ask a Writer, Greco-Roman Voyage; Book Clubbing; Haiku Words; Let’s Movie; Globetrotters – Storytelling from around the World; Kamishibai; Book Social Networking; Illustration Workshop Creating Your Won Character; The Mysterious Ending

## 6. Our ideas, experience, and different approaches available to be implemented.

### **BULGARIA**

Schools are places where children can easily be organized in curricular or extra-curricular reading activities in a safe and familiar place. The people defined for facilitating the process can be either teachers from the school or external experts that have a general programme with scheduled activities. In order for a storyweb strategy to work best at school though, as well as in any other setting, the facilitators should be flexible enough to change their programme according to specific interest, needs or desires of the children. It is not simple, probably also impossible, to imagine what would come out from the interaction with and between the children. Hence, the facilitator could have the general idea of what messages the

stories read and the stories written should be passing, but succumb to the ideas and proposals coming from the children. It is also important to involve everyone, so create possibilities for participation by children with learning difficulties or children with different disabilities. Have a sight impaired student read from a braille book to the others, learn some sign language in order to make a deaf participant feel welcome, never rush a participant with a speech impediment, never press anyone to do something, which they feel uncomfortable with. Whoever refuses to read due to lack of confidence or skills today might surprise everyone nicely during the next session. Also, make use of all topics that are raised by the children and that are relevant to the values upheld by the project. If disabilities should come up during the discussion – be ready with an inspiring text from a book you may advise the kids to read. The same goes for topics related to “black lives matter”, LGBTQ, women’s rights as well as the so called intersectionality where double and triple discrimination is observed due to a person falling into more than one stereotype category (e.g. black woman, disabled woman, black disabled person, black LGBT woman, etc.). Use all naturally arising opportunities to bring these topics into the discussion and encourage children to ask questions in order to build as complete a picture as possible.

Having more places around the school with areas with books and possibilities to sit and read for a while, can make the reading look ordinary. The more you encourage children to share what they have read the more confident they would feel and the more comfortable the others will become for picking up reading and telling stories.

Making reading a whole school culture would mean that there is nothing about it that would make a student look odd or different from the others. Children and later on teenagers have the conflicting desires to both look the same as everyone else and at the same time make an impression and stand out. A very tough combo. If more people at the school are reading, this would be considered a regular activity. Standing out in class or in the reading club could come from what has been read and what new concepts the student has picked up.

A certain part of the school library or a class-room that has no specific designation can be dedicated to regular reading and story making clubs, which can combine groups of students with similar interests.

Literature or Language classes can be used for involving the whole class in reading or story making activities, however, smaller groups of 5 or 6 up to 10 children might be a lot more productive per capita, because more time and more focus will be devoted to each participant.

There can be sessions at the library or at the specially dedicated class-room in the school for reading a favourite book. An announcement on the school news wall can give information who will be reading what at what time and in which place. Anyone interested to listen, would be welcomed. Reading aloud should not be something done only if there is enough time. It should be a regularity, because it is a ritual that develops the minds of children as readers.



## **LITHUANIA**

There are many factors to consider when deciding which IO2 activities to perform. The most important are:

1. Your Children: Before choosing any activity, you need to know the children who will be participating.

a. What is their level of development, what interests, concerns and learning styles do they have?

b. Are there any conflicts or problems in the group?

c. Do these children have particular problems within the community?

d. How much do the children already know about human rights & literature? However, that does not mean that you have to wait until you can answer all of these questions before starting the IO2 activities. Often times, the activities themselves are the most effective way to get to know your group!

2. Your learning objective: Some activities can be used to increase general knowledge about literature or values, or they can be just fun. But mostly topics can and should be taken up that affect the children or deal with a problem in the group, the community or the world. The following topics are at the heart of the IO2 activities:

a. Discrimination

b. equal rights

c. inclusion

d. diversity

e. participation

3. A learning sequence: knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that are permanent cannot be conveyed in a single activity. Choose activities that form a block, be it because they have a common theme or because they develop certain skills. This block can last for a month, a half year or even a whole year. You could choose activities that fit into the school curriculum or address current issues in the group or community.

Be sure to find a balance between different types of activities and make the children's needs the primary consideration. A variety of methods makes the activities more fun and offers children the opportunity to learn not only with their minds, but also with their senses and feelings. For this reason, you will find a wide range of techniques and methods in IO2 Activities.

### Modification of activities

You can use the IO2 activities like a cookbook. Just like good cooks, when moderating, they should take the liberty of modifying the "ingredients" of an activity to suit the time and materials available, the size and competence of the group, and other conditions. In most of the activities you will find tips for modifications.

Remember that there are many different styles of learning in each group of children and that the children's skills are at different levels of development. It is easier if you offer children multiple learning opportunities than if they have to adapt a child to a single method that you specify. Careful selection and adaptation of activities is important to ensure that children with special needs - for example street children, immigrant children, refugee children and children in care - are included and able to participate on an equal basis. Avoid exposing differences that the children may be suffering from.

### ROMANIA

- use of interactive teaching strategies aimed at improving children's reading skills, enthusing them to become lifelong readers as well as enhancing their critical thinking skills and creativity; reading out loud is embedded with engaging activities meant to challenge children's intellect and stimulate their imagination and reflection such as predicting, asking open thought-provoking questions which guide children through the story, identifying and discussing the key messages of the stories, making connections to children's prior knowledge and experiences, organising peer discussions/debates following the story reading, exploring words and pictures or exploring the world of words and their meanings.
- use of effective strategies for improving writing skills tapping into children's interests through the use of technology, interactive writing techniques (asking students for ideas to complete sentences, stories, etc.) or the implementation of positive diverse literacy practices (graphic organizers, cooperative learning, scaffolding, reading aloud, or group discussions).

### GREECE

Since November 2020 we have run workshops in our local Primary Schools with great results. Children were waiting for us every time with great enthusiasm and they were excited to create their own stories.

From our experience, having a consistency of 1 meeting per week helped the children to connect and dedicate to what they are doing, follow the program effectively, understand the offered tools and ideas, enhance their way of writing and expressing themselves, and reflecting on the targeted ideas.

Things children love:

- Using fun ways of narration
- Games of action
- Narrations where we use costumes or sceneries
- Time for reflection after reading every story, and especially reflection
- including some type of art: drawing, clay et.
- Imagine their story to be published in the book

## **FINLAND**

The programme can benefit from initial exploration of students' interests and relationships to storytelling. While not all students are avid readers, many may enjoy other forms of storytelling such as films, TV shows or video games. Incorporating these elements into the programme could be beneficial to get students interested.

An important element is to work closely with teachers, particularly the language teachers, and parents to determine the best time and day for the students. As an extracurricular activity, a day should be chosen when the students have the time after school and they do not feel too stressed and overburdened.

Different exercises and approaches can be used depending on the students' language skills, age, and interests.

If the students are interested in performance arts, the story can be written as a play rather than prose. This way the students can talk about different ways of inhabiting the characters, learn empathy and develop emotional intelligence. In addition, from a practical point of view, it is easier to coordinate communal writing of a play. Alternatively, the students can write a film script and film their story.

This programme can be successfully integrated with STEM programmes that teach students to code or art programmes. The students can create a narrative for a video game that they would then code together. Alternatively, visual arts programs can be combined with storytelling where students would create an art book (inspired by Sabrina Ward Harrison) or a comic book/graphic novel.

In preparation for the program, language teachers can ask students to bring in their favourite books to class and talk about what they like about the stories. These books can be used in the program, asking students to change characters or endings for the stories.

## SPAIN

The modules or content “capsules” we designed for the WWS workshops worked well in several aspects. Being different from a traditional structure, it resulted in more attractiveness for both teachers and students even at the beginning. So, it’s a fascinating and useful approach for triggering the initial interest and engagement in the workshop.

We offered teachers several sessions to suit themselves. Also, the adaptive nature of the content allowed us, together with the teachers, to choose the most interesting modules and develop the content focused on those. In this sense, even the act of choosing among more options gives the teachers more feeling of decision making on one hand, based on their expertise and close knowledge of their students, and, at the same time allows space for some fresh and innovative extra-curricular approaches. So, wide-ranging possibilities are a big plus, meaning the schools have more options to adapt the workshop to their specific needs. Thus, combining the playful, creative and useful aspects.

The same way that we adapted the contents, we also intertwined the three core values of the WWS Project: equality, inclusion, and diversity. Some of our workshops were held in schools where second generation Bulgarian students study Bulgarian (already a second language to them) which is hard and challenging. The workshop introduced another point of view towards the language and gave them the opportunity to learn, express ideas and create in their “mother” tongue.

Added to this, leaving the structure and content as open as possible gave us the possibility to be more adaptive to children’s interests and inspiration. We opted out of the possibility of an online workshop. Although we decided to have a face-to-face WWS workshop, we opted for mixing the digital input with books, including social media and book clubs.

Also, another strong advantage when dealing with both school administration and students was convincing them that a fresh approach to literacy would be an advantage throughout all their lives, additionally helping them in their work, personal relations and realization, etc. Literacy, language, speaking, writing, expression, and creativity explained as a much broader dimension and as a valuable asset in one’s life happened to be a very effective tools.

In terms of teaching, we found that teachers taking part in and “copying” the development of the session with the tutor, and applying afterward in other groups, have highly satisfying results. It means the contents and structure are easy to follow and use.

## Suggestions for improvement

The two big challenges are still convincing school administration and teachers not of the need (which they clearly acknowledge) but of the necessary time in an inexorably busy and time-consuming life. Promoting the idea that literacy is not just reading, we are more likely to persuade schools to give more space to it. Also being open to designing new materials, easy to follow by teachers, and exciting to engage students is a must.

From our experience in face-to-face activities, we still think this is the best way to develop the workshop. Nevertheless, once there is a strong enough engagement and interest from the students, it might be a plus to add some “virtual” side, making the workshop sort of hybrid. But this should be done not pressed by necessity (such as pandemic restrictions, for ex.), but as an added value, an integral part of the literacy project.

The biggest challenge still is to grab children’s attention, and to get them interested a little more, particularly when it’s not compulsory, so the stories need to be interesting and exciting for them. The first two sessions can be used to explore their specific interests, and to adapt or redesign the contents.

Some open-air activities can be included as part of the workshop (as part of the feedback we had from students).

## 7. Suggested bibliography and resources.

### UK

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Annex:

Information about the EU policy and the national policy in Bulgaria

Introducing inclusion in schools is set as a priority in:

Council resolutions:

2008/C 319/01 - Resolution of the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council of 20 November 2008 on the health and well-being of young people

2008/C 319/02 - Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council of 21 November 2008 on better integrating lifelong guidance into lifelong learning strategies

Both available from here: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ:C:2008:319:TOC>

The Bulgarian state in the face of the Ministry of Education and Science has developed a special strategy for upbringing work in educational establishments in the country /2019-2030/.

According to the upbringing interactions, which are prescribed by the strategy within the classes, during extracurricular and out-of-school (including project work) activities and class periods, the schools should:

1. Form a prosocial behavior via activities in support of voluntarism, charity, environmental initiatives and others – on the territories of the educational institutions or beyond them.
2. Form attitudes for tolerance towards differences between the children and the students based on race, nationality, ethnic background, religion, etc.
3. Create conditions for prevention against hate speech.
4. Increase the motivation for learning, including regular attending of school, management of one's own development and progress in the context of educational and vocational orientation.
7. Include in the teaching strategies elements with upbringing impact and influence.

According to the strategy, the development and formation of values via pedagogical activity is at the grounds of the upbringing work in the educational institutions. The importance of

the value development of the citizens of the EU as a community, characterized by pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between men and women is a part of the mere beginning of the Treaty of Lisbon, where article 1a marks the main values, which the EU is based on -

- „respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law”. The same values are inserted at the grounds of the strategy for upbringing work in the educational institutions.

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- Mehta, Adebayo, Martin: The Theatre for Development Handbook. Pan Cultural Arts, 2010
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### [Actividades de animación a la lectura \(Virginia Aragón Jiménez\)](#)

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