

ZUKUNFTSBAU GMBH

**THE INVISIBLE EU CRISIS:
ADULT ILLITERACY -
A LONG UNDERESTIMATED PROBLEM**

A READER WITH FACTS, INFORMATION AND SOLUTIONS

Literacy and vocation

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Education and Culture DG

Lifelong Learning Programme

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PART I

FACTS AND STORIES:

LITERACY NEEDS

IN THE EUROPEAN UNION 2012

**IN THE SPOTLIGHT:
ILLITERACY IN THE EU**

“One in five 15-year-olds in Europe, as well as many adults, lack basic reading and writing skills, which makes it harder for them to find a job and puts them at risk of social exclusion.

For adults the need for action is just as urgent. Almost 80 million adults in Europe – a third of the workforce - have only low or basic skills, but estimates show that share of jobs requiring high qualifications will increase to 35% by the end of the decade, compared to 29% now. Reading and writing are essential skills, not least as they are the key to further learning.”

[Press release European Union, Référence: IP/11/115, Date: 01/02/2011]

As early as 2002 the European Parliament stated in the report on illiteracy and social exclusion:

“Thus while illiteracy, defined as the total inability to read and write, has now been almost completely eradicated in Europe, the phenomenon of 'functional illiteracy' is becoming increasingly serious.

In economic terms, illiteracy generates additional costs for undertakings and affects their ability to modernise. These extra costs are linked to high accident rates, extra salary costs to offset the lack of skills of individual employees and extra time for supplementary personnel supervision; further costs result from the non-production of wealth linked to the absence of optimal qualifications.

The employability deficit also has an impact on workers themselves. Apart from the industrial accidents it causes, illiteracy is a source of absenteeism and demotivation.

[Source: EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, REPORT on illiteracy and social exclusion, A5-0009/2002, 15 January 2002]

“... the Lisbon strategy, aimed at making the European Union the leading knowledge-based economy in the world, has tended to target the best qualified; however, a knowledge- and innovation-based society cannot be founded only on a vanguard of highly-qualified professionals: the entire labour market must master the key skills enabling lifelong learning and training. Moreover, Lisbon's economic targets cannot be reached if pockets of quasi under-development persist within the EU. Combating functional illiteracy is thus also an economic imperative for the EU.

[Committee of the Regions on combating functional illiteracy — an ambitious European strategy for preventing exclusion and promoting personal fulfilment, 2010/C 175/07]

IN THE SPOTLIGHT:

FUNCTIONAL ILLITERACY IN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

Austria

However lacking in basic education skills or however illiterate a public discussion about the issue has been a taboo in Austrian society for a long time. The estimated data of the following institutions illustrate the veiled problem.

UNESCO estimates, that about 300,000 to 6000000 adults in Austria are in need of basic education.

Bulgaria

Expressed in numbers more than 40 per cent of Bulgarian ninth-graders are functionally illiterate, according to the latest report by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development programme for international student assessment (PISA).

About eighty thousand Bulgarians cannot read or write, according to Education Minister, Sergey Ignatov.

Denmark

According to OECD's criteria every fifth Dane (around 1,5 mio. people) has difficulties reading and almost half of the adult population between the age of 16 and 66 cannot read sufficiently. 7 % of all adult Danes perceive themselves as dyslexic.

France

3,100,000 people, some 9% of those aged between 18 and 65 who have attended school in France, are illiterate (IVQ survey, 2004-2005 INSEE ANLCI);

Every year, the tests taken during the defence and citizenship information day reveal that nearly 5% of boys and girls aged 17 are illiterate (JAPD 2009, Ministry of Defence).

Germany

According to a study undertaken by the University of Hamburg, presented in Berlin on the 28th of February 2011, 14% of Germans between the ages of 18 and 64 are affected by "functional illiteracy". That is 7,5 million people of working age.

This means: 14% of the population of working age can only read or write individual phrases but not coherent or even short texts.

Ireland

According to the last international survey, one in four or 25% of Irish adults have literacy difficulties.

Currently in Ireland up to 30% of children from disadvantaged areas leave primary school with literacy difficulties.

Italy

Figures about the matter are published in the Human Development Report by the UN: Italians that have problems with functional illiteracy make up 41% of the population. The subject is huge and it is not linked only to poverty or unemployment. It seems that the general Italian situation has worsened between 2009 and 2010. It is more likely a problem linked to the educational system and to media alternatives: in a country with a lot of television, challenges to improve one's ability to read and write are less important than elsewhere.

Spain

In 2007, functional illiteracy in the Spanish population of working age had been reduced by 50% since 1980. It was 23.7% and was reduced to 11.9%.

In 1980, regional differences in terms of functional illiteracy were very significant. While some Regions, such as Cantabria (5.5%) and La Rioja (7.4%), had very low values, others, such as Castilla-La Mancha (38.2%) and Andalusia (36.4%) exceeded the national average.

United Kingdom

According to a preliminary report released by the World Literacy Foundation, the estimated cost of illiteracy to the UK economy is £81.312bn each year.

The report draws figures from the money spent of welfare and unemployment benefits, estimated to be £23.312bn. It explains that illiterate people are more likely to be claiming such benefits because there is more chance of them dropping out of high school and / or being unable to find work.

Switzerland

In Switzerland, which has a population of 7.5 million, almost a million people of working age have difficulty reading and writing.

An estimated 600,000 people with literacy problems in Switzerland are integrated into the labour market or are looking for employment, roughly one in six of the total workforce.

Illiteracy is not only a burden for those who have difficulty reading or writing – the economic damage is estimated at SFr1.1 billion (\$900 million) a year.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT:

REAL PEOPLE - REAL STORIES

James from Ireland

James is 35 ... left school at 14 and became a mechanic. When eventually the garage had to close, he found that despite the fact that he knew everything about how to fix cars, he couldn't get his full mechanic's qualification because he couldn't read or write. After that he became a lorry driver, getting up at 4 every morning and not returning until 7 in the evening. Even then he had to turn down more profitable long haul jobs because he couldn't type the destinations into his satellite navigation.

That is until he rang the National Adult Literacy Agency and was given a range of free options and he decided to do an intensive six week literacy course. Since then he has never looked back. In only a few months he has changed job, is running a garage and has applied to do a full mechanic and management course in Dublin Institute of Technology.

"My way of dealing with things for years was running, just go away and run from things. I had a lot of rage and anger in me because I couldn't do what I wanted to. I had it in my head and it just wouldn't go on to paper for me. And that was killing me inside. I'd say if I didn't do this course, I'd say the anger would have just festered up inside me. But now I feel very lucky. It's like a fairytale – I started out wanting to do this because I wanted to get out of lorry driving and become a mechanic and now that's what is happening."

Doing the literacy course has also made a huge difference to his personal life. Before starting, James had never read a story to his young son Brendan. "If I were to write a note or anything you wouldn't be able to read it. I wouldn't even send a text because you wouldn't be able to read it. It's after giving me great confidence in myself. I feel proud of myself.

[taken from: www.nala.ie/james-mccann]

Barbara Boysen from Denmark

Barbara Boysen is an office assistant at Froeslev Wood, a wood import company in Southern Jutland in Denmark, and has been employed here for 17 years. Barbara is ambitious and wants to improve her Danish and has attended several courses over the years. She is a student preparing for the level 3 exam.

"I am responsible for internal communication, and I am well aware of the importance of my literacy skills. I have problems in spelling, and I keep working at improving it. The courses really help me, and I do my work better as I improve. I even get more responsibility, because my language skills are improving. Now I am even in charge of some correspondence – albeit not external correspondence", she adds modestly.

Barbara is not anywhere near functional illiteracy, but she is the only one who has the courage to speak in the class. The other students are still too shy.

"We learn Danish at many different levels. We are serious and enjoy ourselves at the same time. I really get more self-confidence through these courses, and it is important for me as a private person too. In Denmark we are privileged to have the State Educational Fund to motivate companies to offer basic education. If we didn't have this education the company would miss out on a lot of potential."

[taken from a interview by Kirsten Cilieborg from VUC Sønderjylland]

Roswitha from Austria

Roswitha is 49 years old. She had been a weak student and after her basic school education she started working in the textile industry.

"It was hard work – no holiday, no sick leave. There was no time for reading. So I forgot how to do it".

In the former years her husband took care of her but a few years ago he died. She was completely on her own. Her cousin encouraged Roswitha to go back to school. She started to learn to read and write again. Since then her life has changed: she bought a microcar, renovated her living room and took the first holiday of her life – three days in Burgenland, east of Austria.

"It was the best decision of my life!"

[from: <http://www.alphabetisierung.at>]

Jutta S. from Germany

I coped with my life without being able to read and write adequately (So I thought anyway ...). After school I completed an apprenticeship as a cook. Done. I even passed the test! But I wasn't glad!

I wanted to be a technical illustrator. I did an internship in the sort of office with large numbers of plans and drawings (some letters). The thing was, to learn something you had to be good at school - even in writing! So I continued to work as a cook. I learned to peel potatoes for 6 years. But writing a menu? Well, there were other trainees for that. I scrubbed the stove and they wrote the menus for me. And if a situation became dicey? Then I had burned my fingers or had cut myself, nothing unusual if you're a chef!

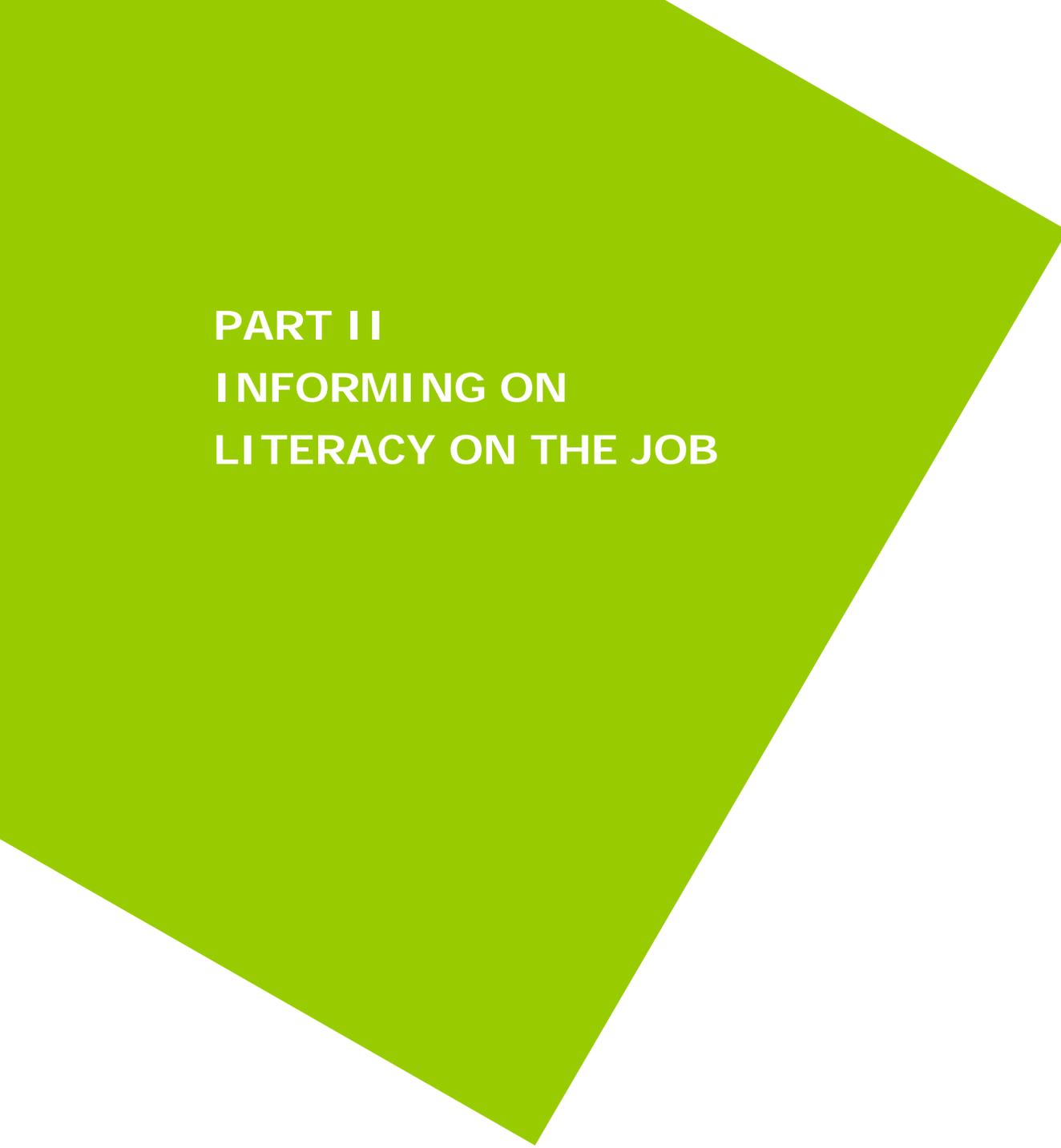
I managed the vocational exams with much distress-it was a multiple choice test. Only ticking answers. There was a 50 to 50 chance to tick the right answer. I did it! And I did it quite badly but I got the diploma.

After training I worked as a seasonal worker. In the summertime at the Sea, in wintertime in the mountains. Only a few months at a time in the same place. That was just long enough before someone noticed my troubles with reading and writing.

An article in a newspaper alerted me to the literacy course at the Adult Community College. It took a whole year until I was encouraged enough to take the phone and call them.

A quick call, a date without any obligation and completely anonymous. And so I came to the course. I was really surprised that there were more people with the same problems. It felt really good to listen to their problems, which weren't different from my problems. In this course didn't just learn how to write, but mainly courage and the desire for, and joy of learning.

[Selected parts of the personal statement of Jutta S. at the national conference of the German Federal Association for Literacy and Basic Education in 2008]



**PART II
INFORMING ON
LITERACY ON THE JOB**

**WHAT WE ARE SPEAKING
ABOUT:
LITERACY FOR JOBS AND FOR
A MODERN SOCIETY**

The following description on the National Adult Literacy Agency (Ireland) website indicates that literacy in modern Europe means more than being able to read and write:

“Literacy involves listening and speaking, reading, writing, numeracy and using everyday technology to communicate and handle information.

[...] Most adults with literacy difficulties can read something but find it hard to understand official forms or deal with modern technology. Some will have left school confident about their numeracy and reading skills but find that changes in their workplace and everyday life make their skills inadequate. The literacy skills demanded by society are changing all the time.

[...] Having a literacy difficulty often means you are not able to understand health and safety information, how Government organisations work, go for promotion, complete a driver theory exam or vote. Equally, parents who have literacy difficulties may be unable to support their own children with their reading and writing. [...]"

[see: www.nala.ie/literacy-ireland]

In addition to this description literacy is the ability to understand other forms of communication too, as body language, pictures, sound or pictograms. In a technological society, the concept of literacy is expanding to include the media and electronic text.

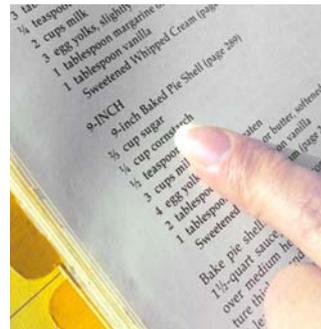
Because these abilities vary in different social and cultural contexts according to need and demand, individuals must continue - in a lifelong learning process – to train reading and writing skills as well as critical understanding and decision-making abilities which they need in society.

And individuals need to train this ability for another purpose: As the 21st century is characterized by the on-going change from industrial society to a “knowledge society”, the so called “up-skilling” of employees and the need for higher qualifications levels is evident across Europe. It is in this context that individuals of today, and of the future, require a good standard of basic education to enable them to access the job market as well as to participate in the process of lifelong learning.

WHAT IS WORKPLACE RELATED LITERACY

Workplace literacy includes the reading, writing, speaking and listening, numeracy, critical thinking and problem solving skills people need at work. Sometimes it also includes using computers and 'learning to learn' skills.

In the workplace, literacy does not mean reading books or writing essays like you did in school. Workplace literacy refers to real work demands based on the real documents people encounter on the job e.g. health and safety manuals, machine specifications, shift notes, quality records, tables and graphs, operator instructions, standard operating procedures and log books.



Workplace literacy skills are often described separately but used together. For example, you need to combine reading, writing and calculation when you:

- Listen to a team leader's instructions about a change in an order
- Read a job specification that has both text and numbers in a chart or tables
- Talk about the information to a co-worker

- Understand the underlying numeracy concepts such as weights and measures, tolerances or temperatures
- Read data from a gauge or dial
- Record the numerical results in writing.

Employees need reading, writing, speaking and listening and numeracy skills to carry out their jobs well and to understand why processes work the way they do. They need literacy skills to get through induction and health and safety training.

The right level of skills means staff can work more quickly with fewer mistakes. Skilled staff are more likely to be innovative and more capable with new technology. They generally require less supervision, accept more responsibility and are better communicators. Training leads to higher skills and wages and lower staff turnover. Building a more productive workforce often means investing in foundation skills training.

Employers don't always recognise the range of underpinning literacy skills that are involved in particular jobs. Sometimes they don't make the link between a lack of reading, writing or numeracy skills and problems such as wastage and reworks.

When there are changes in the workplace, employees' lack of literacy skills may become more apparent. For example, there may be a significant impact on a company if the workforce has low literacy skills and also:

- A process or procedure or machine changes
- Compliance or registration requirements change
- Qualifications are needed or the requirements in qualifications change

LITERACY COMPETENCES FOR VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Training itself often requires a higher level of reading and writing than is needed on the job because new information is usually presented in writing.

People need more reading and writing when they are doing training or unit standard assessment activities than they use on the job. A training course might require people to read notes on a whiteboard and summarise the tutor's key points in writing.

This is often the case with theory and health and safety related information. Reading workbooks or self-study material can be particularly difficult for people who are not confident readers or who have not been in formal training for a long time.

Some training material is written in quite formal language, different from the sorts of reading people may do on the job, such as informal shift notes or very short bullet points on a form.

The training material might include diagrams and charts that may not be used on the job and these are not always carefully explained. Some training material is harder to read than it needs to be because it is not clearly laid out.

In vocational training integrated literacy training supports trainees who have poor literacy skills; trainers can repeat information, summarise concepts and provide extra resources and individual coaching – all of which takes additional time. This support does not usually include direct teaching of reading, writing and numeracy skills.

It is easier to compensate for a lack of literacy at low levels. If trainees want to progress to higher levels, the lack of reading, writing, numeracy and problem solving skills makes progress much harder.

It makes sense to specify the literacy skills needed or expected from training. Workplace literacy demands give people a real purpose for learning. Integrating literacy into the training system also means that the skills taught are wholly relevant to the workplace. This means literacy training will help get a better business outcome.

Companies that provide focused literacy training as part of their industry training system usually find that:

- Employees become more productive and motivated
- Product wastage often decreases and production problems decrease
- Employees participate more in quality systems and contribute more in team meetings.

When employees improve their literacy, they are more likely to stay involved and achieve unit standards. They are also more likely to be interested in further training. This is useful longer term as companies introduce new processes and technologies.

**LITERACY COMPETENCES
ON THE JOB - THE
"KITCHEN HELPER" EXAMPLE**

Overview of tasks and fields of activity (on the example of reading/speaking and listening/critical thinking)

Kitchen helpers work in kitchens of restaurants and hotels, in industrial kitchens as well as in canteens of companies, hospitals and educational institutions. Usually the work in a kitchen is split between more cooks and kitchen helpers. Kitchen helpers also get in contact with waiters, and buffet attendants.

Kitchen helpers assist the preparation of food and menus. They wash and cut vegetables, salads and fruits and prepare cold platters under supervision. Kitchen helpers prepare marinades, dressings, sauces and soups, they cut pastry products such as cakes and pies. Tidying up, washing up and cleaning are a part of their activities as well.

Literacy on the job: READING		
VERY FREQUENTLY	FREQUENTLY	FROM TIME TO TIME
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ labels of goods ▪ Cleaning plans ▪ Recipies ▪ Work plans ▪ Time schedules ▪ menus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ storage rules ▪ terms and conditions of use for machines ▪ health and safety information sheets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ supplier delivery documents ▪ bills ▪ inventory lists ▪ room plans ▪ health and safety information sheets ▪ detailed job specifications ▪ company health and safety manual ▪ employment related information e.g. leave forms, employment agreement pay slips ▪ apprenticeship training materials when going through training ▪ training materials when they attend courses on first aid, health and safety, regulations and standards

Literacy on the job: **SPEAKING AND LISTENING**

VERY FREQUENTLY	FREQUENTLY	FROM TIME TO TIME
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ talk to other colleagues to co-ordinate the work ▪ communicate on work issues to co-workers ▪ listen and respond to verbal instructions and explanations from the supervisor ▪ ask clarifying questions to check the information given ▪ report the progress made on the work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ participate in team meetings ▪ report to manager about anything affecting the job process ▪ request assistance from others ▪ give information to co-workers ▪ order supplies or equipment from suppliers (face-to-face and over the phone) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ discuss issues with supervisor if there are problems with the job ▪ answer verbal questions during training assessments ▪ listen to verbal explanations from people giving training or updates

Literacy on the job: **CRITICAL THINKING**

VERY FREQUENTLY	FREQUENTLY	FROM TIME TO TIME
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the best and most efficient order in which to complete a job ▪ the correct method and tools to use to complete a building task ▪ to do a job by yourself or need help from others ▪ check if your work meets with the standards ▪ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ deal with changes to work plans ▪ discuss and agree on changes to the plan ▪ identify if changes need to be referred to co-workers and supervisors ▪ identify problems and develop solutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ fill in inventory lists ▪ room plans ▪ table/seating plans ▪ deal with contingencies e.g. problems with tools or equipment, injury or accident.

The complete description of literacy competences in selected job profiles can be found on the website www.literacy-and-vocation.eu in spring 2013.

**PART III
SOLUTIONS
FOR COMBATING ILLITERACY**

POLITICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

PRINCIPLES

In the past literacy was considered to be the ability to read and write. Today the meaning of literacy has changed to reflect changes in society and the skills needed by individuals to participate fully in society.

And individuals need to train this ability especially for the following purpose: As the 21st century is characterized by the on-going change from industrial society to a "knowledge society", the so called "up-skilling" of employees and the need for higher qualifications levels is evident across Europe. It is in this context that individuals of today, and of the future, require a good standard of basic literacy education to enable them to access the job market as well as to participate in the process of lifelong and vocational further learning.

And last but not least: functional illiteracy is a factor contributing to exclusion and poverty that restricts democratic and social participation and is seriously detrimental to personal fulfilment and the defence of rights.

COMBATING PREJUDICES

Illiteracy is invisible but not a minor matter. The people involved do all they can to hide their problems, cope with their difficulties and pass unnoticed.

Illiteracy is not exclusively a problem for young people, but affects all age groups. Men more than women. The older you are, the more skills you lose if you do not use them.

Illiteracy is not exclusively a problem for urban neighbourhoods. It is found in town and country.

Illiteracy does not only concern the socially excluded. Over half of these people have jobs.

Illiteracy does not mean incompetence, lack of intelligence. Men and women have acquired sets of skills without using the written word, but these skills are hard to maintain.

Illiteracy has nothing to do with immigration. Combating illiteracy should not be confused with language policy for migrants.

MEASURES TO CONSIDER

A **European definition of illiteracy** should be drawn up.

Measures for

combating functional illiteracy should be understood as a key element of lifelong learning policy

(initial vocational training and in-service training) and should be treated separately from migrant language policy.

These

measures should be designed and implemented on a local and regional level:

they are best suited to assessing and seeking solutions to the problem of functional illiteracy, as local authorities are often the first point of contact for illiterate people.

Adequate assessments should be developed

ensuring to protect the privacy of individual and to avoid the stigmatization of persons.

Local and regional administrations should set the example by launching training programmes for their staff affected by functional illiteracy,

and set up training programmes for staff facing difficulties in their work.

Fostering the

development of efforts to prevent and overcome functional illiteracy in the workplace

improving the economic performance of a business and facilitating the career and personal development of employees.

POLICY PRIORITIES TO REACH THESE AIMS

- **Integration of literacy into publicly funded education and training programmes**
- **Identification of employees' basic training needs based on the workplace**
- **Raising awareness among decision-makers**
- **Development of tailor-made basic training programmes for employees**
- **Development of the right to training in companies and in-service basic training to increase career security**
- **Company-based basic skills training including new ICT and Internet training**
- **Development of programmes to detect functional illiteracy on local and regional level**
- **Development of regional strategies and action plans with local players**

**THE LEONARDO DA VINCI
PROJECT "LITERACY AND
VOCATION"**

The project Literacy and Vocation identifies literacy needs for workplace purposes and develops concepts and materials for literacy and numeracy education (skills for life) in Europe.

Workplace literacy is the ability to communicate effectively in a workplace using (but not restricted to) written information and other forms of communication.

This includes communicating appropriately to fulfil company goals, solve problems, accomplish tasks, and to think creatively and critically on the job. It requires being able to determine what, how, with whom, why, and when to communicate orally or in writing, and how to use language and quantitative information to do this.

The project partnership suggests that workplace oriented literacy programmes are the most effective way to build the literacy skills of people already in employment or in apprenticeship.

To support policy makers, civil servants, teachers, trainers and many more **lit.voc** develops concepts and materials that focus on how to plan and implement workplace oriented literacy programs with the following publications:

IDENTIFYING LITERACY NEEDS FOR VOCATIONAL PURPOSES A GUIDE
FOR VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE PROFESSIONALS (September 2012)

REQUIREMENTS FOR ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATION, MATHEMATICS AS WELL
AS MEDIA SKILLS IN SELECTED VOCATIONAL SETTINGS (November 2012)

CORE CURRICULUM (February 2013)

E-LEARNING-TOOL TRAIN& ASSESS (August 2013)

For more information see

www.literacy-and-vocation.eu



SELECTED BEST PRACTICE

DENMARK

Company-indoor-training: Froeslev Wood Company, Padborg

Froeslev Wood is a wood import company in Southern Jutland in Denmark. The company employs about 100 people. The company has also got its own production of pressure-treated wood and wooden houses.

I visited the company on a chilly morning in March and had to be aware of trucks and fork lifts busily transporting and storing all the different sorts and sizes of wood planks and boards on the huge storage area just besides the highway. I found the offices, which were of course built out of wood. In a large room with a long table I found a group of 12 employees and their Danish teacher, Jens Ole. They were busy discussing the inflection of danish verbs and were preparing an exam in two weeks. The course has 4 levels and this class was preparing for the level 2 exam. One student was preparing for level 3.

Dorte Jessen is the staff manager and she invited me into her comfortable office. Dorte tells me, that the company employs quite a number of workers with little educational background as well as foreign workers.

“At this company we see the employees not only as workers. Our employees are individuals and they must feel good and welcome at their working place. Basic education is very important for us, as we employ unskilled workers. A number of our staff have literacy difficulties and it is necessary that we deal with these problems. We offer courses in Danish, IT and knowledge of wood. Our working place is large, and therefore precise communication is very important. The courses are offered during the working day especially in quiet periods.

The company receives a financial compensation from the State Educational Fund that is meant especially for companies that offer basic education to unskilled and semiskilled workers. This compensation allows the company to offer basic education during the quiet winter months, and we can avoid firing staff in these periods. Our employees feel safer in their employment, they feel appreciated and they improve their basic skills of reading, writing and IT.

Basic education is a great advantage not only for our employees, it actually pays off for the company as well.”

UNITED KINGDOM

Skills for Life Provision in the workplace: National Health Service

The Learning Development Manager for the NHS (National Health Service) Trust contacted the Lancaster & Morecambe College regarding workplace provision for staff wishing/needing to update their Literacy skills and achieve a recognised national qualification. The provision at this time was funded through the Train to Gain scheme aimed at encouraging employers to up-skill their workforce.

Following an initial meeting to clarify the days, times and dates of sessions, publicity was developed aimed specifically at encouraging staff to attend.

On starting the course the learners undertook an 'initial assessment' and completed a piece of writing to help identify current skill level. Following this each learner then completed a 'diagnostic assessment' at that level to identify their specific skills and development points regarding the core curriculum. When this had been established each learner embarked upon an individual learning programme tailored to their specific need in the workshop sessions.

Staff attended the workshop on a weekly basis, being allowed time by their managers to access the learning time. Each session learners would work individually on areas identified through their learning plan with the focus being on building skills across all the curriculum areas and then achieving a qualification at the appropriate level. In addition we found that this process aided significantly individual levels of self confidence and self-esteem.

The learners/staff attending the workshops were of mixed of age, ability and job role within the organisation. All were willing learners who proved keen to achieve the maximum qualification they could.

City and Guilds Adult Literacy Level 1 and Level 2 were the main focus for many in the group with a significant number achieving both by the end of the course. Train to Gain was part of a Government initiative and therefore funded through the Skills Funding Agency.

AUSTRIA

Company-indoor-training: Literacy training for employees

In Carinthia 2007 the project "Bildung wieder entdecken" (Re-discovering Education) was launched. A shoe factory employing about 200 female sewing workers and a factory producing toner cartridges with also about 200 female employees took part in the project.

The companies' counsellors invited the women sensitively and anonymously. There were four courses, each taking about 25 weeks for 8 participants. The courses were held in a room inside the companies. One third of the course was paid as working time by the employers. The Curriculum included teambuilding, literacy, maths, memory training, ICT (including keyboard training), styling and coaching. The learning topics and aims were set individually and closely linked to the women's work and daily life.

All participants finished the 25 week course and most of them were satisfied. The women named improvements such as: more confidence in speaking, reading a

newspaper and writing, using the computer. Some feel a higher level of self confidence.

The women were especially happy that the course has been held within the well-known area of the company. They did not have to change their clothes or get to a new building.

What about improvements for the companies?

Speaking to the managing directors, the following improvements could be recognised:

- The participants showed higher motivation, which was important as many products were produced by hand
- The participants felt more confident, especially when learning a new working process. Especially the memory training had reduced the learning time
- The participants were more self confident and open for innovations.

NEW ZEALAND

Company-indoor-training: Literacy training for employees

Accor Hotels is an international hotel chain with 29 hotels across New Zealand. Novotel & Ibis Auckland Ellerslie, Mercure Auckland and Mercure Windsor Auckland are four of its Auckland hotels with 200 employees. ...

The challenge

The hospitality industry is highly competitive and the interaction between staff and guests is critical to positive guest experiences. Staff need to communicate successfully not only with customers but also with other departments. Accor aims to develop literacy within the workplace and assist employees in improving their ability to communicate and understand the expectations of their role and guests' needs. A number of the hotels' staff speak English as a second language which limits their ability to communicate and understand instructions. Department managers saw instances of employees:

- failing to fully complete induction documents
- having difficulty with written communication
- having difficulty with verbal communication with guests
- lacking in confidence to approach guests

Practical solutions

WORKBASE developed a business skills communication programme based on what was most beneficial for Accor Hotels. Priorities included:

- Communicating effectively with customers including dealing with complaints
- Communicating effectively with colleagues and supervisors
- Accurate documentation (particularly emergency procedures, menus and the hotel's induction book)

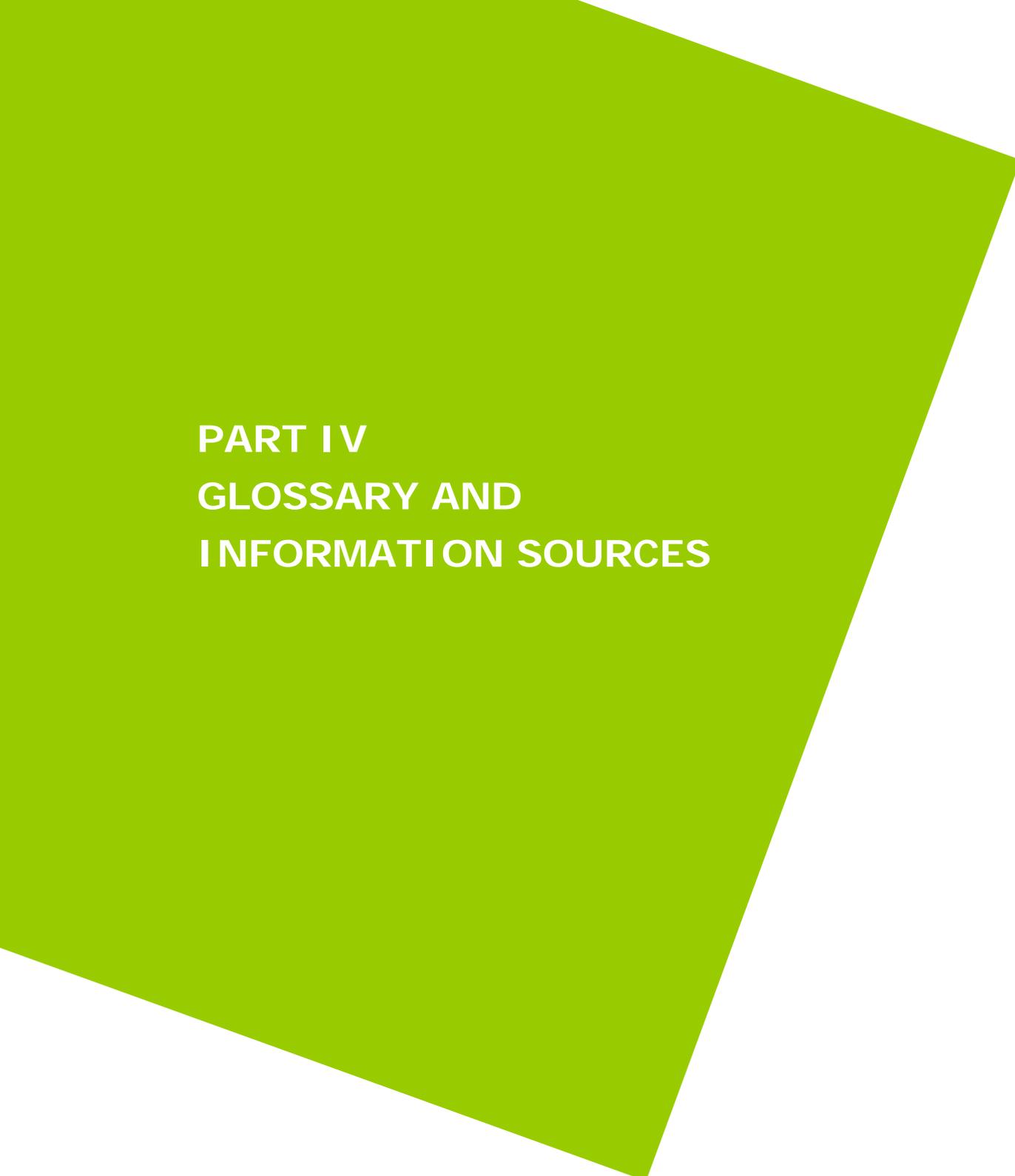
Twenty-nine staff attended an hour of training a week over a 14-month period. The training was tailored to each employee and took place during work hours, which

supported attendance and demonstrated the company's commitment to employee development.

Great results

Following the training hotel managers noticed a range of developments among participants, including:

- improved customer service, including staff handling customer complaints
- improved understanding of instructions from supervisors
- greater confidence to approach guests and initiate conversations
- better understanding of other departments
- improved email and report writing
- more accurate completion of duty logs and order placement.
- improved moral and a more positive attitude towards their work in the hotel



**PART IV
GLOSSARY AND
INFORMATION SOURCES**

Illiteracy and literacy

Concepts and understanding in Austria, Bulgaria, Germany, United Kingdom, Denmark and Spain

Austria

The overall concept and understanding of illiteracy and literacy is largely adapted from the definition provided by UNESCO. However “functional illiteracy” is a term which is rarely used in Austria any more. It’s been replaced by the term “people with basic education needs”. This new term emphasizes a different focus and therefore seeks to remove the stigma associated with being a “functional illiterate”.

The concept of basic education is very flexible. There is no standardised definition of basic education. The benefit of this is that the concept is adaptable enough to meet the needs and requirements of different target groups in different phases of life, with different circumstances and environments.

Bulgaria

In Bulgaria, national legislation in the field of education does not yet specifically deal with the issue of illiteracy, although several pilot projects, most of them involving the Ministry of Education, have been undertaken to examine the issue. The Employment Encouraging Act however, considers the literacy issue in the context of the process of becoming literate. This process is explained as acquiring basic knowledge and skills in reading, writing, and mathematics, as well as in humanities and natural sciences.

In Bulgarian research literature literacy is viewed as the ability to read and write, but also to comprehend information and express ideas in a concrete or abstract way.

Germany

According to German literature there is a distinction between 3 types of illiteracy:

“primärer Analphabetismus” (primary illiteracy)

This refers to an individual who did not learn to read or write during their childhood or adolescence.

“sekundärer Analphabetismus” (secondary illiteracy)

This refers to individuals who acquired reading and writing skills during their childhood and adolescence, but lost these skills over a period of time due to the lack of opportunity to use and apply them.

“funktionaler Analphabetismus” (functional illiteracy)

The term “funktionaler Analphabetismus” refers to the difference between an individual’s existing and necessary (or expected) level of reading and writing skills at a particular time. A person is described as functionally illiterate if their

individual reading and writing skills are significantly lower than those expected or required within the particular society within which the individual lives.

United Kingdom

The term 'functional illiteracy' is not used in England. An individual would be described as having 'literacy, language and numeracy skills needs'. This terminology represents a shift away from a focus on deficiency and the stigma often associated with poor literacy, language and numeracy skills.

Concern about the levels of literacy, language and numeracy skills amongst the adult population led to the launch of the Skills for Life Strategy in 2001. This strategy highlighted young adults as one of the key target groups in the government's plans to improve literacy, language and numeracy skills.

Denmark

The term "functional illiteracy" is used in Denmark when talking about the increasing demands of the Labour Market and society in general concerning literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. However in literature, research and educational areas the term "læse- og skrivevanskeligheder" (reading and writing difficulties) is used. There are different degrees of difficulties and the term is also used in concern to dyslectic people together with the terms "ordblindhed" (Danish word for dyslexia) or "dyslexia".

Spain

Apart from the generic meaning of illiteracy in Spain, the term is widely used to appoint to the individuals who are ignorant or lack elementary training in some discipline.

In these cases, we usually speak of functional illiteracy, which is the inability to comprise the explicit and implicit ideas of a text and issue a critical judgement. This means that the functional illiterate knows how to pronounce and decode written words, but he is not able to put them into the practice neither to understand them.

A core component of the concept of functional literacy is the one which connects to the social project of society. It is convenient to consider literacy as the ability to acquire and exchange information through the written words. We should understand the functional literacy as the possession and access to the skills required carrying out transactions involving reading and writing, and that an individual wants or needs to do.

Besides, in recent years the concept of digital illiteracy has been developed, which refers to the people who do not have the necessary knowledge for interacting with new technologies, such as the Internet.

Health literacy

Health literacy is an individual's ability to read, understand and use healthcare information to make decisions and follow instructions for treatment. There are multiple definitions of health literacy, in part because health literacy involves both the context (or setting) in which health literacy demands are made (e.g., health care, media, Internet or fitness facility) and the skills that people bring to that situation.

There are many factors that determine the health literacy level of health education materials or other health interventions. Reading level, numeracy level, language barriers, cultural appropriateness, format and style, sentence structure, use of illustrations, interactivity of intervention, and numerous other factors will affect how easily health information is understood and followed.

Computer literacy

Computer literacy, the ability to use computers to perform a variety of tasks, is becoming fundamental to the learning process. The "information age" perhaps best describes the twentieth century; the next century has been described as the "information processing" age. A wide variety of computer skills are useful and, in some cases required, as an essential part of college learning and employment for most individuals.

Information literacy

Information Literacy can be defined as the ability to know when there is a need for information, to be able to identify, locate, evaluate, and effectively use that information for the issue or problem at hand. It describes of a set of competencies that an informed citizen of an information society ought to possess to participate intelligently and actively in that society.

Other educational goals, including traditional literacy, computer literacy, library skills, and critical thinking skills, are related to information literacy and important foundations for its development.

Financial literacy

Financial literacy is the ability to understand finance. More specifically, it refers to the set of skills and knowledge that allows an individual to make informed and effective decisions through their understanding of finances. Raising interest in personal finance is now a focus of state-run programs in countries including Australia, Japan, the United States and the UK.

The OECD started an inter-governmental project in 2003 with the objective of providing ways to improve financial education and literacy standards through the development of common financial literacy principles.



INFORMATION SOURCES

www.nala.ie

Information Portal of the National Adult Literacy Agency in Ireland (NALA), information and publications on workplace literacy

www.cityandguilds.com

Certificates in Adult Literacy and Numeracy: Boost your confidence in reading, writing or numeracy - gain the skills and confidence you need to improve your career prospects with a Certificate in Adult Literacy and Numeracy.

www.niace.org.uk

NIACE (The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education) the leading non-governmental organisation for adult learning in England and Wales.

www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise

BBC Skillswise enables adults to improve reading, writing and number skills. Level one and entry level three literacy and numeracy resources - worksheets, ...

www.erwachsenenbildung.at

Portal for teaching and learning adults of the Austrian Ministry for Education: offers, information and links for all areas of adult education.

www.oeibf.at

Austrian Institute for Research on Vocational Training. öibf's mission is to carry out high-quality research and development in order to support and promote activities and policies concerning vocational education and training (VET)e.g projects, publications

www.literacy-and-vocation.eu

Web portal for literacy and vocation, run by the German vocational training provider ZUKUNFTSBAU GmbH, Berlin: Literacy needs for vocational purposes - Concepts and materials for literacy and numeracy education (skills for life) in Europe



The project results are notably based on European cooperation.

The members of the development partnership:

Zukunftsbau GmbH (leading organization) GERMANY
Gobierno de Navarra, Departamento de Educación – SPAIN
Berufsförderungsinstitut Oberösterreich – AUSTRIA
VUC Sønderjylland – DENMARK
DBAZ Pleven – BULGARIA
Lancaster and Morecambe College - United Kingdom

Further information:

www.literacy-and-vocation.eu



Education and Culture DG

Lifelong Learning Programme

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