



ReadTwinning

Connecting students through shared interests
to develop a love for reading

GUIDELINES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



INDEX

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	2	5.4.2 Content-sharing pads	29
INTRODUCTION	4	5.4.3 Social networks and Social reading platforms	29
The Project Partnership	5	5.4.4 Learning Management System	30
1. READING IN EUROPE	6	6. INCLUSIVE READING FOR ALL. BRIDGING THE GAPS - BUILDING BRIDGES	31
2. THE DIGITAL ECOSYSTEM AS AN OPPORTUNITY	11	6.1 Languages	31
2.1 The digital ecosystem and the practice of reading	11	6.2 Socio-economic background	32
2.2 Media-literacy as fringe-benefit	11	6.3 Gender bias and sexual oppression in education	33
3. ACTIVITIES	12	6.4 Learners with Disabilities and Special Educational Needs	35
3.1 Reading together: how and why?	12	6.5 Strategies and suggestions for an Inclusive Reading for all	37
3.2 Promoting interest-based reading	13	7. E-SAFETY AND PRIVACY PROTECTION	39
3.3 Preliminary and motivational activities	14	7.1 Worldwide general data collection policies and practices	39
3.4 The role of (small) reading tandems	16	7.2 Fair practices for collecting information from children	40
3.4.1 Intergenerational tandems	16	7.2.1 Consent of parents or tutors	40
3.4.2 Student reading groups	19	7.2.2 Data retention and protection	41
3.5 How to match young readers in order to establish effective reading tandems.....	20	7.3 Personal and sensitive data	42
3.6 What to read? The role of topic experts/tutors	20	7.4 ReadTwinning Project. E-Safety and Privacy Protection documents	43
3.7 Activities of the reading tandems	20	ATTACHMENT 1	44
3.8 The role of enhanced reading	21	ATTACHMENT 2	45
4. ACTORS	22	ATTACHMENT 3	49
4.1 The role of pupils	22	8. CASE STUDIES	51
4.2 The role of teachers	22	8.1 Family reading groups in Rome	51
4.3 The role of school libraries & librarians	23	9. REFERENCES	52
4.4 The role of parents	23	10. FEEDBACK AND EXPERIENCES	54
5. TOOLS	25	FAQ - READTWINNING WHAT/HOW TO	55
5.1 The platform	25		
5.2 How to register (& Privacy)	26		
5.3 Functionality & How-to	27		
5.4 Other tools	28		
5.4.1 Web conference (online meeting) platforms	28		

INTRODUCTION

ReadTwinning aims to address the ongoing need for effective strategies and tools to promote reading among young people, bridging school activities with personal interests and fostering social connections across students of different classes, schools, cultures and countries.

The need for a strong, active and methodologically innovative commitment by European schools in promoting a love for reading among young people is confirmed by all available data on reading literacy.

"ReadTwinning: Connecting students through shared interests to develop a love for reading" addresses these urgent needs through an innovative approach whose main aim is to motivate 9-15 year old students to read more and enjoy more the experience of reading and, in turn, improve literacy.

The project outputs include:

- **ReadTwinning Guidelines** – This e-publication provides teachers and other stakeholders with methodological guidelines to implement ReadTwinning.
- An **Open Education Resource Platform (www.readtwinning.eu) and toolkits** to offer students and teachers online "ready-to-use" tools to connect students based on shared interests, shaping for them a rich, motivating, shared reading environment based on 'parallel' reading of the same book or thematically connected books. Through ReadTwinning, readers from different years, schools, cities, and even countries can find reading partners with similar interests and enjoy books together.
- A set of **practical lessons plans** – These provide teachers and parents with examples of how to integrate the ReadTwinning approach into their classroom activities (supported by parents at home) and practically define the competences of the 'Connected Reader'.
- Two **Blended training courses** for Connected teachers and Parental engagement. Both courses include the self-assessment of learning outcomes and the recognition of competence acquired by teachers through a certificate.

To engage the most unmotivated and underperforming students, ReadTwinning combines a customised reading path with digital skills and networking.

The resources have been pilot tested in partner and associate schools across Europe and are available to the wider education community. Our dissemination strategy was initially oriented to reach the school sector but also relevant stakeholders active in other sectors, such as public libraries, digital publishers, local organisations, "GLAM" actors, technologists and digital makers, and citizens.

Our aim for the impacts on teachers is increased competence in cultivating young students' personal interests, motivation and reading abilities and a greater responsiveness to the needs of disadvantaged groups by developing, amongst others, competences in involving parents to support pro-reading strategies.

Our aim for the impacts on students is to foster a positive attitude towards reading and greater motivation thanks to the attractiveness of personal interest-based approach, the social dynamics created, and the support of parents and teachers. Reading is the key to unlocking every child's full potential and opens up a world of possibilities.

COVID-19 has impacted students, teachers and parents everywhere. In the first weeks of the pandemic we produced a catalogue of resources for teachers and parents to assist them with distance teaching and/or parental teaching. We also conducted a survey of teachers across Europe to better understand the impact of the pandemic on them and their students. These experiences fed into the

content and format of each of our outputs. Whilst the concept for ReadTwinning was developed before the pandemic, we feel that this connected and interest-based approach to reading is ideal to promote reading in this new world. The innovative ReadTwinning platform and supporting resources enable young readers to connect with friends online to enhance their reading experience, make new connections with similar interests, and ultimately, we hope, to make reading more enjoyable.

The Project Partnership

The partnership is composed of 7 partners from 5 different EU countries. 4 out of the 5 countries involved have among the highest proportions in Europe of 15 year-olds students that are low achievers in reading, and of non-readers in the total population. This means that the partnership has been carefully selected taking into account the necessity to work primarily in those countries lagging behind concerning the achievement of the EU's 2020 target for literacy, and thus in most need to engage students in innovative reading practices.

Six of the partners were also involved in 'The Living Book' Strategic Partnership project. It was through this collaboration that they identified the need for an interest-based approach to reading, rather than the traditional approach of reading in pre-formed class groups which are based solely on the students' age and chance to whomever's class they are chosen to be in.

The partnership includes a cross-section of schools, an association, an NGO and a small enterprise. All partners contributed to all of the project outputs to better meet the needs of students, teachers, parents, and the wider community.

Forum del Libro (Italy) is the Coordinator of the ReadTwinning project and led on the production of these Guidelines. As a non-profit organisation including teachers, librarians, publishers, booksellers, authors, academic researchers, Forum del Libro has vast experience in the promotion of reading and was supported by the other partners in the administration of the project.

GRYD (UK) led on the technical aspects of the project, with many years experience developing innovative online platforms and digital resources for schools. They developed the ReadTwinning social platform, where users are matched together based on their shared interests and desired topics for reading.

Scoala Gimnaziala "Constantin Parfene" (Romania), Dimotiko Scholeio Makedonitissas 3 – Stylianou Lena (Cyprus), and Agrupamento de Escolas de Vila Nova de Paiva (Portugal) are the school partners and led on the production of the practical lesson plans and piloting all of the project resources.

The **European University of Cyprus**, which coordinated 'The Living Book' project (winner of the Innovative Teaching Award 2021), led on the production of the blended courses for connected teachers and parental engagement.

ProgettoMondo Mial Onlus (Italy) integrated their work on intercultural dialogue, diversity, inclusion, and equity into the project to ensure we successfully integrate students from socio-economically disadvantaged families, with less well-educated parents and with immigrant backgrounds.

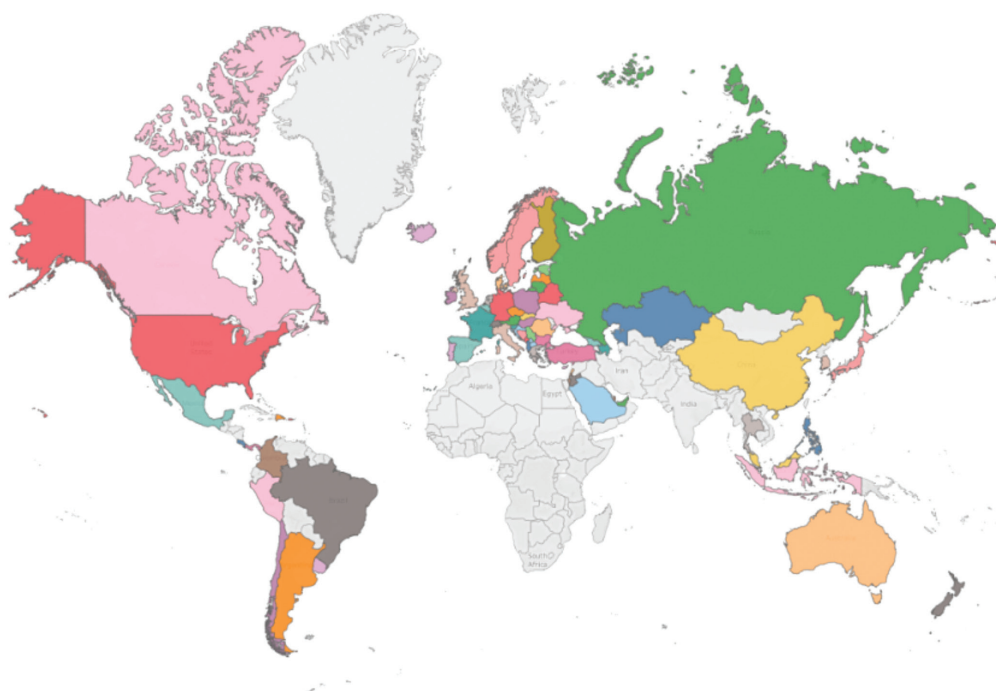
1. READING IN EUROPE

In order to set the ReadTwinning project within the context of its design and implementation, we shall firstly examine the most recent data on reading skills that was collected in the countries participating in the OECD's PISA survey around the world, including, among others, the EU Member States.

Since 2000, the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) has taken place every three years and has aimed to assess the needed key skills for pupils' full participation in society on completion of compulsory education. The survey focuses on reading, mathematics, and science skills, and one of these areas is majorly analysed in depth in each round. Besides, every survey includes the assessment of an innovative domain.

The PISA 2018 tests involved 600,000 15-year-old pupils from 79 countries/economies and focused on reading literacy intended as the pupils' ability to understand and use written texts, reflect on and elaborate the reading contents so as to pursue their goals, and to develop their knowledge and potential. The 2018 research included an interesting innovative domain, that is student well-being.

Countries participating in PISA 2018



PISA acknowledges that technologies – increasingly used in day-to-day activities – have changed the way we read and exchange information at home, at school and in the workplace.

Digitalization has generated and provided us with new ways of reading and text types, and as a result, digital skills have been included in the educational offerings of education systems.

The PISA 2018 test on reading skills was carried out by pupils in a large majority of the 79 participating countries by using a PC, and envisaged reading skill assessment in a digital environment.

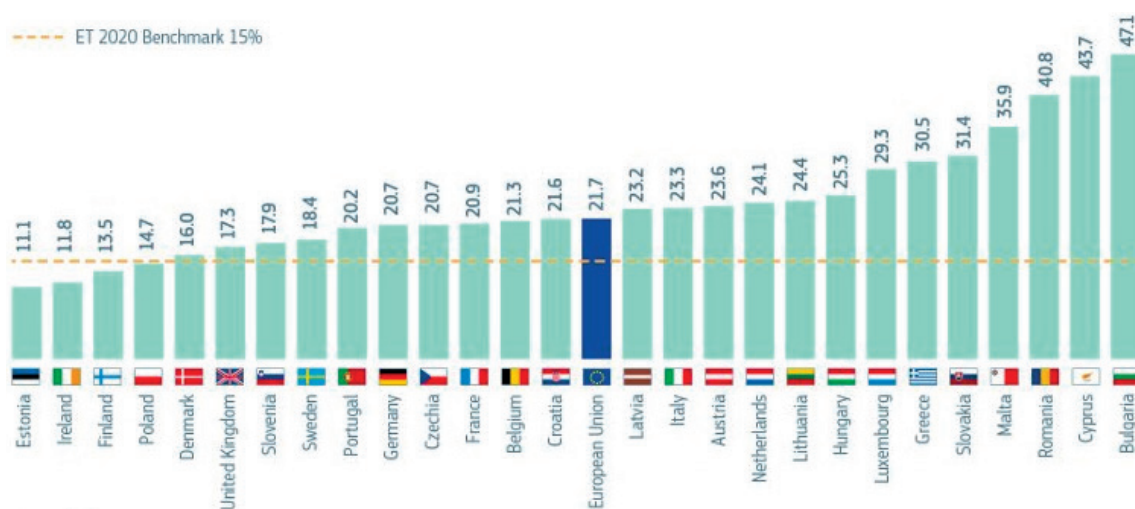
The PISA findings concerning Europe are particularly significant in the scope of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training, ET 2020, under which in 2010, the European Union defined four strategic macro-objectives and a number of benchmarks to be achieved within 2020, including setting the threshold percentage of 15-year-olds with low basic skills below 15%.

Overall, the PISA 2018 findings show that the EU did not reach the target, and identified large differences among the Member States: pupils from some of the involved countries showed low performance rates in the three assessment areas, while more than one pupil in five from other countries was under-skilled in reading, mathematics and science altogether.

As regards reading skills, only four countries achieved the ET2020 benchmark of 15%, namely Estonia (11.1%), Ireland (11.8%), Finland (13.5%) and Poland (14.7%).

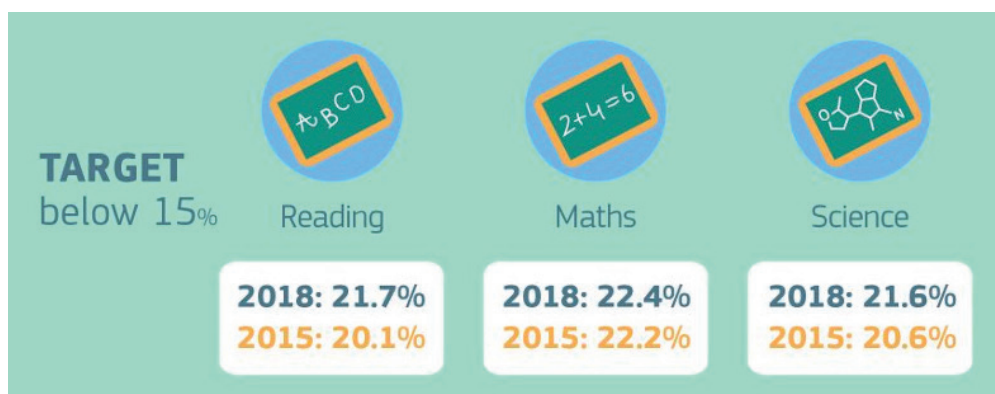
On the contrary, the underachievement rate exceeded 30% in Malta (35.9%), Slovakia (31.4%) and Greece (30.5%); or even 40% in Bulgaria (47.1%), Cyprus (43.7%) and Romania (40.8%).

Underachievement in reading, 2018



Compared to 2015 PISA, the figures worsened in most countries, although the variation results to be important only with reference to Cyprus (underachievement +8.1%), the Netherlands (+6.0%), Latvia (+4.8%), Germany (+4.5%), Luxembourg (+3.6%), Slovenia (+2.7%) and Finland (+2.5%). No country reported a significant reduction in the percentage of underachievers, and this impacts the EU average, where the underachievers have increased from 20.1% in 2015 to 21.7% in 2018.

Underachievement in basic skills among pupils aged 15



Over a longer period, we observe that in most EU countries reading performance changed only by a few percentage points between 2009 and 2018, but that the trend is generally negative: the pupils who were still not sufficiently skilled accounted for 19.2% in 2009.

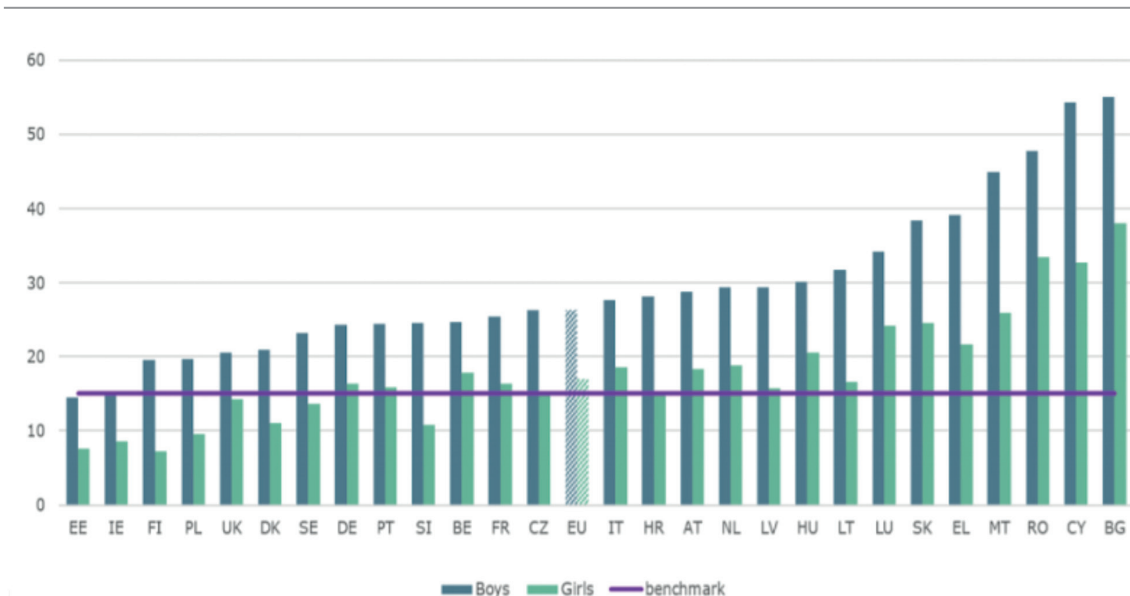
In such a scenario, which appears substantially negative, some countries managed to improve their results over time, and this demonstrates that – not merely economic – investment in the field of education and the policies on modernization of the education system can make the difference. We can identify some recurring characteristics in these countries, which seemingly contributed to these improvements: education systems in constant evolution to meet ever new training needs, extensive school autonomy, social acknowledgement and accurate selection of the teachers, support to education by the public opinion, particular attention on equity and inclusion, curricula built upon pupils' needs and interests rather than being teacher-centred.

According to PISA 2018, gender differences in performing mathematics and science skills can be considered as small, while they are substantial in terms of reading skills, where girls are clearly higher achievers than boys in every EU country.

The gap ranges from 6.4 percentage points in the United Kingdom to 21.5 percentage points in Cyprus. The EU average of underachievers is 26.3% for boys and 16.9% for girls.

Clearly, these differences in performance have nothing to do with the “natural” abilities related to gender, rather they depend on the social and cultural context that has been affecting behaviours, choices and motivations since early childhood.

Underachievement rates of boys and girls in reading, 2018 (%)

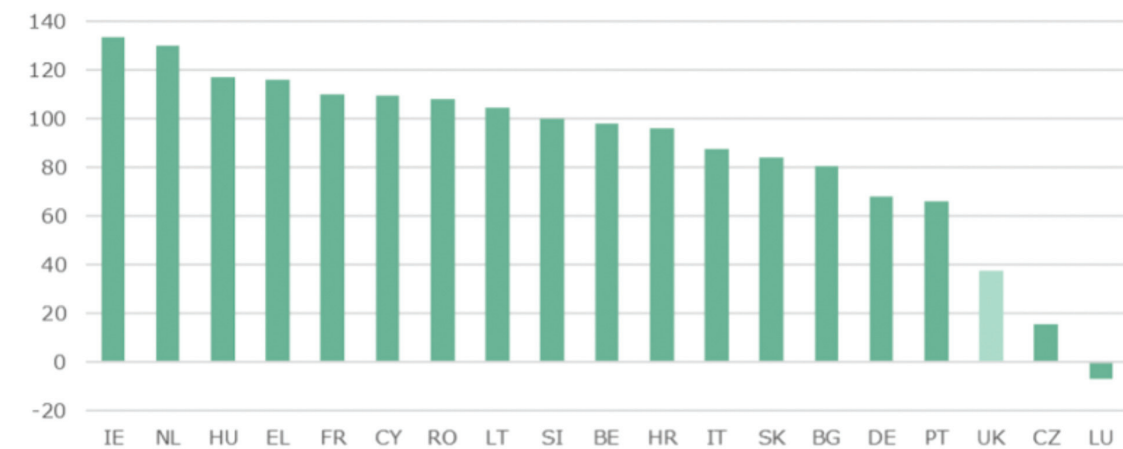


Source: PISA 2018, OECD.

Note: Data not available for ES. All gender differences in 2018 are statistically significant.

There is a large discrepancy in reading performance between pupils attending institutions providing general education and those attending vocational schools, and PISA 2018 detects this in most Member States. The reason likely lies in the fact that underachievers in many countries tend to choose vocational programmes. This discrepancy exceeds 100 score points (corresponding to 3 or 4 years of schooling) in Ireland, the Netherlands, Hungary, Greece, France, Cyprus, Romania, and Lithuania.

Score difference in reading between general and vocational programmes



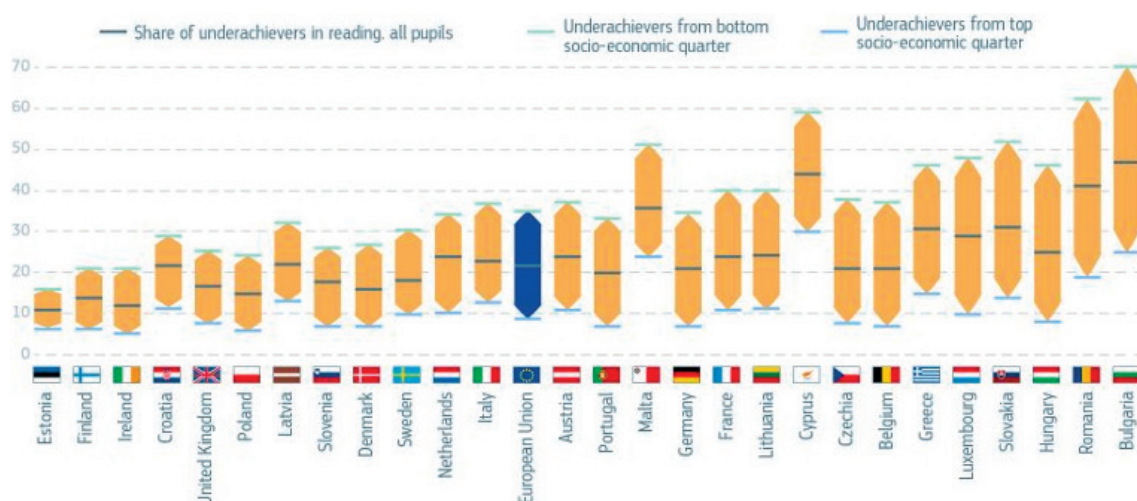
Source: OECD PISA 2018.

Note: Darker bars denote statistically significant differences. Data not available for AT, DK, EE, ES, FI, LV, MT, PL and SE.

In general, what we observe from the 2018 figures is that the countries with a low underachievement rate tend to register high rates of improved educational achievement and this seems to suggest that education systems can pursue excellence and, at the same time, equity in education.

In addition, the survey highlights that the socio-economic context strongly affects pupils' performance and expectations from their university career in most EU countries. Furthermore, those countries with a high percentage of underachievers tend to have large educational achievement gaps between pupils from top socio-economic quarter vs. bottom socio-economic quarter.

Underachievers in reading by socio-economic status, 2018

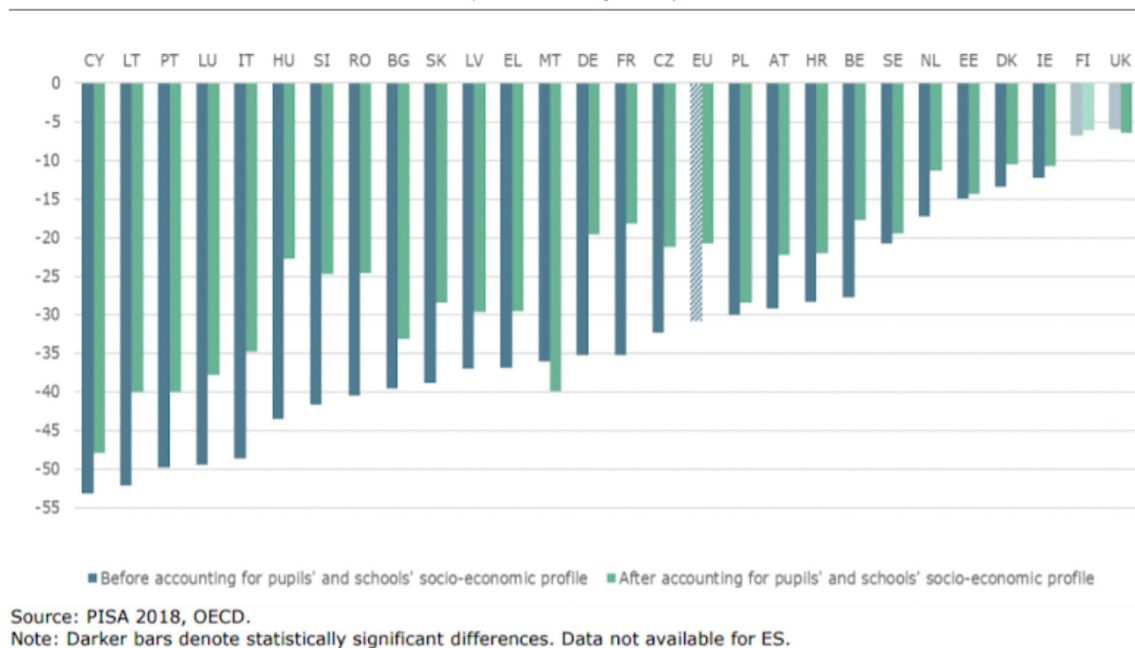


Another aspect the 2018 survey clearly points out is that a migrant background negatively impacts pupils' reading skills and the resulting condition is generally worse for the pupils who were born abroad compared with the native pupils whose parents were born abroad.

Finally, the results of the latest PISA round emphasise that pupils' well-being at school impacts their performance.

In most EU Member States, more than one pupil in five reports to be a victim of bullying, including cyberbullying, at least twice a month. This evidence is of particular concern if we consider that in terms of PISA score points, the impact of bullying accounts for one year and a half of schooling in Cyprus, Lithuania, Malta, Portugal, Luxembourg, Italy, Bulgaria, Latvia, Greece, Slovakia and Poland.

**Change in reading performance when pupils are bullied at least a few times a month
(PISA score points)**



In some countries, more than one pupil in three feels that they do not belong to the school community, and subsequently they are not as motivated to learn; this failure has an impact that is similar to bullying, thus negatively affecting reading skills in nearly every EU country. This data suggests that the situation worsened in most countries between 2015 and 2018.

It is still too early to assess how the pandemic impacted on these data. We know (for an early survey, see Roncaglia and Solimine 2021) that in most countries the first weeks of lockdown had a negative impact on reading (probably due both to the new and stressful situation, and to the closure of bookshops and libraries), while in the following months the practice of reading – which had far less limitations than other gathering-based cultural activities such as music concerts, theatre, movies, conferences – showed a positive growing tendency in many countries. However, we also know that emergency distant learning, while allowing for some, much needed continuity in school activities, had a substantially negative impact on students' overall achievements, including literacy competencies.

New research (and probably a new PISA survey) is required in order to assess the balance of those two factors and to project it on a wider timeframe. We wish to stress, however, that, during the pandemic the project proposed to the participating schools to foster the creation of small, family based reading groups, using a common template of a reading diary. Especially in Romania, where more than 100 family based reading groups were created, the results were very positive. Further details on the methodology used are available in the following sections of this document.

2. THE DIGITAL ECOSYSTEM AS AN OPPORTUNITY

2.1 The digital ecosystem and the practice of reading

The relationship between the digital ecosystem and the practice of reading has often been considered as potentially conflictual: digital devices and online activities may take up the valuable – and limited – time we may have available for reading. In general, online reading content might lack the complexity, depth and structure the book-form usually has, while digital reading devices are still often seen as awkward, distracting and not suitable for long, attentive and fulfilling reading sessions. On the other hand, it should be stressed that digital reading devices are still young, and many improvements, drawing on the remarkable possibilities offered by the digital environment, are still possible.

This project will neither discuss these views, nor take a stance in their defence nor even criticise any of them. On the contrary, what we will try to do is to provide a different perspective: given the pervasiveness of the digital ecosystem – most notably among younger people – and its role in all kinds of information interchange, discovery and research, we would set it out as the chosen environment for many activities connected with book discovery and readers' interaction, regardless of reading habits and the reading devices used (physical books or e-readers).

So, from the point of view of promoting reading, the digital ecosystem will be considered as an opportunity rather than an issue, and will be considered as a reading environment rather than a class of reading interfaces.

Most specifically, the opportunities that the project aims to explore are related to small reading groups (from 2 to max. 4-5 participants, labelled by the project as "reading tandems"). The reasons for this choice will be outlined later in these Guidelines (cf. section 3.1 and 3.2). The project aims to provide both methodological and operational tools for the effective establishment of small reading groups based on shared interests (using a mix of collaborative filtering algorithms and expert-based suggestions for interest-matching and book discovery) and the related activities.

2.2 Media-literacy as fringe-benefit

Using online tools to promote, guide and enhance reading activities will have the additional benefit of fostering media literacy by connecting the complex, relevant, editorially validated content usually related to the book-form with the broader field of online content.

This connection might counteract the tendency to use the web and the online environment as a source of mostly concise, fragmented and often low-quality information, and help students to perceive the web as a host of information resources, which vary in terms of their origin, quality and relevance, and should be selected and critically evaluated using adequate methodology and tools.

More specifically, we aim to help young readers to perceive the web as a content-rich environment which, if the information is correctly searched, selected and evaluated, may complement and be complemented by book content in the process of fostering and exploring personal interests.

In order to maximise the benefit of the project from the point of view of the acquisition of media-literacy competences, the methodology and tools provided will always imply and require that the sources used are correctly and thoroughly identified, thus allowing for a collaborative discussion on their value, meaning and relevance.

3. ACTIVITIES

3.1 Reading together: how and why?

Reading – and in particular pleasure reading – is and has always been a twofold activity. On the one hand, it is an individual activity that requires a quiet environment and a little concentration, as well as protected spaces and time. While on the other, it is a social activity: the books we read are generated within a social environment, selected by using – traditional and/or digital – social tools, interpreted within a shared cultural and semiotic framework, and usually evaluated, discussed, (re)used within a community, or rather a number of interconnected and partially overlapping communities. Reading is conversing with the book, with ourselves, as well as with the larger context of our reading communities.

Referring to the social dimension of reading is no surprise: we are well aware (Ong 1982) that language itself is a social undertaking, and that writing and reading practices are deeply rooted in orality and enrich the ways we use the language with new dimensions and possibilities. The social dimension of reading is interconnected with – and partially mirrors – the social dimension of writing, and incorporates within the latter additional layers of meanings and the possibility of new, ever-evolving interpretations (Cavallo-Chartier 1995, Fisher 2003; extensive survey of more relevant sources in Vivarelli 2018).

From such a perspective, silent reading has always been a game changer and has deeply changed our reading habits hand in hand with the technological and social developments, which allowed for the mass production and distribution of books. We could produce a quite impressive number of quotations on the pleasure of reading from ancient and classical sources, which are evidence of the fact that pleasure reading is no modern invention, rather the widespread habit of “extensive” pleasure reading is relatively recent (Engelsing 1974) and has been further enhanced by pulp magazines and mass-market paperbacks over the last century.

The impact of the digital revolution on the reading ecosystem is much debated, but probably requires time to be fully appreciated and evaluated. The evolution of reading devices and reading interfaces is still an ongoing process, and the connected changes in reading practices and habits is probably slower: what we see today might be just a hint of the radically new and partially unpredictable reading ecosystem of the future.

However, our reading habits have already changed as a consequence of the spread of the digital ecosystem: even the most traditional reader may use the web as a sort of side-environment while reading paper books apparently similar to those published 50 years ago (but probably written, edited, formatted and printed using digital tools), where he or she can search for information related to the book he or she is reading i.e. information about the author, a review of the book, the name of an historical figure, a place, a song, or a not-so-familiar object mentioned in the book...

Using the online environment as a tool for what we could label as “enhanced” reading was the focus of The Living Book, an Erasmus+ Project (2016-2019) that – as already mentioned – involved several partners who are now working on the ReadTwinning Project. As will be outlined in these Guidelines, part of the results and the methodology of The Living Book (available on the website of The Living Library platform: <https://thelivinglibrary.eu>) will also be used in the context of this new project, which however has a different focus, that is promoting the creation of small interest-based reading groups (2 to 4-5 participants) who will meet online and/or off-line, and offering them a sound methodological and operational framework, as well as an online platform with dedicated tools.

In doing so, the project intends to build a strong and effective environment for interest-based social reading, encouraging the participation and addressing the needs of young readers, above all of those who are not strong and/or proficient readers.

The project deals with all the steps concerning the creation and involvement of such groups by means of both methodological suggestions and the use of a dedicated platform. The main steps considered by

the project are the following: how to survey students in order to identify personal interests; how to identify – starting from shared interests – suitable reading partners and constitute “reading tandems” (the label we will use for small reading groups); how to help the reading tandem to choose the books to read; how to set reading goals and reading activities (including a shared reading diary); how to use the web as a social environment for enhanced reading; how to share the outcome of the reading activities and interact with other reading tandems.

3.2 Promoting interest-based reading

Motivation – or rather the lack of motivation – is probably the main challenge parents, schools and teachers should address in promoting reading among young people. And the single, most effective way to motivate young readers is connecting reading with their own individual interests, activities, relationships. The opposition between reading as a duty and reading as a pleasure and the strict entanglement between reading as a pleasure and reading as a way of fulfilling and fostering personal interests are much debated topics in literature (Cremin and Swann 2016, 2017).

Unfortunately, schools are often considered as an environment in which reading as a duty (“curricular” reading activities) prevails upon reading as a pleasure (free, extra-curricular reading activities). As Roberto Casati rightly observes (Casati 2014), schools are places in which interest-based reading is frequently debated or recommended, but scarcely practiced.

One of the main objectives of the ReadTwinning project is to help reversing this situation by offering methodological suggestions and practical tools that are useful for establishing interest-based reading as the core of school reading practices.

In order to reach this goal, a question should be preliminarily assessed: *what exactly is interest-based reading?*

The ReadTwinning methodology defines interest-based reading as the practice of reading connected with the pursuit and the exploration, on the part of the reader, of a specific personal interest, curiosity or passion, regardless of whether this interest is connected with the school curriculum or not, and therefore of the perceived value or relevance of this interest from the point of view of the school curriculum. Whenever possible, the focus is on specific (as opposed to generic) personal interests: not “sport” but e.g. cricket or archery or synchronized swimming; not “science” but e.g. astronomical photography or collecting minerals; not “music” but e.g. K-rock or folk music.

The range of interests considered should be wide-ranging and inclusive: gender-related issues, topics that are relevant for cultural minorities, every-day problems and curiosities (“How do I make the perfect burger?”) are all perfectly admissible interests and might be well connected with the reading activities based on the ReadTwinning methodology.

The focus on specific, personal interests is one of the reasons why the project primarily focuses on small reading groups, or “reading tandems”: larger reading groups tend to pursue more general interests and to find the “common ground” that might connect a broad number of readers. Creating large, diversified reading groups is wonderful, but it usually implies a pre-existing love for reading, and works better with strong and motivated readers. On the contrary, our aim is to build upon more specific, personal interests of pupils who are not strong readers, but who might find that reading a book is a nice way to indulge in their personal interest, and a small reading group – or a reading pal – is a way to discover interesting people with similar interests.

This approach obviously implies drawbacks too: it needs strategies and tools that help identify pupils with similar specific interests, and a teacher might find it difficult to suggest a book to the pupils who have

an interest, for instance, in K-rock or cosplay. Furthermore, there is the risk of creating closed “reading bubbles” that are unable to interact with the reading groups who are constituted according to a different interest. The ReadTwinning methodology aims to overcome these issues by suggesting strategies offering good interest-matching and book-discovery tools; involving parents, pupils, teachers, librarians in building a large online community of topic-gurus with competences on a wide range of subjects; fostering reading activities – including reading challenges – which are shared by different reading tandems. Reading requires protected spaces and time, and each reading tandem should have their own protected spaces and time, but it also requires social interaction, which the project methodology and tools aim to facilitate and boost.

3.3 Preliminary and motivational activities

The main goal of the ReadTwinning project is to promote reading among young people, starting from the assumption that a book is a valuable opportunity for personal and professional growth and an important tool for the benefit of social relations. To achieve this goal, we need to know what in many cases actually hinders young people from establishing a relationship with reading. In such a perspective, and in order to more effectively engage pupils in the activities of the ReadTwinning project, schools are invited to organise a number of preliminary activities to be carried out both inside and outside the school.

These activities aim:

- to better identify personal interests;
- to familiarise pupils with the activities of a reading group
- to involve the pupils’ families, whose role can be crucial, especially for the younger ones (age 9-11);
- to help teachers step back, albeit temporarily, from their role.

These objectives can be achieved by creating small mixed reading groups, i.e. groups composed of teachers, pupils, family members, who occasionally meet on the basis of previously identified affinities, but also of practical factors (neighbouring homes, compatible schedules, etc.). These groups, possibly led in pairs by two different people (teacher-parent, parent-pupil, teacher-pupil) freely talk about their relationship with books and reading according to their own personal experiences.

When organising these groups, we shall bear in mind the model of self-help or of mutual help groups. In other words, these are self-regulated groups without leading figures, which are made up of people who want to share their reading (or non-reading) experiences, so as to achieve a common goal, that is to ensure that everyone has access to reading, looked at as a means of personal and professional growth. This way, it is possible to partially eliminate the gap between reading for duty (study or work) and reading for pleasure, and making room for pupils with reading difficulties (special educational needs and other issues).

One of the main goals of these groups is that of helping parents and teachers in identifying pupils’ interests through informal discussions. Often, parents already know about their children’s interests, but an informal collaborative setting may help in better understanding both the specific framework in which personal interests emerge and their aim and scope.

The key purpose of these groups is to facilitate the planning, enhancement and implementation of interest-based reading activities at school and elsewhere by evaluating their success step by step, and in particular to allow pupils to become familiar with using the ReadTwinning platform. In practical terms, the tasks of these preliminary groups can be summarised as follows:

- knowledge of the interests, interest-based activities and reading habits of the members of the group;
- design of further interest-based activities (including online activities, such as research and evaluation of interest-related content) that can foster and encourage reading;
- support for initiatives that compare different reading experiences;
- support of autonomous planning in the context of reading practices.

Groups collectively meet and discuss the activities carried out and the methods of involvement of the participants on a regular basis. These meetings should harmonise the intervention criteria on the basis of a consistent working style. School libraries are an excellent environment in which meetings of different small groups can be organised.

The objectives of these activities are

- to engage young people and reaffirm the importance of reading along their cultural and social growth;
- to include reading among the “ordinary” home and school activities;
- to put the school library in the forefront of developing reading literacy;
- to emphasise the importance of reading as a learning factor and as an opportunity for fostering personal interests, for leisure and for gaming;
- to help children get used to the idea that reading is a profound personal experience and, at the same time, has a strong relational component;
- to characterise reading as a process of growth, in which individual interests are the baseline for subsequent social sharing;
- to test the level of children’s awareness when using social networks and online search tools;
- to create various communities of readers inside and outside the school, where reading-based “twinning” relationships can develop;
- to define these communities as open groups, involving pupils, teachers and families;
- to involve the family from the outset, in order to develop an environment of trust and to advocate the ReadTwinning activities that pupils will carry out online.

In order to have a better knowledge of the context, schools might find it useful to organise a preliminary survey about personal interests and reading habits among pupils and parents (see ReadTwinning Preliminary Questionnaire).

As for the activities, it would be appropriate to take into account what pupils and families propose during the preliminary meetings. In particular, it is useful to suggest that small reading tandems (two-three people) are established both within the family and among the pupils who not necessarily belong to the same group-class, thus leaving the participants free to choose their partners and the books to read, and to organise the time plan and support initiatives: schedule of the meetings, reading diary, creation of book-trailers, playlists, images.

Family-based, small reading groups proved to be particularly effective during the pandemics, but they can be usefully organised independently from external constraints: they promote family bonding and mutual understanding, and constitute a safe environments in which younger children can develop ideas, debate-related skills and active reading competencies; competencies which can later be used in reading tandems or reading groups involving non-family members.

ReadTwinning Preliminary Questionnaire for Pupils & Parents (questions can be modified/selected/added also depending on the age range)

- 1) *Apart from the time spent working and/or studying, what are the activities you prefer to do at home? Rate them 1 to 10 (1: I really don't like it; 10: I love it)*
Watching TV
Playing video games
Interacting through social media
Reading (books, comics)
Listening to music
Playing a musical instrument
Exercising (e.g. gymnastics, yoga etc.)
Doing home activities for pleasure (e.g. cooking, knitting, DIY...)
Coding, computer programming, robotics...
Other
- 2) *What are the topics that interest you? (for example a sport, a band, manga, cosplay, a celebrity...)*
- 3) *Among the topics you are passionate about, is there one in which you are particularly experienced?*
- 4) *Do you share this passion with any of your family members?*
- 5) *Apart from school books/books for your work, do you spend time reading? If yes, how much time do you spend reading for pleasure?*
- 6) *Have you a habit of reading? If yes, do you have a favourite genre (detective stories, science fiction, fantasy, graphic novels, comics, romance, poetry etc.)?*
- 7) *Do you like reading aloud?*
- 8) *What kind of work/profession would you like to do as grown up?*
- 9) *There is a political or social cause you are passionate about? (for example social equality, fighting climate change, defending gender rights, vegetarian/vegan lifestyle, animal rights...)*
- 10) *There is a book you really, really loved? If so, what book?*
- 11) *Would you like to read it again with your family or with a friend?*

3.4 The role of (small) reading tandems

3.4.1 Intergenerational tandems

Creating small reading tandems involving children and their families, with the school's encouragement and support, which can be held at home or at the school library when possible, can be an effective starting point to raise awareness among parents and relatives about the importance of reading and to outline the ReadTwinning project to them.

Early literacy programs have been in place worldwide for several years, in order to provide preschool children with an environment conducive to the practice of reading. Various studies have shown that being read aloud by an adult since early childhood helps children to approach books with curiosity, thus strength-

ening their emotional relationship with the reading adult, stimulating language development, subsequently improving their reading skills and school achievements. These results are all the more important in families from disadvantaged backgrounds, where reading is not routinely practised: school endorsement and suggestions, as well as the example of other families, may help families from disadvantaged backgrounds to discover the social role of reading even within the family environment.

Maintaining the practice of reading aloud and more in general, of communal reading within the family environment during primary school can support and boost the development of children's literacy: experiencing the pleasure of reading together with those who are the first people the child comes into contact with contributes to developing children's ability to understand the world and other people, and can be a valuable training to learn about the dynamics of shared reading and reading groups the ReadTwinning project is based on. Furthermore, in contexts where a public library is lacking, the school library can become an important reference point for families, especially those with fewer means and resources.

In brief, the goals of a small reading tandem involving children in the 8-11 age group within the family environment are as follows:

1. encouraging children to read by leading them to realise that even the closest and dearest people read with pleasure, and that reading is an activity that can be strictly connected with personal interests, even when those interests are not literacy-related;
2. promoting reading as a daily practice;
3. raising the adults' awareness (parents, grandparents, other relatives) on the importance of reading as a tool for personal and social growth;
4. finding in reading an opportunity for dialogue, which is fundamental to nourish the relationship between parents and children;
5. sharing the pleasure of personal reading, enriching one's own experience and becoming aware that the group is capable of triggering new possibilities of knowledge;
6. enhancing the role of the school library as a central place in the life of the school community and of the children and their families who live in the neighbourhood, in particular of those families who scarcely read any books or who do not read at all;
7. teaching the children how to hold a frank and respectful discussion dealing with a variety of contexts, either in reading tandems within the school or carried out with other girls and boys on the basis of shared interests through the ReadTwinning project.

In setting up reading tandems within the family environment, the teacher's role as a reading mediator proves to be very important, especially when children come from families where reading is neither experienced daily nor practised. In this regard, it is advisable, on the one hand, that the teacher invites the pupils' families on a meeting in the preliminary phase, to better understand the children's background, while on the other, the teacher together with the families outline the characteristics of a small intergenerational reading tandem, which must focus on the children's inclinations and the specific traits of their family. During the meeting, the teacher should explain what the main stages of a small reading tandem are, and underline how each family will be free to shape the various phases according to their own needs (spaces inside the house, work and/or study schedules, habits, etc.). These phases can be briefly summarised by means of a set of questions:

1) Who is going to participate in the small reading tandem?

Although ideally all family members shall join the group, it may occur that at least in the initial phase, someone cannot or does not want to join. What matters the most is that taking part in the group is a free choice and that participating in the group is seen as a pleasant opportunity and not as an imposition dictated by the school or the teacher. In turn, the teacher can encourage broad participation, which is not limited to the parents but that includes brothers and sisters, grandparents or even other relatives, pointing out the potential for dialogue offered by the group.

2) What book will we choose to read?

The choice of the book to read together is obviously crucial and the children's interests should steer the decision. In this regard, the teacher can suggest that the participants confront each other and take into consideration a wide range of books, starting from common tastes and practices within the family (passion for a sport or for a music band, love for adventure novels or for science fiction, memories of a trip...). If families do not have books suitable for shared reading, the school library will offer a spectrum of possibilities (not only fiction, but also comics, popular science books, poetry...) based on the indications provided by the participants.

3) How and when will we read?

Depending on the age of the child and the family composition, the book can be read aloud altogether during short dedicated meetings (which can even be organised in form of 'theatrical' or dramatised reading), or in alternative, each member of the family will read the book separately. In such an event, different stages will identify the reading process according to a schedule including conversations about the book and other free activities related to reading, if the participants agree. If one or more members of the family group cannot take part in the face-to-face meetings, they can have the chance to be involved via a video sharing platform according to a pre-established schedule, which will be an opportunity to meet all the family members involved.

4) What record will be left of this experience?

Family members within the reading group can decide to keep a written record and/or video and/or audio recording of the progression of their experience e.g. by writing the funniest comments, the passages that triggered the most fervent discussion, the insights. This record/recording can take various forms: the outline of a "logbook" can be easily accessed via the ReadTwinning platform, which the group participants will be free to customise as they wish. In any case, the possibilities of leaving traces of shared reading are plenty: from a physical notebook on which participants can write down notes and possibly integrate them with drawings or clippings, to an online diary, which allows to include audio, video, music tracks (on the "reading diary" see below section 3.7).

5) How will we share our experience?

It is possible and desirable that after reading the book, family groups decide to share their experience with other groups. The teacher can then suggest that a small video is made in which the group members talk about the book they read and the progress of their meetings, possibly in a playful way, for example in the form of a book trailer or parody. The videos of the various groups can be collected on the school website and eventually be projected during a meeting at the school library or in other common spaces, thus encouraging new groups to be created.

As outlined in the following paragraph, these steps can also be applied to student reading groups. In the case of family reading groups, however, the documentation participants can choose to consult during their reading experience takes on particular importance. Whether it is in the form of a written record or recorded on video or via other means, the reading diary can become an important text in the family history, something that family members will be able to get hold of over time, and that bears witness to the social and participatory function of reading.

3.4.2 Student reading groups

Traditionally, reading groups are groups of people who meet at set times to discuss one or more books they have previously selected and read. Ideally, the reading group tends to establish a community where books are not only vehicles of knowledge or entertainment, but also instruments of dialogue, of mutual knowledge, of respect for different specific characteristics.

However, if a reading group originated within the school environment, the situation is likely to be different: girls and boys usually join because the teachers propose to create the group and as a consequence, the level of involvement and reading skills may vary. So, it is of key relevance that, thanks to the preliminary activities (see above), students perceive the reading tandem as a voluntary and pleasant activity.

By offering the students to create small reading tandems with other students or friends, teachers should encourage girls and boys to start from their reading experiences, tastes, and habits. In this regard, it may be appropriate to start with a questionnaire administered as a game according to which students are invited to indicate their interests, to explain what they expect from the reading group, to indicate their ideal reading partner, to specify the kind of books they would like to read including comics, illustrated books, non-fiction books. The questionnaire is a useful starting point for the use of the ReadTwinning platform.

On the basis of the answers given to the questionnaires, reading tandems can be created. Each group will have a book approved by all its members.

There are no predetermined rules for the internal organisation of a reading group, all the more so when as in this case, it is a tandem made up of a very small number of people (max. 3-4). Its members will agree upon how to organise their reading schedule, even if it is usually advisable to set a deadline, within which they all should finish to read the chosen book. Likewise, also based on the length and characteristics of the text, the members will decide how many times they should meet while still reading the book. Teachers shall remember that shared reading can occur through direct meetings, which can take place face-to-face or via a digital platform, or it can include other ways of discussion such as by exchanging information and quick opinions over the chat.

In order to nourish reading for pleasure and increase the involvement of even the most reluctant students, parallel activities can be proposed, again in the form of a game. Below are some examples to be integrated into the ReadTwinning platform:

- a reading diary (see below);
- reading aloud or dramatising sections or passages;
- re-writes, parodies, fan fiction;
- creation of a book trailer;
- creation of a short 'pilot' episode for a serial rendering of the book;
- development of a playlist suitable for the book;
- creation of drawings and illustrations for the ideal book cover.

All these activities and more should be freely set out by the students themselves, and never imposed by the teachers.

Reading groups usually meet face-to-face, occasional conversations can follow over time. Reading groups can also take place online via video conferencing platforms and share content via the ReadTwinning platform or other social networks. Online meetings can also be organised by involving reading groups from different schools who have read or are reading the same book.

3.5 How to match young readers in order to establish effective reading tandems

The aim of the match-making process should be that of establishing small groups of 2-4 young readers with

- shared interests, which are sufficiently clear and specific;
- compatible (but not necessarily the same) age, reading and relational skills, complemented by perspectives, attitudes, opinions, reading habits, which should be as diverse as possible, within reasonable limits, to fulfil the need to allow for effective interaction.

In the final version of the project, **the online platform includes specific tools to facilitate match-making** by means of a set of questions to identify users' interests, reading habits and favourite genres. In the preliminary stage, school partners **involve teachers and pupils in the matchmaking process, asking them to help match pupils with similar interests**. Since the project aims to connect pupils from different classes, schools and countries, it is recommended (albeit not required) to **match pupils from different classes**. In the phase, we suggested that **reading pals work mainly in pairs, but that the possibility to work also with small groups of 2 to (maximum) 4-5 people is explored**, in order to better understand if and how well the tools provided and the ReadTwinning methodology work with small groups. In the context of this project, reading pals working in pairs or each small group connected to read the same book is called a **"reading tandem"**.

3.6 What to read? The role of topic experts/tutors

In the final version of the project, **the platform provides book suggestions based on the users' interests via "topic gurus"**, advanced users of the platform (partners, teachers, parents, pupils) with a specific competence on the topic, which constitutes the reading tandem's specific interest. In the preliminary stages of the project, when the guru community is still embryonal, partners were encouraged to **involve pupils, teachers and parents in preparing a list of topics of interest (trying to be the most specific as possible), in identifying topic gurus and in collecting topic-specific book recommendations from the topic gurus**. The platform includes several Gurus, with similar functionality to 'pages' on other social networks, where book titles and related articles and media are shared, to encourage pupils. **However, of great importance is that the final choice of the book to read is left to and not imposed upon the reading tandem.**

3.7 Activities of the reading tandems

Reading tandems may meet online by means of video-conference platforms (private events can be created within the tandem with conferencing links included) and/or off-line. Once the book to read has been chosen (cf. § 3.6), the tandem will meet for the first time, in order to share ideas on the activities along the reading process.

In this regard, of particular relevance is the **reading diary**, which will allow each and every member of the group to share information concerning the progress in reading the book, but also to collect the first impressions on the passages, the ideas, the characters, the facts considered to be the most interesting or the most debatable. The platform offers a template for the 'reading diary', using provocative questions in a forum style ('Discussions'), allowing the tandem members to respond to these questions whilst reading the book and to interact with the replies of other tandem members. These questions were based on a selection of paper templates created by partners in the early stages of the project (an example is enclosed within the Appendix).

In addition, tandem members will use the main tandem 'feed' to share specific media (links, videos, audio, photos) related to the book or their experience of reading the current section of the book (see below).

At the beginning of the activity, each reading tandem can also define a set of goals which, together, constitutes the **"reading challenge"**. What is the deadline to finish the book? Which kind of shared activities (such as creating a book trailer; creating a given number of Instagram stories describing the reading habits, discoveries, activities of the tandem; creating a music playlist related to the book, or to be listened to while reading it; creating book-related bookmarks, etc)

The reading challenges are **not competitive** and should not be perceived as "homework", rather as a way to (self)organise and manage the reading activities: **challenges that the group freely chooses to address rather than tasks imposed from the outside**. The platform offers the opportunity to incorporate the reading challenges in the descriptive ('About') section of the tandem.

Each reading tandem can also define its own **reading stages** e.g. completing the first section of the book, as part of the reading challenges. The reading (sub)challenges can also be included in the reading diary ('Discussions').

The platform also includes badges (for both the tandem and its single participants) which are awarded for certain activities (creating tandems, posting regularly, sharing photos/videos, etc).

Since each reading tandem has its own specific, book-related and topic-related challenges and reading activities, the ReadTwinning methodology allows for **common activities involving different reading tandems**, such as sharing the challenge results with other users; implementing multi-tandem challenges; organising common meetings and discussions...

3.8 The role of enhanced reading

Reading tandems are encouraged to use The Living Book approach based on augmented/enhanced reading **including also activities based on enhanced reading in the shared reading activities and the reading challenges**. The Living Library platform can be also used as a tool for reading tandem activities.

4. ACTORS

4.1 The role of pupils

The ReadTwinning methodology focuses on pupils and aims to create a love for reading, so as to let them explore their own interests, at their own pace, in a varied social environment based on the core idea of the reading tandem and enhanced by shared online and off-line tools.

In particular, pupils should always have the last word on:

- Choosing their reading partner(s): reading tandems should be built starting from the identification of shared interests and can therefore be proposed by teachers, but the final word on their composition should always be left to the participating pupils. Building a reading tandem without a specific, shared interest topic but based on strong personal bonds between its participants, is absolutely fine. In other words, interests related to developing specific interpersonal relationships can and should be included among those taken into account when building the reading tandem.
- Choosing the books to read: teachers and reading gurus have an active and relevant role in suggesting possible books, taking into account the shared interests of the participants in the reading tandem, but the final decision on the books to read should always be left to the participants in the reading tandem.
- Choosing the tools to use, the challenges, the reading schedule. Once again, the teachers/gurus have an active role in proposing a suitable framework for the reading tandem(s), but the final decisions should always be left to the participants.

Pupils could and should also have an active role in suggesting further activities, tools, challenges, and in general, in managing their reading tandem(s) and in building a robust and lively reading community. Active pupils who are already familiar with the ReadTwinning methodology and with the reading tandem experience might (and should) be promoted to gurus in their main interest field(s), thus acquiring an active role also in fostering the establishment of reading tandems and in suggesting books.

4.2 The role of teachers

The ReadTwinning methodology attributes to teachers a relevant role, that of actively promoting the creation of reading tandems on the basis of a preliminary work aiming to identify shared interests and suitable tandem members, as well as to inform about the ReadTwinning tools and methodology. The active and collaborative participation of teachers – in the positive environment of a school library when possible – is fundamental, in order to establish a suitable, robust, lively reading environment.

Among the main roles attributed to teachers by the ReadTwinning methodology, what stands out is promoting interesting surveys (examples can be found in sections 3.3 and 8 of these Guidelines) in their classes, as well as in collaboration with other teachers, classes, schools, also by means of national and international distance partnerships. With the help of school librarians, when possible, teachers are thus responsible for proposing to their students the creation of reading tandems, and for identifying the shared topic and the possible participants. Teachers (as well as school librarians, when possible) are also the reference point for identifying and contacting relevant topic gurus, who in turn will help identify and select the books to read.

Furthermore, teachers know their pupils well, and in certain cases might even be able to immediately identify the “right” members of a reading tandem or to suggest the “right” book for a tandem. In many cases, teachers can (and should) suggest forming reading tandems among students with different literacy / school achievement levels, but connected by shared interests and/or strong interpersonal relationships.

Our suggestion is also to organise reading tandems among teachers, in order to equip them with better knowledge of the ReadTwinning methodology and tools (and in order to promote reading among teachers too!).

The availability of specific online tools – including a teachers-oriented introductory course to the ReadTwinning methodology and tools – will be of further help to encourage the involvement of teachers in project-related school activities. We therefore recommend interesting teachers to participate in the teachers training course provided by the project. <https://courses.readtwinning.eu/>

4.3 The role of school libraries & librarians

When available, school libraries are the best environment for promoting reading tandems and coordinating their activities, as well as fostering the creation of a robust and lively reading community. School libraries and school librarians should have an active role in promoting the ReadTwinning methodology and tools among teachers, parents and students. The ReadTwinning methodology is not designed to replace but rather to integrate other reading-related activities and events, meaning that school libraries and school librarians retain their traditional roles, services, activities. However, school libraries and school librarians, aware of the ReadTwinning methodology and engaged in promoting it, have a key relevance in making information, advice and resources available – including the educational resources developed by the project – which are useful to better understand and implement the project methodology and to know and use its tools. A good school library, and competent school librarians, are key factors in building a ReadTwinning-empowered reading environment.

School libraries play a crucial role also in the creation of well-coordinated reading tandems, and should offer them the possibility of interacting with one another, of sharing their experiences, of participating in common activities, such as outlining the book that has been read and the results of the reading experience to other reading tandems or reading groups.

Furthermore, librarians are not just ideal reading gurus, but also well-equipped for the task of keeping and managing a register of reading gurus, organised by relevant topics and subtopics. Sharing and integrating the “topic-trees” developed by the project will hopefully help to develop a collaborative and experience-based ontology of topics. Interests can be classified by using any well-established library ontology (such as DDC), but we fear that abstract classificatory systems developed by (grown-up) information professionals might be too extensive and, at the same time, too limited when dealing with the interests made manifest by children and pupils falling within the relevant age group for the project. The help of school libraries might be of outstanding value in adapting these ontologies – or in developing context-specific ontologies – which are better suited to deal with the specific needs of the ReadTwinning project and of the reading tandems.

4.4 The role of parents

The very nature of small-scale reading tandems implies that the role of parents in motivating their children – and in particular the younger ones – in participating in ReadTwinning activities is of great relevance.

Furthermore, as already detailed in section **3.4 The role of (small) reading tandems**, the experience of small reading groups or reading tandems is well-suited to be developed also within the family; this resulted to be particularly true during the COVID-19 outbreak, although it is worth noting that small family tandems can be created in a number of different situations and should be considered as a way of applying the ReadTwinning methodology and tools also outside the school context.

Parents should also be considered as potential reading gurus, and in order to fully develop this potential, teachers and school libraries are encouraged to assess parents' interests and fields of expertise by means of parent-specific surveys.

The availability of specific online tools – including a parent-oriented introductory course to the ReadTwinning methodology and tools – will be of further help to encourage the involvement of parents in project-related school activities. We therefore recommend interested parents to participate in the training courses provided by the project. <https://courses.readtwinning.eu/>

In the video below, Maria Teresa Carbone discusses further how families can, and should, support reading at home.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YfTvkQy73KM>

5. TOOLS

In order to better engage its participants, to connect book content and online content, and to organise and carry out social reading activities, each reading tandem can and should use tandem-oriented social reading tools, such as the **shared reading diary ('Discussions')**, the **tandem feed for collecting reading-related content** (both validated online content and user-generated content), the **platform messaging system**, and an external **web-conferencing system** for book-related video discussions and activities. This list is not exhaustive, the choice of the tools to be used is left to the group, however the project platform offers a powerful environment that can be usefully integrated by a number of external tools. The purpose of this section is to introduce the platform and its features, and to suggest a set of other online tools that might complement it. But schools, school libraries and school librarians, teachers, students, parents, gurus, and reading tandems, are encouraged to experiment also with other tools they are familiar with or interested in. For instance, the provided reading diary template can be used, but all users are encouraged to **design their own reading diary templates**, sharing them with us and other ReadTwinning users by means of the feedback form provided in section 10 of the Guidelines. Independently from the tools you use (provided or suggested by the project, or chosen independently), please share your experiences and evaluations on the tools used!

5.1 The platform

The hub of the project is a **multilingual online social platform to connect readers with shared interests and hobbies, suggest relevant books, and share rich media content of their reading experience**. Following a simple **registration** process, where users answer questions on their hobbies and interests, and the genres they like in film, TV, and books; users can access the platform, build their profile, make friends, and start creating tandems.

The layout of the platform and its features will be familiar to social media users. The starting '**feed**' screen shows the activity of their friends and the gurus they follow. Users can choose to like or comment on each post, which can be text, images, videos, or links. Or they could create their own post to share with their friends.

'**My Profile**' takes the user to their own profile. Here they can make updates to their profile or see new **Friends** suggested to them. These friend suggestions are based on the personal attributes of the user, their shared hobbies and interests, and the genres they like. Users can click to befriend these people or click to request new suggestions.

The '**Gurus**' menu will display the various thematic gurus available, where users can find suggestions for books to read, information about authors, or any other content relevant to the selected genre. Content in the gurus is available 'publicly' to all community members. Users can 'Like' a guru to have future guru posts delivered into their home feed.

The '**Tandems**' menu displays all tandems in the ReadTwinning community. By default tandems are private, with only the tandem name, cover and profile image, and the book the tandem is reading displayed publicly. Users can request to join a tandem by clicking 'Join'. Selecting '**My Tandems**' in the left menu will display all tandems which the user is already a member of. Within a tandem, users can interact via the tandem feed (text, images, videos, audio, links, polls). '**About**' displays the tandem title, the book being read, 'Why are you reading this book?', and 'What do you know of the book before starting it?'. These are usually written at the start of the tandem but can be updated at any time. '**Discussions**' is our interpretation of a reading diary. It contains prompt questions to begin discussions with other tandem members and is intended to be used regularly whilst reading the chosen book together – *What did you discover today? What*

did you like and dislike today? Who did you discuss the book with today and what did you discuss? During the reading experience, tandem members can use a blend of the Discussions area and the tandem feed to share their thoughts and progress on the book, or share related media. The **'Reviews'** section is intended to be used by each tandem member when they have completed the chosen book. Tandem members can review both the book itself and their experience of being in this tandem.

Watch the videos below to see a complete overview of the platform and each of the functions described above.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U00-BTwsXz4>

5.2 How to register (& Privacy)



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0-RnFPRaV7w>

5.3 Functionality & How-to



How to view and edit your profile

www.readtwinning.eu



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jp_u0kraMI0



How to find friends

www.readtwinning.eu



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iimQSziy12w>



How to create a reading tandem

www.readtwinning.eu



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2QtxVmg0Iyo>



How to add members to a tandem

www.readtwinning.eu



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fifKerPw1TQ>



How to participate in a tandem

www.readtwinning.eu



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YeAtmeap9dw>



What are gurus?

www.readtwinning.eu



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PXguh_p20k

5.4 Other tools

The ReadTwinning social reading platform is a tool specifically developed by the project, its features have been selected and implemented on the basis of the ReadTwinning methodology and its main purpose is that of effectively hosting ReadTwinning reading tandems and their activities. However, the ReadTwinning platform is by no means the only online tool that can be used by reading tandems. Below are a few suggestions of further tools that can complement or even substitute the use of the ReadTwinning platform, and reading tandems are encouraged to experiment both with the tools listed here and with further tools, according to their needs, competencies and interests.

For convenience, the tools suggested here are grouped in 4 categories: web conference platforms, content-sharing pads, social networks and learning management systems. The selection proposed is by no means exhaustive.

5.4.1 Web conference (online meeting) platforms

A web conference is always a useful tool for reading tandems, and is essential in the case of reading tandems composed by members from different cities or countries. The COVID-19 pandemic not only boosted the use of web conference platforms, but also led to a number of improvements and new features, some of which can be useful in better handling the meeting of small reading tandems. Furthermore, many schools have adopted web conference platforms as distance learning tools, meaning that in many cases the school has already a well-tested platform (free or paid) ready to be used by reading tandems. Most web conference platforms allow for chatting during the conference, useful for links exchange, and for screen sharing, which can be useful when discussing reading-related web content or to share portions of the book (if it is available in electronic format on the device of one of the participants). A non-exhaustive list of the most used free web conference systems is the following:

Jitsi (<https://jitsi.org/>) is one of the best 'politically correct' choices: the platform is open source, and the service is completely free; setting up a room only requires choosing its name, and while the service might not be the most reliable for large meetings, it usually works well with small groups. It can be used from within a browser, and iOS and Android apps are available. The platform lacks some of the most advanced features of commercial alternatives, but is perfectly usable for small meetings.

Google Meet (<https://meet.google.com/>) is the web conference platform provided by Google, and the free version offers all the basic tools required by reading tandems online meetings. The use of Google servers means that the software itself is very robust and reliable, and organising a conference is quite simple. The integration between Google Meet and Google Docs allows the participants in a meeting to share and work together on a document, which can be handy for some activities, such as writing a reading diary or, for instance, a collaborative fanfiction inspired by the book being read. Furthermore, Google Meet is one of the platforms most used by schools, and many readers are probably already familiar with it.

Microsoft Teams (<https://products.office.com/en-us/microsoft-teams>) is the web conferencing platform offered by Microsoft. It is included in Microsoft Office paid subscription plans, but it is also available as a free tool, with some limitations (the maximum length of a meeting is 1 hour, and some advanced features are not available). Its installation and use is not as straightforward as the use of Jitsi or Google Meet, but it has powerful features (including accessibility features, such as automated subtitles from speech) and is very reliable. Furthermore, many schools have adopted Teams as a web conference tool during the pandemic, which means that, just like Google Meet, students, teachers and parents might be already familiar with it.

Zoom (<https://zoom.us/>) is a very powerful and very reliable solution, packed with advanced features, but

its free version only allows for meetings up to 40 minutes. Therefore, it might be a good choice if the school already has a subscription.

5.4.2 Content-sharing pads

Content-sharing pads, or digital walls, are platforms that allow users to 'pin' content (text, images, video, audio, links...) on shared virtual pads. Using a virtual pad is a great way for a reading tandem to share and discuss content related to the book being read, and is therefore a practice that is of special relevance for augmented reading: in this context, virtual pad applications were discussed in the Guidelines of the Living Book Project (<https://thelivinglibrary.eu/guidelines>); the platform developed for that project (The Living Library – <https://thelivinglibrary.eu/>) was itself based on the idea of virtual pads, applied to books and reading groups, and the ReadTwinning platform offers pad functionalities within the reading tandem pages. Many other virtual pad platforms are available on the web; among others, the following:

Padlet (<https://padlet.com/>) was one of the first virtual pad platforms, and is still one of the easiest to use; it allows to create personal or collaborative pads on which it is possible to 'pin' almost any kind of files: documents, images, audio, video, content from web sites such as Wikipedia or online information sources... The drawback is that the free plans are limited to a maximum of three pads. There are educational offers for schools, but even the basic one (10 teachers/admins) costs \$ 1.000 per year.

Wakelet (<https://wakelet.com/>) Is a good, free and more recent alternative to Padlet, and supports basically the same, wide choice of file types. Pads are called 'collections', and can be shared within 'classrooms': in the context of the ReadTwinning Project, a 'classroom' could be a reading tandem, which could create a 'collection' for each book being read. An interesting feature of Wakelet is the presence of accessibility tools, including auto-translation and read-aloud options. Apps are available both for iOS and for Android.

Pinterest (<https://www.pinterest.com/>) is a well known virtual pad: it is mainly used as a tool to share images, but could be a good choice for reading tandem working mainly on connecting books with visual content.

Wiki platforms such as **MediaWiki** (<https://www.mediawiki.org/wiki/MediaWiki>) are collaborative tools which are mainly used for written content, but they can also easily be used as virtual pads for basic multimedia content, since they allow for images, audio and video embedding. MediaWiki is a free, open source software, but requires installation on a server; Wiki functionalities are however included in Moodle (see below, section 5.2.4), a well known e-learning platform used by many schools worldwide. And if you don't want to bother with a MediaWiki or a Moodle installation, there are free web-based alternatives such as SlimWiki (<https://slimwiki.com/>) which allow for easy creation of a collaborative wiki.

5.4.3 Social networks and Social reading platforms

With a bit of creative and lateral thinking, most social network platforms can be used as collaborative tools by reading tandems. We will not bother the readers with a list of social networks – it would be way beyond the scope of these Guidelines – but it might be useful to remember that there are social networks specifically devoted to social reading, which often include tools for handling reading groups. The best-known is probably Goodreads, (<https://www.goodreads.com/>), which hosts a large number of reading groups, with good tools for discussing book content. However, reading groups are organised more as a forum than as a digital wall in which to share book-related content: therefore, a Goodread reading group could be a good choice for a discussion-oriented reading tandem, while a virtual pad (and of course the ReadTwinning platform!) might be a better choice for a reading tandem interested in augmented reading and content sharing.

5.4.4 Learning Management System

A learning management system (or LMS) is a platform used for managing e-learning courses; nowadays, most learning management systems are also learning *content* management systems (LCMS), which means that they are used not only to manage the learning process and activities, but also as a repository and management system for the content (or learning resources) used. The best-known and most widely used LMS/LCMS is **Moodle** (<https://moodle.org/>), which is used by many schools worldwide in order to host e-learning contents and activities. Moodle is a free, open source software. Installing it is not difficult but requires a server and some competencies; however, since Moodle is so widely used, it might well be available at your school or institution.

It may seem strange to consider a LMS/LCMS as a suitable platform for hosting reading groups and reading tandems, but it is surely possible to consider the activity of reading a book with others as a (collaborative) learning activity, and Moodle is so flexible and powerful (and packed with features, with a huge number of plug-ins and add-ons available), that using it as a tool for hosting reading tandems is perfectly feasible. Moodle may handle the calendar of the meetings and activities of multiple reading tandems, may host discussion forums and, all kinds of reading-related content, may be connected with a web conference platform, and, as discussed above, may easily host wiki pages, which can be used as collaborative pads.

A video illustrating an experience of using Moodle as a platform for hosting reading groups and augmented reading content is illustrated in the video below, presented by Gino Roncaglia, Professor of Digital Humanities at Roma Tre University.



**Moodle as a tool for
small reading groups**
Gino Roncaglia
www.readtwinning.eu
 Erasmus+

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6FNiAnmCqoA>

6. INCLUSIVE READING FOR ALL. BRIDGING THE GAPS – BUILDING BRIDGES

ReadTwinning aims to promote reading among young people, to bridge school activities with personal interests and to foster social connections across students from different classes, schools, cultures and countries. The project intends to test an innovative approach to motivate 9 to 15-year-old pupils to read more, enjoy the experience of reading and as a result, improve literacy.

Since socio-economic backgrounds, disabilities and other educational needs have a significant impact on students' interest in reading and reading skills, the purpose of this action is to develop **inclusive reading strategies**. As mentioned above, in this section of the Guidelines our aim is to drive the project theoretical background into the issue of inclusive education. After giving a brief overview of the existing literature, we will outline the practical tools and strategies adopted by ReadTwinning, so that the project's activities can be accessible to all students and educational contexts.

Thus, ReadTwinning is shaped according to an inclusive approach, and takes into account the conditions that may affect the students' reading and learning experiences such as **linguistic, cultural and social differences, gender discriminations, disabilities and special educational needs**.

Furthermore, this section of the Guidelines has the goal to set the theoretical and methodological framework we adopt within the issues of the **accessibility of learning and reading within the broader context of inclusive education**.

More specifically, we intend to design the practical tools and strategies that teachers and parents can adopt to carry out inclusive reading activities with their students.

6.1 Languages

ReadTwinning is based on the idea of promoting a love for literature, language and communication. For this reason, the activities fostered by the project should be based on books that are available in the **national language**, with a preference for those books that are not only available in the national language but also translated into other languages.

Moreover, the activities concerning social reading and the reading groups organised by teachers and parents should be conducted in the national language.

However, since ReadTwinning develops the idea of **cultural exchange**, the language of the activities involving pupils coming from different countries should be English or any other language the participants choose for communication. Selecting books available in more languages could be very useful in this respect, in order to facilitate the reading activities between pairs or groups of pupils coming from different countries.

The activities performed under ReadTwinning can be suitable also in the case of **multicultural and/or bilingual education**. In the case of **bilingual countries or schools**, or classes composed of a significant number of **foreign students**, the project can reinforce linguistic competence through specific reading activities. For instance, a good option to work on linguistic differences and barriers could be **translating texts** and conducting **language comparison** activities.

6.2 Socio-economic background

ReadTwinning intends to be **accessible** to all students from every kind of **educational and socio-economic background**. Since a consistent part of the project is based on the use of digital devices, the modules and tools provided should be accessible from any **standard device**, including mobile devices, when possible, without the need to utilise last-generation, sophisticated or expensive instruments. An optimal example is given by Goedhart Broerse, Kattouw and Dedding (2019) study, which focuses on the perspective of mothers with a low socio-economic position living in the Netherlands in relation to digital technologies. The study indicates that although most families have home access to at least one ICT device, there is a dearth of “the basic conditions, for example, good working devices, appropriate software, Wi-Fi or a printer” (p.2360).

Therefore, **alternative non-technology options** can also be provided with ideas that would work beyond the need of digital technology and advanced digital competences. Such an approach also aims to respond to the concerns about the digital divide and relevant considerations for the various groups of learners. The digital divide is related to the access to the Internet and digital devices but also to digital skills. In particular, social, economic and digital inequalities are strongly cross-related, especially for students coming from low socio-economic backgrounds (Goedhart et al., 2019).

Collaborating with the parents of those students coming from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds has important implications for inclusive reading. McNab and Fielding-Barnsley (2016) explored the use of digital books on iPad tablets used by families from low socio-economic areas in Tasmania and the effects of reading digital texts on young children's early literacy development. The study consisted of three phases: (1) collecting data to explore families' digital reading devices and reading practices; (2) providing digital books on iPads to families in one primary school (with a comparison group located in another primary school focusing on printed text); (3) instructing on digital and dialogic reading. Both groups of children (reading on iPads and on printed text) showed similar important achievements.

In addition, **the role of pedagogy in engaging students from disadvantaged backgrounds** in reading is equally important for the ReadTwinning project. According to the **Fair Go Project**¹ whose focus was on building student engagement pedagogy for teachers in low socio-economic settings, engagement can be defined as “students being simultaneously involved in thinking hard (high cognitive), feeling good (high affective) and actively participating in their learning (high operative)” (The Fair Go Project, 2006; cited in Callow & Zammit, 2012, p.71). This approach lies within the five discourses of power taking place in classroom practices (table 1 and 2).

Table 1: Discourses of power and disengaging messages for low-SES students (adapted from Munns, Zammit & Woodward 2008, p.161, The Fair Go Project)

Knowledge	‘Why are we doing this?’ – restricted access to powerful knowledge
Ability	‘I can’t do this’ – feelings of not being able to achieve and a spiral of low expectations and aspirations
Control	‘I’m not doing that’ – struggles over classroom time and space and debilitating consequences of resistance and compliance
Place	‘I’m just a kid from’ – devalued as individual and learner
Voice	‘Teacher tells us’ – no say over learning with teacher as sole controller and judge

1. <https://www.socialventures.com.au/case-studies/uws-fair-go-project/>

Table 2: Discourses of power and engaging messages for low-SES students (adapted from Munns, G., Zammit & Woodward 2008, p.162, The Fair Go Project)

Knowledge	'We can see the connection and the meaning' – reflectively constructed access to contextualised and powerful knowledge
Ability	'I am capable' – feelings of being able to achieve and a spiral of high expectations and aspirations
Control	'We do this together' – sharing of classroom time and space: interdependence, mutuality and 'power with'
Place	'It's great to be a kid from' – valued as individual and learner and feelings of belonging and ownership over learning
Voice	'We share' – environment of discussion and reflection about learning with students and teachers playing reciprocal meaningful roles

So, to ensure that pupils from low socio-economic backgrounds are equally included in the activities of the ReadTwinning project, we shall consider the points tackled in this section, namely:

- modules and tools provided from the project should be accessible from any standard device (laptop/tablet/smartphone);
- alternative non-technology options must also be provided;
- collaborating with the parents of those pupils coming from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds;
- student engagement pedagogy focusing on discourses of power (knowledge, ability, control, place and voice).

Regarding the student exchange, economically disadvantaged pupils should be preferred when possible, in order to give the latter a chance for personal and cultural growth that otherwise, they might never have.

6.3 Gender bias and sexual oppression in education

As the Global Gender Gap² demonstrates, over recent decades the quest towards gender parity has strengthened, and a marked improvement has been registered at the global scale. Regarding access to Education and Health, the GGG Report 2020 reports high scores (96.1% and 95.7% respectively), however Economic Participation and Opportunity and Political Empowerment are the fields where the gender gap remains significant. If Education seems to become increasingly accessible worldwide, the further steps into self-realisation are not as accessible, qualifying and rewarding for women as they are for men, with significant differences across different regions and countries³. Even if significant steps forward

2. Now in its 14th year, the Global Gender Gap Report 2020 benchmarks 153 countries on their progress towards gender parity in four dimensions: Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival and Political Empowerment. More details at:

<https://www.weforum.org/reports/gender-gap-2020-report-100-years-pay-equality>

3. By region, Western Europe has made the most progress on gender parity (standing at 76.7%), followed by

have been taken, there is still a huge need that cultural policies have to meet, in order to accomplish gender equality.

Concerning the role the education system plays in reducing the gender gap, it is worth noting that even if equal access to educational qualifications is more and more strongly ensured nowadays, **educational institutions** still play a central role in perpetuating gender discriminations (Correll, 2001; Raina, 2012). Referring to the representations of the so-called **“traditional” social models and values**, school programmes reinforce the formation of the **discourse on gender discrimination and sexual oppression** (Beutel & Marini, 1995).

Over recent decades, pedagogists and educational psychologists have strongly appraised that **curricula and teaching materials** remain **gender-biased** to a large degree, thus reinforcing the traditional female-male roles, according to which women are denied opportunities for full and equal partnership in society. Recent studies (Di Prete & Legewie 2014; Scantlebury, 1995) evidence that **science curricula** are the most gender-biased, and this explains why, in general, women tend to pursue science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) degrees at much lower rates than their male peers. However, literary programmes and materials are renowned for being affected by persistent gender discriminations. From the very beginning of their education process, students experience gender bias in **children’s picture books** where males outnumber females in central roles, and both female and male characters are portrayed in **stereotypical activities and roles**. Progressing from intermediate to high school, on average, students keep learning gender-biased representations in literature, history, philosophy, history of art, as well as in physical activity (Vertinsky, 1994).

In addition to learning programmes and reading, it was highlighted that the lack of **gender awareness by educators**, as well as the **role of parents** strengthen discriminatory tendencies undermining female students’ self-esteem⁴. An interesting research (Sarker et. al, 2017) has shown how, under particular conditions, parents performing traditional gender roles are more likely to demonstrate gender-biased investments towards their children. As a result, parents from socio-economic disadvantaged contexts seem to have stronger higher education aspirations for their male rather than for their female children. For this reason, not just teachers but also parents play a fundamental role along the process of building a **safe non-discriminatory educational environment**.

One of the main goals of ReadTwinning is to help students find in reading the drive towards **discovery, personal exploration and cultural growth**. In this regard, ReadTwinning intends to offer learning paths and reading tools based on **gender equality** and a **non-heteronormative representation of sexual identities**.

To ensure the achievement of this goal, involving **an equal number of male and female pupils** in the project will be of primary importance. With reference to the exchange among pupils from different countries, it will be crucial that those opportunities are offered for both genders: such an experience can be particularly meaningful for female pupils who, as a result, may strengthen their self-esteem.

As previously pointed out, teachers, educators and parents will play a key role in creating a gender-equal educational environment. They need to be **critical** in selecting literature for children, and **avoid books that foster stereotypical representations of gender, disabilities and other issues concerning “diversity”**.

North America (72.9%), Latin America and the Caribbean (72.2%), Eastern Europe and Central Asia (71.3%), Sub-Saharan Africa (68.2%), South Asia (66.1%) and the Middle East and North Africa (60.5%).

4. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is one of the first international agreement – now outdated – which defines the different forms of gender discrimination in education, politics, healthcare and economy. The Declaration was adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing from September 4th to 15th, 1995.

An indicative list of **criteria** might help teachers and parents choose books and define reading activities (Narahara, 1998):

1. gender of the author,
2. number of males and females in central roles,
3. number of males and females in secondary roles,
4. attitudes and activities (active or passive) of the male and female characters,
5. the use of male and female nouns, pronouns, and possessive pronouns, and
6. a non-heteronormative representation of sexual identities.

According to this set of criteria for selecting books, the teachers and parents involved in ReadTwinning shall be careful in **avoiding reading activities based on discriminatory assumptions** e.g. female pupils are more likely to prefer romantic novels, fashion, dance, poetry etc. while male pupils will most probably choose adventure stories, war books, sports and so on.

When necessary, teachers and parents have to encourage female pupils to develop their self-esteem by playing **active roles** in the reading activities.

In general, the tools and strategies provided by ReadTwinning should help teachers and parents build reading activities, during which students are encouraged to **express themselves** and to **develop their tendencies and personalities**, despite all kinds of discriminative representations and approaches.

6.4 Learners with Disabilities and Special Educational Needs

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)⁵ has a key role in defining a large majority of the current education policies about disabilities. Since its adoption by the United Nations in 2006, it has been orienting and inspiring the national and international regulations of merit.

The convention does not explicitly define disability. In the preface, disability is considered as “an **evolving concept**” resulting “from the **interaction** between persons with impairments and **attitudinal and environmental barriers** that hinders full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.” The 1st article of the Convention sets forth that “persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.”

5. «Adopted on 13 December 2006 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, it is the first comprehensive human rights treaty of the 21st century and the first human rights convention to be open for signature by regional integration organisations. The Convention follows decades of work by the United Nations to change attitudes and approaches to persons with disabilities: from viewing persons with disabilities as “objects” of charity, medical treatment and social protection towards viewing persons with disabilities as subjects with rights, who are capable of claiming those rights and making decisions for their lives based on their free and informed consent as well as being active members of society. The Convention is intended as a human rights instrument with an explicit, social development dimension. It adopts a broad categorization of persons with disabilities and reaffirms that all persons with all types of disabilities must enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms. It clarifies and qualifies how all categories of rights apply to persons with disabilities and identifies areas where adaptations have to be made for persons with disabilities to effectively exercise their rights and areas where their rights have been violated, and where protection of rights must be reinforced».

Source: <http://www.cbm.org/United-Nations-CRPD-256097.php>

Nevertheless, professionals, academics and disability representatives in the field of education and beyond have been holding a debate on terminology for a long time for the purpose of reflecting on the hurdles existing in the learning environment, most of which are linked to the term and definition of Special Educational Needs (SEN).

Even if the definition is commonly accepted and used in several education systems, some activists criticise it: according to a certain position, the term implies that disabled students have different needs than non-disabled students (Oliver, 1996). It was noted that the use of the term “special” focuses on the individual, thus reinforcing the understanding of disability as a medical model. Based on this model, the difficulties that disabled people face are considered to be the result of their own individual pathology (Barnes et al., 2002). On the contrary, a more recent approach to disabilities rooted in the UNCRPD chart, considers disability as a condition resulting neither exclusively or primarily from an individual pathology, but more significantly from socio-economic and educational barriers. This is the human rights-based approach to disability, which is connected to the social model. According to the latter, disability should be faced as an interactive and evolutive condition co-created by the socio-cultural barriers.

In the field of education and learning, the consideration of “special needs” implies the idea of building tailored educational plans for each student, who are educated individually and separately. Nevertheless, recourse to tailored educational plans mirrors the medical model of disability given that they put emphasis on individual conditions. To avoid this risk, it was highlighted that each student’s diversity should be taken into consideration but projected onto a broader context, where all students are acknowledged as diverse individuals. This interpretation stems from the social model of disability and is coherent with the general discussion about human rights within disabilities. The principles that qualify this model are deeply inspired by the UNCRPD and, more in general, by the assumption of diversity as a human right. The UNCRPD places emphasis on the rights of the disabled people to equal participation in all aspects of life such as society, education and employment (Harpur, 2012). According to the view fostered by the UNCRPD, equal access to education, employment and self-realisation do not arise from notions of humanity or charity, but from those fundamental human rights that any person has and can claim (Rioux & Carbert, 2003).

Taking all the above into consideration, it emerges that the ReadTwinning approach towards reading is based on the principles of inclusive education. Inclusive education focuses on tackling exclusionary practices within the educational settings (Slee & Alan, 2005) and on boosting equal access and participation to quality education for all learners regardless of gender, disability, ethnicity, low socio-economic background (Kozleski, Artiles & Waitoler, 2013). According to UNICEF⁶

- inclusive education is the most effective way to give all children a fair chance to go to school, learn and develop the skills they need to thrive;
- inclusive education means all children in the same classrooms, in the same schools. It means real learning opportunities for groups who have traditionally been excluded – not only children with disabilities, but speakers of minority languages too;
- inclusive systems value the unique contributions students of all backgrounds bring to the classroom and allow diverse groups to grow side by side, to the benefit of all.

As it is outlined below, the principles of inclusive education can be translated into practice concerning inclusive reading.

6. <https://www.unicef.org/education/inclusive-education>

6.5 Strategies and suggestions for an Inclusive Reading for all

ReadTwinning endorses the most recent cultural and scientific perspective on disabilities and special educational needs. Hence, its methodologies and tools are designed to ensure **access** for all students and provide for **inclusive reading experiences**.

To achieve this, ReadTwinning takes into consideration socio-economic, cultural, physical, learning and/or linguistic barriers, in order to define educational tools and modules that approach the needs of all students as a strength and not as a weakness. By placing emphasis on the **different learning styles and needs** of students, the project is in line with the idea of the **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)**.

UDL is a recent learning approach that intends to make learning accessible for all students, regardless of socio-economic backgrounds, disabilities, gender or age. This approach focuses on the idea that the **differentiation of learning contents, materials and tools** is the only strategy to **remove the barriers to learning** and make education **accessible** for everyone.

ReadTwinning complies with this approach by fostering **various reading strategies** based on **personalised paths**. The project provides for interactive and augmented reading activities matching with the need for personalised learning paths. Following a **bottom-up perspective**, disabilities and other conditions are not considered as a deficit, rather as conditions to be taken into account, in order to define **adequate** reading and learning activities.

All students have different learning styles such as visual, auditory, kinaesthetic, or even deriving from a combination of all. Current literature on learning styles is also connected to learners with disabilities and literature on the right to diversity. Hence, the project will help students develop their literacy skills by using personal skills. Below are some examples on how this aspect will be targeted.

Visual learners can take advantage from colour coding, the use of high-legibility fonts, voice output, visualisation of textual information, easy-to-read, and so on.

The textual contents provided by the ReadTwinning platform use a high-legibility font. At the same time, the platform includes accessibility options, such as screen reader and screen colour and contrast options to aid accessibility.

Accessibility for visual learners is also necessary and effective for learners with **hearing disabilities**, as well as **learners with learning and specific learning disabilities (SLD) and intellectual disabilities (ID)**.

Dyslexia is one of the most common SLD that relates to particular **reading, spelling and writing** difficulties due to different factors (genetic, environmental, traumatic).

Similarly, learners with **Intellectual Disabilities** are often excluded from literacy practices in schools if they are considered to be lacking conventional literacy skills. Likewise, other groups of learners, including also children with communication difficulties, may be excluded from literacy practices given that the lack of verbal communication may often be interpreted as the inability to participate in reading activities – an assumption that is close to what is traditionally perceived also for children from diverse cultural and language backgrounds.

A number of tools and technology solutions can be employed to support learners with diverse competencies and needs, who respond to different learning styles, as well as to different difficulties e.g. **auditory learners, as well as the learners with visual difficulties**. The term “visual difficulties” is used here as broadly including a range of difficulties in sight and visual perception, and not only as the legal definition of visual disabilities supported by technologies including

- **TTS programs** (Text To Speech) are speech synthesisers, very common in the educational marketplace. They recognize every kind of written text and automatically read it aloud. They are the main software that total blind people use in their everyday life;

- **VTT programs** (Voice To Text) recognize human voice and translate it into text;
- **Audiobooks** could be a part of the non-textual content provided by the ReadTwinning platform. On top of this, the platform could offer the possibility of **creating audiobooks** and **vocal contents**. Once again, this would accomplish the core purpose of the project, that is conceiving reading as a social, interactive and creative activity;
- **Creating audiobooks** and vocal contents applies to kinaesthetic learners (but it could also be applied to visual/and auditory learners).

Learners with intellectual disabilities, language differences, learning disabilities, as well as visual learners in the broader sense, can be supported through technologies and methodologies such as:

- Easy-to-read, includes simplification and visual enhancement of difficult texts and terminology when the focus is on the perception of the main idea;
- Symbolization can be used alongside the text, or for the explanation and visualisation of difficult vocabulary, or even for the alignment of the reading material with the alternative communication strategies that may be used by non-verbal learners.

Multi-media is one of the most relevant technology applications for universal design for learning. In addition to the various options of representation (visual, text, audio etc), the use of multimedia includes differentiation in users' interaction and options for alternative access in digital forms of books and other material. Multimedia in literacy is also often linked to learners' engagement, especially when new technologies such as Virtual and Augmented reality are employed. In addition, well designed and inclusive multimedia embed accessibility features and/or allow for the use of personal assistive technologies.

In order to help the teachers become familiar with evaluating non-discriminatory readings, a list of suggested books is enclosed in **10. Further Readings and Experiences**. The list was drawn up with the help of teachers from different European countries working at different educational levels. The list should not be considered as exhaustive or comprehensive of all needs, rather as a toolkit that will hopefully inspire teachers and parents in their future activities, whether they are related to ReadTwinning or not.

7. E-SAFETY AND PRIVACY PROTECTION

The growing use of digital tools among young people raises a number of questions related to e-safety and to how such issues are to be handled. Schools often face various dilemmas connected to the use of the Internet in education: How can online tools such as blogs, wikis, and social media be used in the classroom in a safe and effective way? How should teachers manage issues such as copyright, privacy, personal safety and verification of sites? How do we get students to engage proactively with these issues and their own personal safety?

Similar questions also apply to the use of online tools and platforms for social reading, reading groups, shared reading activities, and therefore also to the tools and strategies of the ReadTwinning project.

For the protection of the privacy of minors, general rules and specific indications are now available at international level.

Internationally, we have many important directives regarding the protection of the privacy of girls and boys.

7.1 Worldwide general data collection policies and practices

The General Data Protection Regulation (**GDPR**) is the EU regulation on data protection and privacy in force across the European Union (EU). The GDPR primarily aims to provide individuals with protection of their personal data and to simplify the regulatory framework for international businesses by unifying national regulations within the EU into one text. The regulation incorporates provisions and requirements related to the processing of personal data. Not only adults, but also children should take data protection into consideration.

The “School Education Gateway” is Europe’s online platform for school education. It contains many practical ideas and is inspiring for teachers and schools. A very useful tool, among others, is **A brief guide to GDPR for schools and teachers**.¹

We can also provide many references of laws and rules on the matter from countries outside Europe, in particular the US:

- **FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act)² by the U.S. Department of Education** is a Federal law that protects privacy of student education records. The law applies to all schools that receive funds under an applicable program of the U.S. Department of Education.
- **COPPA (U.S. Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act of 1998)³** The primary goal of COPPA is to place parents in control over the information collected from their young children online. The Rule was designed to protect children under the age of 13 considering the dynamic nature of the Internet.
- **The Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (1978)** was written to protect the rights of parents and students in two ways. Firstly, any material used by students in ED funded surveys, analyses, or eval-

1. <https://www.schooleducationgateway.eu/en/pub/resources/tutorials/brief-gdpr-guide-for-schools.htm>

2. <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>

3. <https://www.ftc.gov/enforcement/rules/rulemaking-regulatory-reform-proceedings/childrens-online-privacy-protection-rule>

uations will be made available to parents to inspect prior to use with their child. Secondly, it ensures that schools and contractors acquire written parental consent before a minor student is required to participate in ED funded surveys, analyses or evaluations which may reveal personal information.

- The **Model Notice & Consent Specific Activities** is a template notice for school districts to notify parents and obtain consent or allow parents to opt their child out of participating in certain school activities. (See: **ATTACHMENT 1**).

7.2 Fair practices for collecting information from children

Children merit special protection with regard to processing their data as they may be less aware of the risks, consequences and safeguards concerned and their rights in relation to the processing of personal data. In particular, such protection should apply to the use of children's personal data for the purpose of creating a personal profile and collecting personal data about children when using services offered directly to a child. 3 The recital of the General Data Protection Regulation reported below clarifies article 8 of the GDPR:

Article 8 – Conditions applicable to child's consent in relation to information society services

1. *Where point (a) of Article 6(1) applies, in relation to the offer of information society services directly to a child, the processing of the personal data of a child shall be lawful where the child is at least 16 years old. Where the child is below the age of 16 years, such processing shall be lawful only if and to the extent that consent is given or authorised by the holder of parental responsibility over the child.*
2. *Member States may provide by law for a lower age for those purposes provided that such lower age is not below 13 years.*
3. *The controller shall make reasonable efforts to verify in such cases that consent is given or authorised by the holder of parental responsibility over the child, taking into consideration available technology.*
4. *Paragraph 1 shall not affect the general contract law of Member States such as the rules on the validity, formation or effect of a contract in relation to a child.*

The GDPR sets the age of consent at 16, but individual member states may decide to set the latter at 13⁴. Children below the age of consent cannot provide consent for themselves. When consent is the lawful basis for processing a child's data, reasonable efforts to verify that the person giving consent is old enough to do so are required. online services must obtain consent from the holder of parental responsibility for the child.

7.2.1 Consent of parents or tutors

When the processing is based on the consent of the person concerned, the holder must always be able to prove (Article 7.1 of the GDPR) that the person concerned has given their consent, which is valid if:

- information about the processing of personal data (articles 13 or 14 of the GDPR) has been given to the person concerned;

4. GDPR Age of "Digital" Consent: <https://www.privo.com/blog/gdpr-age-of-digital-consent>. The GDPR has set the age of consent at 16, which means that 15-year-old and younger users need parent consent where applicable. However, member states can choose to set the age of consent younger, down to 13. In our case: Italy: 14, Cyprus: 14, Portugal: 13, Romania: 16, UK: 13

- it has been expressed by the person concerned freely, unequivocally and if the processing pursues multiple purposes concerning each of them.

Consent can always be revoked. It should be verified that the request for consent is clearly distinguishable from the other requests or statements addressed to the person concerned (Article 7.2), for example within a form.

Tacit or presumed consent is not permitted e.g. by submitting forms where the boxes of merit are already ticked off. Consent must be “explicit” when processing “particular categories of personal data” (Article 9 of the GDPR). The same applies to consent to decisions based on automated processing (including profiling – Article 22).

7.2.2 Data retention and protection

In addition to consent, another important issue concerns the guarantee of the protection of personal data collected during online activities.

Article 5 of the GDPR sets forth seven key principles, which lie at the core of the general data protection regime⁵. Article 5(1) requires that personal data shall be

“(a) processed lawfully, fairly and in a transparent manner in relation to individuals (‘lawfulness, fairness and transparency’);

(b) collected for specified, explicit and legitimate purposes and not further processed in a manner that is incompatible with those purposes; further processing for archiving purposes in the public interest, scientific or historical research purposes or statistical purposes shall not be considered to be incompatible with the initial purposes (‘purpose limitation’);

(c) adequate, relevant and limited to what is necessary in relation to the purposes for which they are processed (‘data minimisation’);

(d) accurate and, where necessary, kept up to date; every reasonable step must be taken to ensure that personal data that are inaccurate, having regard to the purposes for which they are processed, are erased or rectified without delay (‘accuracy’);

(e) kept in a form which permits identification of data subjects for no longer than is necessary for the purposes for which the personal data are processed; personal data may be stored for longer periods insofar as the personal data will be processed solely for archiving purposes in the public interest, scientific or historical research purposes or statistical purposes subject to implementation of the appropriate technical and organisational measures required by the GDPR in order to safeguard the rights and freedoms of individuals (‘storage limitation’);

(f) processed in a manner that ensures appropriate security of the personal data, including protection against unauthorised or unlawful processing and against accidental loss, destruction or damage, using appropriate technical or organisational measures (‘integrity and confidentiality’).”

Article 5(2) adds that

“The controller shall be responsible for, and be able to demonstrate compliance with, paragraph 1 (‘accountability’).”

5. <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-data-protection/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr/principles/>

The GDPR emphasises the importance of two roles, that of individuals or entities: a data controller determines the means and purposes of processing data, while a data processor handles the data on behalf of the controller. Each party has different legal responsibilities.

In the scope of our project, **Forum del libro**, the “controller”, will typically have to secure a clearly defined contract with the “processor”. A processor can take various forms ranging from an online learning platform to a piece of software. In our case, the ReadTwinning platform is managed by **GRYD**.

These entities perform any operation on data counts as processing, even if it is automated such as collecting, storing, retrieving, destroying, and so on.

Accountability is one of the data protection principles, according to which Forum del Libro is responsible for complying with the GDPR and must be held responsible for its compliance.

Forum del Libro, with the support of GRYD as the developer of the online tools, applies appropriate technical and organisational measures to meet the requirements of accountability, including:

- adopting and implementing data protection policies;
- taking a “data protection by design and default” approach;
- sealing written contracts with organisations that process personal data on its behalf;
- maintaining documentation of the processing activities;
- implementing appropriate security measures;
- carrying out data protection impact assessments for uses of personal data likely to result in high risks at the detriment of individuals;
- appointing a data protection officer.

Accountability obligations are ongoing. Forum del libro will review and update the measures put in place if needed.

7.3 Personal and sensitive data

Personal data is any information that can help identify a person or their family. In school records, this would be their name, their address, their contact details, their disciplinary records, as well as their grades and progress reports. This sort of data remains “personal” even if an individual chooses to disclose it.

But special categories of data (**sensitive data**) touches on more sensitive topics. As far as schools are concerned, this includes students’ **biometric data** (e.g. fingerprints, photos), **religious beliefs** (e.g. a student’s opting out of religion classes), **health** (e.g. allergies) or **dietary requirements** (which may hint at students’ religious beliefs or health status). Data in this category may pose a risk to people and hence can only be processed under certain conditions⁶. Schools are not authorised to use it without parental consent:

- political affiliations or beliefs of the student or student’s parents;
- mental or psychological problems of the student or student’s family;
- illegal, anti-social, self-incriminating, or demeaning behaviour;

6. See the recommendations of I.C.O. (Information Commissioner’s Office), the UK’s independent authority set up to unfold information rights in the public interest: <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-data-protection/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr/lawful-basis-for-processing/special-category-data/>

- critical appraisals of others with whom respondents have close family relations;
- legally recognised privileged relationships, such as with lawyers, doctors, or ministers;
- religious practices, affiliations, or beliefs of the student or parents;
- income, other than as required by law to determine program eligibility;
- anything that has to do with their home country's prime minister or a "ruler" of a country.

Parents are given the right to grant permission for their child to participate in the surveys, analyses or evaluations requiring the above content, or they have the choice to opt their child out of sharing such information with the school.

7.4 ReadTwinning Project. E-Safety and Privacy Protection documents

Two documents will be elaborated to meet all the conditions required to guarantee total protection of the privacy of minors using the ReadTwinning platform:

A model for providing consent to the use of information regarding the minors involved in the project, to be signed by a parent or a guardian. (**Attachment 1: MODEL NOTICE & CONSENT FOR SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES**)

A declaration of responsibility for the collection and safekeeping of data concerning the minors involved in the project, with an indication of the roles of the controller and the processor. (**Attachment 2: DATA PROCESSING AGREEMENT**).

The COVID19 virus outbreak triggered a mass transition from offline to online professional and personal relations. Social media and video conferencing tools have proven to be key channels of communication and information. In this new context, the overwhelming role of social media and online applications have raised the further need for media and digital literacy for all citizens regardless of their age or geographic location.

As regards privacy, however, the focus shall not only be on how young people can be protected but also on how they can protect themselves. Of great importance is to acquire the skills necessary to consciously utilise information, news, videos and all we have been provided with by developing the ability to search for, analyse and select the available information, in order to actually improve our knowledge. In this regard, to properly enhance digital literacy is of crucial relevance.

The dimensions of digital literacy on privacy-related online behaviours to be considered are three⁷:

- (a) familiarity with technical aspects of the Internet,
- (b) awareness of common institutional practices, and
- (c) understanding of current privacy policy.

Of use will be to provide clarifications about the correct application of the legislation on the protection of personal data within schools, also in order to guarantee increasing attention to rights and duties within the school community (which includes pupils, families and school staff). (**Attachment 3: PRIVACY BETWEEN SCHOOL DESKS**).

7. Yong Jin Park, "Digital Literacy and Privacy Behavior Online", Article in Communication Research 40(2):215-236 · April 2013 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/258130965_Digital_Literacy_and_Privacy_Behavior_Online

ATTACHMENT 1

MODEL – NOTICE & CONSENT FOR SPECIFIC ONLINE ACTIVITIES

[The following is only an example of notices and consent that may be used by school districts for protected information surveys. School districts will need to tailor their notices and consent/opt outs depending on their specific activities.]

Date: On or about **[Add date.]**

School:

Activity: Survey of At-Risk Behaviours.

Summary: This is an anonymous survey that asks students questions about behaviors such as drug and alcohol use, sexual conduct, violence, and other at-risk behaviors. The survey also asks questions of a demographic nature concerning family make-up, the relationship between parents and children, and use of alcohol and drugs at home.

[Note to schools: We recommend that the notice inform parents that they may submit a request in order to review the protected information survey and that the school will notify the parent of the time and place where the parent may review this. A parent has the right, upon request, to review this protected information survey.]

[Note to schools: If the survey in question is administered as part of an applicable program and the student is required to submit to the survey, prior "active" consent is required.

Consent: A parent must sign and return the consent below no later than **[insert return date]** so that your child may participate in this survey.

[Sample consent:

I [parent's name] give my consent for [child's name] to take the ABC Survey of At-Risk Behaviours on or about **[Add date].**

Parent's signature

Please return this form no later than [insert date] to the following school official: *[Provide name and mailing address.]*

If you need please contact *[school official]* at *[telephone number, email, address, etc.]* no later than **[date] if you do not want your child to take the ABC Survey of At-Risk Behaviours on or about **[Add date]**.**

ATTACHMENT 2

DATA PROCESSING AGREEMENT

(DPA Template PDF here:

<https://gdpr.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Data-Processing-Agreement-Template.pdf>)

This Data Processing Agreement ("**Agreement**") forms part of the Contract for Services ("**Principal Agreement**") between

(the "**Company**") and

(the "Data Processor")

(together as the "**Parties**")

WHEREAS

(A) The Company acts as a Data Controller.

(B) The Company wishes to subcontract certain Services, which imply the processing of personal data, to the Data Processor.

(C) The Parties seek to implement a data processing agreement that complies with the requirements of the current legal framework in relation to data processing and with the Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation).

(D) The Parties wish to lay down their rights and obligations.

IT IS AGREED AS FOLLOWS:

1. Definitions and Interpretation

1.1 Unless otherwise defined herein, capitalised terms and expressions used in this Agreement shall have the following meaning:

1.1.1 "Agreement" means this Data Processing Agreement and all Schedules;

1.1.2 "Company Personal Data" means any Personal Data Processed by a Contracted Processor on behalf of Company pursuant to or in connection with the Principal Agreement;

1.1.3 "Contracted Processor" means a Subprocessor;

1.1.4 "Data Protection Laws" means EU Data Protection Laws and, to the extent applicable, the data protection or privacy laws of any other country;

1.1.5 "EEA" means the European Economic Area;

1.1.6 "EU Data Protection Laws" means EU Directive 95/46/EC, as transposed into domestic legislation of each Member State and as amended, replaced or superseded from time to time, including by the GDPR and laws implementing or supplementing the GDPR;

1.1.7 "GDPR" means EU General Data Protection Regulation 2016/679;

1.1.8 "Data Transfer" means:

1.1.8.1 a transfer of Company Personal Data from the Company to a Contracted Processor; or

1.1.8.2 an onward transfer of Company Personal Data from a Contracted Processor to a Subcontracted Processor, or between two establishments of a Contracted Processor, in each case, where such transfer would be prohibited by Data Protection Laws (or by the terms of data transfer agreements put in place to address the data transfer restrictions of Data Protection Laws);

1.1.9 "Services" means the _____ services the Company provides.

1.1.10 "Subprocessor" means any person appointed by or on behalf of the Processor to process Personal Data on behalf of the Company in connection with the Agreement.

1.2 The terms, "Commission", "Controller", "Data Subject", "Member State", "Personal Data", "Personal Data Breach", "Processing" and "Supervisory Authority" shall have the same meaning as in the GDPR, and their cognate terms shall be construed accordingly.

2. Processing of Company Personal Data

2.1 Processor shall:

2.1.1 comply with all applicable Data Protection Laws in the Processing of Company Personal Data; and

2.1.2 not Process Company Personal Data other than on the relevant Company's documented instructions.

2.2 The Company instructs Processors to process Company Personal Data.

3. Processor Personnel

Processor shall take reasonable steps to ensure the reliability of any employee, agent or contractor of any Contracted Processor who may have access to the Company Personal Data, ensuring in each case that access is strictly limited to those individuals who need to know / access the relevant Company Personal Data, as strictly necessary for the purposes of the Principal Agreement, and to comply with Applicable Laws in the context of that individual's duties to the Contracted Processor, ensuring that all such individuals are subject to confidentiality undertakings or professional or statutory obligations of confidentiality.

4. Security

4.1 Taking into account the state of the art, the costs of implementation and the nature, scope, context and purposes of Processing as well as the risk of varying likelihood and severity for the rights and freedoms of natural persons, Processor shall in relation to the Company Personal Data implement appropriate technical and organisational measures to ensure a level of security appropriate to that risk, including, as appropriate, the measures referred to in Article 32(1) of the GDPR.

4.2 In assessing the appropriate level of security, the Processor shall take account in particular of the risks that are presented by Processing, in particular from a Personal Data Breach.

5. Subprocessing

5.1 Processor shall not appoint (or disclose any Company Personal Data to) any Subprocessor unless required or authorised by the Company.

6. Data Subject Rights

6.1 Taking into account the nature of the Processing, Processor shall assist the Company by implementing appropriate technical and organisational measures, insofar as this is possible, for the fulfilment of the Company obligations, as reasonably understood by Company, to respond to requests to exercise Data Subject rights under the Data Protection Laws.

6.2 Processor shall:

6.2.1 promptly notify Company if it receives a request from a Data Subject under any Data Protection Law in respect of Company Personal Data; and

6.2.2 ensure that it does not respond to that request except on the documented instructions of Company or as required by Applicable Laws to which the Processor is subject, in which case Processor shall to the extent permitted by Applicable Laws inform Company of that legal requirement before the Contracted Processor responds to the request.

7. Personal Data Breach

7.1 Processor shall notify Company without undue delay upon Processor becoming aware of a Personal Data Breach affecting Company Personal Data, providing Company with sufficient information to allow the Company to meet any obligations to report or inform Data Subjects of the Personal Data Breach under the Data Protection Laws.

7.2 Processor shall cooperate with the Company and take reasonable commercial steps as directed by Company to assist in the investigation, mitigation and remediation of each such Personal Data Breach.

8. Data Protection Impact Assessment and Prior Consultation

Processor shall provide reasonable assistance to the Company with any data protection impact assessments, and prior consultations with Supervising Authorities or other competent data privacy authorities, which Company reasonably considers to be required by article 35 or 36 of the GDPR or equivalent provisions of any other Data Protection Law, in each case solely in relation to Processing of Company Personal Data by, and taking into account the nature of the Processing and information available to, the Contracted Processors.

9. Deletion or return of Company Personal Data

9.1 Subject to this section 9 Processor shall promptly and in any event within

10 business days of the date of cessation of any Services involving the Processing of Company Personal Data (the "Cessation Date"), delete and procure the deletion of all copies of those Company Personal Data.

10. Audit rights

10.1 Subject to this section 10, Processor shall make available to the Company on request all information necessary to demonstrate compliance with this Agreement, and shall allow for and contribute to audits, including inspections, by the Company or an auditor mandated by the Company in relation to the Processing of the Company Personal Data by the Contracted Processors.

10.2 Information and audit rights of the Company only arise under section 10.1 to the extent that the Agreement does not otherwise give them information and audit rights meeting the relevant requirements of Data Protection Law.

11. Data Transfer

11.1 The Processor may not transfer or authorise the transfer of Data to countries outside the EU and/ or the European Economic Area (EEA) without the prior written consent of the Company. If personal data processed under this Agreement is transferred from a country within the European Economic Area to a country outside the European Economic Area, the Parties shall ensure that the personal data are adequately protected. To achieve this, the Parties shall, unless agreed otherwise, rely on EU approved standard contractual clauses for the transfer of personal data.

12. General Terms

12.1 Confidentiality. Each Party must keep this Agreement and information it receives about the other Party and its business in connection with this Agreement ("Confidential Information") confidential and must not use or disclose that Confidential Information without the prior written consent of the other Party except to the extent that:

- (a) disclosure is required by law;
- (b) the relevant information is already in the public domain.

12.2 Notices. All notices and communications given under this Agreement must be in writing and will be delivered personally, sent by post or sent by email to the address or email address set out in the heading of this Agreement at such other address as notified from time to time by the Parties changing address.

13. Governing Law and Jurisdiction

13.1 This Agreement is governed by the laws of _____.

13.2 Any dispute arising in connection with this Agreement, which the Parties will not be able to resolve amicably, will be submitted to the exclusive jurisdiction of the courts of _____, subject to possible appeal to _____.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, this Agreement is entered into with effect from the date first set out below.

Company

Signature

Name:

Title:

Date Signed:

Processor Company

Signature

Name

Title

Date Signed

.....

ATTACHMENT 3

PRIVACY BETWEEN SCHOOL DESKS

The privacy regulations of minors are national. For example, in Italy the guide of the Guarantor for the protection of personal data dedicated to the school¹ is published on the MIUR (Ministry of Education, University and Research) website², which answers a series of common questions. The main topics are:

Written tests in the classroom

Students' privacy is not affected by the teachers who assign a classroom task according to which students are asked to develop a topic concerning their personal world. On the contrary, the teacher shall be sensitive enough to find the balance between teaching needs and protection of confidentiality if delicate subjects are dealt with, when the papers are read out in the class.

Phones and tablets

Using mobile phones and smartphones is generally permitted for strictly personal purposes, for example to record lessons, and always in the respect of the people in the class. However, it is up to the educational institutions to autonomously decide whether the use of mobile phones shall be regulated or forbidden. Images, videos or photos cannot be disseminated on the web except in cases when the people who are being photographed or recorded give their consent. We shall remember that the disclosure of video footage and photos infringing people's confidentiality and dignity can lead to the application of disciplinary and pecuniary sanctions against the students concerned or even to charge the latter with a criminal offence. The same caution is advised when using tablets, if used for recording and not only for educational purposes or when consulting ebooks and online texts in the classroom.

Creative and outdoor activities

Video footage and photos collected during performances, recreational and creative activities, school trips and classroom tests do not breach privacy. In such cases, the images are collected for personal purposes and intended for a family or friendly environment; in the event that these are intended for disclosure or dissemination on the web or social networks, the consent of the people appearing in the videos or photos is required.

Questionnaires for research activities

The research activity including the collection of personal information through questionnaires to be administered to students is allowed only if children and parents have been informed beforehand about the purposes of the research, the processing methods and the safety measures adopted. Students and parents must be left free to decide whether to join the initiative.

Processing of personal data

Schools must disclose to families and children, through adequate information, the data they collect and how it is used. Schools often use sensitive data in their daily activities – such as those relating

1. <http://www.garanteprivacy.it/garante/navig/jsp/index.jsp>

2. http://iostudio.pubblica.istruzione.it/web/guest/diritti_e_doveri

to ethnic origins, religious beliefs, health status. Families and students have the right to know what kind of information is processed by the educational institution.

Some remarks about Instant Messaging Services

The rise of the smartphone and omnipresence of mobile networks facilitates Instant Messaging Services (like WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, WeChat, etc.). These apps have propelled communication into real time and revolutionised the ease of conversing. It is because they are easy to operate, informal and are everyone's familiar tool for digital conversations that it is increasingly popular within schools for internal communications. Having a communication tool which allows you to exchange information quickly and efficiently between school departments in a less bureaucratic way than email seems a great idea.

But the easy ability to share information in real time or capture photographs on your smartphone and share over these services is just one facet of many crossover issues relating to child protection, data protection and managing personal/work accounts.

The ability to create communication groups based on the contacts in your phonebook is a popular function and the creation of staff groups that include contacts external to the school, however, presents a further risk to the organisation's data as the school has no control over the sharing or propagation of information outside of their formal structures. An additional security issue is that you cannot control who has access to group chats other than the individual who created the group, so the security is difficult to manage.

8. CASE STUDIES

8.1 Family reading groups in Rome

In order to create the best conditions for a multi-generational reading group, it is quite useful to conduct a survey among students and families with the aim to know their interests, their hobbies and their reading habits, as has been remarked in chapter 3.3 of the Guidelines (Preliminary and motivational activities).

"Students' interests and reading in family" was the subject of such a survey conducted among 22 students (age 11-12) and their families in Spring 2020. The survey was conducted within the frame of a teachers' training course at Istituto Comprensivo Perlasca in Rome and its goal was to assess the students' availability to participate in small reading groups with their parents and other family members or close friends.

Teachers gave participants in the survey a very simple questionnaire. In short, both students and family members were given two questions:

1. What is your favourite activity (or hobby or interest) outside school (or work)?
2. Which is your favourite literary genre?

Besides that, students had to answer a supplementary question:

3. Who would you like to organise a reading group with, among your family members and your close friends?

Only 4 students (about 18 %) decided to not answer the questionnaire. More than half of the students interviewed (12) selected a sport or a physical activity (football, basketball, skating, rhythmic gymnastics, dance) as their favourite activity. Among the remaining 6 students, one chose photography and the other ones answered that they loved reading.

With the exception of one boy that chose comics as his favourite medium, all students said that they loved novels, with an overwhelming majority (85 %) declaring their preference for "adventure books", including thrillers and fantasy fiction. Among them 4 students specified that their favourite books belong to the Harry Potter series.

As for reading partnership, 8 students out of 19 said they would love to form a reading tandem with their mothers; 5 students chose their closest friends as their reading partners, 2 students selected their siblings and 2 their fathers.

For their part, out of the 12 family members that answered the questionnaire, 9 chose reading as their favourite activity and 3 opted for a physical activity. Even in this group "adventure books" (action books, fantasy fiction, thrillers, sci-fi) prevailed, but the range of genres was wider, with biographies, history essays and romance fiction being mentioned.

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10. FEEDBACK AND EXPERIENCES

The ReadTwinning project is open to feedback and suggestions, by schools, school libraries, teachers, students, parents and individual readers who have used the ReadTwinning methodology or are interested in doing so. A feedback form is available on the ReadTwinning platform: <https://www.readtwinning.eu/feedback>

FAQ – READTWINNING

WHAT/HOW TO

1. What is ReadTwinning?

ReadTwinning is a European Union Erasmus+ Project promoting interest-based reading by **matchmaking two “reading pals” (or a small group of reading pals), termed ‘Reading Tandems’ who get involved in reading the same book with the help of an online platform**, which provides tools specifically designed to connect readers and foster shared reading. 9 to 15 year-old pupils are the target of the project.

2. How should the reading pals be matched?

The online platform includes functions to facilitate matchmaking by means of a set of questions aimed to identify users’ interests and hobbies, and their favourite genres. Initially, schools are encouraged to **involve teachers in the matchmaking process, asking them to help match pupils with similar interests**. Since the project aims to connect pupils from different classes, schools and countries, it is recommended (albeit not required) to **match pupils from different classes** even in the preliminary stages. We suggest **that reading pals work mainly in pairs, but that the possibility to work also with small groups of 3 to (maximum) 5 people is explored**, in order to better understand how well the tools provided and the ReadTwinning methodology work with small groups. In the scope of the project, reading pals working in pairs or each small group connected to read the same book is called a **“reading tandem”**.

3. How should the books be chosen?

Pupils are free to decide upon the book they will choose to read with their tandem partner. In addition, the platform includes topic gurus where partners and advanced users of the platform (teachers, parents, pupils), with a specific competence on the topic, will recommend books to read. In the early stages of using the ReadTwinning methodology, teachers and parents can also directly suggest books to read. **However, of great importance is that the final choice of the book to read is left to and not imposed upon the reading tandem.**

4. Which tools are available to the reading tandem?

Each reading tandem includes a private multimedia feed for sharing relevant content with other tandem members, a Discussions area for keeping a regular collaborative reading diary, an internal messaging system, and a final review section to provide feedback on the book and their experience of the tandem. See section ‘5.1 The platform’ for more information and tutorial video

5. How does the reading tandem work? What are the reading challenges?

At the beginning of the activity, each reading tandem should define a set of goals which, together, constitutes the **“reading challenge”**. What is the deadline to finish the book? How often will the members complete the Discussions ‘reading diary’? Which kind of shared activities (such as creating a book trailer; creating a given number of multimedia posts describing the reading habits, discoveries, activities of the tandem, creating a music playlist related to the book or to be listened to while reading it, creating book-related bookmarks, ...) are expected? Each reading tandem can also define its own **reading stages** e.g. completing the first section of the book, as part of the reading challenges.

6. How to use augmented/enhanced reading in the ReadTwinning reading activities?

Reading tandems are encouraged to use [The Living Book](http://www.thelivingbook.eu) (www.thelivingbook.eu) approach based on augmented/enhanced reading **including also activities based on enhanced reading in the shared reading activities and the reading challenges**. [The Living Library](http://www.thelivinglibrary.eu) (www.thelivinglibrary.eu) platform can be also used in the scope of the reading tandem activities; with the results also shared into the ReadTwinning tandem feed.



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