



WORKING OFF OF EACH OTHER

**READING SURVEYS &
READING PROMOTION ACTIVITIES
(SUBREPORT OF “ERICs – and beyond”)**

Working off of each other: Reading surveys and reading promotion activities (subreport of “ERICs – and beyond”)

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1.0	26.10.2024	Kristenn Einarsson Luis González Martín Christoph Bläsi Leon Bleser	NPA FGSR JGU	Public version of Aldus Up’s Working Group on Reading’s Final (Technical) Report covering the work done and findings made regarding the topic of reading promotion.

Statement of originality:

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the final report “ERICS – and beyond” (of which this subreport is a spin-off part) we have presented the considerations that led to our decision to integrate selected reading promotion issues into the core task of Aldus Up WP2’s Working Group on Reading, the harmonisation of surveys on reading habits across Europe. In this context, we have taken a few steps to recognize this obvious connection between surveying and promoting reading. With respect to the core tasks mentioned: in Work Package 2, named «Surveys», Aldus Up follows the goal of studying reading behaviours in different European countries and in particular of making them more comparable. In the research description of the project this is formulated as follows: «In two of these areas (reading habits and translation trends), data are currently collected in the different countries independently, with different methodology by different organizations. In those cases, project surveys will include a comparative analysis of national statistics and guidance for developing a common methodology at EU level, piloted in at least one country.»

In this paper, however, we, the Aldus Up Working Group on Reading (WGOR), focus on the respective work done under the banner of Aldus Up in regards to reading promotion, something that is – as elaborated on in the final report – symbiotic and inseparable from our project task in the direction of harmonised reading surveys. In short we can say that to see the necessity and to understand the effect of reading promotion activities, we need (ideally: comparable) reading surveys.

In the final chapter, we broaden the scope and give a glance at the way forward: The organization of a pan-European project to defend democracies through the promotion of reading, involving key stakeholders from different fields. A more in depth description of this vision can be found in our final report on the EuRoPeAn Item Core Set for Reading Surveys (ERICS).

1. READING PROMOTION

The main task of our working group was to facilitate the comparison of data on national reading habits in Europe by designing harmonised reading surveys which cover the most important reading variables: To make sense of the numbers gained through ERICS, their commonalities, differences and developments from a reading promotion perspective, it is necessary to look at the cultural and educational strategies implemented on national levels. In turn, reading survey results themselves are important – if not essential – tools to see the necessity and measure the effects of activities to support reading. A European harmonization adds the opportunity for benchmarking, for learning from the best.

As ERICS will be used in increasingly more countries in Europe, we will be able to monitor the development of reading in the different countries in the same time spans and can therefore also try to compare the effect of different reading promotion strategies and reading promotion measures. We have found out that a prerequisite for this desideratum – apart from commensurable reading surveys, of course – is an account of what is going on in each country currently with respect to reading promotion policies and measures. This has to be done by monitoring existing overall plans (reading strategies) in each country (if there is one), how they were developed and who is responsible for development as well as for implementation. Existing reading promotion activities have also to be registered as well as who are the agents and stakeholders involved. And that is exactly what we started.

1.1 COLLECTION OF READING PROMOTION POLICIES AND MEASURES ACROSS EUROPE

With the help of a survey disseminated via the Aldus Network and evaluated by us as well as additional desktop research, we collected an extensive sample of over 400 European reading promotion programmes from 34 countries, ongoing ones as well as finalized ones. Besides country and name we documented the duration of each, its rate of repetition, the coordinating body, the website, a category / type of the programme, its target group and its funding, as well as giving a short description of the activity. This work can be seen as a prototype of a reading promotion policies and measures database, a conceivable initiative similar to EURead and one which had been promoted at Mainz Reading Seminar.

1.2 TEST CASE NORWAY

Besides this broad collection, we also looked at a test case, mapping the situation of reading promotion in detail for Norway. The information for this was collected with the help of desktop research. A preliminary first draft was then sent to and reviewed by a number of stakeholders from the Norwegian reading promotion landscape, some of which provided us with detailed expert feedback. Based on this feedback we did the necessary editing and completed version 1.0 (15 pages that are not intended for dissemination).

We also kicked off to map out other countries, namely Denmark, Germany, Italy, Slovenia and Spain, following a structure similar (a few adjustments to cover state-specific conditions were made) to the one used for the Norwegian test case:

- 1 Framework conditions
 - 1.1 General Notes
 - 1.1.1 Political System and Relationship to EU
 - 1.1.2 Administrative division and density of population
 - 1.1.3 Languages
 - 1.2 Reading in Norway
 - 1.2.1 Alphabetization & Reading Skills
 - 1.2.2 Monitoring & Surveys
 - 1.2.3 Reading Habits
- 2 Players and Stakeholders in National Reading Promotion
 - 2.1 Government
 - 2.2 Book Industry
 - 2.3 Independent Institutions
- 3 Reading Promotion Landscape
 - 3.1 Plans & Strategies
 - 3.2 Campaigns & Activities
 - 3.2.1 Synopsis
 - 3.2.2 Annually Repeated Events (ongoing)
 - 3.2.3 Continuous Campaigns & Activities
 - 3.2.4 Recent One-time Campaigns & Activities
 - 3.2.5 Past Reading Promotion Measures (prior to 2018 or ended)
- 4 Conclusions & Observations

Continuing from these first steps, a structured/categorized collection (maybe database) of reading promotion policies and measure as a searchable (according to different target groups, policy objectives, etc.) and updatable repository of best practices for further research and for interested parties to learn from the best could be the result. This repository / database is meant to be an

important part of the project(s) that will no doubt follow Aldus Up, on the basis not least of the integration of surveying and promoting reading as it was first explicitly, comprehensively, interdisciplinarily and with the participation of policy makers expressed at Mainz Reading Seminar (see below).

2. MAINZ READING SEMINAR

To bring together the threads of surveying and promoting reading, WGOR organized the Mainz Reading Seminar on the 5th and 6th of March 2024; it was attended by approx. 25 international guests. This effort of bringing together experts from the educational, academic and cultural sector featured presentations, talks and discussions to share recent results of reading research, reading surveys as well as best practices of reading promotion.

The keynote speakers of the first segment touched upon the importance of reading, especially higher-level reading – besides an academic introduction to a broad range of reading and readers research, the Ljubljana Reading Manifesto was presented. In contrast to that, the importance of not only focusing on readers and higher-level book reading was stressed; according to this view, it is important to make sure not to lose non-readers, digital reading and everyday short text reading out of sight when designing reading promotion programs. The connection between reading and the societal ability to defend democracies was also made a central topic, emphasizing the value of reading as a means to a collective cause in the interest of European democracies. After that, current reading promotion efforts were highlighted from different perspectives, including actions taken on a national, political level as well as work of non-governmental institutions such as Stiftung Lesen, Foreningen !les and AIE.

We, the Working Group on Reading in Aldus Up's WP2, had the opportunity to put our work done in the form of the white paper «Reading situations, cumulative effects of reading, and their consequences for surveying and promoting reading” into the context of the integration of surveying and promoting reading. This scholarly byproduct of the research done for ERICS discusses the vast range of reading situations and their implications, proposing that the positive effects of different types of reading acts can be presented cumulatively in an intuitive way with the help of visualised constructs called ‘signatures’. The paper is indeed an explicit contribution to bringing together reading surveys and reading promotion as these signatures can help in choosing and understanding the most valuable reading promotion policies and measures for specific contexts, i.e. targeted

reading situations and target groups. This tied in well with the final recommendation to develop and try new narratives for reading promotion that focus on reading's positive externalities related to societal, economic and health benefits and, connected to this and most of all, to the idea that reading can be seen / is "cool".

The seminar was covered by two articles published in Aldua Up's K-HUB: "Mainz Reading Seminar" and "Regarding Reading: Five Talking Points at the recent Seminar in Mainz".

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