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Information and digital literacy for primary education: diagnosis of needs and challenges.

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2023

This file contains first the extended abstract for the panel, followed by the slides used during the session.

Information and digital literacy for primary education: diagnosis of needs and challenges

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Extended Abstract

The aftermath of the crisis generated by the COVID-19 pandemic - and the dangerous infodemic that has emerged in parallel - has made the importance of fostering information literacy even more evident. Information literacy is fundamental in all ages to enable us to participate in contemporary society and is therefore specifically a key competence to be developed starting from early childhood (Baji, Bigdeli, Parsa and Haeusler, 2018; Batool and Webber, 2019; Chu, Tse and Chow, 2011; Gardner, Goldstein, Pavey and Secker, 2020).

In some countries, for the primary education stage, the socio-educational need to promote information literacy has obtained an institutional response with the inclusion of information and digital competence in the school curriculum and in current legislation. But the reality is that there is no sound educational approach, no updated and transferable curricular design, no substantial support for the school library, and the results of both the PISA Programme (2018) and recent academic research (Martínez-Piñeiro, Gewerc and Rodríguez-Groba, 2019) regarding information literacy of primary school students show huge gaps that urgently need to be addressed.

The aim of this panel is to describe the preliminary results of the research carried out within the European BRIDGE project ("Information and Digital Literacy at School: A Bridge to Support Critical Thinking and Equality Values for Primary Education Using Children's Literature and Transmedia"). Current legislation, curricula, and practices of promoting information and digital literacy in the six countries of the project - Spain, Turkey, Italy, Finland, Greece and the United Kingdom - have been reviewed; they are accompanied by results from a questionnaire survey for teachers and librarians working with 8-11 year-olds. The questionnaire addressed how primary school teachers and school librarians support their students in developing information literacy, digital literacy, critical thinking and equality values as part of their teaching practices, and also included open-ended questions to collect information on the challenges they encounter, as well as their suggestions for

materials and best practices. In the panel, the main results obtained in the six countries of the project will be presented to identify and reflect the needs and challenges shared and those that are specific to each country.

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Information and Digital Literacy for Primary Education. Diagnosis of Needs and Challenges

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BRIDGE



Panel introduction. Project information

INFORMATION AND DIGITAL LITERACY AT SCHOOL.
A BRIDGE TO SUPPORT CRITICAL THINKING AND
EQUALITY VALUES FOR PRIMARY EDUCATION USING
CHILDREN'S LITERATURE AND TRANSMEDIA
(BRIDGE)

(Project code: 2021-1-ES01-KA220-SCH-000032527)



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BRIDGE



Project information

- Programme: Erasmus+ (2021-2027).
- Specific Programme: KA2 - Cooperation for innovation and exchange of good practices.
- Area: KA220 - School Education Partnerships.





Who are we?

- We are 8 entities, from 6 countries: Spain, Italy, Turkey, Finland, Greece, UK.

PUENTE, KÖPRÜ, PONTE, SILTA, ΓΕΦΥΡΑ - GÉFYRA, BRIDGE

 - Universitat Jaume I (Spain) - Coordinator
 - Hacettepe Üniversitesi (Turkey)
 - Cankaya Üniversitesi Vakfi (Turkey)
 - Università degli Studi di Genova (Italy)
 - University of Oulu (Finland)
 - Ionian University (Greece)
 - InformAll (UK)
 - SP4IL (United Kingdom)





Who is it aimed at?

- Primary school students (approximately middle primary stage, from 8 to 11 years old), and their families.
- Local primary schools and teachers.
- Future primary school teachers (undergraduates in higher education).
- Educational institutions (schools and also universities, with departments of Education where future primary school teachers are trained; and departments of Library and Information Science).
- Stakeholders responsible for curriculum design.
- School and public libraries.
- Regional teaching offices and networks.



Project results (PR). *In progress*

- **PR1:** Report and call for action (on the need to promote information and digital literacy in primary education).
- **PR2:** Open access portal with a selection of good practices and resources for information and digital literacy in primary education. It includes a selection of children's literature and transmedia resources.
- **PR3:** Training seminar (one in each partner country) to provide recommendations on how to integrate information and digital literacy into the primary school curriculum.

All the material will be available on our website (open access) by the end of the project (February 2024)



Putting information and digital literacy at the heart of primary education

- Core ideas:
 - Critical thinking, ethics and equality (intersectional gender perspective) are at the core of critical information and digital literacy.
 - Encourage the pleasure of reading, enquiry, promoting a careful contextualisation of literary or digital documents, through information and digital literacy activities.
 - Enhancing the value of the school library.



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Team members at ECIL

- Spain
- Türkiye
- United Kingdom
- Finland
- Greece





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We now turn to the points selected for our panel.



Illustration by Avi Ofer for BRIDGE project

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Legislation

How information and digital literacy appears in our country's legislation on primary education

- **SPAIN:** Information literacy is mentioned in relation to digital competence (key competence in the official curriculum) and is also mentioned as a specific competence throughout the curriculum together with media literacy.
- **GREECE:** The national digital strategy addresses digital literacy, and it is aimed towards the development of a digital learning culture, where digital competences development takes place throughout formal education, while information literacy skills are embedded within digital literacy.
- **UK (ENGLAND):** Media and information literacy have recently started to feature in the national policy agenda in England, largely to counter online harms. The Online Safety Bill, which becomes law later this year, has a section on media literacy. However, information literacy is still not widely recognised specifically in education policy. There are many media literacy initiatives for young people, but more focus is needed on schools to develop these skills systematically.
- **FINLAND:** The Basic Education Act includes broad objectives such as supporting growth into humanity and ethically responsible membership of society, providing knowledge and skills needed in life & promoting equality and equity
- **TÜRKİYE:** The curriculum incorporates Information Literacy (IL) content with the goal of equipping individuals with the ability to develop problem-solving strategies for practical use in their daily lives. This includes the capacity to search for, gather, comprehend, critique, interpret, organize, and manage information through appropriate methods.



School curriculum under the umbrella of information and digital literacy

Are there any connections of information and digital literacy with critical thinking and equality values in the country's curriculum?

- **SPAIN:** Generally focuses on the use of technologies from an instrumental perspective and less on critical thinking, but some regional regulations do explicitly connect information literacy (also digital and media) with the promotion of critical thinking and equality.
- **GREECE:** The new legislation for school curricula 2023 explicitly mentions individual information and digital skills, including those for finding, analysing, critically evaluating and presenting information, peer collaboration and problem-solving skills in several subjects (e.g. history, visual art, literature etc.) but not information literacy explicitly as a compound concept. Digital literacy is explicitly mentioned in a recently reviewed course for ICT which, under certain circumstances, may present a supportive direction for digital literacy.
- **UK (ENGLAND):** The National Curriculum in England prioritises core competencies over critical thinking skills. Information literacy is not systematically taught. School libraries lack resources and professional staff. Equality, diversity and inclusion policies exist but application depends on teachers. Relationships education covers respect and safety but not broader digital literacy.
- **FINLAND:** National core curriculum includes transversal competencies including T1 Thinking and learning to learn, T2: Cultural competence, interaction, and expression, T3 Multiliteracy, T5 ICT competence, T7: Participation and influence, building the sustainable future
- **TÜRKİYE:** The Turkish curriculum, as of 2018, has been structured to align with the Turkish Qualifications Framework (TQF). Within this framework, qualifications related to Information Literacy, Information and Communication Technologies Literacy, Human Rights and Democratic Sensitivity Competencies, Basic Life Competencies, and more are incorporated.



Challenges and opportunities

I.e. Situation of school libraries and impact of the pandemic on information and digital literacy at primary education as a BRIDGE to support critical thinking and equality values

- **SPAIN:** School libraries are compulsory by law but lack stability and resources (both financial and human). The situation has worsened dramatically with the pandemic, when the physical space of the library was closed or its use was modified.
- **GREECE:** The pandemic increased the preparedness but also matured the responsiveness of the primary education system in Greece, highlighting the importance of school libraries, digital resources, information and digital literacy and the need for a more flexible and adaptable educational ecosystem. However, school libraries are underfinanced and understaffed. Empowering and strengthening school libraries and appropriately trained educators is a challenge.
- **UK (ENGLAND):** School libraries are not statutory in England. The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted primary education in England, with school closures and distance learning. This has exacerbated inequalities and led to some learning loss, especially in maths. School libraries have been impacted through reduced staffing and access. The emphasis is now on core competencies rather than broader skills.
- **FINLAND:** School libraries non-existent or small, but schools collaborate with public libraries which is supported by the Library Act; highly educated and independent but overburdened teachers.
- **TÜRKIYE:** According to the 2021 statistics, the total number of school libraries in Türkiye was 32.690 (see Table 2). Which means about 75% (three-fourth) of the schools, today, have a library. However this does not mean that these are fully equipped effective libraries.



Suggested strategies

Suggested strategies for Information and Digital Literacy

- **SPAIN:** To promote Integrated Documentary Projects (a way of working on information and digital literacy in a transversal and multidisciplinary way), and to encourage Reading Routes (as a sort of Integrated Documentary Project based on the use of children's literature to approach critical thinking). There is an urgent need to strengthen school libraries and provide ongoing teacher training.
- **GREECE:** Information and digital literacy values should be further embedded into the new primary school curricula and educators should further upgrade their information and digital literacy competences through appropriate training. Every school should have a full-time trained school librarian, a fully functional library providing access to various conventional and digital resources, sufficient infrastructure to support increased participation of children in information and digital literacy activities, and a reading culture as a sustainable practice.
- **UK (ENGLAND):** Strategies will need to focus on teacher training, policy advocacy, digital platforms, community engagement, and impact measurement to promote critical thinking, equality values, and digital literacy. Key objectives are developing resources, ensuring access, fostering partnerships, engaging stakeholders, and continuously evaluating policies and training to enhance student outcomes.
- **FINLAND:** Strengthening the collaboration between schools & public libraries in promoting critical information literacy; including this already in librarian & teacher training
- **TÜRKİYE:** In order to enhance information literacy across the country, Türkiye will need to focus on developing a national information literacy policy, fostering collaboration among different sectors, and working towards improving the conditions of school libraries.

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Thank you!

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