

## EURead Statement on Reading and Literacy

We, the member organisations of EURead representing 34 state, NGO and publishing bodies from 23 countries across the continent call on European leaders at regional, national and supranational level to recognise the foundational role that reading plays in the development of individual citizens, in the operation of a thriving economy and in helping to ensure the functioning of modern democracies.

We are specifically calling for recognition of and action on the following principles.

**1. The ability to read and to read critically is essential to personal development and a fundamental human right.**

It is widely evidenced that reading regularly for pleasure improves mental health and well-being, correlates with achievement across the curriculum, improves social mobility and enables participation in society. PISA defines reading as *“understanding, using, reflecting on, and engaging with written texts in order to achieve one’s goals, develop one’s knowledge and potential, and participate in society.”* Because of its widespread impact on individuals’ lives, learning to read and to love reading is a fundamental right.

**2. The ability to read underpins the functioning of our society in many dimensions and, as such, is everyone’s concern.**

Having citizens who can read to the best of their ability can improve economic performance, enable better health outcomes, enhance social mobility and improve social cohesion. Making sure that the citizens of Europe are regular readers is a matter of concern for a wide variety of state and non-state actors outside the confines of the education and culture sectors. This includes organisations active in the business and commercial world, healthcare and regional development sectors amongst others.

**3. Having citizens who can read critically is essential if we are to protect our democracies.**

In an era of disinformation, the ability to interpret information and assess the credibility of statements is essential to the functioning of modern democracies. The promotion of high levels of critical literacy should be a priority for governments and for EU members should form part of the Defence of Democracy package.

**4. Reading needs to be part of family life from a child’s earliest days and governments should further invest in Early Years book gifting programmes.**

There is widespread scientific evidence of the importance of the first 1000 days for a child’s development and further evidence of the critical role that reading with young children can play in language acquisition and emotional attachment with their parent or carer. We know that children who are read to when young are more likely to go on to read themselves later. We believe that no child should miss out on the opportunity this presents and that government should further invest in well-evidenced book gifting programmes. Book gifting programmes should form part of the European Child Guarantee.

- 5. Access to a wide range of books, for example through kindergartens, school libraries and through libraries in the community, staffed by skilled librarians, is essential to fostering a love of reading and needs financial support.**

Every citizen of a European country from birth onwards would benefit from access to diverse reading materials of all kinds and in different formats as this helps the acquisition and maintenance of regular reading habits. Having school and community libraries, staffed by information professionals who can help people discover books they will love, is a critical part of our reading infrastructure.

- 6. Reading promotion by a wide range of players needs to be supported.**

People need encouragement to read, and this is particularly true for those who have the most to gain from reading regularly. Reading promotion programmes which draw on the expertise of the state and NGOs as well as the intellectual capital of authors, illustrators, publishers and booksellers require sustained investment over time in order to effect changes in behaviour. Whilst these actors may lead on promotional activity, it is the responsibility of every element of society to signal that reading is something which is highly valued.

#### **EURead Members**

Anne Çocuk Eğitim Vakfı, ACEV, Asociación Artística Sociocultural Mestiza Bonniers, Familjestiftelse, BookTrust, Buchklub der Jugend, Children's Books Ireland, Detski Knigi Foundation, Diavazontas Megalono, Federation of European Publishers, Foreningen !les, Good Books, Hungarian Reading Association, Idereen Leest Flanders, Kitabistan, Libranda, LitCam, Lubimyczytać.pl, Lukukeskus Läscentrum Martynas, Mažvydas National Library, Medienzentrum DG, Nati per leegere, National Literacy Agency, Nationalt Videncenter for Læsning, Österreichisches Bibliothekswerk, Österreichischer Buchklub der Jugend, Plano Nacional de Leitura, Reading Foundation (Chetene) – Bulgaria, Schweizerisches Institut für Kinder- und Jugendmedien, Scottish Book Trust, Stichting Lezen, Stiftung Lesen, Svet Knihy, The Polish Book Institute, Turkish Publishers, Universal Reading Foundation Poland, Was steht da?