

Language for Life

LOCAL APPROACH WITH SUPPORT

Language for Life co-operates with municipalities and organisations in organising (Dutch language and numeracy) courses for people with literacy problems. The programme sets up local and national networks to try and influence policy-making processes, and to find, motivate, train and monitor literacy learners. Partners of Language for Life have reached nearly 55,000 course participants in two years (2016-2017).



"I did not dare to open my mailbox. I ignored mail from the bank and the tax office. Now I'm attending a language course and I can read almost all my letters. It's wonderful to be less dependent on others!"

Johan from Utrecht

4 PHASES OF THE APPROACH AND SUPPORT

- Build a local coalition** of parties and make a plan (including budget) to find low literate people and motivate them to get started with education. *Support:* problem-awareness activities, organising problem-solving workshops, customised advice, research, sharing best practices and more.
- Municipalities and local organisations work together on **finding and identifying low literate people**, volunteers, professional teachers and other partners. Together they provide a suitable training location for these literacy learners. *Support:* screening instruments to find low literate people, training in recognising and referring to professionals, extended intakes for low literate people and more.
- Literacy learners follow several lessons.** The best learning results are achieved through a combination of the educational expertise of professional teachers, teaching materials matching daily life, and trained volunteers with time to practice. *Support:* customised learning materials, training for volunteers and teachers, e-learning courses and more.
- To find out whether the local approach is successful the Reading and Writing Foundation (RWF) **monitors the learners' progress.** Besides that, RWF organises satisfaction surveys for volunteers, teachers and the partner organisations to improve the quality of the approach. *Support:* tests, surveys, peer coaching and more.

Results

	Courses Language for Life	Benchmark Dutch courses
Number of participants with an experienced increase in social inclusion per variable in %		↓
Language skills	70	58
Digital skills	60	51
Meeting other people	51	49
Mental health	53	*
Physical health	39	*
Looking for a job	32	20
Paid job with assistance	23	14

Source: Maastricht University (2015 and 2017)

* For these variables there is no benchmark

Achieved

- 55,000 adults with literacy difficulties trained
- 16,000 volunteers trained
- 220 supporting teachers trained
- 930 partners included
- 35,000 Literacy Screeners completed
- 310 Literacy Hubs established

Source: RWF (2016-2017)

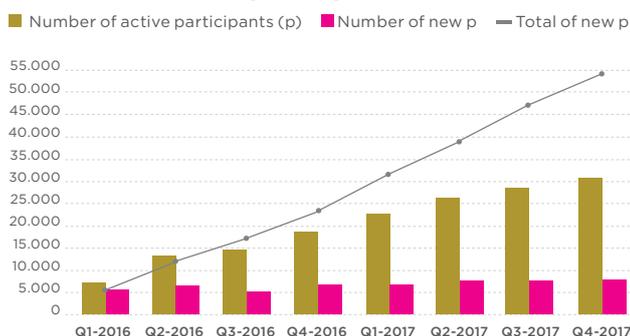
Evaluation ratings by partners *

• Co-operation between RWF and partners	7,9
• Awareness raising and campaigns	8,2
• Total approach	7,9

Source: Maastricht University (2017)

* On a scale from 1 to 10, including libraries, municipalities, companies, healthcare organisations, educational institutions.

Results increase in participants



LESSONS LEARNED

- Connect to a local network; don't start separate projects without local co-operation.
- Involve the target group in finding the right approach.
- You only find native low literate people when screening structurally and taking time to ask them what they would like to learn.
- A combination of teachers, trained volunteers and good teaching materials generates the most effect.
- Start small and learn from that, but think big from the start.
- Finally, ... there is always a solution!

LITERACY HUBS EVERYWHERE

As of 2017, a total of 310 Literacy Hubs are accessible throughout the Netherlands. A Literacy Hub is a low-threshold facility in the neighbourhood that provides information to people with literacy problems, volunteers and teachers. The hub helps low literate people to find a course close to their home. In the hub, people can also practice their language, numeracy and/or digital skills. The majority of Literacy Hubs is located in public libraries, but can also be found within companies, employment agencies and hospitals.

LITERACY SCREENER

The Dutch Literacy Screener is an online tool that can identify possible literacy problems in only 12 minutes. The instrument is valid, objective and reliable and is designed for organisations that wish to have a quick indication of the literacy level of their customers, clients or employees. In 4 years (2014-2017), over 40,000 people have completed the Literacy Screener. 31% has received an indication of low literacy. In 2017 more than 240 organisations use the Literacy Screener, amongst others employment services, municipalities and companies. There is also a Numeracy Screener that quickly checks your numeracy skills, and a Digi Screener identifying your digital skills.



"If I had been able to read labels back then, I would have understood the content of products better. Now I dare to fight and be proud of my achievements, for example the fact that I have lost 65 kilos!"

Dicky from Amsterdam

ABOUT RWF

The Reading & Writing Foundation (RWF) is an independent organisation that supports low literate people. Its goal is to enable as many people as possible in the Netherlands to read, write, calculate and have digital skills. After all, our society will become stronger if everyone can participate!

This is achieved by:

- investing in local and (inter)national networks;
- supporting these networks with education, research, (teaching) materials, advice and campaigns;
- making low literacy a subject of conversation with the public, politicians and policy makers;
- developing knowledge and sharing that with our partners.

RWF is a partner of various international networks, such as the European Basic Skills Network and EPALE, and is the initiator of the project Public Libraries 2020. This project aims to build a broad movement at EU level to address three societal issues in Europe in which public libraries play a central part. The development of Language for Life is funded by the Dutch government.

LOW LITERACY IN THE NETHERLANDS

In the Netherlands, 2.5 million adults have trouble with reading, writing and/or numeracy. They also often have trouble with digital skills. That has a big impact on their personal lives. If you cannot read, write and/or calculate well, it's more difficult to find a job, live a healthy lifestyle and control your financial situation. So, literacy makes you stronger and improves your life.

Women and men

Within this group, more women than men have difficulty with language and/or numeracy.



Natives and immigrants

Within this group, more natives than first generation immigrants have difficulty with language and/or numeracy.



Numbers based on 1.8 million people with language and/or numeracy difficulties (16-65 years). Source: Netherlands Court of Audit (2016).

Development

15 year olds that run the risk of being called 'low literate' at a later age.

17.9%

Source: Feskens, Kuhlemeier & Limpens (2016)

Costs low literacy

Low literate people miss out on annual income due to lower reading, writing and/or numeracy skills.



€572 million

Low literate people more often have an unhealthy lifestyle and are therefore more likely to go to the general practitioner or to the hospital.



€257 million

Because low literate people find it more difficult to find a job, they are more likely to receive social security benefits.



€117 million

Nearly 100,000 people live in poverty due to literacy problems.



€95 million

The government receives less taxes due to low income from low literate people.



€80 million

Numbers based on 2.5 million low literate people aged 16 and over. Source: PWC (2018)

GETTING STARTED

If you would like to get more information, you can contact the Reading & Writing Foundation without any obligation via **+31 70 302 26 60** or **info@readingandwriting.eu**.

We are more than happy to help you!