ELINET: Promoting Best Practices and Policies in Literacy across Europe

William G. Brozo
Renate Valtin
Sari Sulkunen

3rd Baltic Sea – 17th Nordic Literacy Conference, 2016

Lifelong Learning Programme

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views of its authors only, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained herein.

Session Overview

- ***Bill Brozo*** – General Introduction and Speaker Introductions

- ***Renate Valtin*** - Describe the purpose and structure of ELINET and present the framework of Good Practice as well as other important outcomes of the project

- ***Sari Sulkunen*** - Present examples of Good Practice, focusing on practices relevant to addressing the literacy challenges encountered in the network context

- ***Bill Brozo*** – Share insights, as an external evaluator of ELINET, into the network's processes and outcomes, focusing on perspectives on Good Practices

- **Questions/Comments**

Bill Brozo

- Professor of Literacy in the Graduate School of Education at George Mason University, Fairfax, Virginia, USA
- Member of IRA's PISA/PIRLS Task Force since its inception in 2003; chair from 2010
- Involved in many international projects in Europe (BaCuLit; ISIT; the SEA in the Balkans, Reading to Learn-Romania) and the Gulf
- Scholarship focuses on issues of adolescent literacy, content-area/disciplinary literacy
- Author of numerous books and articles, including *The Adolescent Literacy Inventory* (Pearson) & *Content Area and Disciplinary Literacy for Today's Adolescents* (Guilford); *To be a Boy, To be a Reader* (IRA)
- Respondent to the High Level Group report; presenter at the report's unveiling in Cyprus
- External Reviewer of the ELINET project

Renate Valtin

- Professor Emerita of Education, Humboldt University Berlin, Germany
- Chair-person of IDEC, vice-chair of FELA
- Member of the German PIRLS Team since 2001
- Author of numerous books and articles, in the field of literacy, dyslexia, social and cognitive development
- Member of the High Level Group of Experts on Literacy
- Team leader in the ELINET project
- Member of the Reading Hall of Fame

Sari Sulkunen

- PhD, Senior Lecturer, Department of Languages, University of Jyväskylä, Finland
- Member of EU's High level Group on Literacy, PISA/PIRLS Task Force and PISA Reading Expert Group
- Worked in several international literacy studies (PIRLS, PISA, PIAAC) and projects funded by EU (ADORE, ISIT)
- Main interest in adolescent and adult literacy, literacy pedagogy and most currently in disciplinary literacy
- Author and co-author of several international and national articles and publications
- Lecturer of text and literacy related courses for future mother tongue teachers

Purpose and structure of ELINET

Prof. Dr. Renate Valtin

Lifelong Learning Programme

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views of its authors only, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained herein.

Why Literacy Policy across European Countries needs a Push

"One in five 15-year-old Europeans, as well as nearly 55 million adults, lack basic reading and writing skills"
(ELINET Basic Information)

This increases the **risk of poverty** and **social exclusion** and limits numerous opportunities for cultural **participation**, **lifelong learning** and personal growth.

Literacy

- Is indispensable to human development and education
- Is fundamental to social and cultural participation
- Is essential for a strong democratic society
- Enables people to live full and meaningful lives

European Policy Answers:
A „Literacy Report“ from the *European High Level Group of Experts on Literacy* (2012)

ELINET was created to put the Report´s Vision into Practice

The European Literacy Policy Network ELINET:

- established in **February 2014**
- funded for **2 years** with a **3 million Euro** grant from the European Commission (DG EAC) – **plus 1 million self-contribution**,
- a network of **78 partner organizations** from 28 European countries

ELINET´s Main Task:

To build a **strong network** that brings together European policy actors committed to ***reducing the number of children, young people and adults with poor literacy skills in Europe***.

The scope of ELINET: 28 European Countries (24 EU Member States)

Countries involved

Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom

EU-Members not involved so far: Latvia, Luxemburg, Poland, Slovakia.

Who are the ELINET Partners?

ELINET's 78 partner organisations are drawn from a wide range of sectors.

Types of organisations involved:

- Education ministries and national agencies
- Existing literacy networks and national associations
- International organizations (like UNESCO)
- Foundations and NGOs
- Universities, research centres and teacher training institutions
- Volunteer organisations

How to improve literacy policies in Europe – ELINET´s main outcomes

1. A **European Literacy Communication Platform** www.eli-net.eu
2. A set of **30 Country Reports** on literacy policy and performance (of all age groups) in each of the ELINET countries based on a comprehensive framework.
3. A **Declaration of Literacy as a Human Right** outlining 11 conditions for the realization of this right with recommendations for stakeholders
4. A **European Framework of Good Practice in Literacy Policies** (EFGP) covering all age groups and relevant policy areas
5. A sample of related **Examples of Good Practice** covering all areas and age groups

Achievements

European Literacy Policy Network

ELINET

www.eli-net.eu
Communication Platform

Covering all age groups

30 Country reports on Literacy

Featuring all policy areas relevant to literacy

www.eli-net.eu/research/country-reports/

Fundraising Toolkit

Case studies
fundraising know how

Video clips
Top tips from experts

Guidelines on business development

Organisational review tools

Fundraising strategy development

www.eli-net.eu/fundraising/

Network of literacy professionals

Awareness Raising Toolkit

Good practice

Guidelines for running a campaign, workshops and for a video clip

Elevator pitch training

Country fact sheets

Literacy screener

www.eli-net.eu/awareness-raising/

Literacy Glossary

Guidelines for terminology in adult literacy

available in 13 languages

www.eli-net.eu/research/terminology/

Good Practice Examples

150 good practice examples,
all age,
all policy areas,
28 countries

European Framework of Good Practice

www.eli-net.eu/good-practice/

Literacy Declaration

paper and video format

available in many languages

www.eli-net.eu/about-us/literacy-declaration/

Indicators for success

Indicators for the evaluation of awareness- and fundraising

Influence Strategies

www.eli-net.eu/research/research-for-success/

"Our common vision is to give each and every European citizen the necessary tools to prosper in the demanding multi-literate world of the 21st century. **Prof. Dr. Christine Garbe, ELINET coordinator/University of Cologne**"

20-22 January

2014 **2015** **2016**

European Literacy Conference

ELINET

30 country reports

- The reports povide **country-specific knowledge** in order to analyse and report on member states' performance in literacy,, statistical information, current policies, good practices and initiatives on literacy performance.
- The reports are unique in their life-long and life-wide approach. They cover **all age groups** („from cradle to grave“) and all areas of **formal, non-formal and informal literacy learning**: from family literacy to workplace literacy, from teacher education to ´reading for pleasure´ or digital literacy.

Reporting about literacy surveys PIRLS, PISA,PIAAC

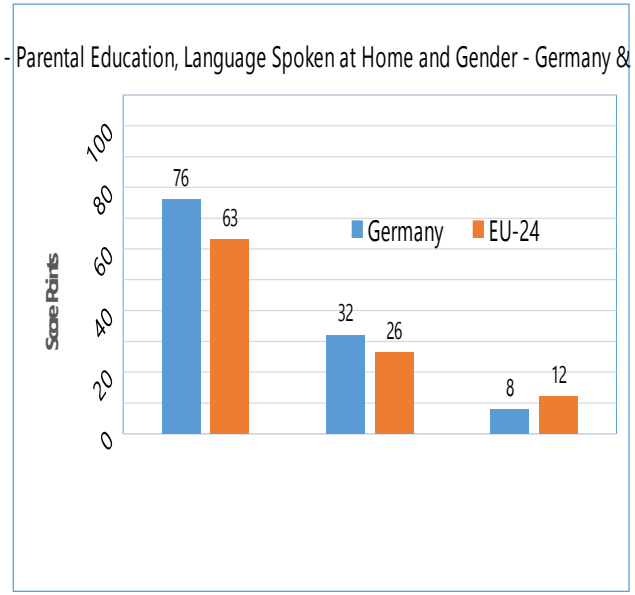
Common framework for Performance data

level of achievement and trends:

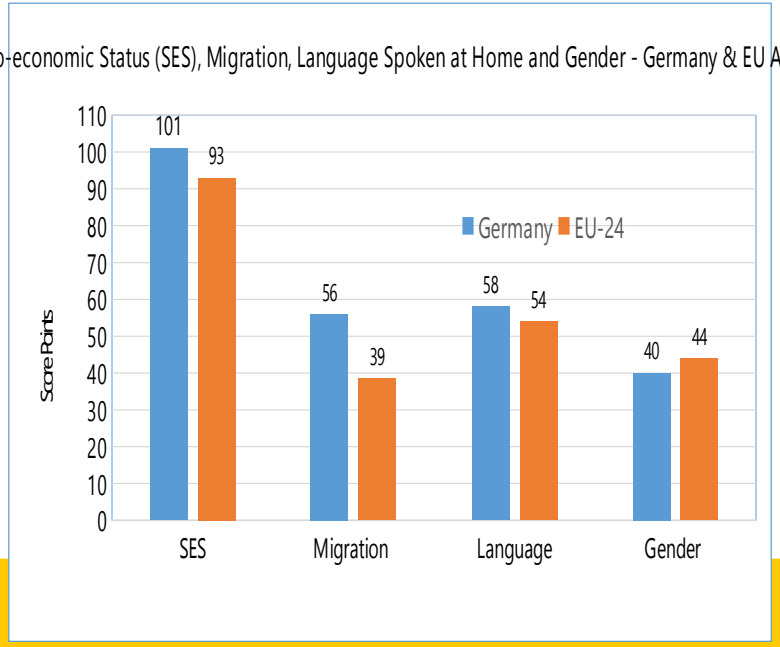
- proportion of low and high performing readers
- gaps: social, migrant, gender

Problem: lack of data for writing

Performance Gaps - Parental Education, Language Spoken at Home and Gender - Germany & EU-24 (PIRLS 2011)



Performance Gaps - Socio-economic Status (SES), Migration, Language Spoken at Home and Gender - Germany & EU Average (PISA 2009, 2012)



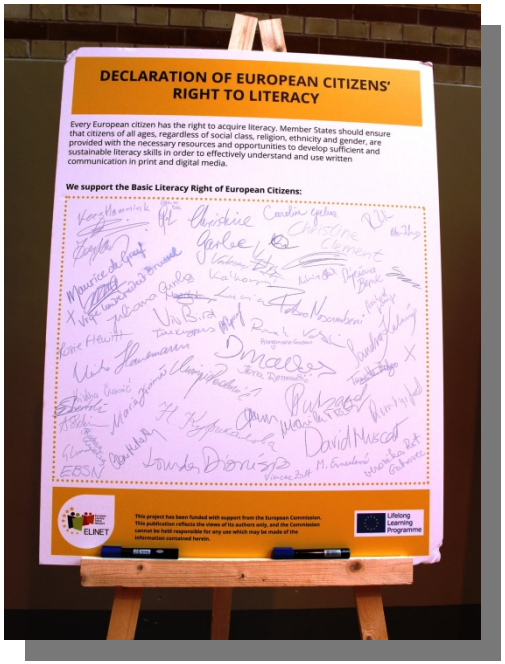
Structure of the children and adolescent reports

Differentiation of **3 key issues for European literacy policies (**High Level Group of Experts on Literacy (2012)**:**

- Creating a literate environment for children and adolescents, at home, in school, digital environment, libraries
- Improving the quality of teaching: quality of preschool, literacy curricula, reading instruction, identification of and support for struggling literacy learners, initial teacher education and continuous professional development
- Increasing participation, inclusion and equity: supporting groups at risk (SES, migrants, pupils with special educational needs, boys)

European Declaration of the Right to Literacy (January 2016)

Everyone in Europe has the right to acquire literacy. EU Member States, candidate and associate States should ensure that residents of all ages, regardless of social class, religion, ethnicity and gender, are provided with the necessary resources and opportunities to develop sufficient and sustainable literacy skills and knowledge in order to effectively understand and use written communication in print and digital media.



11 conditions required to put the right to basic literacy into practice

1. **Young children** are encouraged at home in their literacy acquisition.
2. **Parents** receive support in helping their children's language and literacy acquisition.
3. **Affordable high-quality preschool or kindergarten** fosters children's language and emergent literacy development.
4. **High-quality literacy instruction** for children, adolescents and adults is regarded as a core task of all educational institutions.
5. **All teachers receive effective initial teacher education and professional development in literacy teaching** in order to be well prepared for their demanding tasks.

11 conditions required to put the right to basic literacy into practice

6. **Digital competence** is promoted across all age groups.
7. **Reading for pleasure** is actively promoted and encouraged.
8. **Libraries** are accessible and well resourced.
9. **Children and young people who struggle with literacy** receive appropriate specialist support.
10. **Adults are supported** to develop the literacy skills necessary for them to participate fully in society.
11. **Policy-makers, professionals, parents and communities** work together to ensure equal access to literacy by closing the gaps in social and educational levels.

The European Framework of Good Practice in Raising Literacy Levels

Structure

Age Groups

Children
(0 – 10/12 years)

- Family literacy (connected to adult literacy)
- early childhood/ preschool education/ emergent literacy
- primary education/ acquisition of literacy/ learning to read and write

Adolescents
(10/12 – 18 years)

- secondary schools
- vocational education and training (VET)
- Adolescent literacy/ content area literacy
- multiliteracies/ digital literacy

Adults
(16 – 65 years and beyond)

- tertiary education/ adult education
- adult literacy
- second-chance education

Categories &

EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK OF GOOD PRACTICE in Raising Literacy Levels of Children, Adolescents and Adults

25 experts cooperated in developing the European Framework of Good Practice.

We began '**top-down',** drawing on international research and the common framework of the country reports to define features of good practice for the different literacy policy areas.

Based on those features we collected and analysed good practice examples covering all areas and age-groups. This '**bottom-up**' analysis was used to refine and revise the features of good practice identified in the framework.

EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK OF GOOD PRACTICE in specific literacy policy areas

Creating a more literate environment

- Family literacy programmes, Emergent literacy, Reading (and writing) promotion programmes

Improving the quality of teaching

- Comprehensive literacy programmes (including adult literacy provision), Programmes fostering digital literacy and multi-literacy skills, Literacy curricula, Screenings/assessment, Literacy instruction in schools, teacher education and professional development

Increasing participation and inclusion

- Programmes offering provision of literacy learning opportunities to disadvantaged groups

Good practice examples

- We started a call for submitting good practice examples
- 150 examples were received and reviewed by at least 3 experts
- 109 examples were selected for publication on the ELINET website.

Examples of good practice

Dr. Sari Sulkunen

Lifelong Learning Programme

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views of its authors only, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained herein.

Good practice examples relevant in the Finnish context

- Key literacy challenges
  - Equity: closing the gaps (SES, gender, migrant)
  - Multiliteracy: meeting the current literacy requirements, updating pedagogy accordingly
  - "Hot" topics: disciplinary literacy, literacy learning in vocational schools & adult literacy
- Societal collaboration vs. school alone
- What do we have already in Finland?
- What does ELINET have?

➢Selected examples of 109 good practices

Family literacy: features of successful programmes

- Health care professionals are involved in programme design and implementation.
- Information is provided for parents about the importance of reading to their children.
- Language courses are provided for migrant parents.
- Support is available for migrant families in creating a culture of reading for pleasure by using "silent picture books".
- Strong working partnerships are built across a number of policy areas. Programmes may thus involve health care professionals, libraries, and day care centres and so on.
- Policy-makers commit publicly to the importance of literacy education in the family.
- An evidence-based approach to family literacy programmes is taken.
- Support is provided for book-gifting programmes.

Good practice examples of family literacy

- Neuvola (FIN)
  - Monitoring linguistic development & supporting parenthood
  - Reaches in practice all families
  - Note also maternity package
  - http://www.eli-net.eu/good-practice/examples-of-good-practice/detail/project/monitoring-of-childrens-healthy-growth-and-development-in-neuvola
- Bookstart corner (UK)
  - Low-ses families with 1–2-year-old child
  - Parents are encouraged to read with children
  - Four sessions at home (materials & guidance)
  - http://www.eli-net.eu/good-practice/examples-of-good-practice/detail/project/bookstart-corner

Adult literacy provision should be:

- Available
  - Communities are obliged to open centres for adult literacy education
  - Learners are motivated and supported to develop literacy
  - Participation is free of charge
- Accessible
  - The learning place is easy to reach for everyone
  - Learning hours are suited to the needs of the learners
  - Provision available also for those living in institutions
- Acceptable
  - Goals are clear and responsive to learners' needs
  - Everyone involved demonstrates respect for different convictions
- Adaptable
  - Circumstances of the learner are taken into account
  - Teachers are adult literacy professionals working on the basis of national curriculum
  - Monitoring and evaluation system exists

Good practice examples of adult literacy

- Language for Life (NL)
  - Project (2012 – 2015) aiming to reduce low literacy among adults (later Count on Skills)
  - 60 municipalities, over 600 multiprofessional partners
  - Methods developed included campaigns, language ambassadors and tools for assessing literacy level
- English Adult Literacy Core Curriculum (UK)
  - Support teachers in adult literacy teaching (diagnostic assessment, learning plan, relevant applications, monitoring progress)
  - Literacy includes the ability to speak, listen and respond, read and comprehend, and write

Good practice examples of adult literacy

- The Basic competence in Working Life Programme
  - Developing basic competences for work in Norway
  - Funding for companies that organise courses for their employees
  - Promotional events, media campaigns and meetings
- Distance learning Service (IR)
  - High quality and free learning to improve literacy
  - Writeon project: improving basic skills individually online, tutors available (Freephone)

Critique of ELINET's approach to establishing and promoting best practices

Dr. Bill Brozo

Lifelong Learning Programme

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views of its authors only, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained herein.

Initial Impressions of the ELINET Project – A “Spaghetti Junction”

- How would it be possible to bring togeth

over 120 individuals representing

over 70 diverse organizations across 28

countries and achieve consensus around

best/good practice in literacy instruction,

curriculum and policy from “cradle to grave”?

Initial Impressions of the ELINET Project…

The diversity of membership would be a key factor in the success of the project

- ELINET members came from virtually every corner of Europe and most countries in between
- They represented university scholars, private and public organizations and foundations, ministries and governments, school personnel, and more
- They possessed a wealth of knowledge and experience related to teaching reading and writing literacy, human growth and development, crafting, marketing, and implementing literacy-related programs, and designing and influencing literacy policy

My insights and efforts focused on…

The importance of having clear criteria for deciding what constitutes "best/good practice" on the European scene

- In the United States this is code for government approved practices, meaning only those supported by random control trials (RCTs) or with empirically verifiable results
- I suggested two categories: "Best Practice" with just those practices based on empirical findings and "Promising Practices" with those that produce positive results but have not yet been empirically verified. An alternative was "Theoretically Promising Practices" or "Principled Practices"

My insights and efforts focused on…

The importance of having clear criteria for deciding what constitutes "best practice" on the European scene

- This involves using empirically valid principles as the foundation for many specific literacy practices for which one cannot find empirical evidence.
- This could be the way to escape from the RCT- or experimental-evidence-only box members found themselves in, leading to the rejection of many potentially effective practices
- Especially germane for the adolescent and adult range, since it is often very difficult to find in the professional literature empirically valid findings for many specific literacy instructional practices

My insights and efforts focused on…

The importance of the management board and team leaders to clarify for team members which practices are acceptable to include in the reports and why

- Notions of "good" or "best" practice carried different meanings to different ELINET team members

- To some, practices considered acceptable for inclusion needed to have a substantial evidence base (with empirical data); for others, practices that have any evidence of effectiveness (whether anecdotal, testimonial, or based on other criteria) were considered acceptable to include in the reports

My insights and efforts focused on…

The importance of the management board and team leaders to clarify for team members which practices are acceptable to include in the reports and why

- There was also the question about how detailed the descriptions of best and/or good practice should be: (1) not so detailed that they leave readers with an impression the practice is effective only within a very specialized context; but (2) should include enough information so readers can recognize features of the practice that can be applied to their national and local contexts

What is “best practice”?

- Scientifically-based evidence for specific approaches
- Proven track record based on empirical evidence
- 39,900,000 Google hits for “best practices teaching”
- “What, then, of the ‘silver bullet’—the teaching method that works best regardless of setting? At this point I must consider the likelihood that there is no one best practice” (Smagorinsky, 2009, p. 20)
- I urged an expansion of “best practices” to include “promising practices” and “principled practices”

The Basis for Principled Practices

- Many teachers and teacher leaders should be able to rationalize their approaches and decisions on the basis of foundational principles, because we know that effective teaching (Smagorinsky, 2001; 2009) and school reform (Fullan, 2013) are principle-based.

- This means that instructional and reform practices are grounded in principle-level evidence and ever-present in the thinking and planning of teachers and teacher leaders for supporting literacy and learning development for youth (Sturtevant, Boyd, Brozo, et. al., 2007).

Principled practice

"Teaching through principled practice challenges teachers to think about what is appropriate given the unique intersection that their classroom provides for their many and varied students; their beliefs about teaching and learning; the materials available for them to use; and the public, professional, and policy contexts in which they teach. The notion of principled practice focuses on the why of teaching: why teaching methods work in particular ways in particular settings"
(Smagorinsky, 2009, p. 20).

The Basis for Principled Practices

Fullan's 6 Cs for curricular reform

- **Character education**—honesty, self-regulation and responsibility, perseverance, empathy for contributing to the safety and benefit of others, self-confidence, personal health and well-being, career and life skills
- **Citizenship**—global knowledge, sensitivity to and respect for other cultures, active involvement in addressing issues of human and environmental sustainability
- **Communication**—communicate effectively orally, in writing and with a variety of digital tools; listening skills
- **Critical thinking and problem solving**—think critically to design and manage projects, solve problems, make effective decisions using a variety of digital tools and resources
- **Collaboration**—work in teams, learn from and contribute to the learning of others, social networking skills, empathy in working with diverse others
- **Creativity and imaginati**on— economic and social entrepreneurialism, considering and pursuing novel ideas, and leadership for action

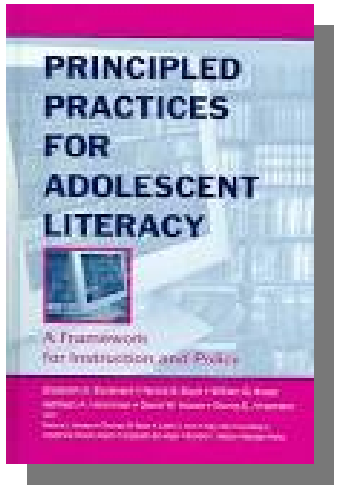
6 Principles of Literacy Instruction

1. *Connect everyday literacies and funds of knowledge with academic literacy and learning*

2. *Use assessment as a tool for learning and future growth*

3. *Engage and sustain effort in reading, writing, and thinking*

4. *Express critical perspectives and interpretations*



5. *Gather and organize print and nonprint sources for increasing understanding of information and ideas*

6. *Expand and generate new understandings using information and communication technologies*

European Framework for Good Practice in Literacy adopted by ELINET includes very broad guidelines/principles

- Creating a literate environment
- Improving the quality of teaching
- Increasing participation, inclusion and equity
- Additional criteria
  - Focus on struggling readers/writers
  - Sound conceptual basis
  - Clear objectives
  - Documentation of implementation
  - Transferability
  - Program outcomes
  - Sustainability

European Framework for Good Practice in Literacy adopted by ELINET includes very broad guidelines/principles

- Allow for myriad expressions of "good" instructional and policy practices from the breadth of network member states

- In the end, ELINET decided on "good" practice (validated) and "promising" practice (yet to be validated) categories

- Resulting thus far in a total of 109 acceptable examples across network member countries http://www.eli-net.eu/good-practice/examples-of-good-practice/

Final impressions

- In many respects, ELINET has already proven its value

- Beyond the products the network generated (e.g., country reports, models of good practice, literacy bill of rights, etc.), the goal of establishing a vibrant and engaged network of members from across Europe committed to improving the literate lives of children, youth, and adults appears to be more in reach than ever before

Final impressions

- Although important and persistent issues continued to challenge the ELINET Management Board and partner members, it was instructive to hold in mind the enormous complexity inherent in establishing and maintaining a coherent and consistent set of guidelines for advancing the goals of the network

- ELINET was ever evolving around its principle mission and in response to inputs from members and findings from internal and external evaluations

- Thus, the challenges I brought to light needed to be considered in light of the evolving and complex nature of this ambitious pan-European literacy network

Questions & Comments

Dr. Bill Brozo, Dr. Renate Valtin & Dr. Sari Sulkunen

Lifelong Learning Programme

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views of its authors only, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained herein.