

European Literacy Network ELN – Report on Activities and Events

ELN (which stands for European Literacy Network) is currently operating a large network of European researchers and professionals interested in research related to the field of literacy and transformations of research findings into outputs relevant for practice (most often educational).

The network was established in December 2014 and is – till the end of 2018 – funded by the European COST Action IS1401 <https://www.is1401eln.eu/en/>. (COST is the European framework funding supporting trans-national cooperation among researchers, engineers, and scholars across Europe.) The IS1401 ELN network currently includes members from 35 countries in Europe and what are termed “near neighbour” or partner countries (see <https://www.is1401eln.eu/en/action/management-committee-mc/>). The system of funding of COST allows each member country to have at least one or a maximum of two official representatives in the network. The representatives create the management committee of the network, the institution that is in charge of the coordination, implementation, and management of the IS1401ELN activities and the use of funding.

It could be said that the network is connecting reading and writing research

communities across Europe, enabling them to meet, share experience, integrate findings and experience, collaborate on research projects, or plan new research projects and, of course, also develop various ways of transforming research findings into practice.

The aims of the network can be divided into scientific, technological, and societal goals.

As a network based on scientific communities ELN helps experienced and early-stage researchers from reading and writing communities to connect and develop a comprehensive understanding of literacy and literacy practices in European countries. An important aspect of all the COST-based network is represented by various forms of systematic support for young researchers. Specifically, the COST network organises what are termed training schools or short-term scientific missions (STSM). Training schools are typically organised on a specific topic for a small group of interested young researchers. They can transfer specific knowledge or skills relevant for a research career within a specific area. This kind of training is organised by more experienced members of the network, influential, innovative, or interesting laboratories or schools. Short-term scientific missions (called

STSMs) allow young researchers to visit one member of the network for a specific research-related scientific purpose. STSMs typically last up to three months. An important aspect of the scientific goals of the network is communication or translation of influential scientific knowledge on literacy into a format that can be understood by the general public and thus can have an impact or a positive influence on everyday practices wherever literacy relevant issues are being dealt with.

Technological goals include, for example, the goals of fostering the development of various digital tools to aid literacy learning and teaching, fostering the development of innovative tools and techniques for scientific studies of literacy, or developing high-quality assessment tools for literacy in multilingual or cross-linguistic contexts.

Goals at the societal level stress the importance of opening the network to educators, practitioners, and the interested general public. The network aims to communicate and share evidence-based methods for enhancing literacy education and improving literacy practices across various national curricula and to connect the network to critical national and international stakeholders and policymakers. The ELN network aims to remain functional after the end of COST funding in 2018 with the will to keep raising public awareness on the pivotal role of literacy in society and keep researchers on literacy active and connected.

Within the network the Czech Republic is now represented by the group of researchers from the Faculty of Humanities and the Faculty of Education of Charles University. The official representative for the Czech Republic and the member of the COST ISO1401 management committee is now Gabriela Seidlova Malkova. The Faculty of Humanities of Charles University hosted the inaugural conference of this network in November 2015.

As far as I can evaluate from my personal experience, the COST system and the networks this amazing funding supports still do not attract enough attention within the Czech research community on literacy. I think it should be especially recognised and used more as an excellent system for the effective support of doctoral students and early-career stage researchers. The beauty of the networks created through COST lies in their open attitude and formats. The already-existing and established networks that COST supports very often invite members to join throughout their whole period of existence. Young researchers or doctoral students can apply for STSM grants or training schools even if their country is not officially represented in the network. This is, I think – at least for the Czech literacy community – an underestimated opportunity.

The ELN COST IS1401 framework is now living through its final months with the support of COST funding. It should show its outputs, impact, and strength at the First Literacy Summit (November 1-3, 2018) in Porto, Portugal, the country that

chairs the ELN COST framework. This summit is considered not only as closing the first period under the COST system, but it is now widely understood by active members of the ELN network as a potential platform to establish a sustainable and functional form of ELN network for future. Not only researchers on literacy, but also practitioners (psychologists, teachers...), software developers with an interest in literacy, as well as not-for-profit literacy organisations, are wel-

come. For more details on this event and registration see: <https://www.is1401eln.eu/en/gca/index.php?id=144>

Te vejo no Porto!

COST Action IS1401 - Strengthening Europeans' Capabilities by Establishing the European Literacy Network (ELN); www.is1401eln.eu/en/

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