Summary

Literacy is one of the fundamental basic skills. It is a key to learning, personal development, satisfaction in one's everyday life and success in working life. Literacy skills are needed continually: to express oneself and strengthen one’s identity, improve the ability to feel empathy, communicate and interact with others, obtain and share information, participate actively in the surrounding society, understand different cultures and experience new worlds through reading fiction. Literacy is also one of the Europe 2020 growth strategy’s objectives. Literacy skills can be developed through extensive reading, but the latest Pisa studies have shown a declining tendency in students’ interest in reading.

Hooked on Books –motivating students to enhance their literacy skills through reading fiction for pleasure– focused on improving students’ literacy skills mainly by reading fiction and on motivating the students so that they get a real interest in reading and it becomes a lifelong hobby. Students who are highly engaged in a wide range of reading activities are more likely than other students to be effective learners and to perform well at school.

Another objective of the project was to compare the literature teaching curricula of the participating countries and to share good practices. The project aimed at creating new teaching material on literature and innovative teaching methods for everyday work.

There were schools from three countries participating: Finland, Hungary and Romania. In each school a group of 3-4 professional teachers coordinated the project. Also in each school a group of 10-20 students took actively part in the project, the total number of participants thus being about 40-60 each year. These students were 15-18 years old and volunteers interested in literature and willing to commit themselves in the project.

The project comprised various activities throughout the school year both in the participating schools and in the local libraries. The students of the active group took responsibility many of the project’s activities: They prepared and carried out e-surveys for all the students and their parents and interpreted the information gathered with them. They interviewed their literature teachers and local librarians. They prepared presentations of their favorite books, significant authors of theirs own country during the past hundred years and contemporary writers of youth literature in theirs own country. The students gave out reading tips to their peers to inspire them to read fiction for fun. Peer learning was emphasized, so that also weaker readers would find out about the advantages of reading for pleasure. In addition, there were three transnational project meetings, once in each participating country.

Using TwinSpace formed a significant part of the project. It was used e.g. for preparing the project, introducing the participants, their schools and hometowns, communicating with other participants, documenting the progress of the project on a regular basis and presenting its results. The participating students shared in TwinSpace their work, e.g. essays of their favorite books and e-survey results. A reading challenge for all the students and a contest for the project’s logo were launched in TwinSpace and a permanent forum for the students’ reading tips was created.

The expected impact on the participants was improved key competences needed in lifelong learning and especially enhanced literacy skills. The project improved the participants' communication in the mother tongue and in foreign language, social and digital competence. Students’ knowledge of the literature of the participating countries increased. The participants created a Europass for themselves to make their skills visible and to help learning and working in Europe in the future.

The project also increased parents’ interest to support their children to improve their literacy skills. The project produced information of students’ reading habits and motivation to read, the books students read and how they are chosen and the relevance of fiction to its readers.

The project raised participants’ awareness of theirs European identity and Europe’s cultural diversity. The European dimension gave added value to the project as students could compare their reading habits with those of their peers in the other countries and motivate each other to read more and various kinds of literature.

All the material and information produced by the project will remain available in the open access TwinSpace. Using TwinSpace has become a good practice in literature teaching in the participating schools. The work to motivate the students to read fiction for pleasure continues, e.g. all the participating schools are inviting contemporary writers for a visit more often, the Finnish schools organize in 2016 a book fair crossing the school subjects’ borders, the Hungarians convert the active group into a book club to keep the good work going.