

LUKUINTO – Joy of Reading

1. What is the need/challenge addressed?

One of the reasons for launching the Joy of Reading programme is the concern for the reading literacy and reading motivation of Finnish children and youth that has been brought into the limelight by Finland's declining PISA results. Finland is among the top countries in reading literacy in the international PISA and PIRLS assessments that measure both learning and attitudes towards learning. However, the results of the PIRLS assessment, whose target population consists of grade 4 pupils, reveals an inconsistency: although Finland is among the top countries in reading literacy—alongside Hong Kong, Russia and Singapore—Finns' joy of reading and learning is at rock bottom. Of 45 countries, Finland has the second lowest reading motivation among 10-year-old children. The PISA assessment examines 15-year-olds' levels of interest in and attitudes towards reading. In 2000, Finnish youths had a positive interest in reading, but in 2009 the attitude had clearly declined: a comparison of the PISA countries reveals that the number of Finnish 9th graders reading for fun declined more than in any other country. The growing gap between girls and boys is also concerning: the gap between the literacy of boys and girls was greater than in other OECD countries. One in eight Finnish boys has poor reading skills. According to the PISA 2012 assessment, 9th grade girls are one and a half years ahead of boys in reading literacy.

4. If appropriate, please indicate target group and age group

The target groups of the programme include children and young people between the ages of 6 and 16, teachers, library professionals and parents.

5. What were the conditions and different steps necessary for the implementation of the measure?

Pilot schools and libraries from 30 municipalities around Finland have participated in the programme. In total, this amounts to some 15 000 pupils between the ages 6 and 16, hundreds of teachers and library professionals and a large number of families and project partners. The pilot pairs comprising a library and a school have sought, developed and tested methods for diversifying the reading of children and youths, increasing joy of reading and improving reading

6. Who delivers the measure? Which stakeholders/professionals are involved from within and or outside the school

Libraries and schools. The most important cooperation resource has been found between schools and libraries – both are working to promote reading among children and young people. In many pilot project communities, the professionals have been inspired and happy about opportunities provided by the increase in practical cooperation. For example, the learning environment at schools has been expanded to include libraries and their information networks, and library experts give information on schools and teach information retrieval skills at schools. There is currently an increase in borrowing from libraries, which testifies to increased reading.

7. Who has overall responsibility for implementation of the measure?

The municipalities, the libraries and the schools in cooperation.

8. How is the measure monitored/assessed? By whom?

The basis of the Joy of Reading programme and how the models work was a broad-based piloting activity done in years 2013 and 2014. Based on this piloting activity, there was an evaluation report published in 2014. This report focuses on how the programme has been carried out and how the activities could be improved and developed. Only at the end of the programme period is it possible to evaluate the results and effectiveness of the programme. The report is based on the self-assessment of the pilot projects in their final reports from the spring of 2014. One of the most important aims of the evaluation was to report on the experiences of the pilot projects and based on that material to create a view on how to inspire children and young people to read.

9. What are the results?

The goal for the piloting activities was to develop and try new kind of approaches to develop diverse literacy skills by involving both schools and libraries. This goal seems to have been reached. In the future, the activities should be spread more than before to the lower secondary schools. The involvement of parents should also be increased. The parents were so far involved in the development projects, but not as much as developers as support.

10. What resources are involved?

The programme is funded by the Ministry of Education and Culture.

11. Is the measure still running?

Yes, it is a three-year national programme running in the years 2012-2015. A final report will be published at the end, including a kind of Toolkit as a guide to implement the programme at the local level.