



## CHARTER OF THE EUROPEAN LITERACY NETWORK

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## **CHARTER OF THE EUROPEAN LITERACY NETWORK**

### **PREAMBLE**

As a network, we proclaim literacy to be a critical tool for human development, freedom, and universal peace. Literacy is a fertile capability, representing a substantive freedom. At its core lies a competence with an external, permanent script. Developing this capability is ever more critical in present-day society, which is complex, bureaucratic, multilingual, and digital. Literacy underpins the way for a myriad of adaptive behaviors – especially the full realization of human potential and allowing for effective participation in communities and fostering societal change.

Effective participation in communities entails that a threshold level of literacy in a given area is attained. Written language is crucial to a wide range of literate practices, from accounting to literature, from law to science. This opens the way for a multitude of literacies; as it is often acknowledged that literacy can be qualified as digital, health, financial, civic, environmental, and so forth. Nevertheless, not everything qualifies as literacy, but as far as written language, documents and skills in managing literate resources play a role in the area highlighted by the adjective, that domain needs to be considered a specialization of the literate mind. Providing optimal conditions for threshold crossing to all children and adolescents in core literacy



areas (e.g., reading, writing, math, science, humanities, arts) is a main duty of universal education. Furthermore, extending literacy to adults not only benefits individuals by promoting lifelong learning, economic stability, improved health, and personal development, but also strengthens the society by fostering greater civic participation, social responsibility, and community engagement.

Modern, digital, and highly bureaucratic societies rest on a wealth of documents, diverse technologies, and codified practices. As a result, introducing societal change normally requires attaining an expert level in a given area, so that effective change might be pursued. Providing means for transformative actions of society typically demands a set of literacy skills that are the focus of higher education. In conclusion, we acknowledge that in present-day bureaucratic societies, becoming literate implies crossing two literacy thresholds, one for allowing effective participation, and another for pursuing societal changes.

Defined this way, literacy is an extraordinary exercise of human freedom and flourishing. Literacy is also just a tool, a means to an end. As with any tool, thoughtful consideration needs to be taken about the plethora of goals and values that the tool might serve. In the preamble to the Charter of the European Literacy Network, it is important to recognize some fundamental human values that make the instrumental use of literacy ethical. While literacy can be used to promote values antithetical to the ones proclaimed here, the signatories of this Charter are committed to opposing such use and



raise awareness of the deleterious effects that such practices can have for the human species.

The set of values that we claim as ours have roots that were laid in ancient Greece. They were revived during the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, were affirmed in the French Revolution and in the United States Constitution, and were essential to the establishment of the United Nations and the European Union. These values were proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the Charter of fundamental rights of the European Union. This set of values are commonly referred to as humanistic or European values as they are inherently related to the history of the continent and the globalization of its culture all over the globe. Although a case can be built surrounding the geopolitical origins of this set of values, more relevant is its potential for universality and its independent emergence in other cultures that had little contact with Europe. Humanistic values span from the acknowledgment of human dignity to the affirmation of universal human rights, thus encompassing a series of steps towards establishing a humanistic worldview. This worldview embraces the fundamental values of humanism, rationality, secularism, rule of law, democracy, and human rights.

Humanism places human dignity, human agency, and the human being as the inalienable core and unit of society. All humans are equal, and their dignity is sacrosanct. Human development is a necessary condition for the full actualization of human potential and nature.



Rationality holds that human reason is a source of insight and can establish truthfulness through a set of logical and empirical procedures, regardless of the individual using them. This means that reason can distinguish false from true claims, or at least proceed through continuous falsifiability. Philosophy and science are blossoms of rationality.

Secularism proposes the separation of religion and worldly affairs. To a certain extent, secularism derives from rationality. By exercising reason, humans may come to question the validity and authority of religious dogmas. As this questioning is central to the scientific endeavor, it is wise to separate both realms. Secularism does not imply any judgment over religious affairs, it only suggests that it should be a matter of one's private life to profess or not religious beliefs. Additionally, there is a general view that godly power ought to be kept separate from human activities that do not directly pursue religious goals.

Rule of law is founded on written language and on a view of how human cooperation and authority ought to be enforced. Equality before the law, separation of powers, calculability of governmental actions and a system of checks and balances are the basic tenets of the rule of law and common features of modern well-developed states.

Democracy is the sovereignty of the people. Democratic states are those that enforce a set of standards, including free elections, democratic constitution (rule of law), existence of opposition, freedom of speech, and protection of minorities.

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Universal human rights are the summit of the humanistic worldview and establish standards for evaluating well-developed and decent societies in which individuals are free to realize their full potential. Human rights rest upon three pillars: freedom, equality, and solidarity. These rights are typically specified in five areas: political, civil, economic, social, and cultural human rights. Furthermore, they are universal, inalienable, imprescriptible, and indivisible.

Many other values can be derived from the stated six fundamental values. A non-exhaustive list of these values includes human development, education, science, truth, freedom, privacy, equality, diversity, peace, and solidarity. The signatories and members of the European Literacy Network agree to uphold these values and recognize that by coupling literacy and humanistic values can contribute to a better world for all. Given the instrumental nature of literacy, and in observance of the aforementioned values, all members of the European Literacy Network affirm their commitment to improving and spreading literacy to establish a truly human world.



## CHARTER OF THE EUROPEAN LITERACY NETWORK

### STATUTES

#### **Article 1: Name, registered office and duration**

1 – The non-profit Association is created for an indefinite period and adopts the denomination ELN – EUROPEAN LITERACY NETWORK ASSOCIATION. For convenience, it may be abbreviated to “ELN” or “network”.

2 – The Association has its headquarters in the city of Porto, at the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences of the University of Porto – Rua Alfredo Allen, s/n, 4200-135 Porto, parish of Paranhos, municipality of Porto, Portugal.

#### **Article 2: Purposes**

1 – The purpose of the Association (ELN) is to create and develop, on a permanent basis, a non-profit global “network” of individual literacy researchers and professionals established by COST Actions IS1401 (ELN), IS1404 (E-READ), ISI406, IS14010 (DigiLitEY) and CA15221 (WeReLaTe) that promotes the specific goals set in the following number.



2 – The specific goals of the global network are:

- To promote scientific and professional interactions, networking between its members, promoting literacy and research worldwide;
- To Promote actions of any kind with a view to bringing together the sciences of Literacy and Education. Such actions could include organizing “literacy summits”, regional, national or transnational conferences, short-term exchanges between researchers and professionals, workshops, training schools, meetings, publications in any medium and format, including digital media, @-books, online publications, dissemination actions;
- To contribute to the promotion of literacy research, improving it and therefore improving education worldwide;
- To promote human development and the dissemination of humanist values.

### **Article 3: Members**

1 – The Association has the following membership categories:

- Honorary Members;
- Ordinary members or “Associate members”.

2 – Honorary members are members proposed by the Board and approved by the General Assembly and may be persons or entities (natural persons and/or legal persons) who, regardless of their nationality and the country or countries in which they carry out their scientific, teaching and literacy activities, disseminate or defend humanist values, have developed works and/or careers and actions



of recognized social, educational or scientific merit that the Association considers to inspire the pursuit of the aims set out in article 2.

3 – Associate or ordinary members are natural or legal persons who wish to join and participate regularly in the Association's activities and whose scientific, professional, or pedagogical/educational profile is considered appropriate and in line with the purposes pursued by the Association. These Associate members will be accepted by the Board and their membership will be subject to a final decision by the General Assembly. Associate Membership applications are open to all.

4 – The non-acceptance of candidates for Associate Membership must always be duly substantiated by the Board. Refusal by the General Assembly to ratify acceptance as a member of the Association must always be substantiated by the General Assembly.

5 – Associate members include members who participated directly in the constitution of the Association or who joined it following this formal constitution and during the first six months after such constitution, they may also be designated as Founding Members.

6 – The conditions for admission and exclusion of members, their categories, rights and obligations shall be set out in internal regulations to be drawn up by the Board and approved by the General Assembly.

### **Article 4: Revenue**

The Association's revenue is made up of:



- Any initial fee paid by Associate Members and decided by the General Assembly, on the Board's proposal;
- The product of membership fees set by the General Assembly;
- Any donations accepted by the Association under legal terms;
- Subsidies and any funding awarded to the Association as part of action programs and research projects;
- Income from the Association's own assets or resulting from its initiatives and actions.

### **Article 5: Bodies**

- 1 – The Association's bodies are the General Assembly, the Board of Directors, the Fiscal Council and the General Council.
- 2 - The mandate of the mandatory bodies, namely the General Assembly (General Assembly board), the Board of Directors and the Fiscal Council is 3 (three) years.

### **Article 6: General Assembly**

- 1 – The General Assembly consists of all members (Honorary Members and Associate Members) in full possession of their rights.
- 2 – The competences of the General Assembly and its functioning those established in the Portuguese Civil Code, specifically in article 170º, and articles 172º to 179º, in addition to the competences that are specially attributed to it in these Statutes and that do not infringe the competences legally attributed to the other bodies.



3 – Meetings of the General Assembly may be held by telematic means or may be mixed (both face-to-face and telematic/online).

4 – The Board of the General Assembly is made up of three members, a president and two secretaries, who are responsible for running the Assembly meetings and drawing up the respective minutes.

5 – Associates who are Founding Members shall be entitled to 2 (two) votes each. Each Associate Founding member or Associate Honorary member, shall be entitled to one more vote for each full 6 (six) years as an Associate member of the Association, thus adding value to their respective seniority as an Associate member.

### **Article 7: Board of Directors**

1 – The Board of Directors, elected by the General Assembly, is constituted by an odd number of members, never less than 5 (five), one of whom shall be the President. The Board of Directors must always include at least 3 (three) Founding Members unless there are clearly no Founding Members available or able to fulfil the respective functions of the Board. The President of the Board, also known as the “Coordinator” of the Board, elected by the General Assembly together with the other members of the body, does not have a casting vote.

2 – The Board of Directors should preferably also include Associate members from countries where the Association has been active in the last three (3) years. The Board should include Associate members from at least two different countries, unless for some reason this proves to be manifestly and circumstantially impossible.



3 – The Board of Directors is responsible in general for the social, administrative, and financial management of the Association, as well as representing the Association in and out of court, in addition to the powers specifically assigned to it in these Statutes and which do not infringe on the legal powers of other bodies.

4 – Its functioning is established in article 171º of the Portuguese Civil Code.

5 – The Association is bound by the signature of the majority of its members.

6 – Meetings of the Board of Directors may be held by telematic means or may be mixed (simultaneously face-to-face and telematic/online).

### **Article 8: Fiscal Council**

1 – The Fiscal Council, elected by the General Assembly, is made up of 3 (three) members, one President and two Secretaries. The General Assembly may decide to replace the Fiscal Council with a single inspector which must be a chartered accountant.

2 – The Fiscal Council is responsible for supervising the administrative and financial acts of the Board, auditing its accounts and reports, and giving an opinion on any acts that involve a significant increase in expenditure or decrease in income.

3 – Its functioning is established in article 171º of the Portuguese Civil Code.



### **Article 9: General Council**

1 – The General Council is made up of an odd number of members, elected at the General Meeting, but never less than 9 (nine). The mandate of the members of the Council is 6 (six) years, and they may cease to hold office when, in the course of their term of office, they are elected to serve on the Board of Directors or the Fiscal Council of the Association.

2 – It is up to the General Council, on its own initiative or at the request of the Board of Directors or the General Assembly, to propose initiatives and lines of action on technical and/or scientific matters of importance to the Association, as well as, on its own initiative or at the request of the Board of Directors or the General Assembly, to formulate and issue opinions on such matters.

3 – The General Council includes all the Honorary members, as well as other Associate members elected by the General Assembly, under the terms of the following number.

4 – The General Council may also include Associate members from and representing countries where the Association has been active in the last six (6) years. This quota of members of the General Council representing countries must include representatives from the country where ELN has its headquarters and may also include Associate members from countries where the Board of Directors considers it strategic to spread the network in pursuit of its specific objectives.



5 – The General Council may meet by telematic or mixed means (meetings held simultaneously in person and by telematic/online means).

**Article 10:  
Internal Regulations**

It is the responsibility of the Board of Directors to draw up internal regulations – which shall be submitted to the General Assembly for approval – on matters that concretize the activity and functioning of the Association and are considered relevant to the specific goals of the Association, namely those concerning the rights and duties (Statuses) of the members and the respective categories, quotas and forms of payment, procedures for admitting candidates to Membership and causes and procedures for losing Membership.

**Article 11:  
Duration and Termination**

1 – The Association, created for an indefinite period, may be wound up by decision of the General Assembly.

2 – When the Association is extinguished, the assets that make up its social patrimony, which are not assigned to a specific purpose and which have not been donated or left to it with any charge, shall be donated to the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences of the University of Porto.

Porto, October 3rd 2023.