

50 STEPS FOR A EUROPEAN READING MANIFESTO

READING POLICIES AND STRUCTURES

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1 – The book as a means of knowledge

1. An instrument. Since five and a half centuries the book is the main instrument for the spreading of knowledge in European countries. Using the book the knowledge necessary for the making of individuals, social groups and societies, covered all science and collective behaviour fields.

2. The book in Europe. Printing technology, book trade, intellectual challenge encouraged the spread of reading in European countries. Gradually nations, institutions, men of letters began seeing in the book circulation one of the foundations of social and cultural dynamics.

3. Libraries and reading. Using different shapes and measures countries, institutions and private citizens encouraged reading, by degrees with suspicions. The foundation of public and private libraries, the increase of sales channels and book typology, the book price encouraged a progressively wide-range reading to all social groups and all phases of citizen making.

4. Transformations. Book uses and policies should now compete with a more and more well-constructed information system where new means of communication – from television to the Internet – new literary works and new reading methods come into play.

5. Reading and development. The reading experience is one of the drives and regulators of social development.

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2 – Reading experience

6. A sign of freedom. The reading experience is a gesture and an event of freedom. Reading is wanted and experienced by those who feel in various ways obliged, bound

and oppressed in their societies or who catch the transformation lines standing out from them.

7. A sign for identity. Reading is a chance for the citizen, of all age and social rank, to feel free of looking for its own identity. Learning how to read is the first step for free men towards an individual and collective history.

8. Against the conflict. Reading should be promoted in the actions and events frame that encourage the social dynamics and reduce the social contrasts. Societies with a wide circulation of books gradually reduce their conflicts.

9. With no censorship. At the same time reading is a collective and free action. European countries should work to remove any obstacles to reading.

10. They are two. The reader reads and interprets the book finishing the writer's work, no matter what age or countries he/she belongs to. Reading is always an act of willingness towards the writer. It is a brotherhood and solidarity deed through times and places. Reading means not being alone on the world path.

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3 – The book continues

11. The book lives. The book lives also in a different information system, because it is flexible, it is a learning source, and it does not limit the individual and collective reading.

12. Words and images. The book carries out words and images, which are two of the language components we use to communicate our presence, our attitudes, and our plans.

13. Not much energy. The book lives because it is a finished product and it does not require much external energy to use it. It demands though a variable – sometimes very tiring- people's effort. Everyone is able to get a more or less considerable section needed for its own cultural growth from what he/she reads.

14. A personal object. The book lives because it is a personal object , to keep at home, to re-read and to mark points.

15. Involvement. Reading is a democratic action of involvement, since two centuries with no bounds proposed and preserved by European countries.

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4 – The book and information system

16. The book lives together. The book lives with other knowledge media, in particular with television, computer, the Internet, digital organizer. The media also demands reading methods and exercises, but they are very different from the ones the book so far requested. Therefore the knowledge consulted, learnt and used is different, too.

17. Steadiness and flow. The book is what is written. That is why since millenniums the book has been, also when not as a printed version, the vehicle of steadiness that reassured closed and repetitive societies. New media is unstable and changeable, suitable for quick consultations but producers of unsettled learning methods and type of knowledge that easily come into contrast with rules, customs, encyclopaedias of closed societies that emphasise the dynamism of local cultures.

18. Generations. Some rifts continually occur between generations using memory and book and generations using television and the Internet. It is not only a matter of conflict among generations: using different mass media implies a world division between societies looking for and accepting cultural changes and societies which are afraid of it.

19. After the digital organizer. Between digital organizers and e-book there will be an intermediate machine not appeared yet, that it will use solar energy or will be rechargeable, it will be portable and wireless, it will allow the access to data banks, and it will allow to save data and to work at the same time. It will be the future means of communication and jobs. It will most unlikely not be made of paper, but reading is an action of knowledge and pleasure, not a ritual in memory of cellulose.

20. War and peace. Societies should know it and let this be used in their schools, libraries and bookstores: there are literary works that no one will never read on digital notebooks, literary works that will be printed for long and literary works that will quickly become marginal because a new way of writing will emerge and will cover all media, books included.

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5 – The heritage

21. The heritage. The reader compares itself with the millennium history heritage of the countries that form the European Union, but also with the heritage continually produced by it and that changes the instructions for using the first one. Reading is able to promote

this heritage circulation at a high in depth and property level of knowledge that belongs to the book, which is a flexible tool to use, to annotate and to re-read.

22. With other means too. The contribute that other media supply for the same aim should not be forgotten. Television and the Internet together reinforce and often encourage book reading experience. It all depends on the information system's logic.

23. Channels. It is necessary to achieve a more wise protection of the textual heritage, allowing the access to historical material only through digital versions.

24. Gradualness and dynamism. Through updating the reader acquires the sense of knowledge dynamics that entirely belongs to this age. In his/her readings, the reader should consider in living in an age without records according to the swift of changes.

25. Agreement to changes. That is why the reader keeps up with the cultural change which involves all society levels.

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6 – For a European reading policy

26. Book and school. The freedom of reading points out the school's task of introducing to literary works reading and at the same time save this action from any kind of compulsion.

27. Reading campaigns. Reading campaigns should encourage the approach between the book and those citizens who are, and have been, alienated from the reading world for many different reasons.

28. Translations. The translation's policy should encourage the literary works' circulation – all types included – and promote at the same time local traditions and their changes when a new knowledge interacts with them.

29. The Internet access. European citizens who live in disadvantaged conditions, live in remote places, have trouble getting to bookstores and libraries should be able to access books and information by a wider reference software and reading through the Internet. The increase of digital libraries and their network should be promoted.

30. Literature and other kind of arts. Arts, especially literature, have a special role in reading. Arts are one of the main means communities use to agree with each other, stabilize and modify their customs, build continuously their identities.

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7 – For a reading policy

31. For a common identity. Reading can promote the unification process that brought European countries to agree about currency and frontiers and, in the near future, the army, foreign policy, health care. European Union's image should become a current argument to understand, justify, respect laws and initiatives to involve those countries and small groups of people that have been separated for long period of time.

32. The defence of local identities. The unification process can be achieved when local communities will see recognized their identities and cultural heritages in European Union as new rules and values of all European countries.

33. Reading and immigration. European Union is now a crossroads where Eastern and Southern citizens meet up with their traditions, no longer with their customs, their land, and sometimes their memories. European Union should provide these new citizens with ways to experience the cultures in which they will work in and with means to preserve their countries' memories. Reading is the easiest, most urgent, and most necessary of these means.

34. Strategies. Some European Union offices should project a general programme for reading promotion. The new European Union policy also requires a political reading programme where a common strategy support the spreading of knowledge and a policy to promote an easier information access. European Union requires a reading campaign to encourage national and local identities' evaluation and at the same time the contact with other experiences so far kept on the side of European discussion. A common work table is needed to elaborate the analysis means - valid for all countries and survey techniques included – to elaborate a reading policy.

35. Policies and services. The programme should allow a service policy for at least one of these reading matters: (i) on line access to catalogues, (ii) on line access to public libraries' books, (iii) separation between preservation libraries – which preserve the artistic heritage – and free access libraries, (iv) easiness for on line bookstores and purchases, (v) reading campaigns, (vi) school reading promotion.

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8 – A new market

36. Print on demand. The new book market implies new production and distribution logics. The new book can be printed at home or on demand by the publisher or bookseller, or it can be purchased on the Internet.

37. Not only paper. For five centuries the book helped us to privilege the paper and to weave rituals and cults around it. We are approaching an information system where information prevails over the media.

38. Not only Gutenberg. As writing, reading is not as it was during Gutenberg time. Texts and literary works use other means of circulation besides the book, even though it is precious and irreplaceable.

39. Differences. This reading change should be considered by the institutions that want to promote reading.

40. Between preservation and innovation. As the book and information market, reading policies also should act between preservation and innovation. Preservation strengthens the cultural heritage and identity when creative connections between cultural heritage and identity win the new world wide market, where those who know how to do it preserve their own identity and creatively propose it to the others.

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41. A making model. No media better than books allows a gradual, widespread, and well thought cultural making. Reading a book is an action that belongs to a culture of capture, appropriation and growth. Paper-printed books are the best way to encourage these delicate matters concerning people's history.

42. Book and television. Other media contributes to a making that requires and participates to a change marked out by models and rules in constant transformation. Since the last decades the largest part of information also runs through other growing media: from television to e-book. The media is powerful, necessary and booming, and it helps to acquire ready to use knowledge. This explains why using the media does not compete with the book. The book is still the only channel where the reader can look for his/her identity, with no bounds, no subjections, but free to choose what he/she wants to do, led by its beauty.

43. Easy to use information system. European Union with this formula encourages to research on accessing the knowledge that should point out and solve circulation

problems through the book as through the multimedia as through the Internet. Some ancient history books recall the grasshoppers' invasion. Now the 'grasshoppers of reading' leave behind them only small pieces of texts used as fragments for media show.

44. The role of literature and non-fiction. The role of literature and non-fiction does not decrease in this frame but it gradually increases as European languages find access to history, cultural heritage and common work in progress activities.

45. Where does reading go? The new reader who uses all media goes wherever he/she likes. If reading means choosing one's own destiny it is right that every reader can choose his/her own one.

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10 – The reasons for reading

46. I read for pleasure. The pleasure of reading is the pleasure of discovering the world I live in. It is a wonderful pleasure of discovering the literary work's composition, the values and images it carries out since centuries, the continents, and the roads.

47. I read for feeling free. No one knows the paths that appear to me when I open a book and I read through its lines.

48. I read for finding out who I am. No one knows better than me what I like to become. Only who wrote the book I am reading can help me find out and change what I really am.

49. I read for finding out who I will be. Reading always implies a future experience, even though when it is about the most ancient past.

50. I read for not feeling alone. If I read I am not alone, the author in some ways thought of me. Those who are fortunate of writing and reading live together. For ever.

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