

## Illiteracy : Grand National Cause 2013

### National and European Conference

13 to 15 November 2013 in Lyon

#### Illiteracy: a largely unrecognized problem

Illiteracy is a widespread but invisible problem that is still largely unrecognized: 7% of people aged 18 to 65 are concerned, even after being educated in France. Two and a half million people have not mastered the basic skills in reading, writing and arithmetic to allow them to be autonomous in simple, everyday situations: reading their children's school reports, understanding medicine leaflets, reading instructions at work, reading maps, making simple calculations, writing and sending postcards or emails, etc.

#### A commitment by everyone for collective action

At the end of 2012, civil society took unprecedented action to unite the associations and partners involved in preventing and fighting illiteracy, in order to submit a joint application to the French Prime Minister to obtain the label: *Grand Cause Nationale* 2013.

On 1 March 2013, this label was awarded to an alliance of 66 major organisations, "Fighting Illiteracy Together", brought together by the French National Agency for the Fight Against Illiteracy (ANLCI) (<http://www.illettrisme2013.fr>). With this decision, the Prime Minister wanted to "recognize and encourage the mobilisation process".

#### An issue that needs to be discussed

Because public opinion needs to be better informed about this widespread phenomenon that is still something of a taboo in our society, because it is necessary to explain that we can continue to learn at any age and that solutions do exist, and because only collective action can allow us to improve and strengthen the measures to prevent and fight illiteracy, the "Fighting Illiteracy Together, Grand National Cause 2013" alliance, brought together by the ANLCI, has been working hard throughout 2013:

- For the first time in France, a large national awareness campaign has been publicised by the press, radio, television and on the internet;
- Regional conferences on the prevention of and fight against illiteracy, which drew more than 4,000 participants, were held in each region between June and September 2013 to share an assessment of the situation, list the solutions that work and prepare proposals to encourage their wider use;
- The various associations made a major effort to communicate with their members using their own communication tools;
- Many public events and open days were organised as part of the Grand National Cause label.

#### Regional and national conferences to boost mobilisation

After the round of regional conferences, the "Fighting Illiteracy Together" alliance decided to take the unique opportunity provided by the Grand National Cause label award to hold a National and European Conference on Illiteracy from 13 to 15 November 2013 in Lyon.

These three days will be the culmination of the work done in 2013 and provide an opportunity to measure the progress made, make plans, enhance the already-existing measures, learn, discuss and most importantly, build partnerships to strengthen action, and compare practices with those of others in order to emulate and multiply the most effective actions. It is the fruit of a long collective effort and will enable us to scale up our programme, as expected.



## “Work together to work better” - more than just a slogan, this is a working method that gets results

The National and European Conference will be an opportunity to emphasize that the people concerned are of different ages, from very different social and professional backgrounds, and that only properly non-compartmentalised, concerted action involving all those with educational, vocational training, welfare, or cultural expertise will be effective for scaling up our activities.

The results of the Information and Everyday Life survey on illiteracy, repeated in 2012 with the same measurement tools as in 2004, show that this working method is beginning to bear fruit as the illiteracy rate among people aged 18 to 65 has dropped by two points in eight years.

## A boost in France and Europe

Through the dynamic it has created, the Grand National Cause 2013 label can also boost action since much work remains to be done.

This unprecedented mobilisation is part of a European dynamic since the EU countries have decided to work together to reduce illiteracy. Representatives of the European bodies have been involved in the Conference in order to report the on-going work and present the priorities identified by the European Union.

This Conference is organised in partnership with the Europe-Education-Formation France Agency (2E2F), the French coordinator of the *European Agenda for Adult Learning - AEFA*. This resolution by the Council of the European Union, relayed by a network of 34 national coordinators, defines five priorities for European cooperation in the area of policies for education and adult learning. In France, representatives of the ministries and stakeholders in vocational training participate in work that will be submitted during the Illiteracy Conference in Lyon. Emphasis will be placed on the acquisition of basic skills, the best ways to reach out to those in need, and guidance for training in connection with access to employment for low-skilled adults. These topics will be addressed and compared with experiences in other EU countries.

# PLENARY SESSIONS

## MOBILISED AGAINST ILLITERACY IN FRANCE AND EUROPE

Opening session

Wednesday 13 November 2013 – afternoon (Welcome from 1:00 pm)

## RESTORING CONFIDENCE

Changing attitudes towards illiteracy

Starting out on the right foot

Taking the first step

Preventing dropping out in alternance training

Thursday 14 November 2013 – morning (Welcome from 8:00 am)

## RELEARNING IS POSSIBLE, SOLUTIONS DO EXIST

Adapted and personalised training for people who are furthest from employment

Training in basic skills, an economic and social impact to be measured

Friday 15 November 2013 – morning (Welcome from 8:00 am)



# PLENARY SESSIONS

## MOBILISED AGAINST ILLITERACY IN FRANCE AND EUROPE

Wednesday 13 November 2013

Presentation of the opening session (2:00–5:00 pm) – Welcome from 1:00 pm

The Grand National Cause 2013 label awarded to the “Fighting Illiteracy Together” alliance, brought together by the ANLCI, is an important step in the prevention and fight against illiteracy as it is an opportunity to mobilise the media to break the taboo associated with illiteracy by giving visibility to the issue and its solutions.

This national initiative is part of a strengthening European dynamic: after setting up a High Level Group of experts on illiteracy, the European Commission issued a set of recommendations to the member states at the end of 2012.

Starting from the point of view of those affected by illiteracy, the opening session of the national Conference will focus on discussions between members of the Grand National Cause alliance and the national and European policy-makers, on various aspects: What are the practical benefits of the Grand National Cause 2013 for the people concerned and for the associations in the alliance who work with them? How was the mobilisation organised during 2013 in all regions? Building on the achievements of the last ten years, how can we take advantage of the Grand National Cause label to boost action? How does the French mobilisation compare with the recommendations that the High Level Group of experts on illiteracy submitted to the European Commission? What are the European guidelines regarding the fight against illiteracy, and more generally in the area of education and training for adults in difficulty? How are these issues taken into account in the framework of the *European Agenda for Adult Learning*? What is France’s investment to meet these European strategic priorities? How has French coordination of the European Agenda divided these priorities into operational working areas?

*Simultaneous French/English and English/French interpretation available  
Translation into sign language also available*

**Participants are invited to a reception in the “Salons d’honneur” at Lyon City Hall at 7:30 pm.**

# RESTORING CONFIDENCE

Thursday 14 November 2013

Presentation of the Plenary Session (9:00 am-1:00 pm)

Welcome from 8:00 am

It is now easier to address one of the cornerstones in the fight against illiteracy: prevention. Everyone involved in this collective challenge can show how their actions help children off to a good start in early learning, both in and out of school.

Preventing illiteracy is essential for the number of illiterate adults to decrease, but in spite of the progress made, it is still not enough. Although it is important to reassure people that they can acquire basic knowledge at any age, it is just as important to remember that the difficulty of taking that first step can seem insurmountable to those concerned. These people camouflage their difficulties and avoid situations that might reveal their shortcomings to those around them. Identifying the difficulties, talking about them without stigmatising, reassuring, informing and supporting are essential, even though they are not always easy. It is people who have conquered their illiteracy who say so.

The morning plenary session will also address the communication actions used to raise awareness of the illiteracy issue. In addition it will focus on actions that can help people make a good start and facilitate the first step. These two sequences are complementary and show how, in practice, the divisions between preventing and fighting illiteracy are tending to disappear. For instance, we will see that preventive action naturally focusing on children can also help adults re-engage and enable a sustainable commitment to training and autonomy in simple situations of everyday life.

A fourth sequence is devoted to presenting the work done by the European Agenda for Adult Learning (AEFA) working group. The challenges of education and young adult learning and support in drop-out cases, illustrated by an example of alternance training, will be covered in a presentation reporting observations and analyses made on the subject in the framework of the AEFA.

## CHANGING ATTITUDES TO ILLITERACY

This year of the Grand National Cause, and for the first time in France, it has been possible to conduct a national communication campaign on illiteracy in order to raise awareness of this issue. The aim of the campaign was “Stigmatising illiteracy without stigmatising people”. There will be a round-table discussion of various campaigns or specific operations carried out in France, Europe and around the world to raise awareness of illiteracy, actions to encourage reading and, more generally, literacy.

## STARTING OUT ON THE RIGHT FOOT

If we want to address the issue of illiteracy differently, we face three challenges. First, we need to consider that the prevention of illiteracy needs to occur at all stages of life. Although the acquisitions of early childhood are essential and fundamental, we must keep in mind that weaknesses may still appear and worsen. Next we must consider that the prevention of illiteracy takes place wherever people live and meet. Finally, we have to understand that by fighting illiteracy, especially by giving an increasing number of adults access to basic knowledge, we are also preventing illiteracy indirectly because these people can play a leading role in the early learning process of their own children. And to do this, we must focus on these actions with multiple effects.

We will discuss prevention from three angles with many testimonies and illustrations:

- Prior to joining school: early childhood
- Outside school: out-of-school and extracurricular activities
- At school

## TAKING THE FIRST STEP

The first step to start a basic learning process seems overwhelming at first sight for people facing illiteracy. It is essential for them to recover confidence in their abilities and overcome a feeling of shame in order to reconnect with reading and writing skills. The environment of the people concerned has a key role in recovering their confidence, together with those involved in social, employment, training and cultural activities. Those who receive and support people potentially concerned by illiteracy must do all they can to adapt their professional practices and create a climate of trust that will trigger the stimulus needed to start learning.

## PREVENTING DROPPING OUT IN ALTERNANCE TRAINING

The conditions to bring for bringing young dropout dropouts back into alternance training will be analysed through the presentation of the work done in the framework of the European agenda for adult learning. Participants will be invited to discuss ways of increasing the attractiveness (both for learners and organizations organisations that finance training) of business sectors that offer job opportunities but suffer from a poor image.

# RELEARNING IS POSSIBLE, SOLUTIONS DO EXIST

Friday 15 November 2013

Presentation of the Plenary Session (9:00 am-1:00 pm)

Welcome from 8:00 am

If they are to put their good intentions into practice, people who are facing the problem need to know about the solutions that exist.

Similarly, those who receive people with illiteracy issues need know-how and tools so they can provide effective support to help them conquer their illiteracy. This is the first essential stage for successful and sustainable professional integration. Identifying the problem, motivating people and finding the right solution that works for the people concerned by illiteracy cannot be achieved by the stroke of a pen and is no easy matter, even if there were substantial resources to finance training pathways.

With assistance from the European Social Fund, building on a rigorous approach and with the right tools, the ANLCI supports the dissemination of good practices across the regions of France and at national level with major partner networks located throughout the country. The aims are to generalise, multiply and transfer efficient practices, relevant procedures and tools in line with the priorities defined in the regional plans to prevent and fight illiteracy.

## ADAPTED AND PERSONALISED TRAINING FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE FURTHEST FROM EMPLOYMENT

The regional Illiteracy Conferences held in 2013 clearly showed that without the basic skills (reading, writing and arithmetic) the most vulnerable people have more difficulty finding their first job or getting another when they have lost their employment. Thanks to the partners involved in the area of insertion through economic activity, many solutions in the framework of the “single integration contract” (*Contrat Unique d'Insertion*) have been implemented to help people overcome these difficulties. Other partners propose to strengthen the basic knowledge of young people starting their first employment through “jobs for the future” (*Emplois d'Avenir*). The morning Plenary Session will focus on solutions implemented by stakeholders, social partners, OPCAs (accredited training fund-collecting agencies), national and local authorities, designed to help those furthest from employment to acquire and consolidate basic skills.

## TRAINING IN BASIC SKILLS: MEASURING THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL IMPACT

A return to learning basic skills inevitably causes people to change. They can then expand their social network, have easier access to leisure and cultural activities, and can support their children in their schooling, etc. The social impact of a return to learning is undeniable, as is the economic impact: better productivity at work, promotion opportunities, finding a skilled job, developing a job search etc.

Therefore, “investing” now in the fight against illiteracy and prevention, particularly through learning basic skills, means investing in the country's future.

# WORKSHOPS

**Thursday 14 November 2013, afternoon**  
**Friday 15 November, afternoon**

Modules on how to use procedures and tools, and workshops in the framework of the Conference aim to empower those who wish to take action against illiteracy. They are mostly inspired by the initiatives identified in the exchange and multiplication of the good practices programme run by the ANLCI with support from the European Social Fund (ANLCI 2.0 Forum). This programme was implemented in all regions of France in order to increase awareness, multiply and capitalise on actions that have proved their worth.

Guides for the dissemination of good practices, illustrated by stories of players in the field, will be presented at the workshops.

In Workshop 7, the AEFA working group will concentrate on tools to help the support and guidance professionals to make a better diagnosis of the learning needs of vulnerable adults.

**Thursday 14 November 2013**  
**2 modules and 7 workshops simultaneously**

**MODULE FOR GETTING STARTED M1**  
2:00-5:30 pm Family Educational Action awareness kit (AEF – Part 1)

**MODULE FOR GETTING STARTED M2**  
2:00-5:30 pm Approaches and tools to support young people lacking basic skills, in training programmes (e.g. the French CB apprenticeship programme)

**WORKSHOP A1** 2:00-5:30 pm Assessing the illiteracy issue:  
French and European practices

**WORKSHOP A2** 2:00-3:30 pm Organising a return to study for young people

**WORKSHOP A3** 2:00-3:30 pm Identifying key skills in a professional situation for employees  
and job seekers

- WORKSHOP A4** 4:00-5:30 pm Running cultural activities and informal education to prevent illiteracy
- WORKSHOP A5** 4:00-5:30 pm Positioning, building and supporting a personalised programme for acquisition of basic skills
- WORKSHOP A6** 4:00-5:30 pm Running a training programme with the help of the ANLCI reference system of key skills in a professional situation (RCCSF)
- WORKSHOP A7** 2:00-3:30 pm Professionalising the players involved in guidance and support for low-skilled adults (workshop proposed in the framework of the European Agenda for Adult Learning)

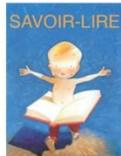
**Friday 15 November 2013**  
**1 module and 4 workshops simultaneously**

**MODULE FOR GETTING STARTED M3**

- 2:00-4:00 pm Implementing a Family Educational Action for parents (AEF – Part 2)
- WORKSHOP A8** 2:00-4:00 pm Assessing transferable or social skills: tools, techniques, methods (workshop proposed in the framework of the European Agenda for Adult Learning)
- WORKSHOP A9** 2:00-4:00 pm Strengthening basic skills to secure qualification pathways and professional development
- WORKSHOP A10** 2:00-4:00 pm Setting up activities that develop confidence and a desire to learn
- WORKSHOP A11** 2:00-4:00 pm Creating an efficient and sustainable regional dynamic to prevent and fight illiteracy

This event is organised by the French National Agency for the Fight Against Illiteracy (ANLCI) in partnership with the 66 members of the Grand National Cause 2013 and the 2E2F Agency, responsible for the European Agenda for Adult Learning.

EDUCATION  
FORMATION  
France



Cette action est cofinancée par l'Union Européenne  
L'Europe s'engage en France

**ONLINE REGISTRATION:**  
<http://assises-illettrisme-2013.eventbrite.fr>

**Agir ensemble  
contre l'illettrisme**

Pour l'accès de tous à la lecture,  
à l'écriture et aux compétences de base



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