



Literacy Screener

# **GUIDELINES ON TESTING ELINET'S LITERACY SCREENER AND DEVELOPING YOUR OWN LITERACY SCREENER**



# 1. INTRODUCTION

Do you notice your employee has difficulties with work instructions? Or that your patient makes mistakes with his/her drug intake? Is a client at your job centre reluctant to find vacancies themselves? Or is your customer always late with returning his/her library books? Does a social security recipient always call after you've sent them a letter? In these instances it may be that reading skills play a role. To get a better grasp of whether this is indeed the case and as such raise awareness of the scope and effect of literacy difficulties, ELINET's Literacy Screener comes in handy.

ELINET's Literacy Screener is an online screening tool that indicates in a simple and fast manner whether somebody may have reading difficulties. The result can serve as a starting point to improve someone's literacy skills as a way to meet the goals of the organisation and of the person with literacy difficulties him or herself.

## 2. ELINET'S LITERACY SCREENER

A tool to quickly measure whether someone has reading difficulties was one of the outcomes outlined as useful from a survey carried out among ELINET members. As a result the ELINET's Literacy Screener has been produced as a framework for the development of country specific instruments.

### A. The concept of ELINET's Literacy Screener

The Literacy Screener is directed at intermediaries and potential literacy learners: it is an online screening tool that indicates in a simple and fast manner whether somebody has reading difficulties. As such, it screens for people who can benefit from improving their reading skills. Any intermediary can use the Literacy Screener without specialist training apart from an instruction on the use and implementation of the Literacy Screener itself.

Following this first indication further testing is necessary to provide information about the exact reading level of the potential literacy learner: the Literacy Screener identifies a literacy need, but does not identify a particular level of need (Initial Assessment), nor the profile of a learner's strengths and development needs at a given level (Diagnostic Assessment).

It is important to note that the current Literacy Screener – in its English, Turkish and Romanian version – is not a validated, objective and reliable instrument as no thorough scientific research in this regard has taken place. However, these versions are based on the Dutch Literacy Screener, which is identified as a validated, objective and reliable instrument.

### B. Target audience: intermediaries and potential literacy learners

ELINET's Literacy Screener targets intermediaries in raising their awareness of literacy difficulties. An intermediary is a firm or a person who acts as a mediator on a link between parties. In the case of literacy, an intermediary takes up the role between a potential literacy learner and a literacy course provider: (s)he steps up to recognize, talk to and refer a potential literacy learner to a literacy course. They are professionals, volunteers and family, friends and neighbours who are in close contact and have a bond of trust with potential literacy learners. As literacy difficulties are often surrounded with shame and taboo, the involvement of intermediaries in tackling the issue is indispensable.

ELINET has identified a list of intermediaries linked to different policy areas that can make use of ELINET's Literacy Screener and implement it in their work structures, namely:

INTERMEDIARY GROUP	POLICY AREA
Health and social workers	Health
Librarians	Culture
Employers	Employment
Municipalities and job centres	Social welfare

Through the intermediaries potential literacy learners are targeted. By means of the Literacy Screener someone can be identified as a person struggling with reading and thus as a potential literacy learner. The Literacy Screener serves as a starting point for potential literacy learners to be referred to opportunities to improve their skills.

## 2.

**C. Objectives**

The objectives of ELINET's Literacy Screener are as follows:

- Raising awareness among intermediaries of the fact that a lack of literacy skills may exist among their clients, customers or patients.
- Support intermediaries in identifying those who may benefit from improving their literacy skills.
- Support potential literacy learners in talking about and improving their literacy skills.

**D. Content and structure of ELINET's Literacy Screener**

ELINET's Literacy Screener consists of 5 different types of assignments and 24 questions connected to them. Each of the 5 assignments has 3 versions, which are randomly selected to form a specific Literacy Screener. The assignments include:

- Multiple-choice
- Right or wrong and yes or no questions
- Fill in the blank
- Connect a description to a picture
- Interpreting figures

The Literacy Screener takes no more than 12 minutes. The programme stops automatically when the 12 minutes have expired even if one did not finish all 24 questions.

**E. How to test ELINET's LITERACY SCREENER**

ELINET has built a demonstration Literacy Screener in English, Turkish and Romanian. These serve as a framework for the development of country specific instruments. To get insight in these Literacy Screeners, go to [www.literacyscreener.eu](http://www.literacyscreener.eu). Click on the Literacy Screener you wish to test by clicking 'demo English', 'demo Romanian' or 'demo Turkish' on the left side of the homepage. You can log in using the login information stated on the page of the different Literacy Screeners. Insert test variables and the email address to which you wish to sent the result of the Literacy Screener and start the test. The result of whether the answers provided indicate literacy difficulties will be sent to your email address. When intermediaries use the Literacy Screener this result gives them a basis for discussing literacy difficulties with their client/customer/patient. They can discuss the result, the implications and the possibilities and benefits of their client/customer/patient to improve their literacy skills by starting a literacy course.

## 3. DEVELOPING A LITERACY SCREENER

If you decide to start developing a Literacy Screener based on the framework of ELINET's Literacy Screener, be sure to take the following points into account.

### A. Design

- Make sure your Screener serves as a quick screener giving an indication instead of a complete assessment with thorough questioning and testing.
- In your choice of font, layout, space on the pages and look and feel, make sure that your Screener is accessible and readable for people with literacy difficulties. This should be chosen in such a way that it does not influence the Screener's results.
- Include different types of questions and assignments, such as multiple-choice, right or wrong and yes or no questions as well as tasks to fill in the blank, to connect a description to a picture and to interpret figures.

### B. Content

- Involve several partners and experts in the development of the assignments in order to implement different viewpoints and perspectives in the texts and questions of the Literacy Screener. In this way the quality of the Screener is safeguarded.
- Be aware of the local context and include texts, pictures, tables and questions relevant for this context.
- Make sure the language level of the texts in the Screener is consistent throughout the Screener and corresponds with language level A2 as indicated in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). In this way all screening tools can map their level as a further quality assurance.

### C. Scientific testing

Before using your Screener externally make sure to run intensive scientific testing on validity and objectivity of the tool as indicator of literacy difficulties.

### D. Indirect use by consultants instead of potential literacy learners

Make sure the Screener is set up to be used by consultants instead of by potential literacy learners on their own and that the result is sent to this consultant. In this way the consultant can support the potential literacy learner in finding options to improve their skills. As such, the harsh reality of being indicated as someone with potential literacy difficulties is buffered and can be transformed more easily into actions for improvement.

### E. Storing the data

During the development think about if and how you want to store the data generated by your Literacy Screener as well as what you want to use this data for. Be aware of privacy issues and rules applicable in your country.

Contact Reading & Writing Foundation ([info@readingandwriting.eu](mailto:info@readingandwriting.eu)) for further support if you wish to develop a Literacy Screener in your country.

## 4. IMPLEMENTING AND DISSEMINATION OF A LITERACY SCREENER

Once you have developed a Literacy Screener, there are important points to take into account when implementing the instrument. Be sure to be aware of the following:

### A. Prerequisites

- Before implementing a Literacy Screener, make sure that there are course options for those who receive an indication of literacy difficulties. If there are no course options or other opportunities for them to improve their skills, there is a high risk the Literacy Screener is solely used to identify people with literacy difficulties. This is ethically unacceptable as this could result in actions of selection and rejection.
- Think about ways to present the tool and how organisations can be persuaded to use it in the way that it is intended, namely as a tool to identify people with literacy difficulties in order to support them to improve their skills. Position the tool in a way that its users view improving literacy as a means to improve other fields or reach other goals, such as lowering the number of work related accidents, improving participation and social inclusion, lowering the reliance on social welfare. This means that the focus should not be on literacy alone, but on other aspects which could be improved by means of improving basic skills such as literacy.

### B. Agreements and preparation of users

- Think about whether you want to work with users' contracts and which kind of terms and conditions for use of your Literacy Screener you want to include in these.
- Depending on your decisions about data storage, make sure the users of your Literacy Screener are aware of and agree with its terms and conditions.
- Give a workshop on the use of the Literacy Screener. In this presentation information should be given about literacy and literacy difficulties, about the use of the Literacy Screener in technical and social terms and about ways to start the conversation concerning the result of the Screener. Lastly, ways to refer people who have been indicated as potential literacy learners, should be part of the workshop.
- It is important to implement the use of the Literacy Screener in current work processes of intermediaries, for example during intake sessions. As such, it is advised to work together with existing collaborations to implement the Screener in the processes of these organisations. In this way it has a clear place in the organisation, is not seen as a burden for consultants and employees and people have less chance to avoid being screened.

## 5. TOOLS TO SUPPORT A LITERACY SCREENER

There are a number of tools that can be used in relation to a Literacy Screener, namely:

- ELINET has developed a workshop for intermediaries to support intermediaries in their role in tackling literacy difficulties. The workshop includes training in recognising people who struggle with reading and writing, discussing it by means of motivational interviewing and referring them to opportunities for literacy improvement. This workshop could be helpful as an introduction to a Literacy Screener and its use. Find more information on the Workshop for Intermediaries here: [www.eli-net.eu/awareness-raising/toolkit/workshop-for-intermediaries/](http://www.eli-net.eu/awareness-raising/toolkit/workshop-for-intermediaries/).
- ELINET has developed guidelines for fundraising, which you can use if you need to raise funds in order to develop and implement your Literacy Screener. More information about fundraising can be found here: [www.eli-net.eu/fundraising/](http://www.eli-net.eu/fundraising/).



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