



CONTEXT AND RATIONALE

The Climate for Reading Erasmus+ project develops activities that support reading among adults in the context of decreasing reading skills and the need to strengthen key competencies. Ljubljana City Library and its partners decided to focus part of their work on adult migrants, recognising that this group faces particular barriers to accessing reading culture.

Migrants—whether asylum seekers, refugees, newcomers, or people with a migration background—are among the most vulnerable groups when it comes to participation in reading and cultural life. Barriers such as limited language proficiency, legal and economic precarity, trauma, and interrupted education can all limit access to books and reading experiences. Libraries, with their democratic and inclusive mission, have a unique role to play in bridging these inequalities by creating safe spaces for belonging, language learning, and participation.

While migrants are structurally more likely to be adult non-readers in the new language, this does not mean they are not readers at all. Many read in other scripts, formats, or oral traditions. Recognising this diversity is essential for any meaningful engagement.

By implementing these programs, the library wants to position itself as a place of support, learning and socializing, emphasizing its role as a center of community and active aging.

KEY BARRIERS

Adult migrants often face multiple, intersecting barriers to reading and library use:

- Language insecurity: fear of not understanding, making mistakes, or being judged.
- Low trust in institutions: especially among those with experiences of discrimination or bureaucratic exclusion.
- Traumatic or interrupted schooling: schooling associated with humiliation or violence can make reading emotionally difficult.
- Lack of materials in the mother tongue: the absence of familiar language resources reinforces exclusion.
- Internalised narratives of inadequacy: “I’m not good enough,” “the library is not for me.”

These factors often result in migrants not entering the library building without a personal invitation. Reading can therefore become a sensitive and emotionally charged topic.

KEY OPPORTUNITY

Recognition of language and identity is a crucial entry point. When migrants feel that their languages, cultures, and experiences are valued, reading becomes possible again—first as an act of belonging, and later as a cognitive skill. Libraries can serve as bridges by making visible that all languages are welcome, that reading has no legal status, and that literature is a human right.

WHERE TO MEET THEM

Libraries need to reach beyond their walls to engage migrants where they already are:

- Asylum homes and integration centres – offering small mobile collections and multilingual book corners.
- Language classes and language cafés – connecting reading with language learning in a relaxed way.
- NGOs, intercultural workers, and cultural mediators – building trust through existing networks.
- Online spaces – diaspora communities, TikTok, Instagram, Facebook groups where identity and belonging are actively negotiated.

INTERVENTION PRINCIPLES

Successful engagement with migrants as adult non-readers should be guided by the following principles:

- Remove pressure to perform – participation without speaking or reading aloud should always be acceptable.
- Normalise silent participation – reading can also mean being present, listening, or watching.



- Prioritise belonging over literacy level – emotional safety is a precondition for learning.
- Validate all languages equally – multilingualism should be visible, celebrated, and normalised.
- Gentle communication – avoid evaluative or corrective tones; messages should be simple, visual, and human.

Examples of appropriate communication tone:

NOT: “Improve your language skills.”

YES: “You belong here with your language(s).”

EFFECTIVE ACTIONS AND FORMATS

1. Partnerships and Outreach

- Cooperate with asylum homes, migrant NGOs, job centres, language schools, and integration houses.
- Provide mobile collections and book corners in their premises.
- Co-create events and activities with partner organisations, not for them.

2. Library as a Safe Multilingual Space

- Ensure language-friendly spaces: multilingual signage, pictograms, bilingual shelving, easy readers (A1–B1), and visible mother-tongue sections.
- Adjust opening hours to fit migrants’ schedules (after work or language courses).
- Include minority languages in city reading plans, translation resources, and cultural programming.

3. Reading Promotion and Visibility

- “Did you know...” stickers in simple English and visual language, e.g.:
 - Did you know the library is free, safe, and for everyone?
 - Did you know you can read in your own language here?
 - Did you know reading in two languages helps your brain learn faster.
- Multilingual bookmarks distributed in the city and partner venues (with QR codes linking to the library website).
- Posters emphasising inclusion and belonging:
 - Reading belongs to all of us.
 - Your language is important here.
 - The library is your space too.

4. Inclusive Reading Activities

- Silent reading sessions: no pressure to speak; reading as shared presence.
- Reading circles in two languages: alternating between mother tongue and host language.
- Meetings on meaningful topics: integration, parenting, human rights, work, identity – supported by relevant books and materials.
- Invite role models: successful migrants to recommend books and share experiences.

5. Community reading picnics and exhibitions: combining books, stories, and objects from home countries

- Involve migrants in curating library collections—books, films, and music from their cultures.
- Ask about their interests, emotions, and memories, not just titles or genres.
- Support migrant parents with bilingual storytelling, bedtime reading, and shared picture books.
- Offer opportunities for job-shadowing and volunteering in the library environment, enabling migrants to gain professional experience, language practice, and confidence in public interaction.



- Encourage reciprocal learning formats, such as:
 - migrants leading language workshops in their native languages while the library offers Slovene language sessions in return;
 - cooking exchanges where participants share recipes and culinary traditions from their home countries;
 - craft and skills workshops where migrants present their traditional crafts, art, or music.
- These collaborative practices not only strengthen belonging and intercultural dialogue, but also support pathways towards employment, social inclusion, and mutual understanding.

WHAT MIGRANTS READ (OR BENEFIT FROM):

- Dual-language and easy readers
- Children's books for family reading
- Poetry and short literary forms
- Fiction exploring identity and migration
- Practical "survival" materials (employment, law, daily life)
- Magazines and digital content in mother tongue

MEASURING SUCCESS

Success indicators should reflect emotional safety and continuity rather than quantitative literacy outcomes:

- Participation without shame or fear
- Return visits and growing familiarity with the library
- Micro-engagements such as taking a bookmark, scanning a QR code, or borrowing a first book
- Qualitative feedback from mediators, teachers, and community partners

EXPECTED IMPACT

belonging → lowers fear → builds trust → opens the door to reading

When migrants see their languages and experiences reflected in the library space, reading becomes a bridge between cultures, between silence and voice, between exclusion and participation.

By fostering this process, libraries uphold their role as democratic, human-centred institutions where everyone can enter the world of reading—regardless of language, status, or past experiences.

