



# DYSLEXIA AND THE iREAD PROJECT



October is often filled with unpleasant weather, scary costumes and sweets; however, it is also about dyslexia. The European Dyslexia Awareness Week is taking place between 7 and 13 October 2019, aiming to raise awareness about dyslexia. This year's theme is schools and businesses helping those suffering from dyslexia.

This is where Pickatale enters the picture. Pickatale is part of a four-year project developing teaching materials and technologies that can help children to further develop their reading skills. The target group is children in primary schools and children suffering from dyslexia. The project is funded by the EU Research and Innovation Programme Horizon 2020. In other words, Pickatale is very committed when it comes to dyslexia and other reading and writing difficulties.



# WHAT IS DYSLEXIA?

**T**he British Dyslexia Association (2018) gives the following definition: "Dyslexia is a learning difficulty that primarily affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent word reading and spelling".

Dyslexia is the most common learning disability among children. In short, dyslexia means having difficulties reading, understanding and pronouncing words, and writing. It is believed that dyslexia is caused by problems in the brain's language centre, and that it can be inherited from one's parents. Another form of dyslexia where one has difficulties understanding numbers is called dyscalculia.

Dyslexia can lead to trouble in understanding the relationship between the sound and the letter. This includes putting sounds together to make words. Letters such as B and P,

and B and D are easy to mix up. One can have problems hearing which letter a word begins and ends with. Double consonants and word divisions create a lot of trouble, and it takes time to 'decode' (understand the

meaning) of a word. And because this takes time, it also becomes harder to understand the entirety of a text when reading it by oneself. If read by someone else, however, it becomes much easier to get the whole picture. Many children who suffer from dyslexia also see written words and letters as if they are 'jumping around' on the page.



# EVERYONE KNOWS HOW TO READ - WHY CARE ABOUT READING AND WRITING DIFFICULTIES?

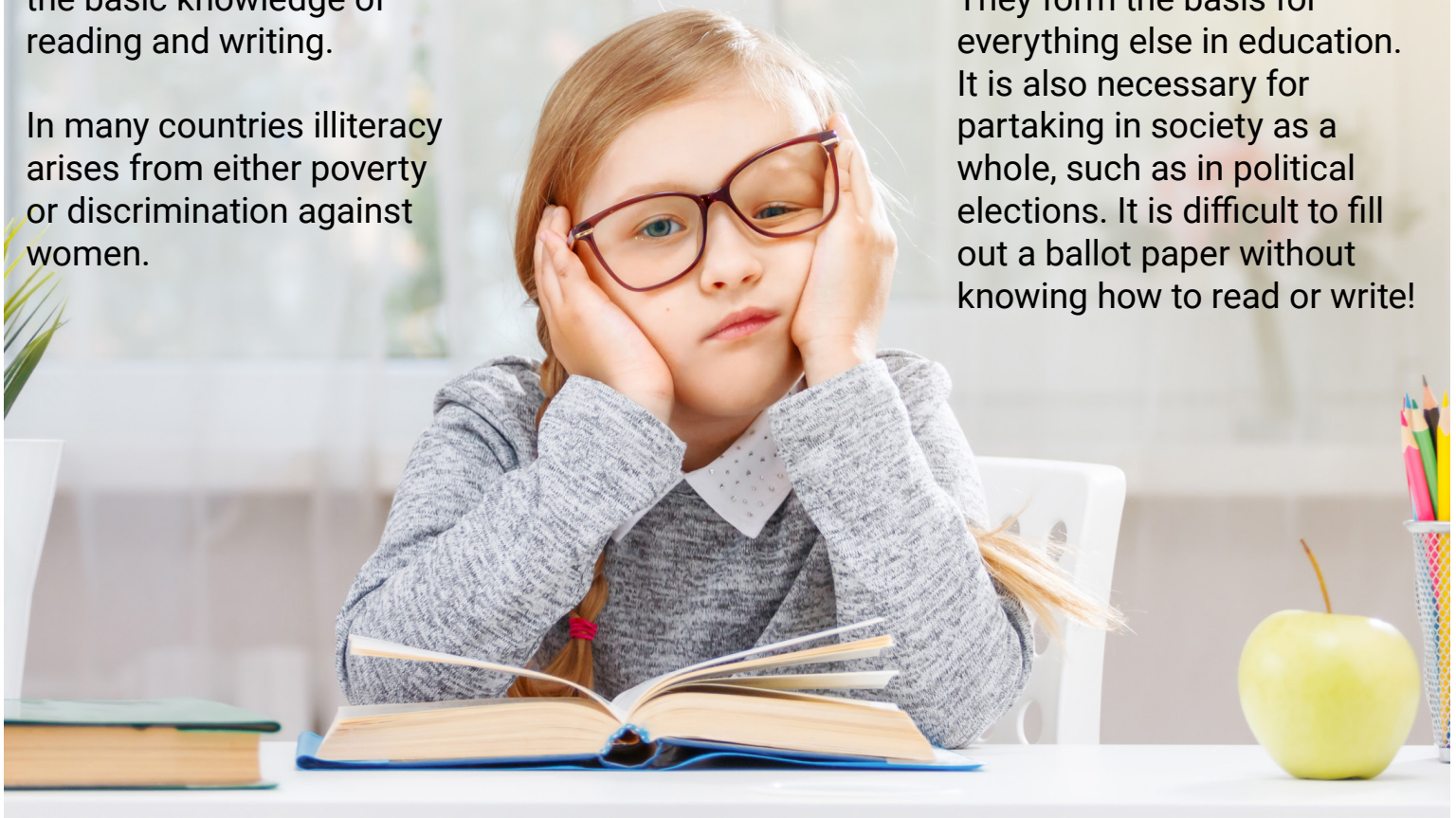
It is estimated that as many as 250 million children around the world cannot read and write! If we count the adults, there are 750 million illiterate people, about the same number as the entire population of Europe! Most of them are women and girls who lack the basic knowledge of reading and writing.

In many countries illiteracy arises from either poverty or discrimination against women.

However, we must acknowledge the fact that developed countries are also facing a huge problem regarding the lack of reading and writing skills. One major problem is dyslexia.

We do not need to go further than the UK to see that the percentage of young people struggling with reading difficulties has increased to as much as 25%.

Knowing how to read and write are two of the most important things to learn. They form the basis for everything else in education. It is also necessary for partaking in society as a whole, such as in political elections. It is difficult to fill out a ballot paper without knowing how to read or write!



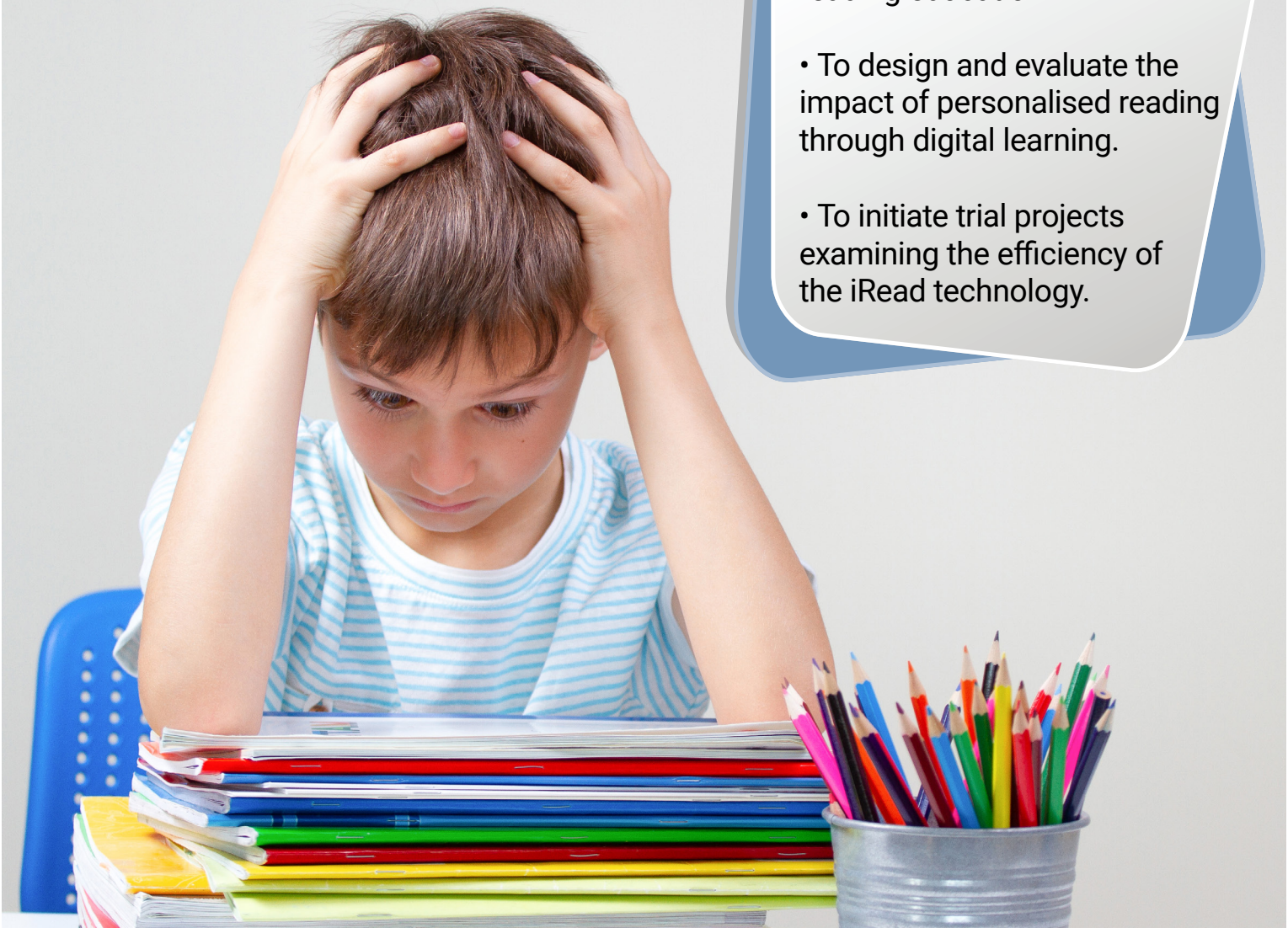


Situations like this is why all UN member countries have agreed on ensuring that all young people should learn how to read, write, and calculate within year 2030.

This is also the reason that the EU has initiated the project in which Pickatale is involved. Launched in 2017 and scheduled to run until 2020, iRead aims at developing digital tools that can improve children's reading skills. It consists of 15 partners from eight countries and has three main objectives:

# THE iREAD PROJECT

- To accelerate the development of technology that can be used by new agents within language and reading education.
- To design and evaluate the impact of personalised reading through digital learning.
- To initiate trial projects examining the efficiency of the iRead technology.





So far, the project has produced a game app called Navigo, which consists of several games that help children how to spell and compile sentences. In addition to Navigo, as part of the project, a reader called Amigo is developed. Amigo Reader is used to enable children taking part in the evaluation to read high quality, freely available digital reading materials with their own personalised presentation of the text to suit their

reading preferences e.g. text size, font, background colour. The game app and the reader are being tested at a number of schools throughout Europe. Data from these tests will be analysed in order to improve and further develop them.

The main reason why this project is focused on digital tools is that at least one in

ten children with reading disabilities fall behind when they are taught to read in a traditional way. This means that other methods are required! Digital tools allow for greater personalisation, thereby focusing on each child's individual needs as different children experience different types of reading difficulties, and therefore they require a different and more personalized approach. A solution that works for some does not work for everyone.



The iRead Project takes all this into account, placing great emphasis on personal adaptation. The Project's target group are children because research material from the International Dyslexia Association shows that 74% of children who struggled with reading disabilities at the age of eight struggle with reading as adults. That is why it is important for them to get solid and personalised help at an early age!



This project, that Pickatale is part of, has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 731724.



To learn more about the project, go to **[iread-project.eu](http://iread-project.eu)**.

