



SEA OF LEARNING BARRIERS

Inspiration for this activity came from 17th-century Dutch paintings. Ships on a stormy sea depicted on them often symbolised people facing and fighting different obstacles in life. Participants create a suggestive visualisation of difficulties people face when learning using colour-coded waves.

Module 2 – Activity 1

Duration: 10 min

Activity type: Practical exercise

Working format: Individual



Learning objectives

Thanks to this activity, participants will:

- Identify internal and external factors that make learning difficult
- Distinguish between personal features and environmental barriers
- Reflect on how learning barriers affect access to education and youth services



Materials & Resources Needed

- Paper “waves” in two colours (e.g. blue and green)
- Pens, markers or crayons
- Space to create the “sea”. This can be, for example, a floor, a wall, a flipchart, or a table.
- Optional: tape or sticky dots if you plan to create the sea on a wall, flipchart or other vertical surface.



Success Indicators

- Participants proposed relevant internal and external learning barriers
- The “sea” consists of waves with a balanced variety of factors
- You observe participants’ engagement
- You see that participants are aware of the wide spectre of learning difficulties





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Step 1 – Introduction (3 min)

The trainer:

- Introduces the activity to the participants
- Explains what their role will be
- Explains what the final result of the activity will be.

Step 2 – Main activity (5 min)

Each participant receives several paper waves in two colours.

Instructions provided by trainer:

- On blue waves, write internal factors that make learning difficult (e.g. getting tired quickly, difficulty concentrating, anxiety, dyslexia)
- On green waves, write external factors (e.g. loud environment, complex language, lack of support, time pressure)

Participants write one factor per wave.

Once finished, they place their waves on the shared surface, gradually forming a collective “sea of learning barriers”.

Step 3 – Conclusion / Group discussion (2 min)

The trainer leads a brief discussion, supporting themselves with the following questions:

- Which type of wave appeared most often?
- Which barriers surprised you?
- Which barriers could be reduced or removed?

Key points to highlight:

- Nobody is alone with their problem. See how many of them repeat!
- There are things we can work on and overcome, and do something about them. But there are also things we try to change

Links with theory / inclusive practices:

- There are multiple and sometimes very simple ways to support people with learning difficulties



Wave template:





LITERACY'S IMPACT QUIZ

This interactive quiz is a participant-friendly presentation of raw data. Instead of providing them with facts and figures, ask them to guess them. This is also a form of energiser after listening to your speech for some time.

Module 2 – Activity 2

Duration: 10 min

Activity type: Knowledge Quiz

Working format: Individual



Learning objectives

- Identify key social, economic and educational impacts of low literacy
- Reflect on the consequences of low literacy for youth and adults
- Seeing low literacy in a wider social context



Materials & Resources Needed

- Smartphone or digital device for participants
- Internet connection
- Interactive quiz tool (like Mentimeter, Wooclap, Kahoot) - You need to prepare the quiz in advance.

Practical tip: Before asking participants to take the quiz, take it yourself and ask a few other people (family, friends, coworkers) to check if everything works as it should.

- For offline version: slides with quiz questions



Success Indicators

- High participation rate during the quiz
- Active reactions and discussions after answers are revealed
- Participants demonstrate increased awareness of literacy-related issues





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Step 1 – Introduction (2 min)

Explains to participants that the quiz is based on real research data and aims to highlight the often-invisible consequences of low literacy skills.

Reassure the participants that this is not a test but a means to emphasise curiosity.

Step 2 – Main activity (7 min)

Ask participants to take their phone, go to the website where the quiz is and enter the dedicated code (or scan QR code).

Put (QR) codes and website address on the screen so that everybody knows where to go.

Make sure everybody's ready and begin the quiz.

Each person does it individually.

Participants answer the questions.

Step 3 – Conclusion / Group discussion (1 min)

Ask participants about their reflections after taking the quiz. What surprised them? Were they aware of the consequences of low literacy?

When closing the discussion, highlight:

- Low literacy has long-term social and economic consequences
- Literacy affects participation, health, employment and family life
- Many impacts are systemic rather than individual failures



QUESTIONS FOR QUIZ:

The questions below are only a suggestion and were prepared based on data from the [Literacy in Europe - Factsheet](#).

You can change the questions. But always remember to base them on reliable resources. And don't make the quiz too long. It must be interactive and energising.

1. People with literacy difficulties feel ashamed about their shortcomings.

True / False

Correct answer: True

2. People with low literacy skills are less likely to participate in volunteer activities

True / False

Correct answer: True

3. The best-paid workers with a high literacy score earn more than twice as much as the best-paid workers with low literacy skills

True / False

Correct answer: True

4. Parents' literacy skills influence directly their children

True / False

Correct answer: True

5. Adults who become unemployed keep their basic skills at the same level

True / False

Correct answer: False

6. What % of jobs will be available for those with basic schooling?

Each participant estimates by themselves.

Correct answer: 15%

7. Find a correlation between death risk and low literacy skills

Open-ended question. Each participant writes their short answer.

8. Family literacy programs attract parents who would otherwise not take part in education.

True / False

Correct answer: False

9. What % of prisoners have low writing and reading skills?

Ranking question:

That's clear!



Activity Sheet

43-58 %

60-80 %

82-95 %

Correct answer: 60-80%



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EXPERIENCING COMMUNICATION BARRIERS IN YOUTH SERVICES

Thanks to this activity, the participants will experience what it feels like to access information in a language they do not understand. It will help them to better understand how young people with low literacy may experience youth services and communication barriers.

Module 2 – Activity 3

Duration: app. 45 min

Activity type: Participatory workshop

Working format: Small groups (3–5 people)



Learning objectives

- Experience communication barriers caused by language and literacy limitations
- Identify key obstacles in youth services communication
- Become aware of how information design influences access and motivation



Materials & Resources Needed

- Printed or digital communication materials from youth-related organisations (leaflets, brochures, websites, social media pages)
- Materials available in French, Italian, Spanish and German (or other languages relevant for your group)
- Pens
- Paper
- Flipchart or whiteboard
- Digital creation tool (like Canva or studio.polonto.com)
- Computers/tablets (one per group)



Success Indicators

- Participants are able to describe communication barriers without focusing on language competence
- A shared list (“mosaic”) of communication needs is produced
- Participants propose concrete changes to make communication more inclusive

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Step 1 – Exploration (15 min)

Explain to the participants that this workshop aims to let them experience situations and feelings similar to those faced by young people with low literacy. They will work with information they cannot fully understand. But our goal will be focusing on communication design, not language skills. Based on that, we'll create basic communication improvement recommendations.

1. Divide participants into four language groups.
2. Each group receives materials about an organisation offering youth-related services in a language not native to them (for example: a French-speaking team receives materials in Spanish). These might be leaflets, brochures or links to the websites.
3. Groups explore the materials without using translation tools.

Each group tries to answer:

- What does this organisation do?
- Who are its services for?
- How can someone benefit from or engage in its services?
- Do you feel encouraged to get in touch with them?

Before the teams start their work, remind them that:

- We are not assessing language skills.
- We are diagnosing communication barriers.
- They can't use any translation tool.

Step 2 – Mosaic of needs (10 min)

In this part, together with the participants, you'll identify and visualise the communication barriers.

Ask each group to:

- Presents the materials they explored
- Describes the difficulties they encountered
- Explains what made understanding or engagement harder

Write their discoveries on a flipchart or whiteboard.

Step 3 – Redesigning (20 min)

This simple exercise will help participants make their first steps towards more inclusive communication.

1. Each language-fluent team analyses the obstacles faced by non-native speakers.
2. They choose one communication material to redesign, or a part of it, for example, one page of a brochure or one website tab.
3. Using a simple tool (like Canva or studio.polonto.com), they create a more inclusive version.

Remind the teams that:



- They should focus on clarity, simplicity and accessibility
- You don't expect a perfect design

Each team presents:

- Their redesigned version
- What they changed
- Why they made these choices

Step 4 – Conclusion (3 min)

Ask participants to reflect on how they felt when reading materials they didn't understand.

Ask them:

- If the workshop helped them to realise about youth communication.
- Which barriers are the easiest to remove?

Recap the experience, reminding that communication barriers are often systemic, not individual. Pay their attention to the role of inclusive design.

Thank participants for their active participation and input into this workshop.

