

READ-IN-CLUB:

READ-ING for CuLtUres across Borders



IO1 – RESEARCH REPORT



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Culture Polis
Corfu, Greece



HELLENIC
FOUNDATION FOR
CULTURE

Hellenic Foundation for Culture
Athens, Greece



institute of
Entrepreneurship
Development

A.B. Institute of
Entrepreneurship
Development Ltd.
Polis Chrysochous, Cyprus



ITStudy Hungary
Educational and
Research Centre for
Information and
Technology Ltd.
Gödöllő, Hungary



Društvo slovenskih pisateljev
Slovene Writers' Association

Slovene Writers' Association
Ljubljana, Slovenia

Sandorf

Sandorf Publishing
Zagreb, Croatia

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Authors:

Literature Review Report: Ilias Polymenidis, Konstantina Argeitakou (Greece)

European Policies and Strategies
for the recovery of the cultural sector after COVID-19: Louiza Ntourou (Greece)

READ-IN-CLUB Research Report:

Greek Research: Louiza Ntourou, Xanthippi Kontogianni, Konstantina Argeitakou

Cypriot Research: Anastasios Vasileiadis

Hungarian Research: Kacsur Annamária

Slovenian Research: Andrej Blatnik, Lija Gantar

Croatian Research: Ivan Sršen, Sandra Karić

Research Report: Andrej Blatnik (Slovenia)

Other Contributors:

Culture Polis: Xanthippi Kontogianni

Hellenic Foundation for Culture: Afrodite Kafetsi

A.B. Institute of Entrepreneurship Development Ltd: Anastasios Vasileiadis

ITStudy: Kacsur Annamária

Slovene Writers' Association: Maja Kavzar Hudej, Nataša Čebular

Sandort Publishing: Marijana Jurčević



Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Overview of the project.....	4
Overview of IO1 – READ-IN-CLUB Research Report	5
Literature Review Report	6
Introduction.....	6
A. Scope and objectives.....	6
Analyzing the impact of COVID-19 on Reading Clubs.....	6
B. The situation.....	6
C. The consequences	7
Conclusions & considerations	9
List of references	10
European Policies and Strategies for the recovery of the cultural sector after COVID-19 ..	11
Introduction.....	11
The impact of COVID-19 on the book sector.....	12
Europe’s response for the recovery of the cultural sector: Key Strategic Axes	14
Direct Ways	15
Indirect Ways.....	16
Europe’s response for the recovery of the book sector.....	18
Conclusion	20
List of references	22
READ-IN-CLUB Research Report	24
The task	24
The methodology	24
Definitions	24
Results – The questionnaire	27
1. Demographics of the respondents	27
2. Reading club habits	29
3. Demographics of the reading club	31
4. Moderation.....	33
5. Habits.....	35
6. Choice of books	36
7. Preferences.....	41
Results – The interviews.....	43
Summary.....	45
Final suggestions	47
Appendix: 5 National Data Collections.....	49



Introduction

Overview of the project

The creative and cultural sector belongs to those segments of society which are most affected by the 2020 novel COVID-19 crisis that is causing enormous social turbulence in European society – EU citizens experience the ‘new normality’ of staying at home and living under lockdown. While human interaction has been seriously harmed under these critical circumstances, EU values for social cohesion, inclusion, intercultural dialogue, community engagement, understanding of the ‘other’ and tolerance – all of them conveyed by arts and culture – have faced a great challenge.

The project READ-IN-CLUB (READ-ING for CuLtUres across Borders) is an EU-ERASMUS+ coordinated program and includes 6 partners (A.B. Institute of entrepreneurship development ltd – CY, CulturePolis-GR, Hellenic Foundation for Culture – GR, ITStudy – HU, Slovene Writers’ Association – SI, Sandorf Publishing – HR) from 5 different EU Member States (Cyprus, Croatia, Greece, Hungary and Slovenia). Its main goal is to equip our society with those skills and competences which are essential for ensuring a smooth recovery from the recent health crisis. In READ-IN-CLUB, the art of literature and the institution of book clubs and reading communities, together with the power of digital technology, comprise powerful facilitators for informal learning and dialogue and generate a supportive cultural environment where people are encouraged to become innovators and effective lifelong learners.

In this context, READ-IN-CLUB targets professionals as well as enthusiasts of the book industry who organize and coordinate the operation of reading clubs or other educational activities related to literature: writers, authors, translators, directors and representatives of private and public libraries, moderators of reading clubs (or book clubs, as they are often referred to) managers of publishing houses and literary organizations, publishers, and editors. Its objectives are to:

- a) Develop a cross-sectoral approach for cooperation – rooted in the EU values which are generated and conveyed by the art of literature.
- b) Address the challenge of ingraining the educational aspect of reading clubs for social inclusion and intercultural dialogue in the ‘digital, post-COVID agenda’ of book industry stakeholders.
- c) Qualify reading club coordinators through enhancing their training skills and digital competences and rendering them ‘Lit.Mentors’ of intercultural dialogue.
- d) Develop and deliver a digital reading club platform, innovative training materials and content methodologies to successfully meet the needs of reading club coordinators and their communities and to empower them at all levels.



Overview of IO1 – READ-IN-CLUB Research Report

The READ-IN-CLUB Research Report presents research on topics related to the value of literature for intercultural dialogue, equity, diversity, and inclusion as well as the potentials of reading clubs for the development of adults. It was created in the framework of the READ-IN-CLUB: READ-ING for CuLTUres across Borders project as the first project’s intellectual output.

This research was conducted by all members of the consortium to investigate the ‘state of the art’ regarding the objectives of the project and to better understand the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the art and culture ecosystem.

The report provides a summary of scientific and academic articles concerning the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on reading clubs in Europe. Furthermore, the report spotlights the novel impact of COVID-19 on the creative and cultural sector in Europe, and more specifically on the book sector, displaying the EU Policies and Strategies for the recovery of the cultural sector after COVID-19, with a greater emphasis on the book (publishing) sector. The report incorporates 5 Data Collections from partner countries – Greece, Cyprus, Hungary, Slovenia, and Croatia – in order to showcase the needs of reading clubs as well as to identify the training gap of reading club coordinators in interpreting literature from the viewpoint of intercultural dialogue, equity, diversity and inclusion. Finally, based on this information, the report articulates also specific recommendations for the development of the next intellectual outputs of this project – Virtual Training Seminars for ‘Lit.Mentors’ and the online platform.



Literature Review Report

Introduction

A. Scope and objectives

As part of IO1, the Hellenic Foundation for Culture completed the Literature Review Report regarding the impact of COVID-19 on reading clubs. The bibliography that was used in order to produce this report is from sites with official articles and from web research from EU organizations with scientific reports.

At the end of this research, the first outcome is that not many researches about book clubs have been made in the EU.

Analysing the impact of COVID-19 on reading clubs

B. The situation

In order to understand the impact of the pandemic in such a specific area, it is useful to look at some information about the book industry in general.

As mentioned on europa.eu, the publishing sector is one of the largest culture industries in Europe, with a total market value estimated at €36–38 billion. The entire book value chain (including authors, booksellers, printers, designers, etc.) is estimated to employ more than half a million people according to the 2018 report of the European Publishers Federation. With more than 500,000 titles published annually, the European book sector is incredibly rich and diverse.

On the one hand, in the recent past, the book sector has been severely affected by the crisis caused by the pandemic and the measures put in place to contain its spreading. On the other hand, the latest figures suggest there was a reading boom in 2020 as COVID-19 restrictions left people working from home (and banned from leisure activities) with more time on their hands according to the Publishers Association. More specifically:

- Consumer publishing – which includes fiction, non-fiction and children’s titles – saw a 7% increase to £2.1bn, including a 9% rise in the UK to £1.5bn.
- There was a big decline in the separate education category but an increase for academic offerings.
- Fiction sales saw a growth of 16% to £688m but non-fiction still sold more, up 4% to £1bn, and the children’s category grew 2% to £396m.

Stephen Lotinga, chief executive of the Publishers Association, said: ‘Publishing has proved incredibly resilient throughout the significant challenges of 2020.’



The history of reading groups goes back to the Middle Ages, when a community would gather together to listen to one of its members read a book aloud. In their present form, reading clubs have existed since the nineteenth century but have been particularly popular since the 1990s.

Until today, the traditional formation of a reading club had to do with an informal, non-academic reading group that meets regularly (generally 1 to 2 times per month) in order to discuss a book chosen by the majority of its members, listen to the participants' literary experiences, and explore possible interpretations. The meetings take place in the house of one of the members, in a bookshop, a library or wherever the group decides. Jenny Hartley's (2001) research showed that reading clubs often consist of middle-class, middle-aged or older, well-educated women, who prefer to read fiction and are looking to inform their reading with other people's opinions.

C. The consequences

One of the first impacts of the pandemic was the cancellation of many planned new titles – which in turn further affected revenues, as Enrico Turrin points out. Some publishers were also affected by supply chain disruption and by a decrease in exports. In the second half of March alone, French publishers postponed publication of 5,236 new titles and new editions, and by mid-May they planned to postpone on average 18% of titles scheduled for 2020 altogether; title production dropped 75% by the end of March in Greece, and the estimate for the whole year is a reduction of around one-fifth of the total; Czech publishers have postponed some 15% of their titles so far. Most strikingly, in Italy by the end of March some 23,200 titles had been cancelled or postponed (about one third of the yearly production), corresponding to 48.9 million fewer copies printed, and during the whole lockdown period title production was down two-thirds. Pretty much all countries experienced some kind of disruption in publication plans.

Online sales of e-books and audiobooks increased sharply in many countries, according to the Federation of European Countries. They were up 52% in March and 180% in April in Flanders; many online platforms doubled or tripled their sales in France in early April; in the year up to mid-April, online sales in Italy for the first time ever overtook sales in stores, reaching a 47% share; by June they had become 40% of total book sales in Romania. In the UK, in April, WH Smith's in-store sales dropped 85%, whereas online sales went up 400%. E-book and audiobook sales also increased significantly in many countries, and in some places, publishers chose to release certain titles only in digital form.

However, in none of the countries where bookstores had to close did online or digital sales compensate for the loss of sales in shops. In France, for example, their turnover was down 30% in March and 50% in April. Sales picked up somewhat when bookstores reopened, but in most cases they remained lower than pre-crisis levels. So, for example, turnover in Austria in May was down 5%, and sales were down 20% in France, and 2.2% in Germany (-6% in retail bookselling); turnover in bookstores was down between 10% and 50% in Hungary. In the first week of 'deconfinement,' sales more than doubled in value in France in comparison with



the previous week, and were also 2.7% higher than the year before; however, they dropped 8% the following week, being also 11% lower than the year before. The first week of full reopening, sales were up 0.5% in Germany through all channels – but still at -6.8% in brick-and-mortar bookstores. The first week of June, bookshop sales were up 37.5% in Spain compared to the previous week, but still 5.2% lower than in 2019. The week bookshops reopened in the UK, sales were up 30.4% year on year in value, and 9.3% the following week – a 14.1% value drop-off week on week. By the end of June, this slow recovery process had brought sales in Germany to -8.3% compared to the previous year (-13.9% in brick-and-mortar bookstores).

An encouraging indication is that people worldwide read more books and listened to more audiobooks while at home during the crisis. As a result of the IPA researches, many publishers received assistance from national publishers' associations in developing e-books and audiobooks as consumers shifted to online purchases and sought out new digital formats.

Because the COVID-19 problem has kept us confined to our houses, a sliver of a silver lining (obviously insufficient, but we look for them nevertheless) is that it has given us an opportunity to catch up on our reading. Because reading is done primarily alone and indoors, it is one of the few activities that has not changed in this new environment while still allowing us to interact with people. With every connected technology serving as a potential source of anxiety, it may have never been more important to escape into the printed word. Several people have turned to reading as a way to create connections and to communicate with friends, and often complete strangers, during the pandemic and the extended lockdown.

As far as reading clubs go, it is a pleasant fact that they rose during the COVID-19 pandemic. On the one hand we have the increase of members in already existing reading clubs and on the other hand the formation of new reading clubs. Several people have turned to reading as a way to create connections and communicate with friends, and often complete strangers, during the pandemic and the extended lockdown.

As the world went into lockdown, virtual reading groups started turning to Zoom, Twitter, Instagram, Skype or Microsoft Teams in order to bring readers together.

One of the positive facts about virtual reading clubs is that members are not situated in the same physical location. That allows them to connect with readers living in different cities or countries. Digital platforms give the opportunity for people that may not have a permanent residence, travel a lot due to work, or have health issues, to meet more easily; they can move from one city/country to another and still join a particular reading club. Also, readers who were having trouble continuing to read or maintaining their attention spans as a result of pandemic stress were assisted in keeping up with their goal.

Moreover, virtual reading communities can be more democratic, diverse and non-hierarchical than offline groups, since members are dispersed and often anonymous in the online environment, and social status and cultural difference are less evident in typed discussions.

According to an essay about the Russophobe Book Club, one fact that changed for the better during the online meetings is that members respected the other participants more and



did not interrupt them while expressing their opinions; they also waited for their turn in order to speak. Virtual discussions tend to be less free-flowing. This is seen as a benefit by some who feel their group's book discussions are more focused and inclusive due to fewer side conversations but others miss the organic flow of an in-person meeting.

While literature can provide comfort and distraction on its own, it can also serve as the foundation of a community. Many digital reading clubs have sprung up throughout the world in recent weeks, allowing readers to communicate with their favourite authors, discuss difficult moral topics, or simply see other human faces. Mike Monteiro, co-founder of Quarantine Book Club, says, 'It's almost like the book is an excuse for people to connect and look at other individuals.'

'Literature has always done such an extraordinary job of provoking community and conversation – it's no surprise to me that it should be doing so, so powerfully now,' says Robert Macfarlane.

Most reading clubs invite authors from time to time, either for a reading of their book or to meet up with the members. It is much easier for writers to participate in virtual meetings, especially if they are on a tour for their upcoming book or simply because they live far away and such reading clubs cannot pay the expenses for a face-to-face meeting. Therefore, groups that enjoy having such meetings tend to invite writers more often.

Some former reading clubbers say that during the pandemic they developed 'internet fatigue'. This is because the vast of the majority worked – and some still do – from home and have to be in virtual meetings many times a day. As a result, they seek activities that do not involve the use of computers.

Furthermore, some say that they miss the face-to-face interaction with the other book members and the chatting that followed after the meeting ended. That leaves them with fewer opportunities to bond and connect on a social level.

Conclusions & considerations

As the pandemic is perhaps coming to an end, we tend to consider how – and whether – things are going to be the same as before. In terms of reading clubs, there is a diversity of opinions. The reading clubs that formed during the COVID-19 era will probably keep meeting through an online platform. The reading clubs that pre-existed the pandemic are expected to return to face-to-face gatherings and at the same time they are also going to give team members the chance to join virtually.

An all-virtual or hybrid group would likely be an appealing option for reading club members. In accordance with research findings, in virtual reading clubs, it is said that the groups have regained members who had moved away permanently or who live in a different location for part of the year. Also, some groups have attracted new members because of the flexibility of the virtual format.



What should concern us in future is whether the reading clubs will continue in the current virtual format, return to traditional face-to-face meetings or give people the chance to have a mixed way of participation. This is a fundamental question soon to be answered, as we gradually return to normality.

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European Policies and Strategies for the Recovery of the Cultural Sector after COVID-19

Focus on the book sector

Motto: 'Literature, culture, the arts foster our common European sense of belonging. Not only do they contribute to the social cohesion of our societies, our democracies and economies, but they also reflect our European diversity, values and history, our way of life.'

David Sassoli, President of the European Parliament (2021)

Introduction

The present report was conducted in the framework of the *READ-IN-CLUB: READ-ING for the CuLtUres across Borders* project funded by the Erasmus+ programme. It aims to outline the consequences of COVID-19 on the cultural and creative industries in Europe, with a special focus on literature and the book industry. It also traces the policies and strategies that the EU initiated for the recovery of the sector and highlights the value of the art of reading and the power of reading communities which in conjunction with digital technologies could create a supportive cultural environment where people are encouraged to become innovators and effective lifelong learners.

The cultural and creative sectors are among the fastest growing sectors in the European Union. It is estimated that it makes up to 4% of the EU's GRP and employs about 7.6 million people. When the COVID-19 health crisis reached Europe, most of the countries imposed lockdowns and movement restrictions that had a dramatic effect on the creative industry, which resulted in many job losses and a substantial drop in creative production. The Annual Single Market (2021) Report has confirmed that this ecosystem was among the hardest hit industrial ecosystems in the EU. According to the report, this sharp fall was especially witnessed in activities based on venues and visits. For instance, cinema operators in the EU report a 70% drop in box office sales in 2020, music venues report a 76% drop in attendance (64% in revenues), and museums lost revenues of up to 75–80% (in popular tourist regions). This impact is further illustrated by a decrease of around 35% in royalties collected by collective management organizations for authors and performers, whose revenues are expected to continue to fall in 2021 and 2022.

At the present moment, it is difficult to assess the overall economic impact on the CCS value chain and its sub-sectors, principally due to the fact that, firstly, sector estimates vary in methodology and content and, secondly, the effects of the pandemic on the CCIs significantly differs across the European Member States. In addition, the uncertain future circumstances require continuous monitoring and evaluation to seriously assess the situation. Nevertheless, some estimates provide an essential snapshot of the seriousness of damage suffered by



the industry. For instance, Central and Eastern European countries are among the most affected, with year-on-year revenue trends ranging from -36% in Lithuania to -44% in Bulgaria and Estonia. Hungary, Latvia, Poland and Romania are also part of this group. In all these countries, the performing and visual arts represent a larger share of the national creative economy than in the rest of the EU. For example, in Hungary, the performing arts (with a market expected to shrink by 90%) account for around 10% of the total CCI market, while the EU average is around 4%. In countries such as Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, France, the Netherlands and Slovenia, CCIs are still facing a significant decline in turnover (between -30% and -35% compared with 2019). In contrast, a group of Western and Nordic European countries (such as Finland, Germany and Sweden) experienced a slightly less grave reduction in turnover (a maximum of -30%) due to either the adaptability of the audience to the provided digital services or the policies each country initiated to support the CCIs.

The EU responded to this unprecedented health crisis by introducing a number of programmes and initiatives that would directly or indirectly support the whole cultural value chain. *Creative Europe* is the major supportive instrument for the support of CCIs and it was further boosted for the 2021–2017 period by almost doubling its overall budget for culture. Next to *Creative Europe*, the CCIs benefit indirectly from programmes such as *Erasmus+* with a doubled budget for the 2012–2027 period, *Horizon Europe*, a scientific research initiative with a budget of €2.4 billion exclusively reserved for the new cluster ‘Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society’, as well as programmes such as *Digital Europe* and *InvestEU*. The EU has also activated, during the crisis, short-term measures which will help the cultural and creative industries to sustain employment with liquid supply, funds, grants and compensations for self-employed people, and small and medium businesses.

Along with the different art forms supported by the new EU measures, special focus has been given to the book sector as one of the largest industries of the European economy. Literature plays a crucial role not only for the promotion of European values but also for building a more social and inclusive Europe, which will result in the better understanding of the Other within and beyond the European borders. The inauguration of Readr in July 2021, a platform that encourages the creation of public spaces dedicated to reading and the exchange of ideas on the world of the future, is the flagship initiative of the Slovenian EU Council Presidency and gives hope for the future of literature in the post COVID-19 era.

The impact of COVID-19 on the book sector

With the outbreak of the pandemic, the book industry along with the cultural and creative sectors across Europe has been severely affected by the COVID-19 crisis. All of a sudden, we witnessed the closure of bookshops, the freezing of new publications, the cancellation of events and book fairs as well as the loss of jobs for many writers, translators and staff working in the book industry. The vital sector of book publishing for the European economy and wellbeing of the citizens seemed to be significantly harmed and the overall consequences are difficult to access at the present time.



The publishing sector is one of the largest industries in Europe, with a total market valued at €36–38 billion. It is estimated that it employs, according to the European Publishers Federation report (2018), more than half a million people. When the pandemic reached Europe, most of the countries imposed lockdown measures and health restrictions which led to a partial or complete closure of bookshops; this had a dramatic impact on book sales. Although the measures and the periods of restrictions varied across European countries, the decline of the book sales reached anywhere between 75% and 95% in spring 2020 according to the Federation of European Publishers' report (2020). More specifically, in March, 2020, during the lockdown, sales dropped 50% in France, in Germany retail sales were down 30%, and Italy saw a drop of 75%, with a loss of €20 million. During the same period, sales shrank by 78% in Portugal, 80% in Spain and 82% in Romania. The extended lockdowns had also a dramatic impact on the publishing of new titles. Just to name some, French publishers postponed publications of 5.236 new titles and editions for the second part of March alone. By the end of March, Italian publishers cancelled or postponed around 23.000 upcoming titles, 75% of new titles were also cancelled in Greece, and Czech publishers postponed 15% of their new editions. Although, due to the lack of statistics, it is difficult to get a clear picture of the overall losses in the whole book value chain yet, it is worth mentioning that countries and governments, which considered books to be essential goods, saw significantly less losses in their country's home market compared to countries which considered books to be non-essential goods and imposed a strict lockdown on bookshops.

The dramatic decline of book sales in European countries in spring 2020 was counterbalanced with the significant increase of the online sales as well as of e-book and audio book sales. This transition from physical sales towards online selling and 'click and collect' services evened out the collapse of book sales around Europe. The Federation of European Publishers' report shows a 50% increase of online sales across Europe with Portugal reaching a 50% growth, Netherlands 40%, Sweden 19% and Italy 16%. According to the same report, the overall loss in book sales across Europe was 2% to 5%, with large disparities between countries and genres.

Despite the fact that the negative effects of COVID-19 in the European book market proved to be less dramatic with the completion of 2020, worrying data concerning the loss of income for writers and translators around Europe were forecasted by the European Writers' Council report (2020). According to a survey conducted by EWC in spring 2020, 97% of writers and translators experienced loss of income mostly because of suspended lectures and workshops (often until September 2020), 64% expect losses because of postponed publications of new titles, and nearly 40% expect losses because of postponed contracts, delay in royalty advances, or cancelled commitments. Particular mention has been made of the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on translators. The postponement of new publications and the cancellation of lectures and workshops has severely affected their income. In addition, the publishers' switch to digital publications and e-books as well as extreme discounts offered led to significantly less royalties for authors and translators.



Overall, the entire book value chain in Europe, no matter the periodically negative performance or recovery seen since the outbreak of the pandemic, seems to face several elements of fragility, which cannot be fully predictable. During this crisis, long lasting challenges concerning the book market also emerged and new ones appeared. Issues such as copyrights, taxation, geo-blocking and accessibility are at the forefront again and require innovative solutions aligned to the new European strategies for the 2021–2027 period as we are entering a new era for European culture.

Europe's response on the recovery of the cultural sector: Key Strategic Axes

Since mid-March 2020, all European Member States have taken measures to contain the spread of the COVID-19 virus. The impact of this crisis was extremely grave for all economic and social sectors around Europe but it has severely affected the already fragile ecosystem of the cultural and creative industries. With cinemas and theatres closed, cancellation of festivals, concerts and book fairs, the loss for the CCI reached €199 billion or 31% of its total revenues in 2020, entering an alarming state around Europe.

The cultural and creative sectors represents 5.3% of Europe's GDR and entails 12 million full-time jobs which constitutes 7.5% of the EU's employment and the third-largest employer sector in the EU (European Commission, 2018). In addition, culture proves to be significantly valuable for people's well-being and mental health. During the lockdowns and movement restrictions, CCIs played a vital role in creativity, engagement, sharing and reaching audiences in innovative virtual environments. In this respect, the EU released emergency funds available to the Member States in order to support the afflicted CCIs and facilitate a safe resumption of the sector's activities. Next to the financial support, the released funds had to meet the key objectives set by the European Commission for the 2021–2027 period. This includes programmes and initiatives that would facilitate a transition towards a more digital, a greener, innovative and more social, cooperative and inclusive Europe.

Among the new measures launched by the EU, there are programmes which directly empower the creative industry as well as non-direct initiatives which aim at the sustainability of the European economy including the cultural and creative industry. This report will outline some of the direct ways that the EU introduced to strengthen the cultural market, such as the new Creative Europe programme, the resumption of the European Capitals of Culture programme and the new platforms for cultural exchange that emerged during the COVID-19 crisis. It will also trace some indirect measures that the EU initiated in order to support the European economy in general and that allowed the whole value chain of the creative industry to benefit from – among them, the European Guarantee Fund, Sure and the Temporary Framework for State Aid Measures.



Direct Ways

Creative Europe

Creative Europe, which was launched in January 2014, is a core programme supporting the creative, cultural and audio-visual sectors around Europe. The programme supports the mobility of European creative projects beyond national borders, aiming to reach new audiences in European countries. With the outbreak of the pandemic and after long discussions on the EU budget, the programme was further boosted with a total of around €2.4 billion made available to Member States for creative projects. Adaptations were embraced and maximum flexibility for the implementation of the projects was offered so the programme could meet the new challenges imposed by the COVID-19 crisis and the movement restrictions enforced in most European countries.

The programme encompasses three strands: Culture, Media and a cross-sectoral strand which supports projects spanning several cultural and creative sectors. Next to the longstanding goals of the programme to nurture new talent and generate new jobs, the new calls under the current circumstances of the crisis have placed special focus on transnational cooperation, innovation and digital transformation. Creative Europe now supports projects which aim to reinforce the transnational creation and circulation of European works. The priority given to cooperation among artists and organizations across European countries can be pictured for example, in the book sector, the co-funding cooperation projects of which has been increased to 80% for grants up to €200,000, and 60% for bigger grants.

In the performing arts sector, new directions have been taken by the EU towards a digital transformation, which not only allows the realization of the projects in a virtual environment, making them at the same time accessible to a broad audience across Europe, but also eliminates the sector's carbon footprint. As the performing arts have been extremely hit by the movement restrictions in Europe, innovative practices towards a digital transition seem now more welcome than ever, namely, through the new calls of the Creative Europe programme. In addition, a flagship initiative for the recovery of the cultural sector has been the development of digital platforms, which facilitate the sharing of creative projects and artworks among artists and organizations all over Europe.

European Capitals of Culture

European Capitals of Culture is an initiative that dates back to 1985 that has since offered the chance to more than 60 selected European cities to benefit from the vast opportunities that this grant has to offer. The aim of this initiative is to foster the contribution of culture to the development of cities, increase European citizens' sense of belonging in a communal area and highlight the richness and diversity of cultures in Europe. The selected cities celebrate and promote the cultural heritage of their area with exhibitions, artistic events, festivals and workshops.



This longstanding initiative was frozen in 2021 due to the COVID-19 health crisis and the calendar for the upcoming European Capitals of Culture was modified in December 2020. The European Commission gave the opportunity to the European Capitals of 2020 (Rijeka & Galway) to hold their title until April 2021. Although the countries that will host the next European Capitals of Culture have been designated until 2027, limited actions were taken in terms of policies for the 'here and now' needs of the current Capitals of Culture or for designing alternative ways for the cancelled or postponed activities and events.

Platforms for knowledge and sharing

In the wake of the COVID-19 health crisis, during the Croatian presidency, when the cultural industry had already been severely hit, the Commission proposed the launching of two new innovative platforms which would facilitate exchange in terms of challenges, solutions and opportunities in the creative sector throughout the European Member States. The two digital platforms which, at one and the same time, meet the broader objective of the EU towards a digital transition and allow for deeper interconnection among the Member States would be beneficial as much for the European policy makers as for all people working in the cultural and creative industries in Europe.

The first platform, launched on April 24, 2020, responds to a policy-making level and encourages the exchange of successful initiatives and practices in the creative sector among all the Ministries of Culture in the European Member States. The second platform, 'Creatives Unite', launched on May 5, 2020, and implemented by the 'Creative Flip' project team, is addressed directly to all people working in the CCIs and offers access to the vast amount of sector resources and initiatives that arose in the EU in response to the COVID-19 crisis. The goal of this project is to accommodate a virtual space which will not only provide information and networks about creative opportunities that arose during the pandemic but also a space where people working in the cultural industry will be able to co-create, exchange ideas, suggest and initiate solutions together. In the new reality shaped by the pandemic, this project aims to bring European 'creatives' together under a digital 'home' that had set the foundations for re-inventing new methodologies and practices in the cultural and creative sectors.

Indirect Ways

The Temporary Framework for State Aid Measures

Next to the measures taken by the EU to directly support the cultural and creative sectors, CCIs also benefit from a number of additional indirect reforms concerning the recovery and sustainability of Member States' economies. On March 19, 2020, the European Commission introduced the Temporary Framework programme in order to support the European



economy. The aim of this programme is to support micro and small businesses, self-employed people, and consumers who have been affected by the cancellation of services. It includes measures such as grants, selective tax advantages, advance payments, state guarantees for loans taken by companies from banks, subsidized public loans to companies, safeguards for banks that channel State aid to the real economy, and short-term export credit insurance.

The Temporary Framework is a programme which was first adopted by the EU in 2008 during the global financial crisis. With the outbreak of the pandemic, the programme was activated again and since March 2020 it has been repeatedly amended in order to widen the scope of this type of aid. With the latest extension of this programme, Member States can be supported by this scheme until the end of December 2021. Although there were voices expressing doubt concerning the efficiency of this measure for the European economy and whether the policy principles were correctly applied in practice by each Member State, it still remains a valuable tool which has contributed to the sustainability of the cultural and creative industries. For example, in Greece alone, the Commission approved (June 2021) a €8 million scheme to support film distributors and cinemas affected by the coronavirus outbreak and another €14 million scheme (July 2021) to support companies active in the arts and entertainment sectors, particularly in theatre and cultural venue management.

European Guarantee Fund

The European Guarantee Fund was founded by the Europe Investment Bank group and the EU Member States in December 2020 to offer protection to companies severely hit by the COVID-19 crisis. The EIB has made available €25 billion in response to the current health crisis and it is expected to generate another €93.9 billion in funding for the EU economy. The available funds are targeted mainly towards small and medium enterprises (65%) and a maximum of 23% will go to companies with 250 or more employees, with restrictions applying to larger companies. Five per cent will be available for companies aligned to the public sector and organizations focused on health research. Some 7% of EGF is aimed at financing venture capital projects.

The priority of the fund is to provide financial aid to companies that are viable in the long-term, but are struggling in the current crisis. Over half of its target has been already offered to vulnerable SMEs and companies of the creative industry. For instance, in March 2021 the European Investment Fund signed a guarantee agreement with Magyar Vállalkozásfejlesztési Alapítvány to provide €8.2 million in support to Hungarian small- and medium-sized enterprises in the cultural and creative sectors in order to sustain jobs and speed up economic recovery. Bulgaria was provided with €10 million upon agreement with the European Investment Fund in order to support small- and medium-sized private and public enterprises in the cultural and creative sectors. The agreement provides loans with better terms and conditions to small and medium enterprises, helping them to sustain jobs.



SURE-Support to mitigate Unemployment Risks in an Emergency

SURE is a loan-based instrument proposed by the Commission and adopted by the Council in September 2020 upon agreement with the Member States. By making available €100 billion, SURE is designed to mitigate unemployment risks in an emergency and protect jobs and incomes of European citizens affected by the pandemic. The provided loans aim to support the Member States to cover the costs directly related to the creation or extension of national short-time work schemes and other similar measures they have put in place for the self-employed.

Due to the COVID crisis, many businesses are experiencing difficulties and have been forced to shrink part of their activities. As a result, many employees are compelled to leave their jobs or reduce working hours. The emergency loans offered by SURE to Member States give them the opportunity to avoid such wasteful redundancies. The first report published by the European Commission in March 2021 shows that the SURE instrument supported between 25 and 30 million people in 2020. The demand from Member States has been strong, with 90% of the total envelope to have already been allocated by the Council to 18 Member States. For instance, according to the report, Spain has received €21, 324 billion in loans, the Czech Republic has been provided with €2 billion, and Hungary with €504 million. Although at the moment there is limited data from the Member States regarding the sectors that have been mostly supported by SURE, it is implied that the cultural industry, along with hospitality, entertainment and tourism, was one of the main beneficiaries.

Europe's response to the recovery of the book sector

Next to the support offered to the cultural and creative industry, the book sector has benefited from the new measures initiated by the EU. The new Creative Europe programme 2021–2027, as the major source of support for the book industry, has to offer new opportunities and a much bigger budget compared to that of 2014–2020, as the Commission announced in January 2021. Creative Europe now has a total of around €2.4 billion available to promote cultural and linguistic diversity and heritage.

The new calls under the new Creative Europe for the book sector are affiliated with the EU's political priorities towards a green and digital transition, transnational cooperation, innovation and a more social and inclusive Europe. In particular, cooperation projects seem to be the main priority of this new programme aiming to deepen the connections among the Member States and among different organizations and creators. Innovation is also a primary concern for the EU as it will enforce improvements towards a digital transformation. It will also increase competitiveness and contribute to a more efficient circulation of literature. As a result, it will allow the book industry to reach new audiences, paving the way for a more diverse and inclusive Europe. The new Creative Europe 2021–2027 programme will maintain the same supporting tools as the previous version but with some improvements that will



accommodate the new objectives of the EU under the new circumstances imposed by the health crisis. This includes Literary Translation Support, the cooperation and platform for promotion of works and the European Union Prize for Literature.

Literary Translation Support

The appeal for *More than a language* in Europe was first launched in September 2008 at a conference on Multilingualism in Paris. It was a call for a large-scale European programme which would bring to the fore the importance of multilingualism and translation in European culture but would also financially support translating endeavours in this direction. Since then, the Creative Europe programme has incorporated Literary Translation Support, a scheme which provides co-financing to publishers to encourage the translation and publication of books in particular from less represented languages.

The new Creative Europe programme will maintain this instrument for the 2021–2027 period with a budget of €5 million. It supports publishers by offering 50% of the total cost of the translation of a minimum of 5 works as well as additional support for distribution and promotion to a broader audience. The novelty of the new programme is that there will be the possibility for publishers either from the same country or from different countries in the EU to apply jointly for larger-scale projects. As a result, more publishing houses around Europe will take advantage of the programme, reinforcing in this way the activities of the whole value chain of the book market and enriching diversity around Europe.

Cooperation and platforms for promotion of works

The book sector will be reinforced also by a number of platforms and projects which aim not only to strengthen the whole book value chain but also to enable access to a wider European readership. Old projects will continue and new ones have been initiated in order to foster the cooperation and networking of young European creators and organizations, to promote new talents, to develop new skills, and to increase competitiveness and professionalism in the book industry. Platforms such as CELA, ALDUS, Versopolis, SILO and READ ON are socially oriented projects that promote several types of literature, ranging from fiction and comics, to poetry and science. Each one, with its unique specialization, brings to the fore the vital role of literature in European society. They promote smaller languages in the publishing industry, conduct social inclusive operations for marginalised people, strengthen the European sense of 'common place' through literature, and attract young people's interest through their digital skills.

On July 14, Minister of Foreign Affairs Anže Logar inaugurated a new platform, 'Europe Readr'. As the flagship cultural project of the Slovenian EU Council Presidency, the platform was realized in collaboration with EUNIC. 'Europe Readr' aims to promote reflection on the future of living by using as a starting point a programme of curated activities related to reading culture and literary practices. The project looks at the intersection of literature, sustainability,



architecture, urbanism and digitalisation and it is another endeavour from the EU to connect European society with literature. With the whole cultural industry having been severely affected by the COVID-19 crisis for more than a year now, it seems quite promising for the future of the book industry to see the European Council put the spotlight on literature as the starting point for European cultural and financial recovery.

The European Union Prize for Literature

The European Union Prize for Literature is an initiative started in 2008 that aims to highlight the wealth and diversity of European literature in the field of fiction. The Prize is supported by the Creative Europe programme and the competition is open to 41 countries. The consortium of the Prize consists of the European Writers' Council, the Federation of European Publishers and the European and International Booksellers Federation. Each year, national juries in a third of the participating countries nominate their winning authors, making it possible for all countries and language areas to be represented over a three-year cycle. Since its first edition, 135 emerging authors from 41 European countries have been selected, making it possible for their work to be translated into several languages and reach new markets in Europe and beyond.

The primary priority of the Prize is to offer equal opportunities to writers and new talents whose language is underrepresented in the European book market in order to enrich cultural and linguistic diversity in Europe. Next to the number of opportunities offered to the winning authors for their career, the European Union Prize for Literature aims to enrich cultural diversity in Europe. The domination of the English language, along with French, Spanish and Italian, within Europe did not allow easy access to literature of other countries with less popular languages. With the Prize, European readers now have the possibility to discover new authors from all over Europe, to meet new cultures within the European borders and to gain a better understanding of the Other through literature. The new Creative Europe programme 2021–2027 will continue to support this initiative, making it possible for European writers, publishers and the whole book value chain to benefit from the valuable opportunities it offers, especially under the current circumstances of the COVID-19 crisis.

Conclusion

The present report aimed both to outline the impact of the COVID-19 health crisis on the cultural and creative sectors in Europe, with a special focus on the book industry, and to trace some of the measures that the EU initiated for the recovery of the sector. Whilst the EU responded in an immediate way to this unprecedented crisis that reached Europe in 2020, the pandemic left this sector severely harmed and brought to the fore longstanding issues that it faces. Now, in 2021, the COVID-19 crisis is still here and that creates a number of challenges for the European economy in general and especially for this already fragile sector.



The EU tried to strengthen the creative industry by introducing a number of policies and practices to help CCIs, creators, freelancers and consumers to sustain employment and production. These include short-term measures such as public funding opportunities, tax relief, unemployment benefits, grants and subsidies for individual artists and CCIs, compensation of losses, loan provision, guarantees and investment incentives for creative companies, job retention schemes that help companies to safeguard employment, and procedural flexibility for project implementation. It also adopted a series of long-term measures affiliated to the EU's strategic plan. The new Creative Europe 2021–2027 programme, which is the major supportive instrument for culture, initiates structural change policies for the CCS that focus on training and employing creative workers, transnational creation and cooperation, innovation, and the digital transformation aiming to set the foundations for a more socially inclusive, competitive and green Europe.

The main objective of the new programme is to boost the digital transition in the creative industry. As digital technologies gained significant ground during the pandemic in terms of people's interaction, cultural engagement, entertainment, sales and other traditionally physical activities and services, the new EU reforms aim to unlock digital growth potential and deploy innovative solutions for CCIs and creators. European reformers see in the cooperation of culture and digital technologies opportunities for a more social and inclusive Europe. Cross-sectoral collaboration and cooperation among the European Member States in the field of culture is one of the first priorities of the EU. Through opportunities for mobility and skill development for creators, audience development and cooperation among artists and organizations, the EU's goal is to strengthen intercultural dialogue and achieve a more social and inclusive Europe, namely, by promoting its diversity and fostering a European common place with equal opportunities for all. New reforms also foster the green transition and contribute to achieving the goals of the European Green Deal.

In the wake of the announcement of the new cultural policies of the EU, a critical discussion has opened about the gaps in the new reforms and the extra policies and strategies that the EU needs to introduce for the recovery of the cultural sector. After the outbreak of the pandemic and the crisis that the cultural and creative industries faced, the slogan heard by many cultural workers, activists, researchers and experts is: *'We won't go back to normal, because normal was the problem'*. There is a call for structural changes and reforms that will permit the CCS to be a driver and enabler of sustainable development. This includes, primarily, a better collection of evidence concerning the economic and social impact of the pandemic on the CCS. Robust data enables a better understanding of the real problems that the sector faces and can raise awareness of the value of the cultural and creative sectors among policymakers, citizens, and education and training providers. Based on strong data collection, EU policy makers can also build a fair work system that the cultural sector needs urgently. Creative employment very often takes non-traditional and diverse forms and CCS workers are often excluded from receiving benefits unless adaptations for such non-traditional forms are part of the general package. The COVID-19 crisis has highlighted how such jobs often fall through the cracks in terms of public support. Consequently, addressing gaps in self-



employment support schemes by simplifying eligibility criteria and making them accessible to hybrid forms of employment would be significantly valuable for the support of people working in the creative industry.

Public funding is also crucial for the sustainability of the creative industry. However, CCI needs more public funding aligned to the needs of the sector. For instance, the often overlooked grassroots venues, independent bookshops and non-profit organizations, which are an extremely important source of independent experimentation and cultural diversity both in rural and urban areas, are at risk during the crisis since they often lack the necessary legal form that will enable them to receive support. Consequently, there is a need for radical structural changes for the recovery of the cultural and creative sectors and this could be achieved by more targeted public funding and long-term approaches in policy making.

Regarding the digital transition, EU policy makers are asked to create a digital framework that fits the CCS's needs. The digital ecosystems for the CCS remain fragmented and require further critical reflection on digitalisation and democracy. Many SMEs, for example, find it hard to achieve a digital transition due to the lack of funds and infrastructure. The EU should ensure a diverse and inclusive digital space as well as digital accessibility and discoverability for all cultural institutions and audiences in the EU, including for those based in rural and remote areas. In conclusion, it is crucial for the EU to raise awareness about the cultural dimensions of social inclusion. Recognising the interconnection of cultural participation and social inclusion and promoting the positive impacts of the CCS on intercultural dialogue and European diversity would result in a more democratic, competitive and social Europe. With these reforms the cultural and creative sectors can prove to be a major accelerator for social, societal and environmental transitions in Europe.

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READ-IN-CLUB Research Report

The task

The READ-IN-CLUB Research gathered data on working formats and methods of various existing reading clubs, especially after the COVID–19 pandemic outbreak, in five European countries: Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, Hungary and Slovenia. The aim of the research was establishing ground for the development of useful tools in the various reading club practices.

The methodology

The READ-IN-CLUB Research was conducted between September 1 and September 30, 2021, in five participating countries. The questionnaire with 41 questions organized in 7 groups was distributed and a total of 156 answered questionnaires was collected, ranging from 20 up to 48 in various countries. While these numbers are too small to give a deep representation of reading club practices in various countries, they do indicate some common points as well as some differences in the area of our research.

In addition to this, the reading club coordinators in various countries were invited to participate in structured interviews consisting of seven questions on organization background, financial support, goals, obstacles and possible improvement. These responses came from a minimum of five coordinators in each participating country.

Definitions

As a starting point, we needed to define the topic of our research. In existing practice, similar terms such as **reading club**, book club, reading group and others are used interchangeably, without precise definition what they refer to, which sometimes leads to confusion. For clarification, we started with the basic nominal distinction between the reading club (where the emphasis is, at least nominally, on the *act of reading*) and the book club (where the emphasis is, again at least nominally, on the *object of the book*).

Those activities whose primary motivation is aimed at stimulating the book trade in any form (primarily of course by selling specific books) were excluded as a topic of our interest. Therefore, we left out many forms of book promotion vaguely referred to as a 'book club' or, in some cases, even 'reading club', starting with probably the most famous of them all, *Oprah Book Club*.

The vague use of the term is also demonstrated by *Wikipedia*, which does not have a 'reading club' article. A search for this term refers the reader to the article on '[book discussion club](#)':



‘A **book discussion club** is a group of people who meet to discuss a book or books that they have read and express their opinions, likes, dislikes, etc. It is more often called simply a **book club**, a term that is also used to describe a [book sales club](#), which can cause confusion. Other frequently used terms to describe a book discussion club include **reading group**, **book group**, and **book discussion group**. Book discussion clubs may meet in private homes, libraries, bookstores, online forums, pubs, and in cafés or restaurants over meals or drinks.’

Collins Dictionary also has no ‘reading club’ entry; however, the [‘book club’ entry](#) has the same dual definition:

1. A book club is an organization that offers books at reduced prices to its members.
2. A book club is a group of people who meet to talk about a book or books that they have all read.

A similar definition appears in *Oxford Learner’s Dictionary*:

1. an organization that sells books cheaply to its members
2. (also book group, reading group) a group of people who meet together regularly to discuss a book they have all read

The *Cambridge Dictionary* definition, on the other hand, defines a [book club](#) as ‘a group of people who meet regularly to talk about a book that they have all read’ and omits the first meaning.

Reading club is also omitted as a term from *Encyclopedia Britannica* where the [book club article](#) refers primarily to the specific book distribution setup in the book trade.

For the purpose of our research, we defined a reading club as **a group of people who meet regularly to discuss a book they have read.**

1. *A group of people* – we did not require a minimum or maximum number of participants. However, the term ‘group’ implies a meeting of at least five people coming from different families.
2. *Meet* – we understood this term as a physical meeting in a specific space as well as a virtual meeting with the help of electronic communication, as long as the meeting takes place in real time – in a specific frame of time which is set up in advance. Therefore, a literary forum where people are posting their reading experiences online (such as [www.bookcrossing.com](#)) does not qualify.
3. *Regularly* – such meetings can be held on a weekly, monthly or less frequent basis. We considered as ‘regular’ meetings that happen at least four times a year.
4. *To discuss* – exchanging reading experience must be a multi-way event, so lectures on a specific book or interviews with the author do not qualify. Again, at least four reading experiences must be expressed to qualify as discussion.



5. *A book they have read* – we've omitted the word 'all' ('they have all read') used in some of the definitions. It is impossible to verify if all the participants have read the book that is the topic of discussion; on the other hand, their presence at the discussion expresses their interest in the discussed book, so they might become future readers of the book title under discussion.

We had no preferences on where the reading club is taking place (various physical or virtual spaces were treated equally) or on the status of the organizers of the meeting as long as these organizers were not primarily commercially oriented and thus included in the regular book supply chain.

Meetings in public libraries did qualify – meetings in bookstores did not. Meetings in private homes did qualify if they were not oriented primarily to the sale of a specific book title or a book series. Meetings in cafés and restaurants did qualify if the establishment did not make a majority of their income by selling books – they might sell books as a side business, though. Last but not least, we analyzed only reading clubs where the majority of readers are adults – 18 years of age or older.

We defined the **reading club coordinator** as the person who takes care of the practicalities of the reading club: coordinating the time and space/web channel, informing members about the choice of books to be discussed, informing them of club activities... This person can also moderate the discussion, but this is not a condition for being considered the coordinator. Not all the tasks mentioned need to be taken care of by the coordinator but this person should be the first choice if the members are looking for answers on practical matters regarding the reading club activities.

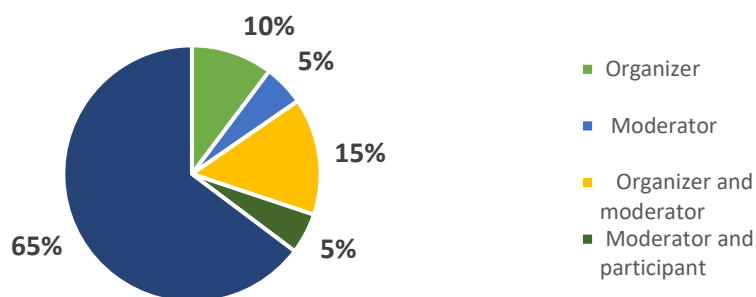


Results – The Questionnaire

1. Demographics of the respondents

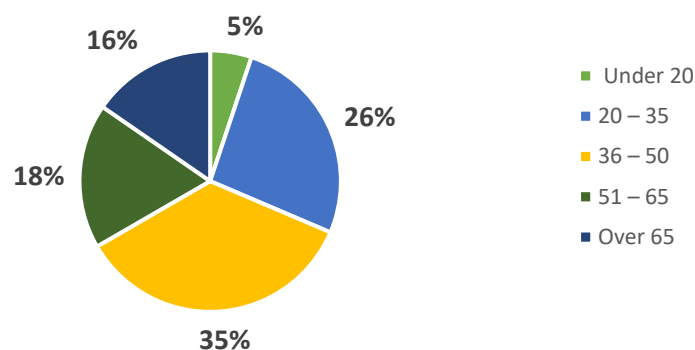
Out of the 156 responses, 16 participants in the research chose to represent themselves as organizers, 6 as moderators, 23 as organizers and moderators, and 8 as moderators and participants. 101 chose the representation as ‘participant’. These figures show a high level of self-organization in the existing reading clubs – more than one out of three respondents has also organization and/or moderation tasks.

1. 1. In what function do you participate in your reading club?

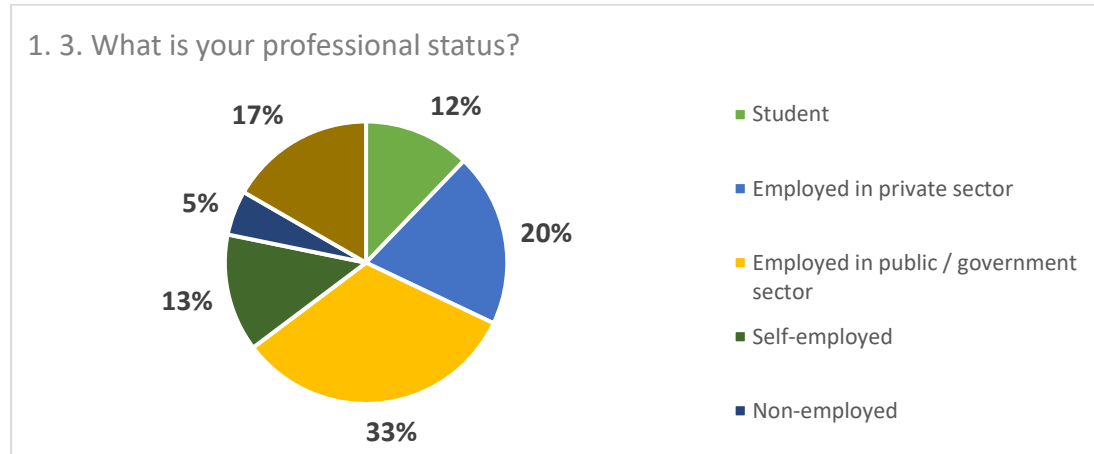


In terms of age, similar numbers of participants were under 35, 36–50 and over 51, which led us to conclude that the reading clubs represent all age groups of the grown-up population in an almost equal measure. (The same was reflected in the estimation the participants gave about the age difference and the average age of the participants in their club – most of the clubs had an age difference ranging from 10 to 30 years.)

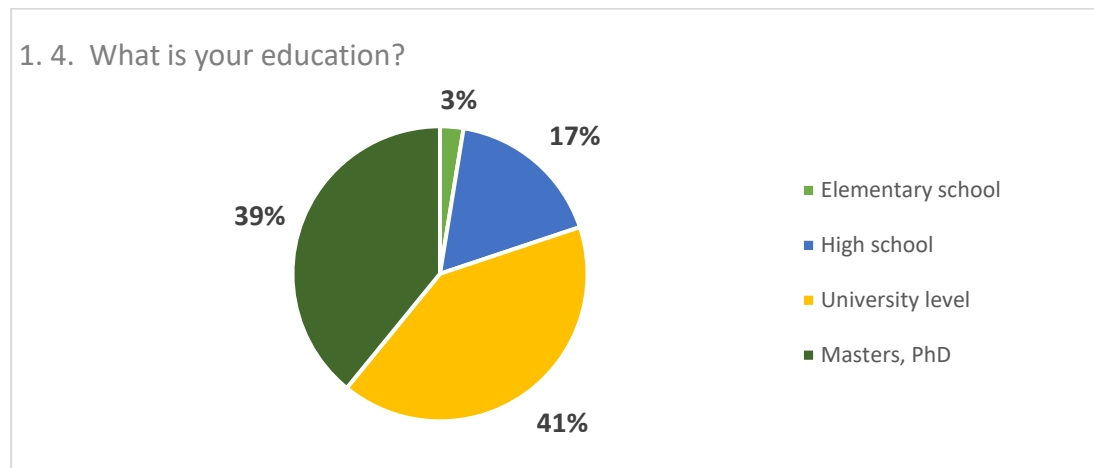
1. 2. What is your age?



The same three almost equal groups are shown when we have a look at the employer of the participants – one third is employed by private sector, including self-employed, one third by public sector and one third consists of students, unemployed and retired persons.



A completely different picture is shown by the question on education: most people have a university education (125 altogether) and a surprisingly high number of them a Masters or PhD.¹ There are very few participants (none in most countries) whose highest level of education is primary school. The number of participants whose highest level of education is high school is almost equal in all participating countries.

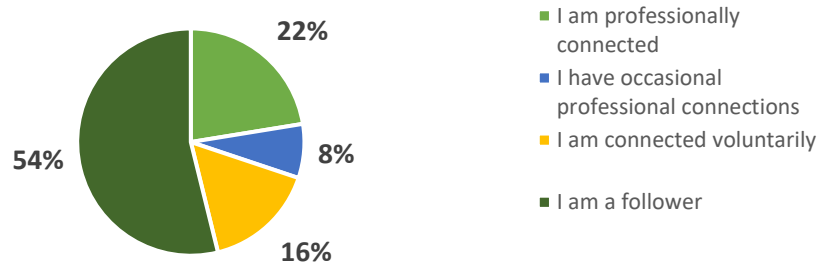


¹ This result comes from a particularly high number of such participants in the Croatian research. It is possible that this research was targeted at specific reading clubs where members have the highest possible level of education.



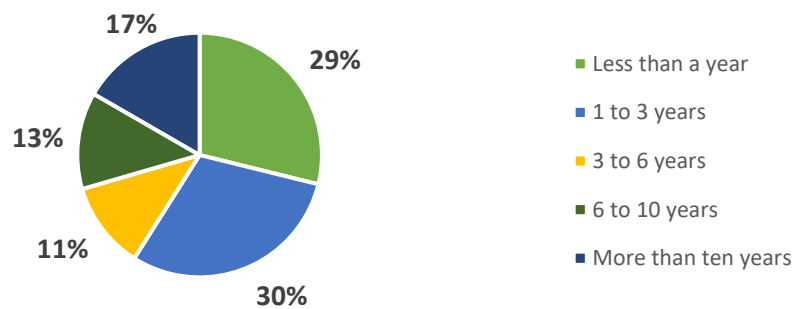
A significant number of participants have professional or voluntary connections with the book field.

1. 5. What is your connection with the book field (publishing, libraries, media ...)



Quite a few members have been active in their reading clubs for a long time.

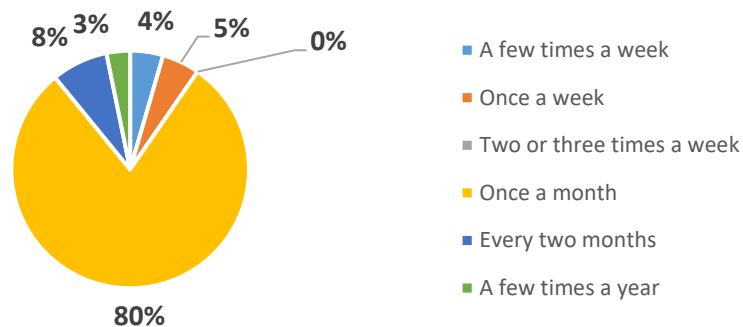
1. 6. For how long have you been participating in a reading club?



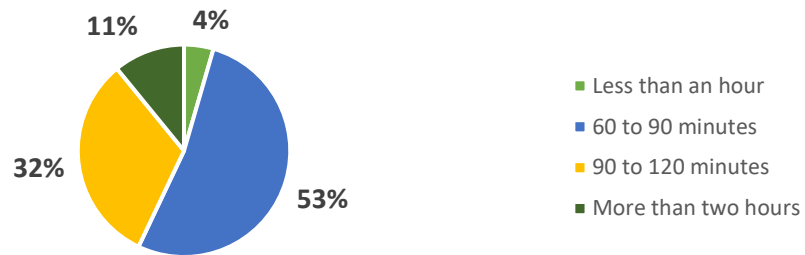
2. Reading club habits

A vast majority of reading clubs (80%) meet once a month and a majority of meetings last 60 to 90 minutes (82 answers), while some extend to two hours (50 answers) or more (17 answers). Very seldom are the meetings shorter than an hour (7 answers).

2. 1. How often does the reading club meet?

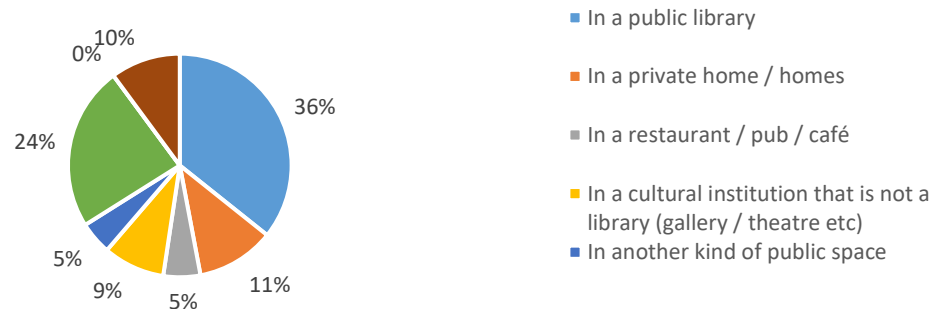


2. 2. How long does a meeting last?



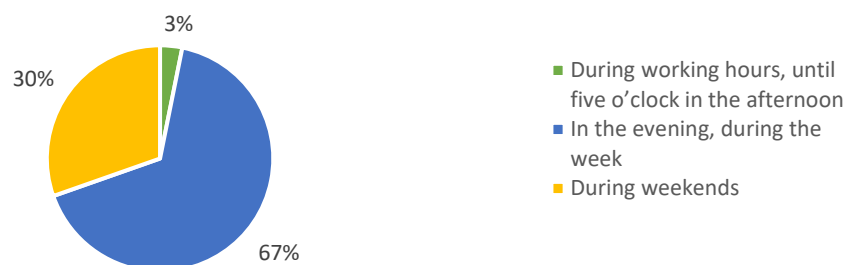
Most of the meetings take place in a public library, followed by meetings held online via Zoom.²

2. 3. Where do the meetings take place?



Roughly two-thirds of the meetings take place in the evening, during the week. Approximately one third of the meetings take place during weekends. Very seldom do members of a club meet during regular working hours, that is, before five o'clock in the afternoon.

2. 4. When do the meetings take place?

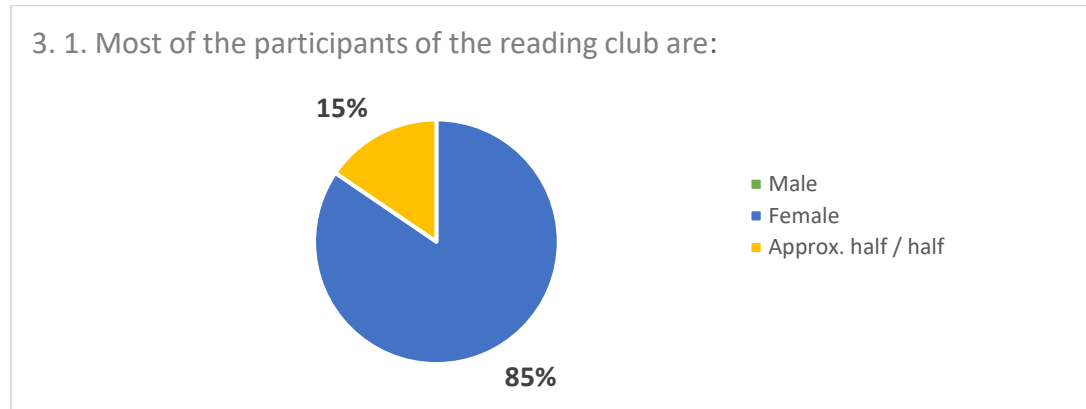


² Similar research carried out by BookBrowse in 2020, *Bookclubs in Lockdown*, where 90% of the respondents were in the USA, showed that 54% of the reading club members meet in a private home and 15% at the library. Those meeting remotely used Zoom in 96% of the cases.

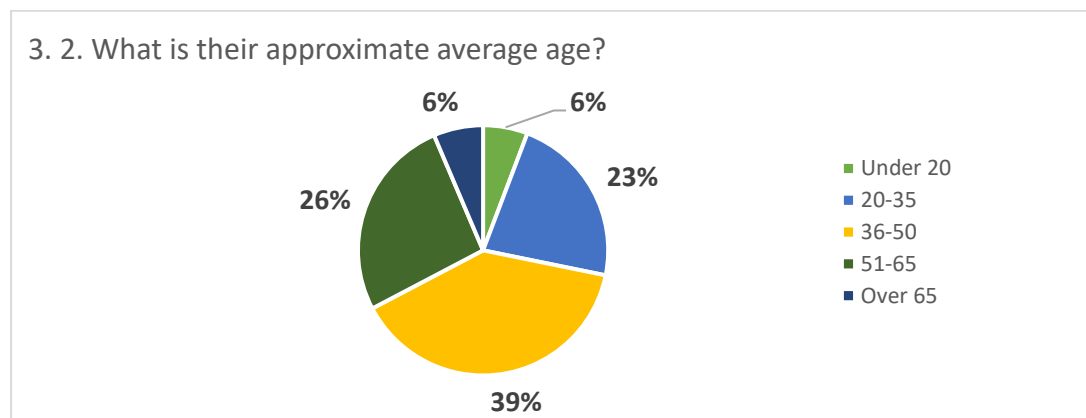


3. Demographics of the reading club

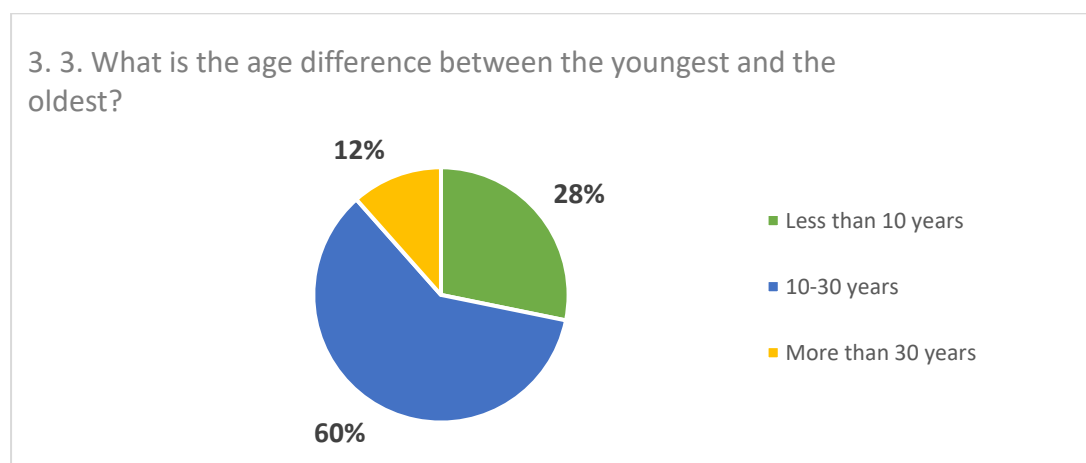
None of the reading clubs had a majority of male members. In more than 80% of the answers, most of the members are female. (This is in correspondence with the general reading research data, where female readers prevail.)



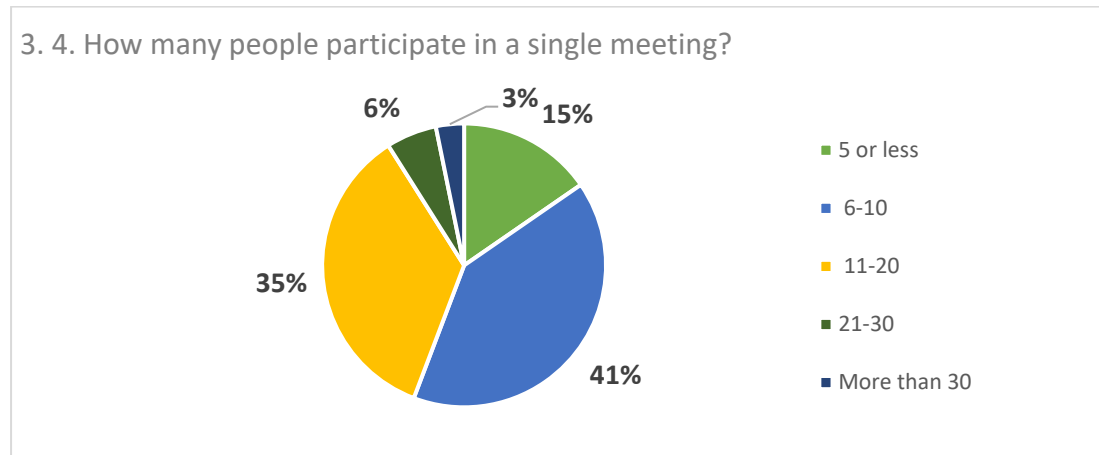
The approximate average age was between 36 and 50 years of age.



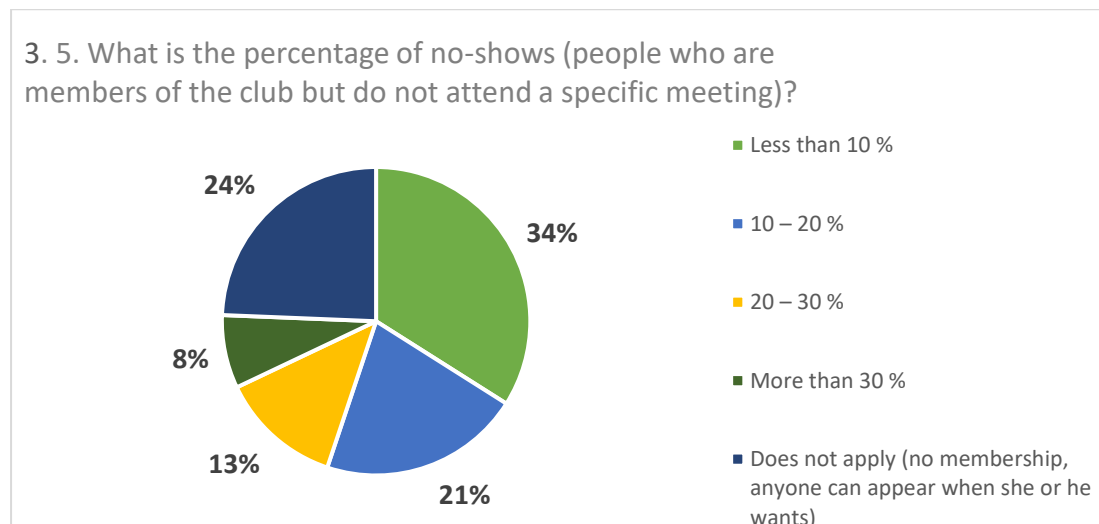
In general, most of the clubs show a wide variety of age groups and therefore provide intergenerational discourse.



Very few clubs have more than 20 participants; a majority has less than 11, and quite a few respondents (namely, 24) were participating on meetings with five or less members. Since we put the limit of the research to clubs with at least five members, that means that 15% of the respondents were participating in *microclubs* consisting of five members.



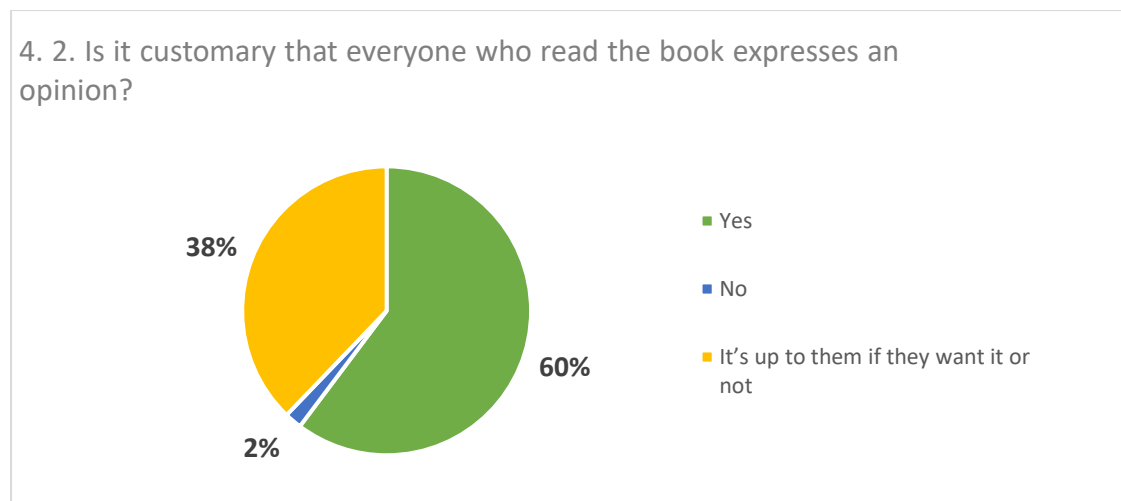
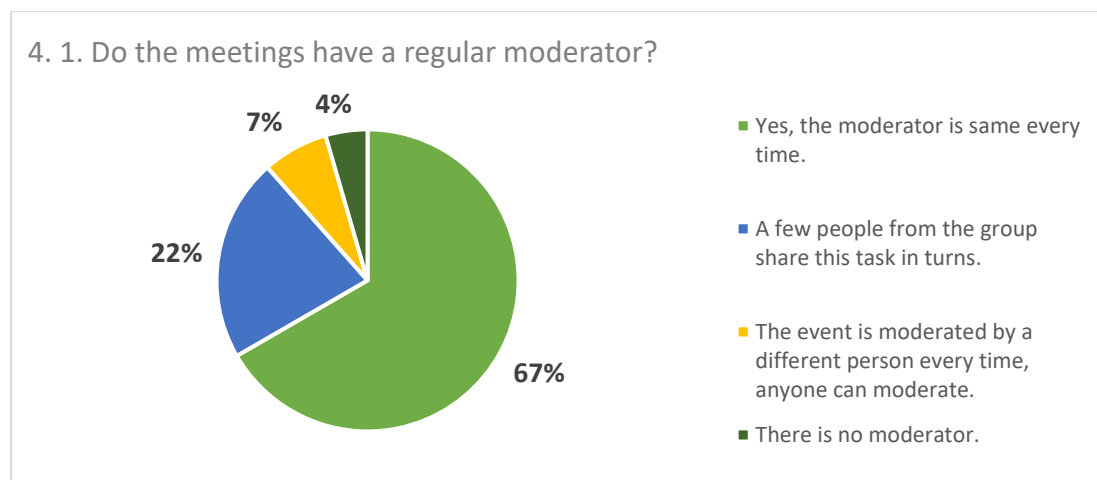
The loyalty to the clubs was quite high: one third of the respondents expressed that the dropout rate was less than 10% on a single meeting which, in combination with the average number of members, shows that the members, at least in smaller reading clubs, typically visit every meeting.



4. Moderation

A vast majority of respondents reported having the same moderator at every session in their club. Very seldom did the group function without the moderator.³ Most of the moderators stimulate the reading club members to express their opinion – and in most cases, the members do it every time. The number of responses that the moderator has to ‘take care that some of the participants do not take too much discussion time’ was quite high, which most likely corresponds to the wish expressed in the structured interviews that the moderators would like to acquire additional knowledge on group dynamics and psychology.

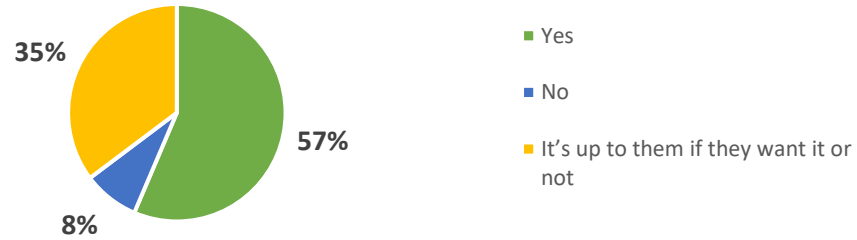
Most of the reading clubs do not require that all the participants read the book being discussed, though this is strongly preferred.



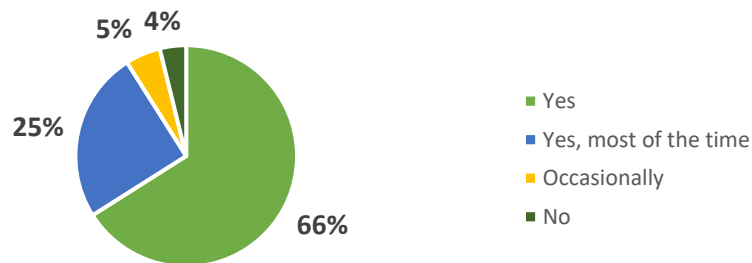
³ In USA, 75% of private book clubs and 93% of public book discussion groups have somebody who functions as a moderator or at least facilitates the discussions (sometimes the same person each time, sometimes the role is rotated). (<https://www.bookbrowse.com/blogs/editor/index.cfm/2019/5/20/What-to-Do-When-a-Book-Club-Member-Talks-Too-Much>)



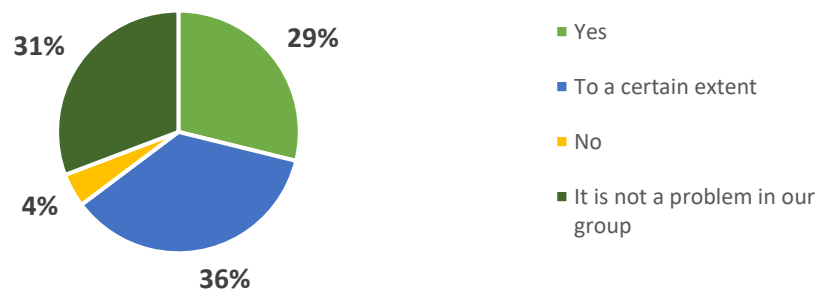
4. 3. Does the moderator invite the silent participants to express their opinions?



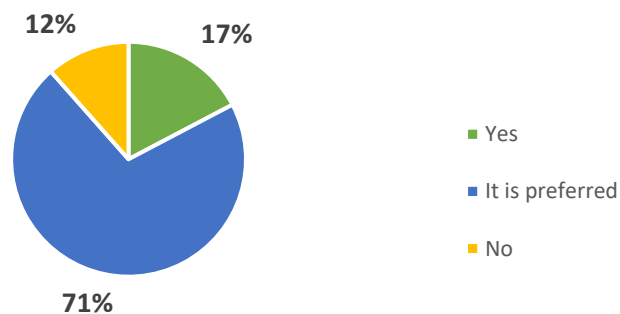
4. 4. Does the moderator pay attention to every member opinion being heard?



4. 5. Does the moderator take care that some of the participants do not take too much discussion time?



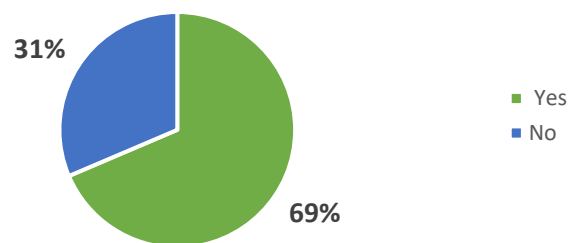
4. 6. Is it obligatory to read the book being discussed?



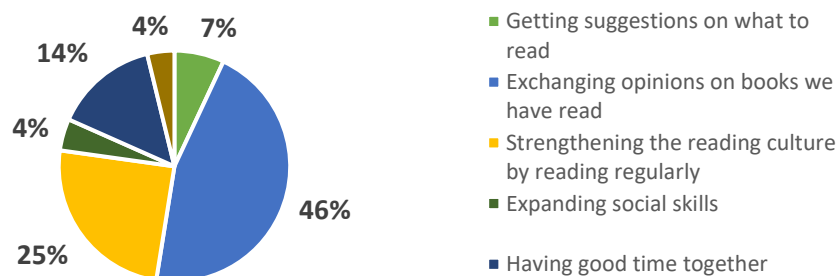
5. Habits

Most of the participants reported that in their meetings it is possible to participate without being present by mailing comments and/or questions. Since the majority of respondents quoted that exchange of opinions about the books read was the strongest reason to join the reading club, this practice seems to at least partly satisfy their motivation. The next most quoted reason was ‘strengthening the reading culture by reading regularly’ followed by social motivation, i.e. ‘having a good time together’. Only a handful of participants were primarily motivated by ‘getting suggestions on what to read’, ‘expanding social skills’ and ‘expanding intercultural dialogue’. Obviously these benefits are not yet fully addressed in the present routine of the reading clubs.

5. 1. Is it possible to mail questions and/or comments if someone is not present at the meeting?



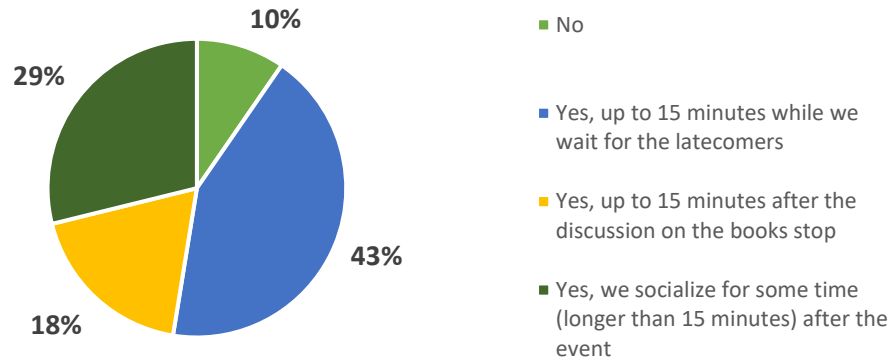
5. 2. What is your **main** reason for joining a reading club? (choose one answer)



As for the social part of the gathering, most of the respondents note it is an important part of their activity – only 15 responses (divided between three countries) reported of no ‘general chat’ activity whatsoever, while quite an impressive number of reading club participants reported on socializing after the event (29 for up to 15 minutes and 45 for more than that).



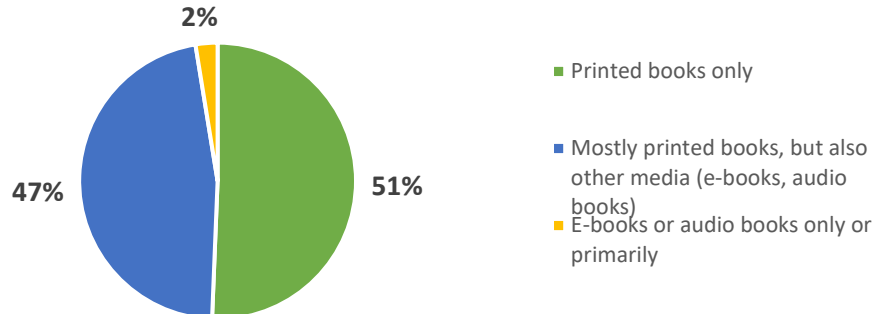
5. 3. Is any amount of your reading club time dedicated to general chatting/socialization?



6. Choice of books

The responses on the chosen reading media were almost equally divided between ‘printed books only’ and ‘mostly printed books, but also other media (e-books, audio books)’. Only four responses were in the category ‘e-books or audio books only or primarily’.

6.1. What is the chosen reading media?

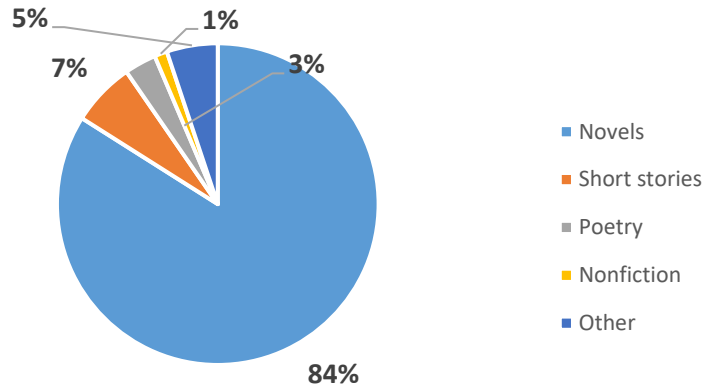


(The BookBrowse research from 2020, *Bookclubs in Lockdown*, noted that ‘many groups that are currently meeting have taken advantage of their library’s ebook collection, often for the first time [...]. However, wrangling the technology has been a challenge for some, who look forward to return to borrowing in print.’ 90% of the respondents were from the USA where the usage of e-books – or ebooks, as used in the text – is a few times higher than in Europe.)



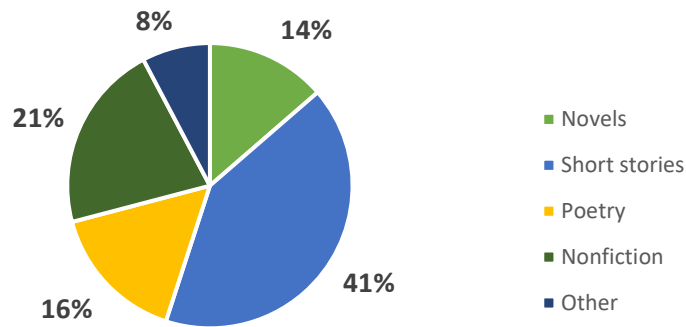
As for the choice of reading genre, as expected, novels strongly prevail. They represent the majority of the books being read in almost all the answers, followed by short stories, non-fiction and poetry.

6. 2. The **majority** of the books being discussed consists of:



As for the second-most-frequently-read genre, novels seem to be second choice in almost every answer where they are not the first choice and various literary genres are present in the same descending order as beforehand.

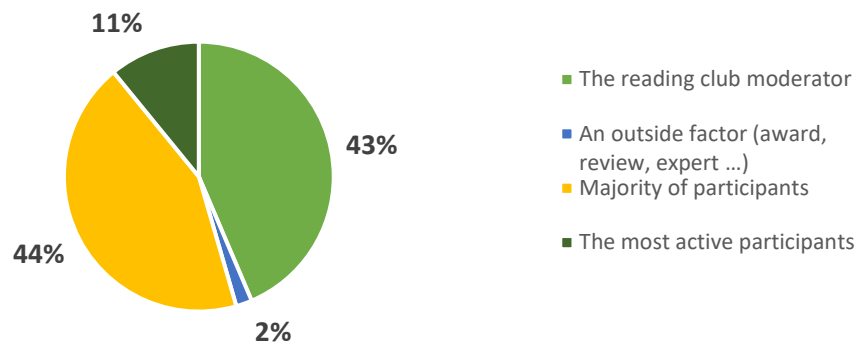
6. 3. Other included genres are (mark all that apply)



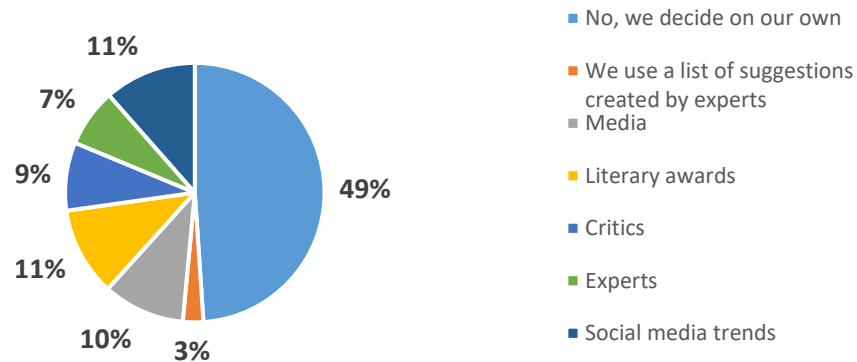
The primary choice of books for discussion is in equal measure made by the moderator and the majority of participants; in some cases, the choice is made by the most active participants, and only one response reported on an outside factor that makes the choices. Quite clearly, the reading choices are not made from any central point and have to do with subordinate levels. In addition to that, none of the outside factors prevails when it comes to suggesting which books to be read.



6. 4. Who **primarily** chooses the book for discussion?

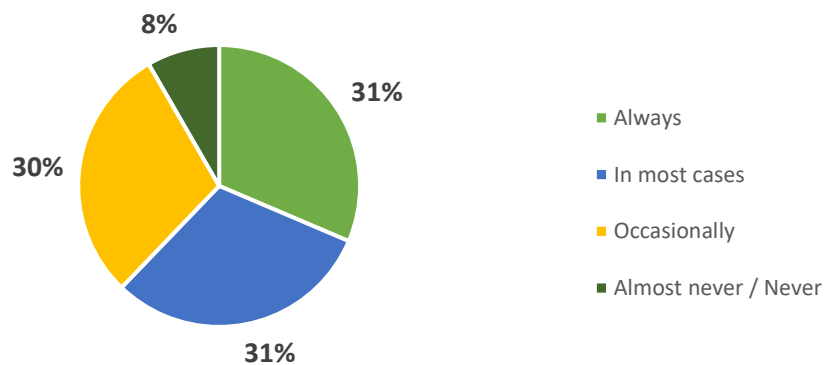


6. 5. Does an external suggestion influence the choice of the book to be read?



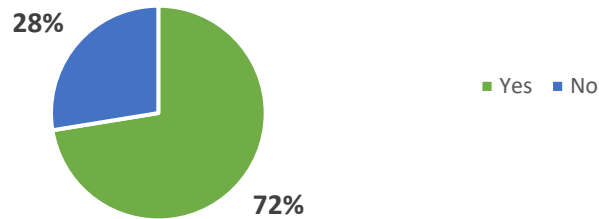
The previous statement is also supported by the fact that reading club members see their participation in the choice of the books being read, in almost equal parts, as follows: ‘always’, ‘in most cases’ and ‘occasionally’. ‘Almost never/never’ were far less frequent responses.

6. 6. Do members participate in choosing the books being discussed?

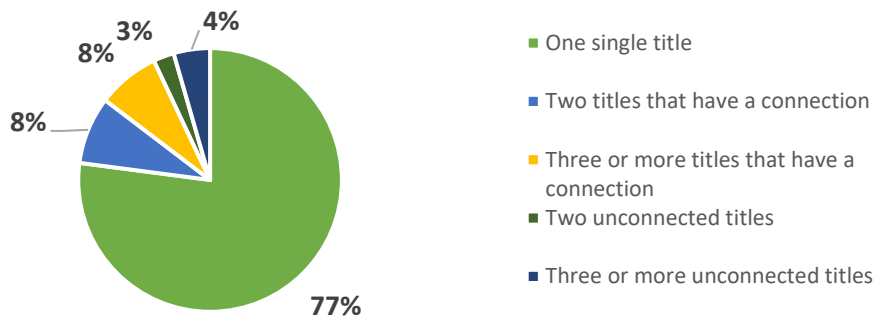


In most cases (over 70%), a single book title is discussed in a single meeting. Sometimes the discussion is focused on two or, in lesser measure, three connected books. Unconnected titles are discussed in a single meeting only as an exception.

6. 7. Does the discussion take place over a single book title every time?

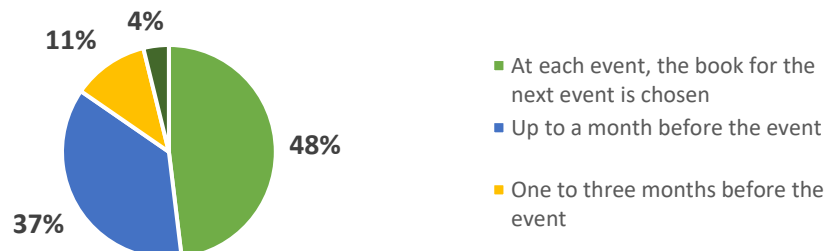


6. 8. How many book titles are typically discussed in a single meeting?



Almost half of the responses report that the book to be read is chosen at each meeting for the next one, followed closely by ‘up to a month before the event’. The choices ‘one to three months before the event’ and ‘more than three months before the event’ lag far behind.⁴

6. 9. How far ahead of time are the books to be discussed chosen?

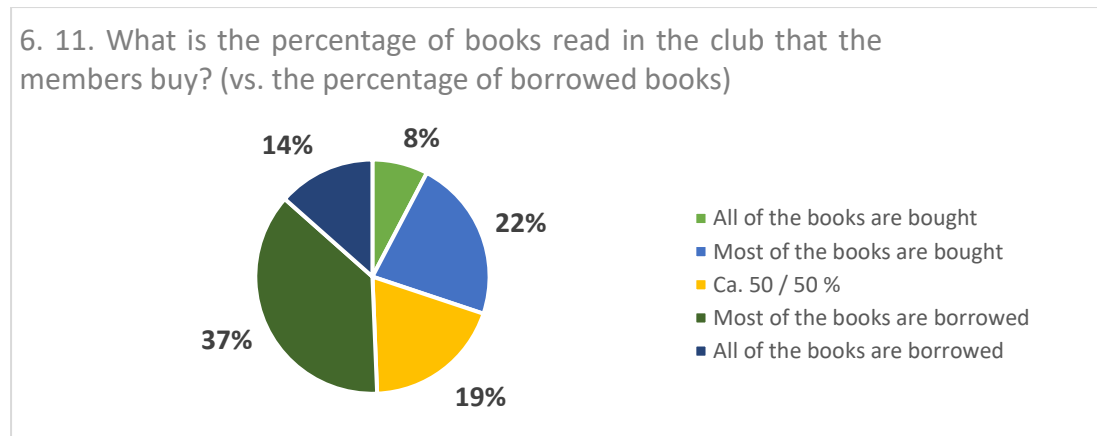


⁴ The *Bookclubs in Lockdown* research states that about 40% of the groups choose their reading at least four months ahead.



(It needs to be noted that this timing is in close relationship to the frequency of meetings – it seems highly unlikely that those clubs that meet every week can choose the book to be read for the next meeting at the previous meeting – not only the time to read the book, also the time to acquire the next title might be too short in this case, especially since a substantial number of participants borrows the books chosen from public libraries and/or friends. Since a vast majority (approximately 80%) of the answers shows that the reading clubs meet once a month, this leaves the adequate time to acquire and read the book for the next month.)

The price of the books does not significantly affect the choice of the books being discussed, partly because a high percentage of the books being read is borrowed from public libraries and/or friends.



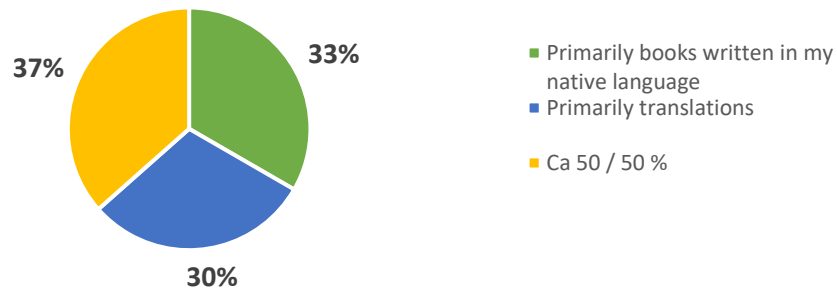
The question ‘Do you primarily read books written in your language, or translations?’ had an almost equal divide of answers between ‘primarily books written in my native language’, ‘primarily translations’ and ‘approximately half/half’.

(It should be noted that in most countries, the percentage of translated books vs. original ones tends to lean heavily towards original books, so, bearing this in mind, translations seem to be more strongly represented in the reading club practices than in general publishing practice. An additional research would be needed, though, to explore the difference between the translations used in the reading club practices and their share at the book market.⁵ Since the translated books undergo double selection process, first for publication in the original language and after that for publication in translation, it is not an exaggeration, although a simplification, to say that these books are in general a ‘safer choice’ in the search for books of quality than books written in a native language.)

⁵ A study in Slovenia (<https://knjiznica.zbds-zveza.si/knjiznica/article/view/6120>) showed that approximately four out of five novels borrowed from Slovenian public libraries were translations. This result does not necessarily express that national literature is not interesting for the national readers – it comes more likely from the fact that the Slovenian literary production, at that time, included almost no popular literature which is the most read literature by definition.



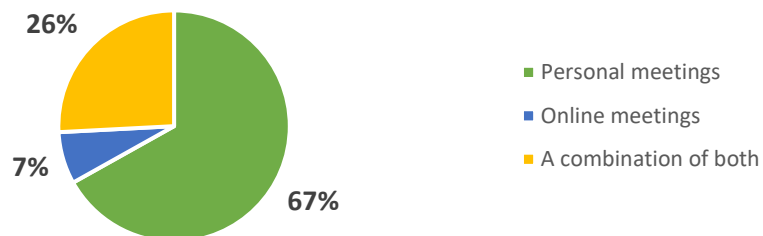
6. 12. Do you primarily read books written in your language, or translations?



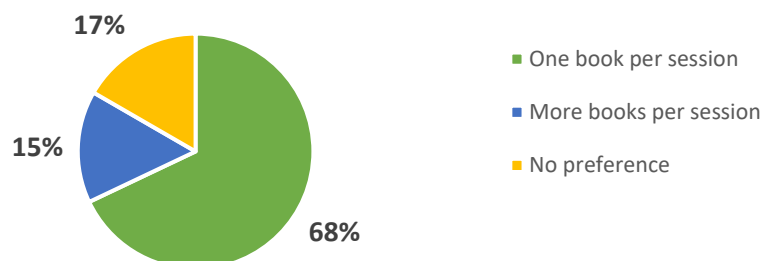
7. Preferences

Most of the respondents prefer meeting in person to meeting online; they also preferred discussing one book per meeting. Since the social element is one of the crucial motivations for reading club experience, this comes as no surprise.

7. 1. In an ideal situation, would you prefer personal or online meetings?



7. 2. Do you prefer discussing one book per session or more books (somehow connected)?



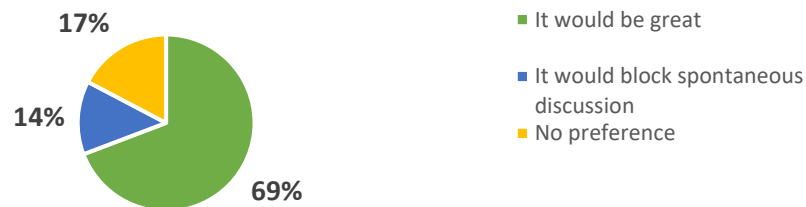
However, moderated discussions are preferred to spontaneous discussion. Obviously, discussion on the books is for most of the members also a way of broadening their knowledge and understanding of literature, not just an excuse for socializing.

7. 3. Do you find moderated meetings more adequate than spontaneous discussion?



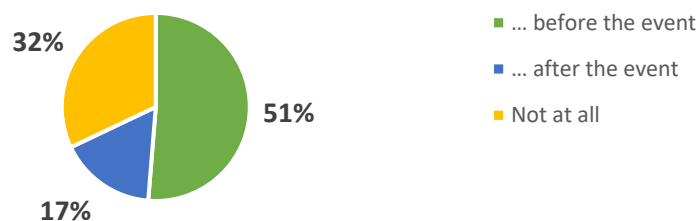
The wish for a 'professional' approach towards the books being discussed is further emphasised by the fact that most of the respondents welcome the participation of the author and/or an expert on the book.

7. 4. What is your opinion on presence of the author/an expert on the book?



Although the answers show only a minor impact of outside factors, such as literary awards, media and critical response on the choice of books to be read, the majority of the respondents would appreciate some additional materials about the read book, preferably before the meeting.

7. 5. Would you like to receive guidelines on the book you're reading ...



Results – The interviews

When asked about the obstacles they face, most of the reading club coordinators mentioned the lack of IT devices and/or IT knowledge as the primary challenge. As expected, online meetings are less appealing, especially for older members who do not possess appropriate equipment or knowledge on the use of IT.

In most of the countries, the pandemic has reduced or completely erased the activities of the reading clubs. After a while, some of them have resumed their activities in a basic form, for example, by exchanging reading suggestions via email. Those clubs that had meeting online before the pandemic were of course less affected. On the other hand, meetings held in libraries were completely stopped since the libraries were not open at the beginning of the pandemic.

Some coordinators mentioned that there is not enough general knowledge about the existence of reading clubs and the benefits of participation in them (socializing, 'readophilia', exchange of opinions, building relations ...). Some have mentioned it is not easy to get enough copies of the books for all members to read them in time – the number of copies in local public libraries is limited; there are towns without bookstores; and delivery of online orders might take too long.

Quite a few have mentioned visits of authors and exchange of experiences by various reading clubs as a tool to improve their activities. Financial support which could enable the visits was also called for.

Physical meeting places were, in most cases: public libraries, various cultural institutions and NGOs, private homes, and in one case a swimming club bar.

Croatia

All of the 10 reading clubs whose coordinators were participating in the interview were part of an organization, six of them working within the framework of a public library and four of them of an NGO. Six of them got financial support from the Ministry of Culture and local governments, two of them from a public library and only two received no support at all.

Most of the clubs have moved their activities online during the pandemic, which brought the positive effect that more members from distant places, even from other countries, were able to participate.

Cyprus

In Cyprus, four out of five reading clubs were made up of informal gatherings of individuals, and one was allocated at a public library. This was the only reading club that received some public funds from a library and local municipality.



Greece

The reading clubs in Greece had a variety of financing sources: one was supported by crowdsourcing, another by public funds, two by membership fees; and got no support at all. The same variety was shown in the transfer to digital during COVID – one of the clubs reported a seamless transfer to online meetings, two with difficulties, and two stopped their activities completely.

One of the Greek reading clubs has incorporated meetings with authors in their activities – the meeting with the author follows the reading club meeting and is organized as a public event, open to everyone.

Almost all Greek coordinators mentioned a lack of time as a main obstacle for better development of their reading club, which was not the case with other coordinators. They also emphasised the need of closer connection with the professional book sector.

Hungary

In Hungary, the seven reading clubs participating had a variety of structures – some were informal gatherings of individuals, some were independent civic organizations, and some were non-government organizations. This variety was also reflected in the financial resources for the activities, ranging from membership fees to successful applications for funding given by the municipalities and government.

Slovenia

Three of the five reading clubs included in the interview were an activity conducted through a public library, one was a part of a civic organization working in many fields, and one was a private initiative. The last was the only one that got no public funding, although some of the coordinators complained that the sums given to the moderators and/or guests of the clubs are 'ridiculously low'. Some of the clubs transferred their activities online via Zoom during the pandemic. They noticed the limited interaction between participants in that form. On the other hand, some more shy participants prefer to express their opinion online.

Members of the reading clubs working in public libraries mostly decided to stop their activities while the public libraries were closed and to continue them once the circumstances changed. On the other hand, a reading club in one of the biggest Slovenian public libraries (in the centre of the capital city Ljubljana) decided to hold their meeting only via Zoom. This enabled more distant members to participate. This club mentioned that the older members gradually became more at ease with digital communication and emphasised that a simple how-to guideline for the technical side of Zoom communication would help.

The club that was a completely private initiative started during the pandemic via Zoom. The coordinator emphasised that the videoconferencing system enabled some of the members living in other countries to participate in discussions. Another club mentioned that they have a member living in Canada who overcomes the difference in time zones to participate in discussions.

One of the coordinators expressed that she has literary knowledge but lacks moderation skills and could use some additional knowledge in that area.



Summary

The answers on demographics show that reading clubs consist of an evenly dispersed range of ages, in almost equal measure. They are also equally visited by those employed in the private sector and those employed in the public sector. The number of unemployed falls slightly below the percentage of unemployed in Europe (5% vs. 7%). Although the retired population tends to read above the average according to the general book research data, the percentage of retired members of the reading clubs is also slightly lower than the percentage of retired population of Europe (17% vs. 20%) – the reason is quite likely the fact that the research was conducted in electronic form and therefore was less likely to be answered by older individuals. In Hungary, the questionnaires were attached to an e-mail and the number of retired respondents was consequently much higher (64% of all respondents) than in other countries.

These figures might lead to the hasty conclusion that at present, reading clubs are open to everyone in an equal measure and that the members represent the general population. The most obvious difference is that the members of reading clubs are primarily women, which corresponds to other researches of the reading field. The education level also shows an unbalanced picture: 80% of the respondents has completed university education (which is twice the European percentage in all the population, according to Eurostat) and very few have finished only primary school. While the relation between education and reading habits is undeniable, it needs to be emphasised that some of the researches have shown that reading habits exist in all levels of education.

Obviously there is a certain gap in the existing reading clubs' structure and it might be fruitful to establish reading clubs which will be specially targeting those whose highest level of education is high school or less; their participation could probably be encouraged by the choice of more accessible books. The established form of a *microclub* (with around five or slightly more members) might be appropriate for such a venture. It might be reasonable for these clubs to be moderated by socially more experienced coordinators able to suggest appropriate books for this specific readership and, on the other hand, to accommodate the discussion of the books on a level which can be followed by all (or most) members of the reading club.

The role of the moderator is constantly expressed as very important in the research, and even with a population where 80% of the respondents have a university education, the moderators have to take care that every opinion is being heard and that some of the participants do not take too much meeting time to express their opinion.

The strongest reasons to participate in a reading club are an exchange of opinions on the books and social interaction which often extends beyond the discussion of the books to general socializing. Consequently, it is no surprise that the majority of participants prefer real meetings to online meetings. Online meeting have their benefits, too: it was emphasised several times that in an online meeting, more members can participate, including those from



distant areas, towns and even other countries. If circumstances such as those caused by the pandemic force the reading clubs to transfer from live to virtual events, it might be constructive to pay special attention to socializing possibilities in online communication (i.e. breakout rooms in Zoom meetings, etc.).

Moderated discussions are preferred to spontaneous discussion and participation of the author and/or an expert on the book would be welcomed by most of the respondents. The majority of the respondents would appreciate some additional materials about the book under discussion, and most of them would prefer to have such material before the meeting. Since almost all of the clubs make the reading list as they go, and since the reading choices are made, to a large extent, by reading club members, introduction of reading guide editions (quite common in English⁶) might not be the most appropriate response to this need – although they could be used at least for some of the titles that are often included in reading clubs practice and/or represent a national or wider canon. Such tools might also help the coordinators to organize the discussion and pay additional attention to some hidden undercurrents in some of the books.

It must be emphasised that, with a wide range of generations within a single club, the reading club experience provides intergenerational discourse. However, inter-social discourse might be on a lower level – we did not ask about the members' income since we would need to take into account the differences between average income in various countries, but we can conclude this from the fact that the members with less than university education are rare.

The financial and organizational structures vary greatly not only between the various countries taking part in the research, but also between the various reading clubs. While eight out of ten reading clubs in Croatia and four out of five in Slovenia received financial support by the state and/or local community, only one out of five was supported in Cyprus. Financial support comes from a variety of sources, of which public funding is the most stable. Most club coordinators mention a lack or inappropriate level of financing as one of the main obstacles for book club development.

⁶ Many examples can be found at <https://www.readinggroupguides.com/>.



Final suggestions

Based on the research results, the following actions can be suggested for an improved reading club experience:

- *A reading club network*

A number of club coordinators have mentioned the eagerness to exchange experiences with other reading club coordinators and to come into contact with good innovative practices in their work. Therefore, it would be helpful to organize an ongoing event being held on a regular basis (maybe twice a year) to share good practices across international borders. Within the national borders, suggestions on books that are a good starting point for discussion could also contribute to the reading club activities.

This network can be supported by a common international website for reading clubs (in English) with connections to pages in national languages.

- *Expanding knowledge in literature, moderation and technical aspects of online communication*

While the technical aspects could be improved by a simple how-to guide in the native language of participants (some of whom lack the necessary English skills to rely solely on Zoom guidelines), it seems that there is a need to enhance knowledge about literature (especially reader-response theory) as well as moderation skills. Some coordinators expressed a wish to participate in a seminar for improvement of the reading club moderation.

- *Establishing reading clubs specifically aimed at readers with high school education or lower*

Since these readers are strongly underrepresented in the present reading clubs, there might be a need for reading clubs created specially with them in mind, moderated by experienced coordinators who can suggest appropriate book choices.

- *Visits of authors and/or experts on specific books/topics*

While in many (by no means all) countries there is a scheme to support authors' appearances at the literary events, festivals and in bookstores, this does not seem to extend to reading clubs. Since many of the clubs included in the research have no funds of their own (or have very limited funds), it would be necessary to research possible options to cover authors' and other professional participants' fees for visits.

Since it was expressed in the interviews that some of the members could be slightly unsettled during the authors' visits due to possible 'nonunderstanding' of their work, it might be smart to agree on the visit before inviting the author. The practice of one of the Greek reading clubs where the meeting with the author follows the reading club meeting where the book of this author is discussed and is organized as a public event, open to everyone, can be suggested as a successful practice.



- *Creating reading guides for some selected titles*

The majority of the respondents would appreciate additional materials about the books they read, preferably before the meeting takes place. Such materials should be created on a national level and possibly distributed as free downloads via the website of the reading club network. Finding such support for books might gather additional attention when reading clubs are choosing books for discussion, meaning that a special emphasis can be put on books that support intercultural understanding.

November 16, 2021



Appendix: 5 National Data Collections

IO1- READ-IN-CLUB Research Report 5 NATIONAL DATA COLLECTIONS

Countries: Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, Hungary, Slovenia

Total number of filled questionnaires: 48 + 26 + 20 + 25 + 37 = 156

Questions	CROATIA – Nr. of responses	CYPRUS – Nr. of responses	GREECE – Nr. of responses	HUNGARY – Nr. of responses	SLOVENIA – Nr. of responses	TOTAL number of responses
1. Demographics of the respondent						
1. 1. In what function do you participate in your reading club?						
● Organizer	2	2	2	8	2	16
● Moderator	1	1	1	3	2	8
● Organizer and moderator	5	5	3	4	6	23
● Moderator and participant	2	4	2	0	0	8
● Participant	38	14	12	10	27	101
1. 2. What is your age?						
● Under 20	4	0	1	0	3	8
● 20–35	5	6	5	2	23	41
● 36–50	23	11	11	4	6	55
● 51–65	11	7	2	4	4	28
● Over 65	5	2	1	15	1	24
1. 3. What is your professional status?						
● Student	4	0	1	1	13	19
● Employed in private sector	5	11	6	4	5	31
● Employed in public/government sector	29	6	5	2	9	51
● Self-employed	3	5	7	2	4	21
● Unemployed	1	2	0	0	5	8
● Retired	6	2	1	16	1	26
1. 4. What is your education?						
● Elementary school	3	0	0	1	0	4
● High school	4	5	5	4	9	27
● University level	5	13	8	16	22	64
● Masters, PhD	36	8	7	4	6	61
1. 5. What is your connection with the book field (publishing, libraries, media ...)						
● I am professionally connected	19	1	4	2	9	35



● I have occasional professional connections	1	2	2	4	3	12
● I am connected voluntarily	1	9	3	2	10	25
● I am a follower	27	14	11	17	15	84

1. 6. For how long have you been participating in a reading club?

● Less than a year	13	8	8	3	13	45
● 1 to 3 years	19	6	5	1	16	47
● 3 to 6 years	8	1	2	2	5	18
● 6 to 10 years	8	5	3	4	0	20
● More than ten years	0	6	2	15	3	26

2. Reading club habits

2. 1. How often does the reading club meet?

● A few times a week	0	0	1	4	2	7
● Once a week	0	1	5	2	0	8
● Two or three times a week	0	0	0	0	0	0
● Once a month	47	24	10	12	31	124
● Every two months	1	1	2	4	4	12
● A few times a year	0	0	2	3	0	5

2. 2. How long does a meeting last?

● Less than an hour	1	0	1	2	3	7
● 60 to 90 minutes	26	14	11	8	23	82
● 90 to 120 minutes	18	9	4	9	10	50
● More than two hours	3	3	4	6	1	17

2. 3. Where do the meetings take place?

● In a public library	35	2	7	9	7	60
● In a private home/homes	3	1	6	8	1	19
● In a restaurant/pub/café	5	1	1	1	1	9
● In a cultural institution that is not a library (gallery/theatre etc.)	0	5	3	5	2	15
● In another kind of public space	3	1	0	2	2	8
● Via zoom	14	5	3	0	18	40
● Via MS Teams	0	0	0	0	0	0
● Via another way of e-communication	0	11	0	0	6	17

2. 4. When do the meetings take place?

● During working hours, until five o'clock in the afternoon	2	0	0	3	0	5
● In the evening, during the week	46	13	10	16	20	105
● During weekends	2	13	10	6	17	48

3. Demographics of the reading club

3. 1. Most of the participants of the reading club are:

● Male	0	0	0	0	0	0
● Female	46	21	10	19	35	131
● Approx. half/half	2	5	10	5	2	24



3. 2. What is their approximate average age?						
● Under 20	7	0	1	1	0	9
● 20–35	0	8	2	2	23	35
● 36–50	29	10	12	2	8	61
● 51–65	12	7	5	12	5	41
● Over 65	0	1	0	8	1	10
3. 3. What is the age difference between the youngest and the oldest?						
● Less than 10 years	12	3	9	6	14	44
● 10–30 years	31	20	10	16	17	94
● More than 30 years	5	3	1	3	6	18
3. 4. How many people participate in a single meeting?						
● 5 or less	0	0	4	1	19	24
● 6–10	16	15	11	7	14	63
● 11–20	29	8	4	10	4	55
● 21–30	3	2	1	3	0	9
● More than 30	0	1	0	4	0	5
3. 5. What is the percentage of no-shows (people who are members of the club but do not attend a specific meeting)?						
● Less than 10%	20	13	10	3	7	53
● 10–20%	7	6	6	8	6	33
● 20–30%	4	4	2	7	3	20
● More than 30%	1	0	1	5	5	12
● Does not apply (no membership, anyone can appear when she or he wants)	16	3	1	2	16	38
4. Moderation						
4. 1. Do the meetings have a regular moderator?						
● Yes, the moderator is the same every time.	41	21	10	6	26	104
● A few people from the group share this task in turns.	6	4	7	10	7	34
● The event is moderated by a different person every time, anyone can moderate.	1	0	3	5	2	11
● There is no moderator.	0	1	0	4	2	7
4. 2. Is it customary that everyone who reads the book expresses an opinion?						
● Yes	28	18	13	8	27	94
● No	0	0	0	2	1	3
● It's up to them if they want to or not	20	8	7	15	9	59
4. 3. Does the moderator invite the silent participants to express their opinions?						
● Yes	24	21	14	13	16	88
● No	0	0	0	12	1	13
● It's up to them if they want to or not	24	5	6	0	20	55



4. 4. Does the moderator pay attention to every member opinion being heard?						
● Yes	37	21	12	12	21	103
● Yes, most of the time	9	4	7	8	11	39
● Occasionally	1	1	1	1	4	8
● No	1	0	0	4	1	6
4. 5. Does the moderator take care that some of the participants do not take too much discussion time?						
● Yes	10	12	8	8	7	45
● To a certain extent	18	7	8	10	13	56
● No	1	0	1	1	4	7
● It is not a problem in our group	19	7	3	6	13	48
4. 6. Is it obligatory to read the book being discussed?						
● Yes	6	5	7	2	7	27
● It is preferred	38	19	12	17	25	111
● No	4	2	1	6	5	18
5. Habits						
5. 1. Is it possible to mail questions and/or comments if someone is not present at the meeting?						
● Yes	37	15	16	12	27	107
● No	11	11	4	13	10	49
5. 2. What is your main reason for joining a reading club? (choose one answer)						
● Getting suggestions on what to read	3	2	2	1	3	11
● Exchanging opinions on books we have read	30	14	4	1	23	72
● Strengthening the reading culture by reading regularly	15	6	9	6	3	39
● Expanding social skills	1	0	2	1	3	7
● Having a good time together	1	1	2	16	3	23
● Expanding intercultural dialogue	0	3	1	0	2	6
5. 3. Is any amount of your reading club time dedicated to general chatting/socializing?						
● No	7	0	0	2	6	15
● Yes, up to 15 minutes while we wait for the latecomers	26	14	8	4	15	67
● Yes, up to 15 minutes after the discussion on the books stop	5	2	8	0	14	29
● Yes, we socialize for some time (longer than 15 minutes) after the event	10	10	4	19	2	45
6. Choice of books						
6.1. What is the chosen reading media?						
● Printed books only	29	9	7	14	20	79
● Mostly printed books, but also other media (e-books, audio books)	19	17	13	10	14	73
● E-books or audio books only or primarily	0	0	0	1	3	4



6. 2. The majority of the books being discussed consists of:						
● Novels	48	24	12	12	35	131
● Short stories	2	0	4	4	0	10
● Poetry	0	1	4	0	0	5
● Non-fiction	0	1	0	1	0	2
● Other	0	0	0	8	0	8
6. 3. Other included genres are (mark all that apply)						
● Novels	3	9	5	4	9	30
● Short stories	39	19	3	6	24	91
● Poetry	15	5	2	8	5	35
● Non-fiction	16	8	8	7	8	47
● Other	6	4	2	0	5	17
6. 4. Who primarily chooses the book for discussion?						
● The reading club moderator	41	3	7	5	12	68
● An outside factor (award, review, expert ...)	0	1	1	1	0	3
● Majority of participants	7	19	11	12	19	68
● The most active participants	0	3	1	7	6	17
6. 5. Does an external suggestion influence the choice of the book to be read?						
● No, we decide on our own	37	21	4	24	29	115
● We use a list of suggestions created by experts	1	1	2	1	1	6
● We take suggestions from (more answers possible):						
● Media	4	6	4	6	4	24
● Literary awards	10	6	1	2	7	26
● Critics	7	4	2	5	2	20
● Experts	7	4	0	4	2	17
● Social media trends	3	3	7	8	6	27
6. 6. Do members participate in choosing the books being discussed?						
● Always	3	18	5	6	17	49
● In most cases	11	4	13	11	9	48
● Occasionally	25	3	2	8	8	46
● Almost never/Never	9	1	0	0	3	13
6. 7. Does each discussion session focus on a single book?						
● Yes	28	26	16	12	31	113
● No	20	0	4	13	6	43
6. 8. How many book titles are typically discussed in a single meeting?						
● One single title	33	23	13	18	34	121
● Two titles that have a connection	3	1	5	4	0	13
● Three or more titles that have a connection	7	2	1	0	2	12
● Two unconnected titles	0	0	1	2	1	4
● Three or more unconnected titles	6	0	0	1	0	7



6. 9. How far ahead of time are the books to be discussed chosen?						
● At each event, the book for the next event is chosen	30	16	11	8	10	75
● Up to a month before the event	16	8	9	10	14	57
● One to three months before the event	1	2	0	6	9	18
● More than three months before the event	1	0	0	1	4	6
6. 10. Does the price of the books affect choice?						
● Yes	0	20	2	2	0	24
● No	6	5	12	14	20	57
● Most of the books are borrowed from a public library and/or friends	42	1	6	9	17	75
6. 11. What is the percentage of books read in the club that the members buy? (vs. the percentage of borrowed books)						
● All of the books are bought	0	4	5	2	1	12
● Most of the books are bought	2	19	6	5	3	35
● Ca. 50%	2	3	3	11	11	30
● Most of the books are borrowed	27	0	6	7	18	58
● All of the books are borrowed	17	0	0	0	4	21
6. 12. Do you primarily read books written in your language, or translations?						
● Primarily books written in my native language	8	8	11	19	6	52
● Primarily translations	17	8	3	1	18	47
● Ca. 50%	23	10	6	5	13	57
7. Preferences						
7. 1. In an ideal situation, would you prefer personal or online meetings?						
● Personal meetings	41	10	12	18	20	101
● Online meetings	1	2	0	0	8	11
● A combination of both	5	12	7	6	9	39
● No preference	1	2	1	1	0	5
7. 2. Do you prefer discussing one book per session or more books (somehow connected)?						
● One book per session	32	22	14	11	27	106
● More books per session	9	1	4	8	2	24
● No preference	7	3	2	6	8	26
7. 3. Do you find moderated meetings more adequate than spontaneous discussion?						
● I prefer moderated meetings	35	17	11	12	22	97
● I prefer spontaneous discussion	5	3	7	7	8	30
● No preference	8	6	2	6	7	29
7. 4. What is your opinion on presence of the author/an expert on the book?						
● It would be great	38	18	16	16	20	108
● It would block spontaneous discussion	5	5	1	2	8	21



● No preference	5	3	3	7	9	27
7. 5. Would you like to receive guidelines on the book you're reading ...						
● ... before the event	25	10	10	14	21	80
● ... after the event	9	5	4	0	8	26
● Not at all	14	11	6	11	8	50

