

ACTIVITIES FOR PROMOTING BOOKS AND READING IN THE SPIRIT OF EUROPEAN VALUES

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Abstract: The Scientific Library of the Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova (SL of ASEM) aligns its activities and initiatives with the objectives set forth in the National Development Strategy “European Moldova 2030”. In this context, the library is actively involved in organizing and conducting a series of events and campaigns dedicated to promoting European values and initiatives in the Republic of Moldova, with a particular focus on students.

The primary goal of these initiatives is to raise awareness and promote, through books and reading, a range of current and significant topics that are relevant to both Moldovan society and the academic community. These topics include globalization, European integration, economic resilience, climate change, green energy, and sustainable development. Additionally, the library addresses essential matters for the academic community, such as cultural diversity, multilingualism, the European linguistic landscape, intercultural education and training, intercultural competence and communication, and intercultural dialogue.

Through the combined efforts of the SL ASEM and various faculties and departments of ASEM as well as NCC, the library makes a significant contribution to fostering the reading culture among young people. It aims to facilitate access to knowledge, raise students' awareness of cultural diversity, and develop their intercultural competence and reading skills. Furthermore, these activities seek to enrich students' vocabulary and promote reading and books among the young people who are passionate about learning.

Keywords: European Moldova, reading culture, book, European values, book promotion, promotion through reading

JEL Classification: I23; I28; M31

1 Introduction

At present, the Republic of Moldova is at a crucial stage in its European integration process which is characterized by numerous challenges and opportunities. To support the European path of the country requires an increased commitment from both social, political and economic actors, and the whole community including scientists, culture and arts, teachers, library staff, etc. In this context, the role of civil society, public institutions, especially libraries as centres of information and education of European awareness, becomes crucial in achieving the objectives of accession to the European Union, promoting European values and principles, facilitating intercultural dialogue, ensuring a transparent

and inclusive integration process, accelerating and strengthening democratic reforms, socio-economic integration.

In this study, we aimed to reveal the proactive role and contribution of the SL to the process of European integration, its active involvement in promoting European values among pupils/students through books and reading. The subject of study aims to promote reading and the love of books in the spirit of European values, the development of reading skills, stimulating interest in reading, promoting cultural and linguistic diversity and the European route of the Republic of Moldova in the activities held. Based on the assumption that European cultural and human values, along with national ones, can be successfully promoted with the help of books and reading in the framework of activities and campaigns organized in the academic environment, we set out to test this assumption.

The investigation has links with the key concepts, terms and notions such as books, reading, literacy, European values, promotional activities, European integration, accession objectives, intercultural competence, collaboration, SL of ASEM, pupils/students, etc. In order to carry out the research, we used both theoretical (analysis and synthesis, induction and deduction) and empirical research-information-documentary methods, based on direct observation in the role of organizer and participant-observer. Being accessible and dynamic, these methods have produced quantitative and qualitative results. In addition, the experience in the field and the professional skills acquired over the course of authors' careers enabled us to test the initial hypothesis and validate the results obtained. In this vein, the study aimed to bring an added value to the investigated field by identifying some of the current challenges faced by reading, some types and functions of reading, highlighting some of the opportunities and benefits of reading for young people, analysing the current situation regarding the promotion of books and reading in the Republic of Moldova, identifying the 6 fundamental values of the EU, explaining the mission of the SL of ASEM in the context of the integration process, presentation of relevant events with the aim of encouraging all types of reading, organized by the SL of ASEM. Moreover, the study aims at describing activities carried out in collaboration with ASEM's faculties, departments, and the NCC, with reference to promoting European values and principles, cultural and linguistic diversity in our institution with the help of books and reading, as well as by formulating conclusions and recommendations.

2 Books and Reading: current challenges

The whole evolution of human development is based on knowledge, which is primarily attained through learning and study, i.e. books and reading. Whether it is motivational reading, for pleasure, information or any other kind of it, reading moves a person on a lifelong spiral. Opening the horizons of knowledge, reading is the foundation on which you can build anything (Osoianu, 2020).

In the opinion of François Hollande, French politician, President of France (2012-2017): „,... books are not the stuff like all the others, books teach us how to live, they structure our personality. We must do all we can to give children a taste for reading." This quotation is a strong exhortation to increase and encourage young people's motivation for reading, to raise their reading proficiency, to adopt best practices in applying reading strategies, to embrace lifelong learning. In this regard, the concept of literacy, in line with the agreed European definition, refers to the development of reading and writing skills that facilitate understanding and learning, using and critically evaluating information provided in a variety of ways by written, electronic and pictorial texts (Cristea, 2013).

The literature in the field gives evidence of different types of reading according to the reader's preferences: linear, receptive, associative, literary, informative, global, exploratory, fast, compulsory, for research and pleasure, etc. The most important functions of reading are: information and documentation, cognitive, formative, and culturalization (Busuioc, 2018). Nowadays, both at local and European level, the way young people read has changed. As it comes to reading, information and communication technologies (ICT) gain more and more ground, representing the biggest "threat" to quality reading. Many scholars sound the alarm about the negative influence of ICT on personal development (Osoianu, 2020).

Digital devices and online activities limit the time available for reading because they are inconvenient, distracting and not suitable for long, attentive and fulfilling reading sessions. Also, online reading content is not as complex, deep and structured as in books. Therefore, discussions about the benefits of reading in relation to cutting-edge technologies need to be persuasive, to put forward strong arguments in favour of books and reading to reduce functional illiteracy. This notion refers to people who can read but do not understand what they have read (Cristea, 2013).

Regardless of the reading habits and reading devices used by young people (physical books or e-readers), the role of reading is essential in promoting and acquiring both national and European human principles and values, in shaping the personality and the development of society, in building a European identity. Therefore, the promotion of reading is an inter-professional responsibility, based on the sharing and transfer of concepts and methodologies between several professions. In this respect, the efforts of the basic actors such as writers, researchers, teachers, publishers, booksellers involved in organizing and promoting reading should be strengthened, focusing also on librarians as professionals who, according to their responsibilities, are meant to organize the reading process, to foster the love of reading and to put the book in the reader's hand as often and as early as possible (Osoianu, 2021).

3 Opportunities and benefits of reading for young people

Reading is the most beautiful and uplifting pastime and can radically change a person's life. Among the various opportunities and numerous benefits of reading for young scholars, we list the following:

- **Reading broadens horizons.** By reading more books, the young person learns about unexpected things they would like to experience, stories and places they would like to know, becoming more courageous and ambitious, wanting to succeed in life.
- **Reading is good for the soul and the psyche.** Reading a book brings inner peace, rest, disconnection from everyday problems, being a therapy. Books mean relaxation and pleasure.
- **Reading enriches general culture.** Many people who read have an enviable general knowledge. School fails to fully cover what we should know. Thus, reading books is essential.
- **Reading makes life better and easier.** A young person who reads will take from books what interests him or her and use that information more effectively in everyday life.
- **Reading educates and disciplines.** There are good and bad characters in books. Acting on the principle of good overcoming evil, young people will want to be good, fair, honest, hard-working, responsible.
- **Reading emphasizes the man.** A young person who reads can fit in anywhere and in any group. Thanks to his knowledge, he will be able to carry on any conversation, making himself liked and appreciated.

- **Reading helps you get to know life.** By reading books, the young person will learn to cope with failures, showing optimism and courage, to overcome obstacles and face challenges.
 - **Books are formative.** Reading makes people intelligent, romantic, kind, gentle, tender, confident, courageous, kind, empathetic, etc. In practical terms, it shows them the true values of life.
 - **Reading means wealth.** A young person who reads a lot will be a soul-fulfilled man and will acquire an extraordinary spirituality (Hadârcă, 2015).
- Thus, the aforementioned allows us to state with certainty that books and reading cultivate, form, train, instruct, educate, discipline, motivate, enrich spiritually and unite us.

4 Promoting Books and Reading in the Republic of Moldova

There is currently no clear national strategy to promote reading in Moldova. However, in recent years, the state authorities have realized the importance of books and reading as a precious European value and have tried to develop a reading culture through various national projects and campaigns:

- 2020 has been declared the national Year of Reading.
- In 2023 the National Reading Promotion Project "Open Book" was launched under the patronage of President Maia Sandu. The project aimed to stimulate the interest in reading among pupils and young people, as well as older people, providing opportunities to discover the joy of reading, develop personally and to integrate actively into society (National Reading Promotion Project "Open Book", 2023).
- Since February 14, 2023 the National Reading Day has been celebrated in the Republic of Moldova. A resolution, in this regard, was unanimously voted in the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova at the beginning of 2022, thus being an important step in promoting the reading culture in our society.
- It is encouraging that the National LecturaCentral Program launched by the National Library of the Republic of Moldova has reached its 7th edition. The slogan of 2024 is very suggestive: "Promoting European values through reading" (National LecturaCentral Program, 2024).

Therefore, in the digital age, in the context of the European integration of the RM, in order to support significantly learning, literacy and reading, to improve the quality of people's lives and to meet the expectations of community members, libraries change in the country, continuously adapting to the new reality, developing and offering new services, collections and practices, promoting both equal and free access to information and knowledge as well as EU values, principles and successful practices through various activities and campaigns. EU values are an integral part of the European way of life. They are the key element in building a European identity. The EU is founded on six values enshrined in Article 2 of the Lisbon Treaty: respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law. Respect for and protection of human rights are enshrined in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

5 SL of ASEM as key institution in promoting Books, Reading and European values in the process of European Integration

It is well known that the library is one of the key institutions in the promoting reading, similar to schools, universities, etc. The library plays an important role in this, with considerable responsibilities and contributions. The promotion of reading and information is the central focus of the library, reinforced by the promotion of services based on the needs of the community in the service area. All over the world, libraries are a central part of the intellectual infrastructure, responsible for promoting

literacy, books and reading (Osoianu, 2003). In fact, reading is the most important and constant process in working with information, in study, self-instruction and self-education activities. Reading has a major role in forming moral and spiritual values of the personality. Today's teenagers are tomorrow's readers. That is why writing and reading, in all their forms, are essential for building an active individual and citizen, capable of making important decisions for themselves and their community, or even for humanity. The promotion of reading among young people is a priority of the SL of ASEM as well as a major concern of the teachers who form, train and educate future professionals. Through its varied activities, the SL of ASEM makes a particular contribution to the formation of reading skills as an artistic and cultural practice.

The activity plan of ASEM SL aims at numerous actions that put into practice the European integration aspirations of the Republic of Moldova:

- Involvement in the support and realization of the National Development Strategy "European Moldova 2030" and the National Plan "Building European Moldova".
- Strengthening the role of the library in public service on the basis of the Law on Libraries in line with European legislation.
- Informational support of the training and research process in study programs with European Union component.
- Ensuring access to information and diversification of e-information services.
- Promoting the common, cultural and human values of the EU (SL of ASEM Report, 2023).

Overall, through its mission, SL of ASEM ensures the optimal functioning of the documentary heritage for training, education and research in the context of European integration of the Republic of Moldova.

6 Activities that promote Books and Reading in ASEM in the spirit of European Values

In close collaboration with the faculties and departments of ASEM, as well as with the National College of Commerce, SL systematically organizes numerous formative, informative and cultural-artistic activities that support actively the development of a strong academic community involved in the process of European integration. It is encouraging that through the actions and events organized, the SL of ASEM manages to bring to the forefront of cultural life the book, reading and their importance in the multilateral development of the personality, of society as a whole.

In this vein, we mention several relevant events such as National Campaign "We read aloud together"; "Generation NEXT" Reading Club; Mihai Eminescu's Birthday on January 15; National Reading Day on February 14; European Languages Day on September 26; "BiblioASEMia" campaign, dedicated to the World Book and Copyright Day and Librarian's Day on April 23; "Book of the Week" project; "ACADEMICA" Book Exhibition; "In support of the first year student" campaign; "Library Night" campaign; Researchers' Night etc. (SL of ASEM Report, 2023). Overall, the activities organized aimed to promote reading and love of books; promote European values in the context of cultural diversity, as well as the European path of the Republic of Moldova; promote Europe's cultural and linguistic diversity, European values and traditions.

Among the objectives set, we list: 1) Development of intercultural competence, including comprehension (reading, listening), speaking (participation in conversation, oral discourse), writing (written expression). 2) Familiarization with world literature, raising the level of general culture. 3) Spiritual formation, emotional enrichment. 4) Stimulation of creative, reflective, autonomous

activities. 5) Enrichment of vocabulary, broadening the horizon of knowledge, accumulation of new experiences. 6) Familiarization with the history of the European Day of Languages, language groups, languages in international circulation, advantages of multilingualism, language barriers. 7) Encouraging lifelong language learning. 8) Familiarization with EU history, EU founders, symbols, European institutions, advantages and benefits of European construction. 9) Raising students' awareness about the accession of the Republic of Moldova to the EU and promotion of European values. 10) Acquiring knowledge about European heritage, history, culture, spoken languages, traditions, folk costumes, gastronomy, personalities and innovations, cultural diplomacy. 11) Training on how to access the EU Electronic Library website, etc. (Rusu, 2022).

Both modern and traditional methods and techniques used in the organized activities undoubtedly led to the achievement of the set objectives. For example, the Literary Club "LIRE c'est VIVRE", now in its 6th edition, included a recital of verses from the works of Grigore Vieru; a review of the books read by the students, PowerPoint presentations in French, accompanied by the biographies of writers, images, photographs, audio and video sequences from the literary works, descriptions and commentaries, personal conclusions, aphorisms, musical breaks, thematic posters, book exhibition. Other methods and techniques: Virtual journeys; Interactive activities; Discussions; Debates; Opinion polls; Quiz games in the Kahoot app; Poetry and song recitals in different languages, etc.

Below, we briefly present some of the successful activities carried out by the SL of ASEM, in collaboration with ASEM subdivisions, in the context of promoting books and reading in the spirit of European values.

1. The National Campaign "Read Out Loud Together" is organized annually on the occasion of WORLD READ ALOUD DAY (WRAD), a global initiative promoted by LitWorld organization since 2010. The World Read Aloud Day is a movement to raise awareness among wide circles of actual and potential readers and aims to promote reading and raise awareness of the benefits of reading. In 2024 the title of the Campaign organized in ASEM was: „Read aloud from Eminescu's public literature". Among the objectives of the campaign we mention: to celebrate the power of reading aloud, to familiarize young people with the political work and public literature of Mihai Eminescu, to appreciate the beauty, to raise awareness of the opportunities offered by reading.

In 2023, the campaign was entitled "One book, one voice, many ears". The NCC students read aloud and recited expressively poems and passages from their favourite books. The event was also attended by ASEM librarians, students from the Faculty of Finance, who guided the young generation to read and broaden their knowledge horizon. In 2022, the Campaign's slogan was "Joy of reading". Pupils and teachers from Mircea cel Bătrân Gymnasium from the village of Moscovei, Cahul district, joined the online event, planned for the ASEM and NCC community, thus being a pleasant surprise and a real reason for joy.

2. "Generation NEXT" Reading Club. In 2023, the SL of ASEM joined the initiative of the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education and Research of the Republic of Moldova within the National Project for the Promotion of Reading "Open Book", relaunching the activity of the reading club "Generation NEXT". In the last period, numerous cultural-artistic events have been organized within the club, among which we enumerate:

✓ **Poetry recital „Let us read Eminescu"** which aimed to raise awareness of the community on the works of Eminescu and to capitalize on the literary works of the poet.

✓ **Literary Club "Reading means living".** The aim of the literary salon was to encourage and promote reading in the mother tongue and in other languages, cultivate the love of books and of beauty, stimulate information-documentary and extra-curricular activities in the ASEM reading rooms. The objectives of the event include: increasing interest in world literature, valuable literary works, biographies of established writers; developing existential competence; shaping an educated and cultured personality; promoting authentic national, European and universal values; cultural awareness, promoting francophone values; broadening the horizons of knowledge, enriching vocabulary, etc.

✓ **Discussion panel "Languages - Europe's treasure".** The aim of the activity was the promotion of European linguistic and cultural diversity, as well as the development of communication/speaking/discussion skills, both written and oral production and expression, language learning through reading. Other objectives were to raise awareness of reading works in different languages, know and learn languages by reading books in the original; capitalize on the playful, artistic and imaginative dimensions of reading and books. The successful panel discussion activities demonstrated that French-speaking students are well acquainted with linguistic diversity and European cultural heritage. The main message conveyed to the event participants was the need to know at least two or three languages and to read books in the original language. Intercultural and linguistic communication skills offer young people multiple cultural and economic and social advantages to integrate harmoniously into the European community.

✓ **Literary-artistic Club "Ion Hadârcă - a knight of metaphor"** was organized within the National Reading Promotion Project "Open Book", held under the patronage of the President of the Republic of Moldova, Maia Sandu. Ion Hadârcă's book "The Ruins and Runes of War: A Chronicle of the First 101 Days of Russian Aggression" was presented. Also, students from the faculties of Finance and Accounting, including students of the NCC of ASEM presented a beautiful literary-musical recital of poetry and songs on the verses of Ion Hadârcă.

3. As part of the **BiblioASEMia Campaign: Bibliotec@: Attract, Satisfy, Educate, Motivate**, dedicated to the World Book and Copyright Day and the Librarian's Day on April 23, the SL of ASEM organizes various activities that highlight the scientific book, promotes the academic book to meet information needs, educates the reading culture in the spirit of knowledge, encourages and motivates quality reading. To this end, the SL organizes exhibitions of books by academics, excursions, presentations, book launches, meetings and discussions, exchanges of opinions and best practices.

4. The "Book of the Week" project is a book promotion action on the SL of ASEM Facebook page. It promotes the publications of scientific and teaching staff, various publications in the fields related to the disciplines taught. New editorial publications (textbooks, university courses, monographs, practical applications, guides, tutorials, etc.) are identified and presented to the general public in an original way. As part of the project initiated in 2022, around 80 postings were produced, including a description of the book, cover image, a brief annotation to generate interest in new publications.

5. The Book Exhibition „ACADEMICA" is a traditional event, dedicated to literature and personal development enthusiasts, organized in the framework of the ASEM Day and the Economist's Day in the Republic of Moldova on September 25. Throughout the exhibition, academics, researchers and students, as well as those interested, have the opportunity to explore new publications and interact with personalities in the field. By promoting reading and continuing education, the book exhibition also supports the development of a strong and engaged academic community. The exhibition

showcases the latest publications of ASE Bucharest and ASEM publishers, organizes meetings, book presentation sessions, discussions, exchange of ideas and best practices.

In this vein, we mention that the activities organized within the framework of the national campaign "We read aloud together", the reading club "Generation NEXT", the campaign "BiblioASEMia", the project "Book of the Week", as well as the book exhibition "Academica", contributes significantly to increasing interest in books and reading, as well as in the European integration of the Republic of Moldova, cultivates tolerance, empathy towards other cultures, promotes a European behaviour model among young people, develops intercultural and language communication skills, required by the local and European labour market. We would also like to emphasize the significant contribution of the European Union Information Centre (EUIC) of the SL of ASEM to the promotion of the fundamental values of modern society. Through its active involvement and formative, informative, assistance and cooperation activities, the EUIC of the SL of ASEM contributes actively to raising the awareness of young students and the general public about European values and initiatives, as well as the EU assistance to the Republic of Moldova in the process of European integration.

Therefore, the statements and evidence presented through the promotion activities briefly described in our study, as well as the objectives achieved during them, confirm the hypothesis initially launched that: common European values can be successfully promoted within ASEM with the help of books and reading through various activities with students, organized by the SL of ASEM in close collaboration with the other subdivisions, and support the validation of the results obtained.

7 Conclusions

The importance of books and reading for personal and professional development is relevant and undeniable. Reading provides equal opportunities for knowledge and development which is the essence of conscious existence. There are several types of reading that support lifelong learning, with specific functions and objectives according to the reader's preferences. Reading is an excellent tool for enriching one's mother tongue and helps to learn new languages. Nowadays, the need to know at least two or three languages is a pressing necessity. Intercultural and linguistic communication skills enable young people to integrate harmoniously into the European community, open up new horizons of knowledge and development, and provide multiple cultural and economic and social advantages.

In the context of the Republic of Moldova's accession to the EU, books and reading play an important role in society, fostering constructive cultural dialogue between different peoples and cultures. The prospect of the Republic of Moldova's accession to the EU entails multiple challenges that lie in knowing, assuming and complying with obligations. One of the most important obligations is the commitment to respect and promote the common values of the European Union: respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, respect for human rights, including those of minorities. Currently, both at national and institutional level, increased efforts are being made to promote books and reading in the spirit of European principles and values. National programs and projects, information and awareness-raising campaigns, various promotional activities are aimed at the opportunities and benefits of books and reading throughout life, thus contributing to awakening national consciousness.

The activity plan of the SL of ASEM includes numerous actions that put into practice Moldova's European integration aspirations, development and public interest priorities. In cooperation with the faculties, departments and the NCC of ASEM, the SL organizes systematically activities aimed at

promoting common European values in the process of integration of the Republic of Moldova into the EU through reading and books, training and developing reading skills, stimulating interest and cultivating passion for reading, raising awareness of young students and the general public to the true national, European and universal cultural values. The activities organized by the SL of ASEM encourage the multilateral development of the personality and support actively the consolidation of a strong academic community involved in the accession process. In this regard, we emphasize that reading is recognized as the most important way for modern man to educate himself, to be able to make decisions. Today, the clever quotation of the great Chinese philosopher Confucius: "You cannot open a book and not learn something" remains as relevant and topical as in his time.

Therefore, let us always and everywhere enjoy the BOOK, a true and unfailing source of knowledge, values and wisdom! Let us discover systematically new publications in libraries and bookshops! Let us go to book exhibitions, meetings with writers and people of different professions, promoters of national, European and universal identity and values! Let us select valuable books that offer us new perspectives, increasing our chances of success!

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