



National Evaluation Report

Netherlands

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Glossary

Except where otherwise stated, the definitions included here are derived from the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN) Glossary: <http://www.elgpn.eu/glossary>.

Terms in English

Adult basic skills

Definition

Basic skills may include competences in literacy (reading and writing), numeracy/everyday mathematics, Digital competence/ICT skills, and oral communication. Adult basic skills courses/programmes are literacy and numeracy education for adults who for some reason did not acquire these skills or a level sufficient for everyday adult life when they were at school.

Source: Project GOAL definition.

Basic skills assessment

An assessment tool that measures skills in reading and/or writing and/or Maths and/or digital skills.

Source: Project GOAL definition.

Career

The interaction of work roles and other life roles over a person's lifespan, including how they balance paid and unpaid work, and their involvement in learning and education.

Career guidance

A range of activities that enable citizens of any age, and at any point in their lives, to identify their capacities, competences and interests; to make meaningful educational, training and occupational decisions; and to manage their individual life paths in learning, work and other settings in which these capacities and competences are learned and/or used.

Counselling

The interaction between a professional and an individual helping them to resolve a specific problem or issue.

Early school leaver

See **Early leaver from education and training**.

Early leaver from education and training

A person aged 18 to 24 who has completed at most lower secondary education and is not involved in further education or training.

Source: Eurostat, <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Category:Glossary>

Educational counselling/guidance

Helping an individual to reflect on personal educational issues and experiences and to make appropriate educational choices.

Employment counselling/guidance

Counselling or guidance that addresses one or more of the

	<p>following domains: career/ occupational decision-making, skill enhancement, job search and employment maintenance. Activities include assessment, development and implementation of an action plan, follow-up and evaluation.</p>
Guidance	<p>Help for individuals to make choices about education, training and employment.</p>
Guidance counsellor	<p>A trained individual delivering guidance as defined above. Guidance counsellors assist people to explore, pursue and attain their career goals.</p>
Guidance services	<p>The range of services offered by a particular guidance provider. These might be services designed for different client groups or the different ways that guidance might be delivered (e.g. face-to-face, online, telephone, etc.).</p>
Interest inventory	<p>An interest inventory is a career guidance tool that assesses an individual's interests in order to identify the employment or educational opportunities that are most appropriate for those interests. Source: GOAL Project Definition</p>
Lifelong guidance	<p>A range of activities that enables citizens of any age and at any point in their lives to identify their capacities, competences and interests, to make educational, training and occupational decisions and to manage their individual life paths in learning, work and other settings in which these capacities and competences are learned and/or used.</p>
Lifelong learning	<p>All learning activity undertaken throughout life, which results in improving knowledge, know-how, skills, competences and/or qualifications for personal, social and/or professional reasons.</p>
Low-educated adult	<p>An adult without upper secondary education</p>
One step up	<p>A priority of the 2007 Action Plan on Adult Learning is to "Increase the possibilities for adults to go one step up and achieve at least one level higher qualification". Source: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52007DC0558</p>
Outcome (quality)	<p>Positive or negative longer-term socio-economic change or impact that occurs directly or indirectly from an intervention's input, activities and output</p>
Self-knowledge	<p>Knowledge that an individual has about him/herself.</p>

	Developing self-knowledge/awareness is considered an important activity in career counselling: many career interventions are designed to increase self-knowledge.
Stichting Lezen en Schrijven (Reading and Writing Foundation)	The Reading and Writing Foundation brings literacy problems to the attention of both the general public and politicians, as well as offering nationwide support to municipalities, institutions, companies, teachers and volunteers in the education sector. In the GOAL project the Reading and Writing Foundation is responsible for recruiting and selecting partner organisations and for keeping these organisations informed with regard to project design and implementation.
Taalmeter	The Taalmeter, or Literacy Screener, is the core instrument of the Dutch GOAL project. The Literacy Screener is an online tool which can quickly and easily identify people who possibly have low literacy.
Validation of non-formal and informal learning/ validation of prior learning (VPL)	A process of confirmation by an authorised body that an individual has acquired learning outcomes against a relevant standard. It consists of four distinct phases: (1) identification – through dialogue – of particular experiences made by an individual; (2) documentation – to make visible the individual experiences; (3) a formal assessment of these experiences; and (4) recognition leading to a certification, e.g. a partial or full qualification.
Vocational rehabilitation	A process which enables persons with functional, psychological, developmental, cognitive and emotional impairments or health disabilities to overcome barriers to accessing, maintaining or returning to employment or other useful occupation. Source: http://www.vra-uk.org/

Executive Summary

This is the final report of the Dutch evaluation of the “Guidance and Orientation for Adult Learners” (GOAL) project. An interim national evaluation report was published in November 2016.

Project GOAL sought to develop existing models of guidance and orientation for adults in the six countries in order that these services could reach low-educated adults and address their needs. GOAL was a three-year project, running from February 2015 to January 2018, and was coordinated by the Flemish Government’s Department of Education and Training. Project GOAL was evaluated by the UCL Institute of Education (IOE), London, in partnership with local evaluation teams in each of the GOAL countries.

GOAL Activities

The hypothesis underpinning GOAL was that an independent one-stop guidance service that puts the specific needs of low-educated adult learners at its centre could help to increase the participation of this target group in adult education. To this end, each of the six countries piloted new guidance models to specific target groups within the low-educated adult population. Five intervention strategies were implemented by the GOAL partners, although not all strategies were implemented in all countries:

1. **Networks and partnerships** with relevant organisations were established or improved.
2. **Tools** were developed to facilitate the delivery of guidance specifically to low-educated adults.
3. The **competences** which counsellors require to enable them to address the specific needs of low-educated adults were defined.
4. **Outreach activities** designed to bring guidance services to specific target groups within the low-educated population were developed.
5. Each country sought to provide **high-quality guidance services** with the aim of optimising individuals’ learning and/or employment outcomes.

Research questions

Five research questions underpinned the GOAL evaluation:

1. What programme processes and resources were developed? To what degree did programmes achieve their implementation aims across the five intervention strategies, and what factors at programme and policy level appeared to influence this?
2. What service user outcomes were achieved, for what groups, and to what degree?

3. What was the Return on Expectations? That is, to what degree were programme expectations met?
4. What programme-level factors were associated with the achievement of high service quality and/or positive service user outcomes?
5. What policy-level factors were associated with the achievement of high service quality and/or positive service user outcomes?

Evaluation data

Evaluation data has been gathered via:

- client monitoring data (to establish baseline, ongoing and exit data)
- client satisfaction and outcome data (user survey and qualitative interviews)
- programme and policy data (literature review; needs and strengths analysis)
- case studies of programme sites (qualitative interviews, document analysis, analysis of quantitative data)
- qualitative interviews with policy actors.

The evaluation includes ongoing data collection (throughout the life of the project) and wave-specific data collection.

Dataset

The quantitative dataset is comprised of:

- **Monitoring data for 76 clients**
- **75 client satisfaction surveys**

The qualitative data set is comprised of interview data from **eight programme staff members; six programme partners; nine policy makers; ten policy actors** and **fourteen service users**.

Challenges

Four organisations have participated in the GOAL project in the Netherlands, fewer than originally anticipated. The Reading and Writing Foundation, in spite of extensive efforts, **found it very difficult to get organisations to participate in the GOAL project**. The main reasons for reluctance from possible partner organisations were:

- the anticipated **additional staff effort**,
- the **costs** associated with project implementation,

- the **administrative requirements** of the evaluation, and especially of collecting monitoring data, and
- the (perceived) **lack of direct added value** for the organisation itself.

Quantitative data has been collected at three pilot organisations only, as the fourth had almost no new client intake since January 2016. An additional bottleneck was that the GOAL project also **started very slowly** within two of the other three participating pilot organisations. As a result, they started filling in the questionnaires quite late in the evaluation study (after Wave 1, i.e. the interim evaluation stage).

This slow start also presented several challenges to the qualitative data collection. In Wave 1, local evaluators in the Netherlands were unable to interview clients (because they were all prisoners) and the number of interviews with staff members and programme partners were fewer than anticipated at some project sites. In Wave 2, **follow-up interviews with service users were used to evaluate the intervention (screening and referral) and to explore the motivations of clients to take language lessons**, rather than gathering information about the results of the language lessons. The latter was not possible because of the slow start of the process in the organisation.

Findings

Programme participants and stakeholders

The GOAL intervention in the Netherlands consisted of **screening** the clients of four service providers (a social service, an agency specialised in services related to labour participation, and two prisons) **for low literacy** by means of a validated Literacy Screener (*Taalmeter*). In one guidance session the results of the Literacy Screener were discussed with clients and potentially low literate clients were informed about local training opportunities and were referred to language training points or educational institutions.

The **four pilot organisations** were organisations **where people come for an entirely different (i.e. non-literacy-related) purpose**. The clients of these organisations vary in age, background and level of knowledge. Most of the monitoring and client satisfaction data was collected at the **social service**. The other (smaller) part consists of a special target group: **male-only prisons**. The employees of the organisations say that shame and avoidance behaviour is a (major) factor for both target groups. The majority of respondents are of Dutch descent and have Dutch as their mother tongue. Shame at their poor literacy skills is particularly evident in the native Dutch-speaking group.

A number of characteristics of the participants struck us in particular: 60 per cent of the participants feel more or less in control of their lives¹; the target group identifies itself as (very) keen to learn and 12 per cent of participants have completed a university or university of applied sciences education.

¹ As measured via a validated self-efficacy instrument; see full evaluation report for more details.

GOAL Guidance service

In the Dutch pilot, there is just **one type of contact**: the face-to-face interview where the Literacy Screener is administered and its results are discussed. Guidance sessions can therefore be **characterised as very short** relative to those in the other participating countries (average 16 minutes in the Netherlands).

In all four of the pilot organisations, administering the Literacy Screener and the discussion about the outcome are fixed parts of the work process. The Literacy Screener is administered immediately upon arrival, and in general, clients react well to the Literacy Screener and are cooperative. The outcome provides the organisations with relevant information for the further performance of their work process. The different parts of the guidance process (administering the Literacy Screener and discussion about the outcome/referral to a language course) are not always performed by the same person/department. This requires good arrangements and communication between the different people involved.

Partnerships and Networks

An important focal point in addressing low basic skill levels in the Netherlands is the establishment and strengthening of regional networks. A condition for addressing low basic skills is ensuring that the offer of local literacy training meets the needs of potential participants. In order to ensure better cooperation between the organisations in which service users with low literacy are identified and the organisations in which literacy lessons are offered, regional 'literacy teams' are deployed.

Two of the four GOAL pilot organisations form part of a local network. The bottlenecks and challenges identified in these networks primarily concern cooperation between different parties. The success factors identified can be divided into factors concerning the structure of networks (a central basis, flexibility, clear agreements, enough language volunteers and the support of the Reading and Writing Foundation in setting up the local infrastructure) and factors concerning community support (an influential and enthusiastic driving-force, shared sense of urgency and commitment of everyone involved).

Because of their closed nature, the two penitentiary institutions are not part of a local or regional network. There is an **internal network within the penitentiary institutions** that consists of the reintegration centre and the education department. The penitentiary institutions currently do not work with external local networks yet. This is however crucial to continue support in the area of language when detainees are released (early).

Counsellor competences

Nearly all adult guidance practitioners in the Netherlands have experience in education and/or reintegration practices. However, there are no formal criteria for guidance practitioners and thus a great divergence in quality between various service points. These differences are evident in the Dutch GOAL pilot organisations, which deploy **people in a variety of job roles** to conduct the Literacy Screener. A possible challenge for them is to **incorporate the Literacy Screener in their regular work**

process. All four pilot organisations have succeeded in this, of which three deploy unpaid workers (volunteers or trainees) to administer the Literacy Screener. This requires proper guidance in order to deliver high quality service.

The main competences programme staff members need to have to administer the Literacy Screener and to discuss the outcome are primarily in the area of social skills and (motivational) speaking techniques. **Discussing the outcome of the Literacy Screener can be seen as the most difficult part of the Dutch GOAL intervention**, because low literacy is a sensitive subject that is often accompanied by shame and avoidance. Empathy, creating trust and conducting the interview on the basis of alternatives and possibilities are therefore essential.

The client satisfaction survey shows a (very) positive image of the performance of the counsellor. It should be noted here that 43 per cent of the clients received assistance in completing the client satisfaction surveys, which may have influenced the answers due to social desirability bias.

Guidance tools for low educated adults

At the heart of the GOAL project in the Netherlands is a Literacy Screener, the *Taalmeter*. The Literacy Screener is an online tool with which organisations can identify quickly and easily those people who may have difficulty reading. The Literacy Screener was developed outside the GOAL programme and has been used over 34,500 times in the Netherlands since June 2013. According to all four pilot organisations, **the Literacy Screener fits well into their work process and has added value for their services**. Together, during the GOAL pilot, the four organisations conducted 1,525 Literacy Screeners (far more than the intended 400), identifying 465 people with potential low literacy.

In general, the service users interviewed found taking the Literacy Screener to be a positive experience. However, one respondent (along with educational professionals from one prison) mentioned the time limit and digital nature of the test as presenting a challenge.

Outreach

In the area of outreach to service users with low literacy, **gains can be made in the Netherlands**. That is why this aspect forms the core of the Dutch GOAL intervention. Outreach in the Netherlands involved **expanding identification sites** and screening of people who potentially have low basic skills in an **accessible setting**. Relatively new identification sites are, for example, prisons, with two participating in the pilot. An important first result is that the participating organisations are thinking about how they can organise the recognition and referral (and education) of those with low literacy within their mainstream work processes, and understand the importance of this guidance service. With the aid of this evaluation study, these findings can be disseminated further.

The identification of those with low literacy is in itself not sufficient; we can only speak of outreach if those with low literacy are also helped in a suitable manner. In three out of the four pilot organisations, the number of identified people with low literacy who then enrolled on a language course was low. On the one hand, this low follow-up is due to the **internal processes of**

organisations. In two organisations the cooperation between various departments involved did not run smoothly (due to lack of a common vision and integrated approach). Additionally, the penitentiaries experienced specific difficulties that are related to the special nature of the organisations, such as limited capacity, complicated planning and difficulty of monitoring continuity. On the other hand, the low follow-up was also related to the **people with low literacy themselves.** In the first place, people whose native language is Dutch do not typically recognise or admit they have language problems. In the second place, taking a language course takes time which clients would rather spend on something else.

Service user outcomes

The client satisfaction survey was completed by 75 service users. A positive picture emerges from their responses: **the majority of the participants say they now know (somewhat) better what they need to learn, where they can take a language course, and what they can do next.** This is in line with the results from the data monitoring questionnaire, which show the most frequently occurring results of the session were ‘the development of a personal action plan’ and ‘being informed about what can be studied and where’. A small majority of the participants (six out of every ten) said that they are going to use the tips from the client manager.

However, this positive picture is not reflected in the follow-up. **In practice, the percentage of service users flowing into a language course after an unsatisfactory score on the Literacy Screener is (very) low** in the three organisations from which the client satisfaction data is obtained. The follow-up interviews with service users confirm this. Although the majority of the fourteen service users interviewed considered taking the Literacy Screener and the interview about the findings to be a positive experience, most (ten out of fourteen) did not start with a language course after that. They indicated they were too busy, or they did not recognise the use of it as they felt they could manage perfectly well without it.

In the fourth organisation, all participants with an unsatisfactory score on the Literacy Screener have gone on to start a language course. In this organisation, **language support is embedded in the guidance in a very natural way.** Clients are given one-on-one support to improve their participation in the labour market. Language support can be provided by the same assistant and is often very practical, for instance at the workplace. According to this organisation, the language lessons lead to improved language skills, mainly because the language lessons are very practical. Quantitative data is not available from any of the four pilot organisations about the result of the language lessons in terms of improving the clients' skills.

Service quality

Introducing and conducting the Literacy Screener is a **smooth process** in the four pilot organisations. Good examples in this respect can be used by other organisations for implementing the Literacy Screener in their work processes. The **follow-up is a major difficulty:** in general, the inflow in language courses of clients with an unsatisfactory score on the Literacy Screener is still low. This is due to challenges within the organisations and amongst the service users. In two organisations, the internal cooperation between various departments/employees involved is not running smoothly. A

common vision and integrated approach with clear working arrangements are essential for the design of a good follow-up. Additionally, the penitentiaries experience specific difficulties that demand specific solutions. In addition to the difficulties organisations are facing, the low follow-up is partly due to the fact that the clients do not always want to opt for a language course. We conclude that **the way in which the interview about the outcome is conducted has to be reconsidered carefully**, with respect to both the content (identifying the practical value for the client and linking up with this) and the person who conducts this interview (somebody with whom the client has a relationship of trust and who meets with the client on a regular basis).

1 Introduction

The ‘Guidance and Orientation for Adult Learners’ Project (GOAL) was a collaboration between six partner countries: Belgium (Flanders), the Czech Republic, Iceland, Lithuania, the Netherlands, and Slovenia². Project GOAL sought to develop existing models of guidance and orientation for adults in the six countries in order that these services could reach low-educated adults and address their needs. GOAL was a three-year project, running from February 2015 to January 2018, and was coordinated by the Flemish Government’s Department of Education and Training. Project GOAL was evaluated by the UCL Institute of Education (IOE), London, in partnership with local evaluation teams in each of the GOAL countries.

This report presents national evaluation findings for the Netherlands. These findings cover the full evaluation period, which consisted of two waves: Wave 1 and Wave 2. A Wave 1-only (i.e. interim) report is also available on the GOAL project website:

<http://www.projectgoal.eu/index.php/publications>. This evaluation draws on quantitative data on GOAL service users collected between the launch of the programme in February 2015 and the 7th of April 2017; qualitative data collected from programme stakeholders and service users in April and May 2016 and March and April 2017, and contextual data gathered during a local needs and strengths analysis.

1.1 The GOAL project

Funded under ERASMUS+, Project GOAL addresses the European Commission’s priority theme of reducing the number of low-educated adults through increasing participation rates in adult education. As well as contributing to the European Agenda for Lifelong Learning (http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/adult-learning/adult_en.htm), GOAL will contribute to three priority areas of the 2008 ‘Council Resolution on better integrating lifelong guidance into lifelong learning strategies’ (http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/104236.pdf), that is, to facilitate access by all citizens to guidance services, to develop the quality assurance or guidance processes, and to encourage coordination and cooperation among the various national, regional and local stakeholders.

Project GOAL was targeted at low-educated adults, that is, at adults without upper secondary education (ISCED level 3³). The context for GOAL is that adult education provision in the six countries is fragmented and there is currently a lack of coordination between the different providers and stakeholders that are involved with low-educated adults. Moreover, although the partner countries have some forms of guidance for adult learners, or have specific policy strategies that focus on

² Two members of the Turkish Directorate of Lifelong Learning are participating in GOAL as observers, with the aim of learning from the project and identifying opportunities to promote lessons in Turkish guidance policies.

³ For more on UNESCO’s International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) see <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Documents/isced-2011-en.pdf>

educational guidance and orientation, the existing services, or the structures on which these services rely, do not reach the adults most in need of education as well as they could or in sufficient numbers.

The hypothesis underpinning GOAL was that an independent one-stop guidance service that puts the specific needs of low-educated adult learners at its centre could help to increase the participation of this target group in adult education. To this end, each of the six countries piloted new guidance models, in two locations within each country, to specific target groups within the low-educated adult population. Five intervention strategies were implemented by the GOAL partners, although not all strategies were implemented in all countries:

6. **Networks and partnerships** with relevant organisations were established or improved.
7. **Tools** were developed to facilitate the delivery of guidance specifically to low-educated adults.
8. The **competences** which counsellors require to enable them to address the specific needs of low-educated adults were defined.
9. **Outreach activities** designed to bring guidance services to specific target groups within the low-educated population were developed.
10. Each country sought to provide **high-quality guidance services** with the aim of optimising individuals' learning and/or employment outcomes.

The aim of the GOAL project was that, through developing, piloting and evaluating these interventions:

1. The **processes** to implement effective guidance services and supporting networks that improve service user outcomes would be mapped.
2. The **criteria, success factors and conditions** on implementation (processes) that contribute to outcomes of guidance users would be identified.
3. Potential generalizable **case studies** would be made available to be analysed by policymakers to understand and analyse challenges and success factors in establishing 'joined-up' programmes in complex policy fields.
4. The **policy processes** that play a role in influencing programmes success would be identified and described.

1.2 The GOAL evaluation

The GOAL evaluation has two aims. Its primary aim is to understand, assess and improve GOAL across the six participating countries. The evaluation also aims to provide country-specific case studies that can be analysed by policymakers seeking to understand challenges and success factors in establishing 'joined-up' programmes in complex policy fields.

The evaluation focuses on processes and outcomes, thereby enabling the identification of success factors across different programme contexts. This evidence can potentially be used to develop a structural support basis amongst decision makers and relevant stakeholders for scaling up the pilot learning guidance and orientation models in partner or other countries.

Five research questions underpinned the GOAL evaluation:

6. What programme processes and resources were developed? To what degree did programmes achieve their implementation aims across the five intervention strategies, and what factors at programme and policy level appeared to influence this?
7. What service user outcomes were achieved, for what groups, and to what degree?
8. What was the Return on Expectations? That is, to what degree were programme expectations met?
9. What programme-level factors were associated with the achievement of high service quality and/or positive service user outcomes?
10. What policy-level factors were associated with the achievement of high service quality and/or positive service user outcomes?

The evaluation unfolded in a series of stages:

1. **Pre-implementation stage** (February 2015 - October 2015): activities centred on needs and strengths analyses in each of the six countries; on reporting the results of these analyses, and generating data collection tools.
2. **Ongoing (cross-wave) data collection** (November 2015⁴ - 7 April 2017)
 - a. Client satisfaction survey
 - b. Monitoring data
3. **Wave 1 data collection** (with national reporting completed in October 2016)
4. **Wave 2 data collection** (with national reporting completed in October 2017), including a longitudinal follow-up survey in each country
5. **Data analysis and final reporting**

Section 2.2 of this report outlines the evaluation methodology in greater details.

In the Netherlands, the local evaluation was carried out by two organisations: the Reading and Writing Foundation and Regioplan Policy Research. The Reading and Writing Foundation (www.readingandwriting.eu) is responsible for recruiting and selecting partner organisations and for keeping these organisations informed regarding project design and implementation. Regioplan

(www.regioplan.nl) is responsible for quantitative and qualitative data collection and the processing, analysis and reporting of collected data.

1.3 Project GOAL in the Netherlands

Context

The main providers of education and career guidance in the Netherlands are **Education and Career Guidance Centres/Contact Points**. These serve to 'provide independent advice about educational opportunities and labour market opportunities for everyone: unemployed, employed, pupils, students and employers'. There is however no official definition of either lifelong guidance or adult guidance provided by government or law in the Netherlands.

There are two other forms of education/career guidance available in the Netherlands. **Regional vocational education centres** are legally obliged to provide career orientation and guidance for their students, including adults who are following lower and upper secondary education. Both lower and upper secondary education are provided by regional vocation education centres. The Inspectorate for Education, which monitors the quality of the career orientation and guidance, defines the guidance as 'focused on following the developments in the studies of students and support of making choices during and after the studies'. The guidance is therefore very much focused on career guidance during and directly after finishing study, and less on guidance before studies.

Secondly, the **National Public Employment Service** provides career guidance in various forms. This guidance however is highly focused on getting a job rather than personal development and therefore limited educational guidance is provided, although this is sometimes combined. The same type of guidance is provided by local social services to the unemployed. There is no common definition or description of what this career guidance or orientation should look like. It is mostly tailor-made in such a way that it enhances the chances of the unemployed person getting a job as quickly as possible.

There is no guidance in the Netherlands specifically for adults with low basic skills. Although the guidance services described above might be offered to those with low basic skills, this cohort is not their focus.

In the Netherlands, the policy toward people with low basis skills deviates from that of other European countries because this policy is largely decentralised in the Netherlands. The idea behind this is that, to support people with low basic skills, it is important to connect to what they need in their daily lives. The national government believes that, to achieve this, the support and guidance need to be organised close to people. Furthermore, having low basic skills can be linked to added problems such as debts and/or unemployment. The municipalities are often also responsible for these areas.

As part of the decentralised policy, the national government has the task of enabling other parties to address low basic skills at the local level. For example, an important role is the specific transfer payments the national government gives municipalities to address low literacy and granting subsidies

to the Dutch Reading and Writing Foundation. The national government is also facilitating experiments to produce proven effective methods to address low basic skills.

In 2016, the national government set up the action programme Count on Skills [*Tel mee met Taal*]⁵, “as an impulse for municipalities to reinforce the local approach to low literacy and promoting reading”.⁶ With this programme, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment aim to “collectively counteract the marginalisation of people with limited language skills.” This programme provides a foundation for the cycle that needs to be set up at the local level to address low literacy: recognition, referral, teaching and measuring progress.

“A very common route in the Netherlands is therefore recognising low literacy [at the municipal level], for example at an Education and Career Guidance Centre/Contact Point or at another service desk in the social domain, referral to a language point, and schools at a local or regional provider in the neighbourhood, where professionals and volunteers work side by side.” (policy actor)

The GOAL project focuses on the first two steps in the cycle: recognising and referring people with low literacy. The GOAL project seeks to address the following challenges:

- **Increasing the number of people that are reached.** This requires shifting the logic of existing guidance interventions from a demand-driven logic to a needs-based one. Demand for (voluntary) guidance is relatively low among low educated adults because this group frequently fails to recognise that their low basic skill levels can limit their professional lives. Demand for guidance services can only be boosted in the long-term if more people recognise their own personal interest in this. In other words, they need to become increasingly sensitive to their own needs.
- **Improving the impact and effectiveness of guidance and counselling services.** Having assessed that a client has low basic skill levels and after having completed the guidance intervention, it is important that clients find their way to the most appropriate education (or career service) provider. The impact of guidance on clients’ personal and professional lives and the effect of the interventions depend on the degree to which clients translate the advice they receive into action. A prime objective of our intervention is **to improve the advice-to-action-to-impact ratio**.
- **Increasing the number of organisations that deliver guidance services.** Guidance service centres reach a limited group of people because demand is low. We need to multiply the number of locations in which adults with low basic skill levels are identified and subsequently receive appropriate guidance services. We aim to increase the number of organisations that

⁵ This action programme is the follow-up to programmes that proved to be successful, such as the Action Plan Low Literacy (*Laaggeletterdheid*), the pilot programme Language for Life (*Taal voor het Leven*) and the Action Plan Art of Reading (*Kunst van Lezen*). These programmes took place from 2012 up till and including 2015.

⁶ The action programme Count on Skills (*Tel Mee met Taal*) is focused on language skills, but in practice these skills are closely connected with arithmetical and digital skills. In practice, language courses are therefore often about improving other basic skills as well.

identify and support the target group by providing these organisations with appropriate tools and methods to provide effective guidance (if required, 'in disguise'). Organisations that could identify the target group and subsequently provide guidance services are municipality social security agencies, community centres, libraries, temporary employment agencies and employers.

GOAL programme

Aims

At the heart of the GOAL project in the Netherlands is a Literacy Screener, the *Taalmeter*. This instrument was developed by CINOP for *Stichting Lezen en Schrijven* (the Reading and Writing Foundation). This validated quick scan is an online tool that gives a sound indication of participants' actual literacy skills levels. Clients complete the test within **12 to 15 minutes** under the supervision of a trained counsellor. The use of the quick scan is free of charge.

The underlying rationale for using the Literacy Screener is that **effective orientation and guidance services require a sound assessment of clients' qualities, capacities and ambitions**. The levels a client has obtained in formal education are not always a reliable indicator when assessing clients' chances on the labour market as clients may have improved their (basic) skill levels, or their (basic) skill levels may have deteriorated, since leaving school. Rather than looking at obtained formal education levels, experience in the Netherlands strongly suggests that actual basic skill levels are a more important indicator in predicting clients' success in an increasingly demanding and competitive labour market. Effective orientation and guidance services therefore require an up-to-date assessment of the effective, applicable levels of basic skills. **Low levels of basic skills inhibit effective guidance and counselling and reduce clients' prospects of staying active on the labour market.** It is therefore anticipated that more effective, tailored guidance and counselling services can be provided once clients' actual basic skill levels have been assessed.

In the original project plan, the following goals were set by the Dutch GOAL team:

- **Increasing the number of organisations that use the Literacy Screener** as an integrated part of their working procedures. Recruiting at least eight new organisations, divided equally over two regions.
- **Integrating basic guidance services into the working procedures of organisations** that use the Literacy Screener.
- **Training staff** of organisations that use the Literacy Screener to provide basic guidance services.
- **Developing a regional road map to education and career-service providers** to facilitate follow-up after guidance services have taken place and to improve the quality of the match between client needs and service provision.
- **Developing a monitoring system to measure improvements** in the advice-to-action-to-impact ratio of guidance services.

The data collected regarding numbers (Literacy Screeners taken, numbers of clients with low basic skill levels and referrals) and backgrounds should also give the organisations concerned insight into the following levels:

- Percentage of adults identified as having low basic skill levels who subsequently enroll in an education or career-service programme.
- Percentage of adults identified as having low basic skill levels who complete an education or career-service programme within six months.
- Perception of social inclusion of participants.

Activities

The GOAL intervention in the Netherlands consists of screening the clients of various service providers (such as municipal employment offices, reintegration services, penitentiary institutes) for **low literacy** by means of a validated Literacy Screener. In one session the results of the screener are discussed with clients and potentially low literate clients are **informed about local training possibilities and are referred to language training points or educational institutions**. The word 'potentially' is used here as the screening with the Literacy Screener (*Taalmeter*) indicates whether low literacy *might* be a problem and further testing is often needed to establish the exact level of basic skills a client possesses⁷. Counsellors can make use of the so-called 'Road Map' (which was also developed by the Reading and Writing Foundation) to refer clients to suitable training or education.

The experimentation in the Netherlands is thus quite **different** from the GOAL programmes in the other five countries where more elaborated guidance programmes are being set up, often involving multiple coaching sessions. The pilot in the Netherlands can be characterised as **a quick screening for low literacy and referral to appropriate training facilities where the actual education and coaching takes place**. The GOAL programme also has a strong focus in the Netherlands. The programme focuses on one type of problem (low literacy), one type of instrument (the Literacy Screener [*Taalmeter*]) and one type of education (language lessons).

In the original proposal, it was planned to recruit eight organisations to implement the Literacy Screener in their working procedures in each of the two selected pilot regions (Drenthe and Twente). In each organisation, it was projected that the Literacy Screener would be completed by at least 100 people. They would receive guidance services, either by the organisation offering the Literacy Screener or by one of the existing Service Points for Career Orientation and Guidance.

The methodology being used involves the regional project manager of the Reading and Writing Foundation contacting potential participating organisations and providing them with information on the GOAL project (by e-mail and face-to-face contact). If they are willing to participate, the **regional project manager** supports them with information, and training is given to their staff on recognizing and referring people with low literacy and the use of the Literacy Screener. They also receive

⁷ The Literacy Screener was developed outside the GOAL programme and has been used over 34,500 times in the Netherlands since June 2013. On average, approximately 30% of the 34,500 people who have taken the Literacy Screener have scored at or below level A2 for reading, writing and/or maths. These participants are identified as people with 'low basic skill levels'.

information on low literacy and learn about the causes and consequences. A **language ambassador** (former low literate) talks about his/her experiences. Practical instructions are given about recognising low literates (signals) and how to use the instruments (Literacy Screener and Road Map). Staff are also provided with instructions on how to talk about literacy problems with clients, for example to reduce stigma by saying that many people face literacy problems. They are finally taught how to guide people to courses.

Sites

In order to recruit sites to the study, the Reading and Writing Foundation reaches out to organisations in their network or to new organisations in the chosen regions. Due to the lack of organisations willing to participate in the original two regions, the **scope of the study was extended to Friesland, Flevoland and Gelderland**. For discussion on this, see Section 2.5 below.

Four organisations have participated in the GOAL project in the Netherlands. The fourth organization, PI Achterhoek, joined the project a little later than the other three (20 April 2016).

The four organisations in the pilot are the following:

- **Aksept** (located at the municipality of Hengelo, in the Twente region), an organisation specialising in services relating to labour market participation and health care. Its services include: reintegration services, job coaching and career counselling. In addition, Aksept provides day care activities to people with a large distance from the labour market (in terms of competences and skills). Within the framework of the GOAL pilot, all new clients of Aksept will be screened for low literacy using the Literacy Screener (*Taalmeter*).
- The **Municipality of Emmen** (located in the Province of Drenthe). All new clients who apply for social benefits at the municipality of Emmen are screened for low literacy by the training and diagnostic centre. The training and diagnostic centre is part of the EMCO-group which provides services for the municipalities of Emmen, Coevorden and Odoorn. The centre uses the *Taalmeter* for the screening.
- **Penitentiary Institution (PI) Lelystad** (located in the Province of Flevoland). All new inmates are invited to participate in the screening for low literacy. Participation is voluntary. Those clients who are screened as potentially low literate are referred to the internal education department. The *Taalmeter* has been introduced as part of the standard toolkit for all penitentiary institutes. Prior to participating in GOAL, PI Lelystad was already using the *Taalmeter*.
- **Penitentiary Institution (PI) Achterhoek** (located in the Province of Gelderland). The same working method as in PI Lelystad applies here.

Target group

A priority of the adult education policy is to improve basic skills of those groups who are not easy to reach, in particular **native Dutch speakers with low literacy and numeracy skills**. Screening for low literacy at various service providers as is the case in GOAL project is likely to contribute to a better outreach among these groups.

1.4 About this report

This is the final GOAL evaluation report for the Netherlands. An interim report, published in 2016, can be found on the GOAL project website: <http://www.projectgoal.eu/>. This website also includes final and interim reports for the five other countries participating in GOAL. In addition, the project website includes the final and interim GOAL cross-country reports, which synthesise data and findings from all six GOAL countries. Key aims of the cross-country reports are to enable participating countries to learn from one another's programme development experiences, and to draw lessons that can support national-level programme improvement.

The current national report is comprised of 11 chapters including this Introduction. This report is structured as follows.

- Chapter 2 describes the methodological design of the evaluation.
- Chapter 3 provides an overview of the GOAL programme participants and stakeholders in the Netherlands.

Chapters 4-10 report on programme processes and findings, covering the following topics:

- Chapter 4 describes the GOAL service in the Netherlands.
- Chapter 5 discusses GOAL partnerships and networks.
- Chapter 6 discusses GOAL counsellor competences.
- Chapter 7 focuses on guidance tools used in the provision of GOAL services.
- Chapter 8 looks at GOAL outreach strategies.
- Chapter 9 presents and analyses programme outcomes.
- Chapter 10 discusses the quality of the GOAL programme.
- Chapter 11, the Conclusion, addresses the five overarching evaluation questions, as well as the potential implications of this project for future programmes and policy.

The reporting template on which this national report is based was designed by IOE to be used across all six countries. IOE also contributed generic text to the six national reports, including the material on the GOAL project background and the evaluation methodology. All reporting on national and site level findings is authored by the local evaluation team, with editorial input from IOE.

2 Methodology

This chapter summarises the evaluation methodology for the GOAL project, discussing: the overarching evaluation design; quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analysis; and methodological challenges within the Netherlands and across the six-country project as a whole.

2.1 Evaluation design and methods

Evaluation design

The methodological approach for this evaluation was shaped by the complexities of the project design, namely the facts that:

- GOAL is multi-site (12 ‘sites’ or locations, that is, two⁸ in each of six countries) and multi-organisational.
- GOAL has multiple objectives.
- GOAL is predicated on cross-organisational collaboration.
- Each partner country has its own unique context and target groups (and target numbers to achieve).
- Programme resources are finite, and should be primarily focused on the interventions rather than the evaluation.

For these reasons, it was neither feasible nor advisable to conduct an experimental or quasi-experimental evaluation involving comparison groups. Instead the evaluation has positioned itself within the broad ‘**Theory of Change**’⁹ approach. Evaluations adopting this approach^{10,11} typically seek to address two levels of theory: 1) Implementation theory and 2) Programme theory.

Implementation theory focuses on how programmes are implemented, e.g. the intervention strategies that underpin programme activities. **Programme theory** focuses on programme mechanisms, by which we refer not to programme *activities* but to the *changes* within participants that those activities facilitate. These changes, in turn, may lead to the desired programme outcomes. For example, in a counselling programme such as GOAL, counselling is not a mechanism, it is a **programme activity**. Programme activities will ideally **trigger mechanisms (i.e. responses) within programme participants** – such mechanisms may include greater knowledge, increased confidence or motivation, and/or heightened ambition. These mechanisms, in turn, may then contribute to client actions and outcomes, such as enrolling on a course.

⁸ In the Netherlands, three sites are included instead of two.

⁹ Weitzman, B. C., Silver, D., & Dillman, K. N. (2002). Integrating a comparison group design into a theory of change evaluation: The case of the Urban Health Initiative. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 23(4), 371-385.

¹⁰ Rogers, P. J., & Weiss, C. H. (2007). Theory-based evaluation: Reflections ten years on: Theory-based evaluation: Past, present, and future. *New Directions for Evaluation*, 2007(114), 63–81.

¹¹ Weiss, C. (1997). How can theory-based evaluation make greater headway? *Evaluation Review*, 21, 501–524.

While drawing on Theory of Change approaches in general, the GOAL evaluation also draws on a specific type of Theory of Change evaluation: **Realist Evaluation**¹². The Realist approach emphasises the central importance of the **interplay between programme contexts and mechanisms**. A central tenet of Realist Evaluation is that programmes do not themselves produce outcomes in a direct causal fashion: programmes are not catapults with which we metaphorically launch clients into a better future. Unlike balls launched by catapults, clients have **agency**. Furthermore, they live their lives within **structural contexts**; these contexts produce **constraints and opportunities** within which agency may flourish (or not) to greater or less degrees. Causality (in terms of the intervention producing the desired effects) is thus contingent rather than deterministic: in the appropriate context and for the people, programmes (through their activities) *may* facilitate the triggering of mechanisms which *may* in turn lead to desired outcomes. Realist Evaluation, as with Theory of Change evaluation more generally, seeks to develop and test hypotheses about which interventions (or aspects of those interventions) work for whom in what contexts. As a corollary of this objective, Realist Evaluation rejects the assertion that to be considered successful, programmes must be context-independent, in terms of their ability to produce desired outcomes through the same intervention strategies for all target groups across all contexts. Whereas such context-independence and broad-scale generalisability may potentially be achieved with simpler interventions, it is unlikely to be feasible with complex interventions such as GOAL. A key objective of Realist Evaluation (and Theory of Change evaluation more generally) is thus to produce **theoretical generalisations which future programme developers and policymakers can draw on** when developing interventions in their own particular contexts and for particular target groups. This means measuring not only the degree to which a programme does or does not work, i.e. the degree to which it produces the desired outcomes, but also generating knowledge about **how programmes work, for whom, in what contexts, and why**. This requires in-depth understanding of intervention strategies and activities, and their relationship to programme contexts, mechanisms and outcomes.

In generating knowledge not just about whether programmes work but also how and why they do so, evaluators seek to go beyond merely providing a summative assessment of a specific programme. Summative evaluation is necessary but not sufficient. A broader goal is to contribute to the **cumulation of knowledge** in a field. Such cumulation, and the theory development it implies, is particularly essential in underdeveloped fields such as that investigated by GOAL: guidance and counselling for low educated adults. This objective is important not just because of the **limited amount of credible evidence in this nascent field**, but also because of the **inherently complex nature of interventions such as GOAL**. Evaluations which seek to understand and assess complex interventions must take account of a range of complicating factors within the programme¹³, including: 1) multi-agency governance and/or implementation; 2) simultaneous causal strands leading to desired outcomes; 3) alternative causal strands leading to desired outcomes; and 4) recursive causality. These four factors are discussed in the following paragraphs.

¹² Pawson, R., & Tilley, N. (1997). *Realistic Evaluation*. SAGE.

¹³ Rogers, P. J. (2008). Using Programme Theory to Evaluate Complicated and Complex Aspects of Interventions. *Evaluation*, 14(1), 29–48. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1356389007084674>

The importance of **multiple agencies** will be apparent throughout this report, particularly in discussions of partnerships and networks. As these agencies exist at programme and policy levels, the evaluation takes a multilevel approach: an important element of the evaluation is the description and assessment of the policy factors that play a role in influencing programme success. It is hoped that this dual focus on **programme-level and policy-level processes**, and their interaction, will provide useful evidence for a range of policymakers working in complex fields.

The notion of **simultaneous causal strands** refers to the presence of two or more causal strands that are required in order for desired outcomes to be achieved – e.g. for programme participants to enrol on a course, they may need to improve their motivation (causal strand 1), but viable courses also need to be made available to them (causal strand 2). **‘Alternative causal strands’** refers to the likelihood that one aspect of the programme may work for one client (in terms of producing a desired outcome), whereas another aspect may work for another client. For example, one GOAL client may take the ‘next step up’ into education as a result of increasing their previously low self-confidence or self-belief. Another client may take the same step for a different reason, e.g. perhaps she was already motivated but simply lacked information about relevant courses.

Finally, the notion of **recursive causality** refers to the non-linearity of many causal pathways. A linear model of programme theory might, for example, show a client moving in a direct, linear fashion across the following stages:

1. Improved self-esteem, *which leads to*
2. Increased ambition, *which leads to*
3. Desire for knowledge about further education courses, *which leads to*
4. Enrolment on a course, *which leads to*
5. Successful completion of the course.

A more realistic (particularly for disadvantaged target groups), recursive model of causality might include all five of these stages, but would take account of the tried and tested maxim that humans often need to take one step back in order to take two steps forward. Thus, a recursive model of causality might be:

1. Improved self-esteem, *which leads to*
2. Increased ambition, *which leads to*
3. A crisis of confidence: the client had never seen herself as an ambitious person, and is uncomfortable or even threatened by this new identity. *This could lead to*
4. Additional focus on self-esteem and identity, *which leads to*
5. Desire for knowledge about further education courses, *which leads to*
6. Enrolment on a course, *which leads to*
7. Another crisis of confidence, *which leads to*
8. Renewed focus on self-esteem and identity, plus a focus on study skills and resilience, *which lead to*
9. A new, expanded identity or self-concept as a capable learner, *which leads to*
10. Successful completion of the course.

A central objective of the GOAL evaluation is to develop and present a rich understanding of the range and types of causal pathways to be found in the programme, and the relationship of these pathways to specific national and local contexts.

In summary, this evaluation has sought to achieve three **overarching objectives**¹⁴: 1) to measure the effects of GOAL, with regard to client outcomes; 2) to understand how, why, for whom and in what contexts outcomes are (or are not) achieved; and 3) to contribute to joint learning and knowledge cumulation – both (a) within the GOAL programme itself (e.g. by sharing process evaluation evidence with programme developers and other key stakeholders), and (b) in terms of the broader field of adult guidance and counselling (by providing credible and relevant programme theory and evidence that future programme developers and policymakers can draw upon in their own endeavours). In working towards these objectives, evaluation evidence has been gathered via:

- client monitoring data (to establish baseline, ongoing and exit data)
- client satisfaction and outcome data (user survey and qualitative interviews)
- programme and policy data (literature review; needs and strengths analysis)
- case studies of programme sites (qualitative interviews, document analysis, analysis of quantitative data)
- qualitative interviews with policy actors.

The evaluation includes: a) ongoing data collection (throughout the life of the project) and b) wave-specific data collection.

Interim reporting

An interim national evaluation report for each GOAL country was published in November 2016. These reports, along with an interim cross-country report synthesising findings and key messages from all six countries, are available at <http://www.projectgoal.eu/index.php/publications> under the heading 'Wave 1 Evaluation Reports'. A key aim of this interim reporting stage, which drew on data collected through 26 January to 18 May 2016, was to analyse and share early messages in order to facilitate service adaptation and improvement.

The findings from the interim reporting stage are included in the current (i.e. final) report.

2.2 Sample

The questionnaire monitoring data was filled in for 76 clients, of which 8 in Wave 1 and 68 in Wave 2. The client satisfaction survey was filled in by 75 of the 76 clients, of which 7 in Wave 1 and 68 in Wave 2 (see table 2.1). In Wave 1, all the questionnaires filled in came from the prison PI Lelystad. In

¹⁴ Berriet-Sollic, M., Labarthe, P., & Laurent, C. (2014). Goals of evaluation and types of evidence. *Evaluation*, 20(2), 195–213. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1356389014529836>.

Wave 2, aside from PI Lelystad, questionnaires were also filled in by the municipality of Emmen and the prison PI Achterhoek. Aksept did not fill in questionnaires in Wave 1 or in Wave 2 (see table 2.2).

Table 2.1. Data Collection Sample, the Netherlands

Method	Wave 1	Wave 2	Total
Questionnaire monitoring data	8	68	76
Questionnaire client satisfaction survey	7	68	75
Interview follow-up survey service users	-	14	14
Interview policy actors	5*	5*	10
Interview policy makers	4*	5*	9
Interview programme staff	4	4	8
Interview programme partners	3**	3	6
Total	31	167	198

* Including double interviews.

** This was one interview with three people

Table 2.2. Quantitative Data Collection per Pilot Organisation, the Netherlands

Pilot organisation	monitoring data	client satisfaction survey	follow up survey service users
Aksept	0	0	0
Municipality of Emmen	53	53	14
PI Lelystad	9	8	0
PI Achterhoek	14	14	0
Total	76	75	14

The qualitative part of the study began with telephone interviews with the pilot organisations. In Wave 1, no interviews were held at PI Achterhoek, because this organisation joined after the data collection cut-off date for Wave 1. In Wave 2, all four pilot organisations were interviewed.

Two interviews were conducted at Aksept in Wave 1: one with a policy maker (senior policy maker/head) and one with a programme staff member. In Wave 2, the policy maker was interviewed again. A new programme staff member was also interviewed (because the respondent from Wave 1 no longer worked at Aksept) and an additional interview was held with a programme partner (local project leader at the Reading and Writing Foundation).

Two interviews were also conducted with the municipality of Emmen in Wave 1, one with a policy maker (municipality of Emmen account manager) and one with a programme staff member. Both respondents were interviewed again in Wave 2. This time, the policy maker was interviewed together with the sector head of diagnostics, education and training at the EMCO-groep because they have worked together in the GOAL project over the past year. In Wave 2, an interview was also conducted with a programme partner (language point coordinator from the municipality of Emmen).

At PI Lelystad, seven employees were consulted in four interviews in Wave 1: a double interview with policymakers (the head of the internal education department and the coordinator of the reintegration centre), two interviews with programme staff members and a triple interview with

employees from the PI's education department. The education department provides language guidance services and can be seen as an internal programme partner. In Wave 2, the coordinator of the reintegration centre (policy maker) and an employee of the education department (programme partner) were interviewed again. A new programme staff member was also interviewed, because the respondent from Wave 1 no longer worked at PI Lelystad.

At PI Achterhoek, two interviews were held in Wave 2, one with a policy maker (head of detention and reintegration) and one with a programme staff member who coordinates administering the Literacy Screener and providing language lessons.

Aside from interviews with the four pilot organisations, interviews were also held with policy actors from different organisations and backgrounds who are involved in policy and projects focused on adults with low basic skills. In Wave 1 this included four interviews with civil servants, advisers and project coordinators from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW), the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (SZW), the Reading and Writing Foundation, and the Employee Insurance Agency (UWV). Three interviews were held in Wave 2, two of which with employees from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (an interview with the secondary vocational education director who is also a member of the Count on Skills steering group and a double interview with the national project manager of GOAL and the project leader of Count on Skills) and one with employees of the Reading and Writing Foundation (a double interview with the GOAL programme manager and a district employee).

Finally, fourteen structured interviews were held in Wave 2 with service users who have gone through the process of screening with the Literacy Screener and referral to language lessons.

All quotes in this report are translated from the original language into English by the translation agency who fully translated the Dutch report.

2.3 Data collection

Quantitative data

Quantitative client data were collected throughout the life of the programme via: 1) a data monitoring instrument and 2) client satisfaction surveys. The **data monitoring instrument** gathered detailed information about the clients on the GOAL programmes, thus enabling evaluators to measure target numbers and track a range of programme processes and service user outcomes. This instrument included a question asking clients if they could be contacted later as part of the evaluation study.

The data monitoring instrument was used **each time** a client had a guidance session, although not all fields were completed at every session: some fields were relevant for the first session only (entrance data) whereas other fields focused on exit data. Each client was assigned a unique identifier by the counsellor, allowing evaluators to link data for clients who participated in multiple sessions.

The **Client Satisfaction Survey** was designed to gather data from service users about their experiences of counselling services. The instrument was a short, two-page, self-completion survey offered in either paper or online formats. It contained eight questions: two gather demographic information on the client (age, gender); five focusing on the counselling session, and one question asking clients to record if they received assistance in completing the survey¹⁵. There were small differences between the surveys offered in the six countries, reflecting the different contexts in which the guidance was offered and the different objectives of various programmes.

Both instruments were developed by IOE in close collaboration with the country partners in order that the instruments were sufficiently sensitive to the target groups involved and to national data protection regulations and concerns. These tools were finalised in autumn 2015.

In the Netherlands, **each pilot organisation has a contact person who functions as a permanent contact point for the GOAL programme**. These contacts all received an e-mail with information about the evaluation as well as links to the online instruments for data monitoring and the client satisfaction survey. The contact person forwarded this e-mail to all client managers in their organisations, with the request that the monitoring survey be conducted during an intake session among all clients who have low basic skill levels according to the Literacy Screener. The client managers were also asked to have clients with low basic skills complete the client satisfaction survey at the end of the intake session (if necessary with the client manager's support). In the Netherlands the decision was made to use an **online version** of the client survey so that the data would be more easily and securely available to researchers.

In Wave 1, data collection began with difficulty, which resulted in only 8 completed questionnaires monitoring data and 7 client satisfaction surveys from one pilot organisation. At the start of Wave 2, the Reading and Writing Foundation discussed the study again with each pilot organisation and agreements were made about filling in questionnaires. This had a positive effect on the quantitative data collection. One pilot organisation (Aksept) did not fill in questionnaires in either Wave 1 or in Wave 2 due to a very low influx of clients.

Beginning in March 2017, a **follow-up survey** was conducted with 14 clients. This survey sought to collect longitudinal outcome data from clients, in order to provide evidence on programme effects. The survey also collected quantitative and qualitative data on clients' perspectives on the programme and its impacts on their lives.

Though the follow-up survey was conducted in as rigorous a manner as possible, any conclusions drawn from it must be considered tentative: the limited time period of the evaluation means that only short-term outcomes could be assessed. Furthermore, participation in the follow-up survey was voluntary and thus non-representative; therefore it is not possible to generalise from the survey findings to the broader group of GOAL clients. That being said, the survey may provide valuable insights into the experiences and outcomes of particular clients or subgroups of clients. As discussed

¹⁵ It was anticipated that low literacy levels, or migrants' low skills in the national language, might prevent some clients from completing the survey without assistance.

in Section 2.1, this evidence may thus contribute to programme theory regarding how to meet the needs of such clients.

In total, 19 clients (with an indication of low literacy on the basis of the Literacy Screener) gave permission to contact them via the monitoring data questionnaire and gave their telephone number and/or email address. These clients all come from the municipality of Emmen. Follow-up interviews with clients were not possible at PI Lelystad or PI Achterhoek due to the nature of their situation. Aksept did not fill in any questionnaires, as a result of which follow-up contact was not possible.

The 19 clients from the municipality of Emmen were contacted by telephone and/or by email depending on the contact information they had provided. Fourteen of the 19 clients participated in telephone interviews. The other 5 clients were not reached or declined to participate. The interviews were not recorded because it was felt that making audio recordings would put off clients from participating too much. The 14 interviews were conducted in a short time span: from 29 March to 7 April (data collection cut-off date for Wave 2). The reason for this is that we only obtained permission from clients to contact them late in the data collection process (via the monitoring data questionnaire). The clients interviewed had only recently done the Literacy Screener and still needed to start language lessons if necessary. The interviews therefore do not provide any information about results of the guidance. There was discussion about experiences with undergoing the Literacy Screener and about the outcomes and the motivations to take language lessons or not.

Qualitative data

Qualitative data was collected at two different stages over the life of the programme. The first stage (Wave 1) of qualitative data collection took place from 25 April to 23 May 2016. The second stage of qualitative data collection took place from 20 March to 7 April 2017. By collecting such data in two waves rather than only one, the evaluation is able to provide a longitudinal focus on issues explored through the qualitative analysis.

During each data collection wave, **semi-structured qualitative interviews** were conducted with a range of programme stakeholders. In the first stage of qualitative data collection, four topic guides were developed by IOE to assist local evaluators in Wave 1 data gathering and to ensure consistency across the programme locations: **1) Programme Staff; 2) Programme Partners; 3) Policy Actors; and 4) Service Users**. A fifth Topic Guide, used in Iceland only, combined questions for Programme Partners and Policy Actors.

Similar topic guides were developed for the **second wave of qualitative data collection**. However, the development of these later topic guides was led primarily by local evaluators in each country, in consultation with IOE. The second wave of topic guides was somewhat more targeted in terms of the issues that were focused on: after qualitative data from Wave 1 had been analysed, key issues requiring further exploration or understanding were highlighted. These issues then formed the basis for Wave 2 topic guide development.

Appointments for qualitative interviews were made via the pilot organisations' contacts. In Wave 1, face-to-face interviews were conducted for two pilot organisations; in the third pilot organisation,

the interviews were conducted by telephone. All interviews were conducted using a voice recorder. The interviews were transcribed using the interviewer's notes. If the notes provided insufficient clarity, parts of the interviews were listened to again. The interviews with policy actors were transcribed using the recordings.

In Wave 2, all the interviews were conducted by Skype and recorded using the Skype Recorder programme. As in Wave 1, the interviews were transcribed using the interviewer's notes and parts of the interviews were listened to again if the notes provided insufficient clarity. After finishing, the interviews were transcribed in full by an external agency.

In the Netherlands, one-to-one **interviews were selected instead of focus groups** for the qualitative data gathering because of the limited group size, to limit participant time investment (no journey time to a central location) and to enable the possibility of responding flexibly to the relevant participant's agenda. A flexible and individual approach was required as the participating parties had only recently decided to participate. The willingness to participate in the interviews was high and, as far as we could see, this was not considered to be a great burden.

Evaluation manual

To ensure the collection of robust data and the consistency of instrument administration across the six countries, IOE created an **evaluation manual** containing guidelines for the use of the data collection tools. Version 1 of the manual (November 2015) included protocols for two quantitative instruments used in ongoing data collection. Version 2 (March 2016) added guidelines for the administration of the Wave 1 Topic Guides and other instruments, as well as guidance for completing the interim national reports. Version 3 (February 2017) provided guidance on the development and use of all Wave 2 data collection instruments, and guidelines for completing the final national reports.

2.4 Data analysis

In this **mixed methods evaluation**, a number of analytical approaches were used. Quantitative data were analysed using mainly **descriptive statistics**, e.g. frequencies, averages, group comparisons and cross-tabulations.

Qualitative data from interviews were analysed using mainly thematic analysis around the topic guides that were explicitly linked to the main aims and objectives of the project. In addition some typology analysis and group comparison analysis were also used.

2.5 Methodological challenges

Challenges for counsellors

The questionnaires were filled in by three pilot organisations. In the municipality of Emmen, quantitative data collection started late because there were internal differences of opinion about who would do this. The questionnaires took too much time for the client managers who support clients in their search for work. Ultimately, it was decided to have the questionnaires filled in by

employees of the training and diagnostic centre, who also administer the Literacy Screener. There, the questionnaires have been incorporated into their work process well. The training and diagnostic centre finds that the monitoring data questionnaire adds value. They see the list of questions as a good instrument for the intake interview: *“It provides useful information and contact with the participant on day 1,”* said the programme staff member interviewed.

At PI Achterhoek, the questionnaires were filled in by the language volunteers, who provide the language lessons for detainees. They use the monitoring data questionnaire as a guide for the intake interview and they also want to continue the use after the end of the GOAL study. The only sticking point they have encountered is that a number of questions do not fully connect with the target group. A programme staff member said it as follows: *“There are a few questions that are a bit more difficult for our target group to fill in. For example: why are you coming to the course? Do you have control over your life? And these guys often don’t have learning goals, they just come and then suddenly have to make learning goals. They come to do the Literacy Screener, which is mandatory. They haven’t actually thought about goals regarding work yet.”* PI Achterhoek has a waiting list to take language lessons because there are only three language volunteers. Given that the GOAL questionnaires are filled in at the intake interview, some time can pass before a client with an indication of low literacy on the Literacy Screener fills in the questionnaires.

For PI Lelystad, it was difficult to fit completing the questionnaires into their work processes. They found the guidance clients needed to fill in the forms too time consuming. They also found the questions unsuitable for their target group. To begin with, clients refused to answer the questions. A programme staff member explains this as follows: *“It is a very fragile target group that very much depends on trust. It can sometimes even take us a while to get an answer to the question ‘how was your day today?’ If you say that the questionnaire is for external parties, they usually say ‘no, I won’t do that’. [...] They just don’t want to give too much information about themselves. Which is understandable, because they are in detention.”* There are also many questions that clients don’t understand because the language is too difficult.

It also emerged from the interview with a programme staff member at PI Lelystad that there was too much ambiguity about the purpose of the questionnaires and the way they were to be filled in. In Wave 1, the PI made a good start on filling in the questionnaires. We have concluded that the transfer to new colleagues did not go well. For example, in Wave 2 the client experience questionnaires were filled in at the wrong time: not after clients had done the Literacy Screener and the interview about the outcomes had been held, but immediately after the explanation about the Literacy Screener. For this reason, 21 completed client experience questionnaires could not be included in the study.

Quantitative data challenges

Stichting Lezen en Schrijven (the Reading and Writing Foundation), in spite of all efforts, **found it very difficult to get organisations to participate in the GOAL project**. This was mainly to do with the anticipated **additional staff effort, the costs associated with this and the lack of direct added value for the organisation itself**. For many of the organisations, sessions with clients are carried out with a

completely different main objective and any screening for low basic skills is carried out as an extra. For many of the organisations that are interesting for this research, the emphasis lies on working efficiently, partly because of past cost-cutting, and intake and other interviews are conducted according to **strict procedures and strict time limits**. Many organisations considered the effort that is necessary for conducting the Literacy Screener and the additional monitoring surveys to be too high. **Although the effort for the monitoring and client survey seems limited from our perspective, for the organisations, it appeared to be an insurmountable objection.** Many organisations fear ‘administrative hassle’, as one potential participant put it. Moreover, pilot organisations in the Netherlands do not receive financial compensation for participating in GOAL.

Due to this difficulty in recruiting organisations, fewer pilot organisations participated than was projected.¹⁶ In January/February 2016, only one organisation participated (Askept). PI Lelystad and the Municipality of Emmen and PI Achterhoek started participating later (March/April 2016, see also Table 2.3. for starting dates of each GOAL pilot). An additional bottleneck was that the GOAL project also started very slowly within two of the participating pilot organisations. Once the municipality of Emmen and PI Achterhoek had agreed to participate, it took several months to get the project started. This had an impact on the (monitoring) data that could be collected.

At Askept no surveys (i.e. monitoring data and client surveys) were completed because – contrary to prior expectations – there had been almost no new client intake since January 2016. The municipality had hardly referred any new clients to Aksept. According to the interviewed policy maker from Aksept, standard procedure is for all the reintegration clients in the municipality to go to a social work company. It is a long (political) process to achieve change in this. Furthermore, Aksept underwent restructuring while GOAL was in progress.

Table 2.3. provides an overview of filled out Literacy Screeners (1 January 2016 to 7 April 2017), the number of indications of low literacy, and the starting dates for participating in GOAL. As the table shows there is a discrepancy between the number of indications of low literacy and the number of clients for whom we have monitoring data (i.e. only from 76 clients). First of all, this is due to the fact that organisations already implemented the Literacy Screener before they decided/were asked to participate in GOAL. Second, as we have mentioned, the data collection started late in the municipality of Emmen (due to internal differences of opinion about where this could be outsourced), PI Lelystad found the questionnaires to be too time-consuming and unsuitable for their target group, and PI Achterhoek has a waiting list for language lessons (and therefore also for filling in the questionnaires). In Aksept, due to the low inflow of new clients and restructuring, no effort was made to instruct programme staff members to fill in the questionnaires.

¹⁶ As a positive spin off of the efforts of the Reading and Writing Foundation to recruit organisations to participate in GOAL, an organisation which did not originally wish to participate in GOAL is currently considering using the Literacy Screener and the organisation of language lessons on the work floor.

Table 2.3. The Use of the Literacy Screener (Taalimeter) 1 January 2016 – 7 April 2017, the Netherlands

Pilot organisation	Start participation in GOAL	Number of completed Literacy Screeners (<i>Taalimeters</i>)	Number of indications of low literacy
Aksept	26 January 2016	24	8
PI Lelystad	21 March 2016	689	171
The Municipality of Emmen	18 April 2016	477	225
PI Achterhoek	20 April 2016	335	61
Total		1525	465

Qualitative data challenges

As described, interviews were held with 14 service users. These interviews (follow-up survey) were originally intended to collect information about the results of the language lessons. Unfortunately, this did not succeed in the Netherlands because filling in the questionnaires (in which clients could give permission to be contacted again) started late in the municipality of Emmen. The interviews were therefore used as an instrument to evaluate the intervention (screening and referral) and to explore the motivations of clients to take language lessons, or not.

2.6 Key methodological findings

An important lesson to be learned from the experiences of the GOAL project in the Netherlands is that **the benefit for organisations in participating in the pilot should outweigh the administrative ‘burden’ associated with the accompanying research.** Especially in the Netherlands where the intervention is relatively ‘light’, the data collection (data monitoring, client surveys, interviews etc.) can pose a significant strain on already tight work processes. *“If your whole intervention is only supposed to take 10 or 15 minutes, it is quite significant if the time investment more than doubles because you are taking part in such a study,”* says the project leader of Count on Skills.

This fear for administrative burden has been a reason for several organisations to forgo participation in GOAL. **While organisations do see the benefit of using the Literacy Screener, they do not always see the benefit of participating in the research.** In fact they can also implement the Literacy Screener (*Taalimeter*), without participating in GOAL. Moreover, pilot organisations in the Netherlands do not receive financial compensation for participating in GOAL. This situation has made it difficult for the programme coordinator to fully implement the GOAL project as originally anticipated.

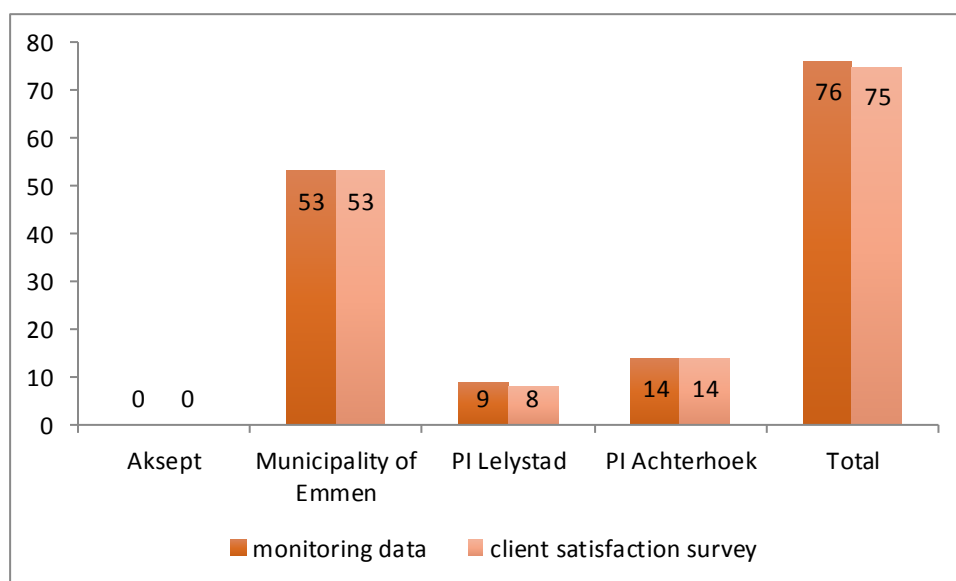
Finally, an important lesson is that the questionnaires have to fit with the target group and the practical situation of the pilot organisations, which vary quite widely in the Netherlands.

3 Programme Participants and Stakeholders

3.1 Service users

The respondents come from three organisations: the municipality of Emmen and the prisons PI Lelystad and PI Achterhoek. The majority of the questionnaires were filled in by the municipality of Emmen (figure 3.1.).

Figure 3.1. Overall Response per Pilot Organisation, the Netherlands



Demographic characteristics

Target group

The target group is made up for 70 per cent of people who are looking for a job/unemployed people and 30 per cent of detainees (table 3.1.)

Table 3.1. Target Group, the Netherlands

	N	%
Job-seeker/unemployed	53	70
Detainee	23	30
Total	76	100

All pilot organisations state that the target group they deal with is very diverse. Clients enter the organisations with a specific purpose, but their age, background and level of knowledge vary. Aksept provides two kind of services: reintegration services and day care for adults who are at a large distance (in terms of competences and skills etc.) from the labour market. In addition, they also offer guidance to youngsters from the training college who are looking for an internship to learn employee skills. The target group of the Municipality of Emmen consists of people who apply for social security. At PI Lelystad and PI Achterhoek the target group consists of male detainees. According to an

interviewed programme staff member of PI Lelystad, the background characteristics and issues also vary widely within this target group. Yet a few common features can be identified:

“Mainly boys who have got less of a social network outside the prison, who have to rely on themselves, who have a lower IQ level and/or a background on addiction”.

The municipality of Emmen as well as PI Lelystad and PI Achterhoek emphasise that **low literacy is accompanied with feelings of shame** and avoidant behaviour. A policy maker we interviewed from PI Lelystad says the following about this:

“Often they are super intelligent in hiding their low literacy, in order of which they’ve developed all sorts of mechanisms”.

In this regard, the municipality of Emmen notices a clear difference between clients whose mother tongue is Dutch and clients with a different mother tongue. Where the first group often denies having difficulty with the Dutch language (even if the score on the Literacy Screener points to this), the latter group does not feel the need to hide their low literacy.

Gender

Three quarters of clients are men (table 3.2.). It should be noted here that two of the three pilot organisations that participated in the quantitative data collection are male-only prisons. The gender of the respondents also correlates significantly with the target group they belong to. All women in the sample came from the municipality of Emmen and fall under the category of searching for a job/unemployed (table 3.3.).

Table 3.2. Gender of Clients, the Netherlands

	N	%
Female	20	26
Male	56	74
Total	77	100

Table 3.3. Target Group By Gender, the Netherlands

	Male		Female		Total	
Target group	N	%	N	%	N	%
Job-seeker/ unemployed	33	59	20	100	53	70%
Detainee	23	41	0	0	23	30%
Total	56	100	20	100	76	100%

$\chi^2(1) = 11.779, p < .01$

Age

The average age of the respondents was 42 years, with a minimum of 22 and a maximum of 63 years of age. Table 3.4. gives the age distribution of participants. Over four of every ten respondents were between 36 and 55 years old. There were no minors or people over 66 in the Dutch sample.

Table 3.4. Age of Clients, the Netherlands

	N	%
18 and under	0	0
19-25	7	9
26-35	21	27
36-55	33	43
56-65	15	20
66 and older	0	0
Total	77	100

Residence and home language

Most participants hold **Dutch citizenship** (Table 3.5.). The sample also included several residents of other EU countries, non-EU residents with a residence permit, asylum seekers and refugees.

Table 3.5. Residence Status of Clients, the Netherlands

	N	%
National/citizen	62	82
EU national	4	5
Non-EU national with residence permit	2	3
Asylum seeker	3	4
Refugee	2	3
Other (Please specify)*	3	4
Total	76	100

** This category includes a respondent of Russian descent, a respondent of Chilean descent and a non-EU resident without a residence permit.*

Participants speak a variety of languages. The majority of the clients have Dutch as the language most commonly spoken at home (Table 3.6.).

Table 3.6. Which Language(s) Do You Most Commonly Speak at Home? (multiple answers possible)', the Netherlands

	N	%
Dutch	54	71
English	4	5
French	3	4
Arabic	3	4
Persian/Farsi	2	3
Roma(ni)	2	3
Kurdish	1	1
Moroccan	1	1
Moldavian	1	1
Papiamentto	1	1
Polish	1	1
Romanian	1	1
Russian	1	1
Spanish	1	1
Turkish	1	1
Sinhala	1	1
Tigrinya	1	1
Serbian (Yugoslavia)	1	1
Total	76	100

Education and employment characteristics

Highest educational level

The education level of the respondents is diverse (see table 3.7.). A small majority of the respondents (61 per cent) has **lower levels of education** ((not completed) primary education, lower secondary education). Nine respondents (12%) were highly educated (tertiary education), of which eight are of Dutch descent. Although the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) shows low literacy isn't completely uncommon amongst high educated persons, our finding is quite high in comparison with their finding that 4.8 per cent of low literate adults in the Netherlands are highly educated (tertiary education).¹⁷ This said, it's important to keep in mind that the Literacy Screener only gives an *indication* of someone's reading skills, and is not an exact measure.

Table 3.7. What Is Your Highest Level of Education?', the Netherlands

	N	%
Not completed primary education	5	7
Primary education	17	22
Lower secondary education	24	32
General upper secondary education (gymnasium)	2	3
Vocational education (upper secondary level)	17	22
Post-secondary education, non-tertiary	2	3
Tertiary education (bachelors, masters and doctoral degrees)	9	12
Total	76	100

¹⁷ Buisman, M., Allen, J., Fouarge, D., Houtkoop, W. & Velden, R. van der (2013). *PIAAC: Kernvaardigheden voor werk en leven. Resultaten van de Nederlandse Survey 2012*. 's-Hertogenbosch: Expertisecentrum Beroepsonderwijs.

Current education and learning

As Table 3.8. shows, **most participants are not involved in any kind of education or learning.**

However, this picture does warrant some nuance. For instance, all the respondents from the municipality of Emmen (N=53, 70%) underwent the basic training for job applications. This training is mandatory for all people who apply for social security benefits. The moment of administering the questionnaire also influenced the answer. The respondents from PI Achterhoek filled in the questionnaire during the intake, which meant that the answer to the question of whether they follow a form of training was 'no' by definition. PI Lelystad filled in the background information questionnaire at the moment that clients had already started on internal language lessons in the education department.

Table 3.8. 'Are You Currently Engaged in Any Kind Of Education or Learning?', the Netherlands

	N	%
No	60	79
Yes	16	21
Total	76	100

Two thirds of those who are participating in training are **working towards a qualification** (N=11, see Table 3.9). Further investigation shows that these service users come from the social service of the municipality of Emmen (N=7) and PI Lelystad (N=4). The respondents from the municipality of Emmen could be working on obtaining work-related certificates, such as a basic safety certificate. The education department at PI Lelystad offers recognised ROC (Regional Education Centre) courses. However, it is striking to note that people with an indication of low literacy take training or courses that leads to a recognised diploma/certificate.

Table 3.9. 'Are You Working towards a Qualification?', the Netherlands

		N	%	Valid %
Valid	No	5	7	31
	Yes	11	15	69
	Total	16	22	100
Missing	Not applicable	60	79	
	Total	76	100	
Total		76	100	

Employment status

Given that 70 per cent of respondents come from the social service of the municipality of Emmen, the majority of respondents are unemployed (see table 3.10.). A number of clients from the municipality of Emmen have part-time work and one client does volunteer work. The remaining respondents come from PI Lelystad and PI Achterhoek and are therefore labelled as inactive.

Table 3.10. 'What Is Your Current Employment Status?', the Netherlands

	N	%
Employed part-time	5	7
Unemployed	47	62
Inactive (not retired and not actively looking for a job) E.g. full time student, stay-at-home parent)	23	30
Other*	1	1
Total	76	100

*Voluntary work with unemployment benefit

Previous guidance

As table 3.11. shows, a small majority of the GOAL participants in the Netherlands have no prior experience with career or educational guidance during adulthood. On the other hand, the percentage of participants that do have experience with this is quite high at 42 per cent. A further consideration shows that this does not vary significantly between the types of organisations (social services and penitentiary institutions).

Table 3.11. 'Have You Previously Received Any Career/Educational Guidance during Adulthood (But Not as Part of Higher Education)?', the Netherlands

	N	%
No	43	57
Yes	32	42
Don't know	1	1
Total	76	100

Previous barriers to improving education or career

The **most common obstacle that respondents have experienced in improving their training and/or work situation is their low Dutch language skills** (see table 3.12.). There is therefore a reason that the national action programme Count on Skills has the goal of preventing people with low literacy being marginalised.

Other commonly mentioned obstacles are age (mentioned by 26% of respondents), health problems (mentioned by 25% of respondents), the costs of training (mentioned by 24% of respondents), a lack of self-confidence and lack of transport/mobility (both mentioned by 20% of respondents). The current infrastructure in the Netherlands is intended to tackle a number of these obstacles. For example, the national government is stimulating the efforts of volunteers. **By investing in non-formal resources, the intention is to make language instruction in the Netherlands accessible to people for whom the step to a formal learning environment is (still) too big.** Furthermore, one-to-one language training with a volunteer makes it possible to connect well with the student's specific needs.

There seem to be some differences between male and female respondents in the barriers that have stopped them from improving their education or career up till now (see table 3.13. – 3.16.). Too busy taking care of family, lack of confidence and other personal reasons were significantly more often mentioned by female respondents, whereas the obstacle of low main language proficiency was significantly more often mentioned by male respondents. We also found a significant difference

between respondents who are currently engaged in any form of education or learning and respondents who are not: the latter group mentioned lack of transport or mobility as a barrier, whereas the first group did not mention this barrier at all (see table 3.17.).

Table 3.12. 'What Sort Of Things Have Stopped You Improving Your Education Or Your Career Up Till Now? (multiple answers possible)', the Netherlands

	N	% of responses	% of cases
Insufficient basic skills	11	5	15
Low main language proficiency	26	13	34
Lack of prerequisites	10	5	13
Too busy at work	8	4	11
I was too busy taking care of my family	11	5	15
Cost of education or training was too expensive/ I could not afford it	18	9	24
Lack of information about courses	5	3	7
Courses offered at an inconvenient time/place	8	4	11
Negative prior experience with schooling	6	3	8
Learning disabilities (e.g. ADHD, dyslexia)	8	4	11
Age	20	10	26
Health problems (incl. mental and physical health)	19	9	25
Lack of confidence	15	7	20
Lack of motivation	3	2	4
Lack of support from family	6	3	8
Lack of support from employer	2	1	3
Lack of transport or mobility	15	7	20
Cultural or religious obstacles	1	1	1
Criminal record in the past	2	1	3
Other	9	4	12
Total	203	100	267

Table 3.13. 'Barriers – Low Country's Main Language Proficiency', By Gender, the Netherlands

	Male		Female		Total	
Barriers – Low country's main language proficiency	N	%	N	%	N	%
No	32	57	18	90	50	66%
Yes	24	43	2	10	26	34%
Total	56	100	20	100	76	100%

$\chi^2(1) = 7.069, p < .05$

Table 3.14. 'Barriers – I Was too Busy Taking Care of My Family', By Gender, the Netherlands

	Male		Female		Total	
Barriers – I was too busy taking care of my family	N	%	N	%	N	%
No	52	93	13	65	65	86%
Yes	4	7	7	35	11	15%
Total	56	100	20	100	76	100%

$\chi^2(1) = 9.238, p < .05$ (1 cell (25%) has expected count less than 5).

Table 3.15. 'Barriers – Lack of Confidence', By Gender, the Netherlands

	Male		Female		Total	
Barriers – Lack of confidence	N	%	N	%	N	%
No	48	86	13	65	61	80%
Yes	8	14	7	35	15	20%
Total	56	100	20	100	76	100%

$\chi^2(1) = 3.992, p < .05$ (1 cell (25%) has expected count less than 5).

Table 3.16. 'Barriers – Other Personal Reasons', By Gender, the Netherlands

	Male		Female		Total	
Barriers – Other personal reasons	N	%	N	%	N	%
No	52	93	15	75	67	88%
Yes	4	7	5	25	9	12%
Total	56	100	20	100	76	100%

$\chi^2(1) = 4.501, p < .05$ (1 cell (25%) has expected count less than 5).

Table 3.17. 'Barriers – Lack of Transport or Mobility', By Current Educational Status, the Netherlands

	Not engaged in any education		Currently engaged in education		Total	
Barriers – Lack of transport or mobility	N	%	N	%	N	%
No	45	75	16	100	61	80%
Yes	15	25	0	0	15	20%
Total	60	100	16	100	76	100%

$\chi^2(1) = 4.984, p < .05$ (1 cell (25%) has expected count less than 5).

Self-efficacy

In the initial guidance session clients were asked to answer three questions concerning their own judgment about their self-efficacy, i.e. their self-perceived ability to achieve desired outcomes in life. Each question was made up of two statements, one presenting a more positive view and the other a more negative view. The positive statement gave the client a score of 1 point for that question and the negative one gave them a score of 0 points; thus the scores for the whole scale could range from 0-3 points, with 3 representing a client who chose the positive statement for all three questions and who thus had the highest possible score on the self-efficacy scale. The lowest possible score was 0.

The calculated self-efficacy scores (table 3.13.) indicate that 60 per cent of the participants feel more or less in control of their lives. This is quite striking, given that part of the population is in detention (30 per cent) and the remaining 70 per cent is looking for a job/unemployed. This question may be sensitive to socially desirable answers. The data did not provide any evidence for differences in reported self-efficacy based on a target group, gender, educational level and current status as well as employment.

Table 3.18. Self-Efficacy Score (at the Entry Point), the Netherlands

	N	%
0	5	7
1	26	34
2	43	57
3	2	3
Total	76	100

Attitudes to learning

As table 3.14. shows, almost all participants indicate that they like to learn new things. The majority of respondents (59 per cent) assess themselves as very eager to learn.

Table 3.19. 'Do You Like Learning New Things?', the Netherlands

	N	%
No, not really	3	4
Yes, a bit	28	37
Yes, a lot	45	59
Total	76	100

Learning goals

The most commonly mentioned learning goals are achieving a specific qualification and finding a job (see Table 3.15.). In line with expectations, the learning objective of 'finding a job' correlates significantly with the type of referring organisation. This learning objective is primarily mentioned by respondents from the social service (municipality of Emmen) (see table 3.16.). After all, clients come to the social service after they have applied for social security benefits and they receive assistance with finding work there. The learning objective of finding a job also correlates significantly with the current educational status of the respondent: it is primarily mentioned by respondents who are not engaged in any kind of education or learning at the moment. The learning objective 'achieve a specific qualification' does not significantly correlate with the organisation the respondents belong to or their current employment status.

Table 3.20. 'Do You Have Specific Learning Goals? (multiple answers possible)', the Netherlands

	N	% of responses	% of cases
Yes, I want to achieve a qualification of any sort	10	8	13
Yes, I want to achieve a specific qualification	30	24	39
Yes, I want to improve my skills in general	16	13	21
Yes, I want to improve my skills in a specific area	12	10	16
Yes, I need this training for my current job	3	2	4
Yes, I need this learning to find a job	27	22	36
No, I do not have any specific objectives	10	8	13
Not applicable; the client does not have education related guidance	17	14	22
Total	125	100	164

Table 3.21. 'Learning Objectives – I Need this Learning To Find a Job', By Type of Referring Organisation, the Netherlands

	Social (welfare) services		(National) prison institution		Total	
Learning objectives – I need this learning to find a job	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	23	43	4	17	27	36%
No	30	57	19	83	49	65%
Total	53	100	23	100	76	100%

$\chi^2(1) = 4.736, p < .05$

Table 3.22. 'Learning Objectives – I Need this Learning To Find a Job', By Current Educational Status, the Netherlands

	Not engaged in any education		Currently engaged in education		Total	
Learning objectives – I need this learning to find a job	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	44	73	5	31	49	65%
No	16	27	11	69	27	36%
Total	60	100	16	100	76	100%

$\chi^2(1) = 9.767, p < .05$

Career goals

As table 3.17. shows, one in ten respondents has a specific job or career in mind. Furthermore, six in ten respondents know what sector or what type of job they want to work in. This percentage is quite high. Further investigation shows that these respondents come both from the social service and from the penitentiary institutions. The data does not make it possible to calculate pivot tables.

Table 3.23. ‘Does Your Client Have Clear Career Goals?’, the Netherlands

	N	%
No, the client does not have any specific job or career area in mind	21	28
Yes, the client knows what industry/type of work he/she wants to do	45	59
Yes, the client has a specific job in mind	9	12
Not answered	1	1
Total	76	100

3.2 Programme staff

There were four participating organisations spread across multiple sites. In the Netherlands, **no quantitative information was collected on programme staff**. It was chosen not to burden participating organisations further, because the situation is complex (for example, in the case of the two participating prisons) and because **background information on staff is less relevant** than in the other participating countries because of the unique nature of the Dutch intervention. This mainly concerns using the Literacy Screener including an interview on the outcome and any referral, but not about guidance in the wider sense of the word. In three of the four pilot organisations, the Literacy Screener is administered by unpaid workers: in Aksept and PI Lelystad, these are trainees, in PI Achterhoek, they are volunteers. The municipality of Emmen is the only pilot organisation in which the Literacy Screener is administered by (paid) professionals. With the use of trainees at Aksept and PI Lelystad, there is continuous turnover of programme staff members because work placements usually take (a maximum of) one school year.

Those administering the Literacy Screener have received instruction from the Reading and Writing Foundation on how to recognise low literacy, how to discuss this issue with clients and how to use the Literacy Screener (Taalmeter). As the Literacy Screener itself is very straightforward this does not require any further training of staff. A programme staff member interviewed at PI Achterhoek expresses this as follows:

“It is generally self-evident. The volunteers I have are all people who have a considerable level of education and we know their backgrounds. No special skills are needed to administer the Literacy Screener. With the volunteers we have, this is not a problem at all.”

3.3 Key findings

Most of the Dutch sample consisted of clients from the social service in Emmen. The other (smaller) part consists of a special target group: male-only prisons. The employees of the organisations say that **shame and avoidance behaviour play a (major) role in both target groups**, which are significantly different from each other. The majority of respondents are of Dutch descent and have Dutch as their mother tongue. Shame at their poor literacy skills is particularly evident in the native Dutch-speaking group.

Important obstacles that respondents have experienced in improving their education and/or work situation include low Dutch language skills, age, the costs of training and a lack of self-confidence. The Dutch approach responds to this by means of accessible, low-threshold and customised language education.

A number of characteristics of the participants struck us in particular: 60 per cent of the participants feel more or less in control of their lives. This is striking given that participants are in detention or unemployed. The target group also identifies itself as (very) keen to learn. However, in practice, they are often not open to taking language lessons. This is discussed further in chapters 9 and 10. When looking at the highest education level completed, it struck us that twelve per cent of participants have completed a university or university of applied sciences education. This is quite high compared to the results of the Dutch PIAAC study on this behalf, which indicate that 4.8 per cent of low literate adults in the Netherlands are highly educated (tertiary education). Perhaps our finding confirms that the Literacy Screener only gives an indication of low literacy and additional investigation of the individuals' literacy skills is necessary before drawing firm conclusions about their abilities.

The pilot organisations provide different types of services: from reintegration and day care for adults who are at a large distance from the labour market, to detention. The clients who make use of these services vary in age, background and level of knowledge. **One of the objectives of GOAL in the Netherlands is to identify more people with low literacy. To achieve this, screening is being started in different organisations where addressing low literacy is not the main objective.** Although the Dutch GOAL project focuses on one problem (low literacy), the target group can vary in terms of background characteristics.

3.4 Key implications

Implications for future programme development

We have found differences between male and female respondents in the obstacles that have stopped them from improving their education or career up till now. Too busy taking care of family, lack of confidence and other personal reasons were significantly more often mentioned by female respondents, whereas the obstacle of low main language proficiency was significantly more often mentioned by male respondents. These gender related differences are important to address when referring clients to a language course.

4 The GOAL guidance service

This chapter provides an overview of descriptive information on the GOAL guidance service. Looking across Europe as a whole, the culture of **adult guidance is underdeveloped**, especially among adults who are traditionally less likely to engage in work-related and other forms of learning, such as those with low literacy and numeracy skills. There is a perception – which to some extent is still borne out by practice – that guidance is almost exclusively a careers-focused service offered in schools at or near the point where students are completing their compulsory education.

According to the ELGPN¹⁸, guidance within adult education typically takes three forms:

- *Pre-entry guidance* which supports adults to consider whether to participate in adult learning and what programmes might be right for them.
- *Guidance as an integral part of adult education programmes*. Some adult education programmes are strongly focused on career planning or on the development of employability and career management skills: in these cases lifelong guidance is often built into the core of the programme.
- *Exit guidance* which supports graduates of adult education programmes to consider how they can use what they have learned to support their progress in further learning and work.

4.1 Guidance activities and processes: Quantitative findings

Reasons for seeking guidance

As table 4.1. shows, obtaining support in finding a job is the most commonly stated reason to seek guidance. This reason significantly correlates with the type of organisation the participants come from, as do the reasons ‘to obtain support with making a CV’ and ‘to explore training options’. As tables 4.2. and 4.3. show, participants from the social services (from the municipality of Emmen) sought help with finding a job and making a CV more often than participants from the two penitentiary institutions (who almost never mentioned these reasons). This is logical, because participants from the social services have all applied for social security benefits and go to the social service for guidance in finding work. Only seven participants from the social services say that they have sought support to explore training possibilities (see table 4.4.). This reason is mentioned by half of the participants from the penitentiary institutions.

Logically, the reason ‘to obtain support with finding a job’ also correlates significantly with the gender of the participants (see table 4.5.). After all, all the women in the sample come from the municipality of Emmen.

¹⁸ Hooley, T. (2014) The evidence base on lifelong guidance: A guide to key findings for effective policy and practice. European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network.

Table 4.1. Reasons for Seeking Guidance (multiple answers possible), the Netherlands

	N	% of responses	% of cases
To explore educational opportunities	20	16	26
To find links between personal interest and occupational/educational opportunities	4	3	5
To validate existing competences/prior learning	3	2	4
To get assistance with learning technique/strategies	4	3	5
To find financial resources for learning	3	2	4
To get assistance with job seeking	55	44	72
To get assistance with writing a CV	17	13	22
To get information about different institutions and their roles	2	2	3
Because of personal issues	5	4	7
To increase proficiency in main language	9	7	12
To receive an income	2	2	3
To learn writing/reading/math	1	1	1
Not applicable	1	1	1
Total	126	100	166

Table 4.2. 'Client Reasons for Seeking Guidance – To Get Assistance with Job Seeking', By Type of Referring Organisation, the Netherlands

	Social (welfare) services		(National) prison institution		Total	
Client reasons for seeking guidance – To get assistance with job seeking	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	52	98	2	9	54	71%
No	1	2	21	91	22	29%
Total	53	100	23	100	76	100%

$\chi^2(1) = 62.351, p < .01$

Table 4.3. 'Client Reasons for Seeking Guidance – To Get Assistance With Writing A CV', By Type of Referring Organisation, the Netherlands

	Social (welfare) services		(National) prison institution		Total	
Client reasons for seeking guidance – To get assistance with writing a CV	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	17	32	0	0	17	22%
No	36	68	23	100	59	78%
Total	53	100	20	100	76	100%

$\chi^2(1) = 7.568, p < .01$

Table 4.4. 'Client Reasons for Seeking Guidance – To Explore Educational Opportunities, By Type of Referring Organisation, the Netherlands

	Social (welfare) services		(National) prison institution		Total	
Client reasons for seeking guidance – To explore educational opportunities	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	7	13	12	52	19	25%
No	46	87	11	48	57	75%
Total	53	100	23	100	76	100%

$\chi^2(1) = 12.989, p < .01$

Table 4.5. 'Client Reasons for Seeking Guidance – To Get Assistance with Job Seeking', By Gender, the Netherlands

	Male		Female		Total	
Client reasons for seeking guidance – To get assistance with job seeking	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	35	63	19	95	54	71%
No	21	38	1	5	22	29%
Total	56	100	20	100	76	100%

$\chi^2(1) = 7.568, p < .01$

Contact type

In the Dutch pilot, there is just one type of contact and that is the **face-to-face** use of the Literacy Screener and discussion about its results.

Length of session

Sessions are **relatively short** in the Netherlands. The average session duration with the participants was 16 minutes, with a minimum of 5 and a maximum of 30 minutes. Half of the sessions took 15 or 20 minutes (table 4.6.).

Table 4.6. Length of Session, the Netherlands

Minutes	N	%
5	4	5
7	1	1
8	3	4
9	5	7
10	9	12
12	2	3
13	1	1
14	1	1
15	26	34
20	11	15
25	4	5
30	9	12
Total	76	100

The length of the session significantly correlates with the type of organisation the participants come from. As table 4.7. shows, over 80 per cent of the sessions with participants from the social services from the municipality of Emmen took a maximum of 15 minutes. Sessions for participants from prisons often took longer: two thirds of the participants had a session of 20 to 30 minutes.

The shorter session duration at the municipality of Emmen probably correlates with the high number of clients that do not agree with the outcome of the Literacy Screener and do not consider it necessary to take language lessons (this is discussed further in chapters 9 and 10). In such cases, the interview about the outcomes of the Literacy Screener ends quite quickly. The programme staff members interviewed at PI Achterhoek and PI Lelystad said that most clients are open to taking language lessons.

Table 4.7. Length of Session by Type of Referring Organisation, the Netherlands

	Social (welfare) services		(National) prison institution		Total	
Length of session	N	%	N	%	N	%
5 – 15 minutes	44	83	8	35	52	68%
20 – 30 minutes	9	17	15	65	24	32%
Total	53	100	23	100	76	100%

$\chi^2(1) = 17.272, p < .01$

Focus of the sessions

The focus of the sessions is diverse, as Table 4.8. shows. Approximately equal numbers of sessions were about learning or about work. Other subjects that were discussed in the sessions (and fall under the category 'other') were the personal circumstances (and future prospects) of the client, filling in the GOAL questionnaire (monitoring data) and the fact that the client did not recognise the outcome of the Literacy Screener.

Table 4.8. Focus of Session (multiple answers possible), the Netherlands

	N	% of responses	% of cases
Jobs/employment	34	31	45
Learning/education/qualifications	39	36	52
Validation of prior learning	1	1	1
Other	36	33	48
Total	110	100	147

Route to guidance: type of referring organisation

The majority of Dutch participants in GOAL come from the social service of the municipality of Emmen (see table 4.9). The other participants are detainees, coming from PI Lelystad and PI Achterhoek.

Table 4.9. Type of Referring Organisation, the Netherlands

	N	%
Social (welfare) services	53	70
(National) prison institution	23	30
Total	76	100

4.2 Guidance activities and processes: Qualitative findings

Seeking to meet client needs: The guidance process

The guidance process in the Netherlands consists of three steps:

1. **Administering the Literacy Screener** – In all four of the pilot organisations, the Literacy Screener is administered at the moment that clients enter the organisation. The Literacy Screener is timed: clients have a maximum of 12 minutes to complete the test. Clients do the Literacy Screener by themselves at a computer.
2. The **discussion about the outcome** – If clients have an inadequate score on the Literacy Screener, there is an interview to discuss the indication of low literacy and to gain a picture of the learning needs of the person in question.
3. **Referral to a language provider** – If it emerges from the discussion that clients are open to taking language lessons, they are referred to an (internal or external) language provider for a language course that meets the client's needs.

Programme staff members say the **total guidance process** (administering the Literacy Screener (including an introduction), discussion about the outcome and any referral) takes **20 to 30 minutes**. This process is implemented in organisations where addressing low literacy is not the main objective. The four pilot organisations have implemented this as follows:

Aksept

Aksept¹⁹ is the only pilot organisation that makes a selection of clients for whom they administer the Literacy Screener: clients who have completed a university or university of applied sciences education do not have to take the Literacy Screener. At Aksept, the Literacy Screener is administered individually by trainees. If a client has an inadequate score, the client's process supervisor holds the interview about the outcome. Aksept provides its own language lessons with material from the Reading and Writing Foundation:

"We can give language training ourselves, because we have taken a course for this at the Reading and Writing Foundation. We can take the first steps; if more is needed, we can also bring in the ROC (Regional Education Centre). But we can take the first steps, especially for getting work, it is important that people are comfortable with this."

With an inadequate score on the Literacy Screener, the possibility of language lessons is discussed with the client and job coach. They consult to look at what is the most useful for the respective client. The policy maker from Aksept explains:

"We also look at what is practical. If they need to go to the work floor and have to undergo training there, it is done on location. These are customised processes. We look at where the help is needed and it is specifically set up there. We have learned that this works best."

¹⁹ A note on the experiences at Aksept, is that they only administered 24 Literacy Screeners in the period from 1 January 2016 – 7 April 2017 (of which 8 point to an indication of low literacy). This is substantially fewer than the other pilot organisations (see table 2.3.).

Gemeente Emmen

In the municipality of Emmen, the Literacy Screener is administered at the training and diagnostic centre, where people who have applied for social security benefits take (mandatory) basic training on applying for jobs. The basic training takes two weeks and begins with the Literacy Screener. The municipality of Emmen is the only pilot organisation where the Literacy Screener is administered by a professional in plenary sessions. The group generally consists of 10 to 20 people. If a participant obtains an inadequate score on the Literacy Screener, the process supervisors from the training and diagnostic centre briefly ask about their reaction. The participant is then referred to the language point coordinator, who has a session at the training and diagnostic centre on the same day. The language point coordinator can connect the client to a suitable support resource. The municipality of Emmen is therefore the only pilot organisation that does not organise language lessons in house. According to the process supervisor interviewed, administering the Literacy Screener fits well within the training and diagnostic centre's services:

"When someone comes in whom you help to apply for a job, it is good to know how his/her language skills are."

PI Lelystad

Detainees enter the penitentiary institution in the reintegration centre. Upon arrival, the Literacy Screener is offered immediately (on a voluntary basis) in combination with the Reflector (a personality test). The Literacy Screener is administered by trainees. The discussion about the outcome and the possibility of taking language lessons within the penitentiary institution is held by the same work placement student. The coordinator of the reintegration centre says the use of the Literacy Screener fits into their work process well because the score on the Literacy Screener gives insight into whether detainees have an adequate command of the Dutch language to do the Reflector, which is very important for the detainee's further reintegration programme:

"Then at least we know if people cannot fill in the Reflector, and we don't have that done. And that they don't just put nonsense."

An inadequate score on the Literacy Screener is emailed to the internal education department automatically. The reintegration centre assumes that it will then call the detainee to come for an intake interview to look at the best way to help him. In the education department, language lessons are provided by volunteers from the Language for Life programme. However, the interviews show that the education department does not call in all the men with an inadequate score on the Literacy Screener. They only give language lessons to men who come to the education department themselves. More about this in chapter 8.

PI Achterhoek

In PI Achterhoek, the Literacy Screener is also administered in combination with the Reflector upon entry to the reintegration centre. However, the Literacy Screener is not offered as freely in PI Achterhoek as in PI Lelystad:

"It is a standard procedure. They all just accept it, it's simply for everyone, and that's that."

The Literacy Screener is administered by volunteers from the penitentiary institution. If a detainee has an inadequate score, this is discussed with the same volunteer. This person then asks (carefully and sensitively) if the detainee wants to be helped by language volunteers within the penitentiary institution.

In principle, the Literacy Screener is administered to everyone. Exceptions are only sometimes made for people with non-Dutch descent if it is immediately clear that they do not understand the Dutch language. The programme staff member interviewed said they often indicate this themselves. In such a case, the man is referred directly to a language volunteer.

Introducing the Literacy Screener to clients

In the interviews with programme staff members, we asked how they introduce the Literacy Screener to clients. A number of common factors can be derived from their answers:

- Formulating the introduction positively;
- Explaining that it is not a test to measure how well you do it, but that it is intended to obtain a picture of the client's language skills;
- Stating what possibilities are available for the client if the Literacy Screener shows that he/she has difficulty with the Dutch language;
- Not making administering the Literacy Screener too big a point by introducing it as a standard procedure.

The municipality of Emmen adds that it helps to mention the involvement of Princess Laurentien in addressing low literacy. They also mention that low literacy goes undetected in many people and for example that it also occurs among people with a secondary vocational education.

PI Lelystad adds that it is important to emphasise the value for the client (personal development, more independence) and to remove feelings of shame.

Client's reaction to the Literacy Screener

In the municipality of Emmen, at Aksept and at PI Achterhoek, virtually all the clients do the Literacy Screener without resistance. At PI Lelystad, it does happen that detainees refuse to do the Literacy Screener. Sometimes they are to be released in a few days and they do not see the point of it. If detainees with longer sentences refuse to do the Literacy Screener, they often come back to this after a number of weeks, according to the programme staff member interviewed.

"Then they have calmed down a bit and they can lay it out for themselves better: maybe it is actually more useful to organise my time, to develop myself. I don't gain anything by refusing, I'll just take part and see what I can get out of it."

Client case studies

The following two case studies (based on an interview with a process supervisor) show how clients with different learning levels are going through the guidance process in the municipality of Emmen. For both clients, Dutch is not their mother tongue. This is characteristic of the group of clients from

the municipality of Emmen who agree to take language lessons. Virtually all clients whose mother tongue is Dutch refuse to take language lessons (more about this in chapters 8, 9 and 10).

Client 1: a highly educated woman from England, who speaks no Dutch at all and progresses quickly.

- **Arrival at the training and diagnostic centre:** the client has applied for social security benefits and came to the training and diagnostic centre the same week (this is the procedure for all clients who apply for social security benefits).
- **Administering Literacy Screener and interview about the outcome:** the client comes from England and did not yet speak any Dutch. The communication was therefore entirely in English. For this reason, she did not do the Literacy Screener, but she went directly to the appointment with the language point coordinator.
- **Referral to education:** the language point coordinator connected the client to a volunteer. As of November 2016, they meet each other once per week for a 1.5 hour language lesson.
- **Results (so far):** the language lessons are still in progress. The client is a highly educated woman who is very motivated to learn the Dutch language. The lessons are going well, she is making good progress. She began with learning basic skills. For instance, she can now count and knows the seasons, months and the days of the week. She can also greet people, introduce herself and ask people she meets a few questions. Her vocabulary is growing, which enables her to be understood in many everyday subjects. She has formulated the goal for herself at least to be able to partially speak Dutch during a job interview.
- **Overall experience of the client:** the client is very ambitious and very much enjoys the language lessons. In her daily life, she has few people around her with whom she can speak Dutch, which sometimes makes practicing outside the lessons difficult.

Client 2: a client whose mother tongue is not Dutch, with low language and computer skills. She is progressing slowly.

- **Arrival at the training and diagnostic centre:** the client has applied for social security benefits and came to the training and diagnostic centre the same week (this is the procedure for all clients who apply for social security benefits).
- **Administering Literacy Screener and interview about the outcome:** the client was completely overwhelmed. In the 12 minutes available, she answered 10 of the 24 questions, of which she had 5 correct. This score is a strong indication of low literacy. In a conversation with the client, it was clearly audible that she has a lot of difficulty with the Dutch language. Her vocabulary was limited and she had difficulty with reading comprehension. It was also not a surprise to the client herself that she had obtained a poor score.
- **Referral to education:** the language point coordinator connected the client to a volunteer. The client was eager to take language lessons and started them quite quickly. As of August 2016, she takes weekly language lessons at the language point. This involves practical exercises with reading and writing, for example using a book, newspaper or the internet. She also does exercises on the computer to improve her computer skills.
- **Results (so far):** the client still finds the Dutch language very difficult. Her vocabulary is still limited, as a result of which she quickly loses the thread when reading a text or in

conversation with other people. The client has not formulated a specific goal. Although her language skills are progressing slowly, she believes that the language lessons are helping her. Her computer skills are progressing more quickly.

- **Overall experience of the client:** the client very much likes the support from the volunteer. Her motivation is evident from her persistence: she has been coming to the language point for lessons every week for almost seven months.

4.3 Key findings

Guidance activities and processes: quantitative findings

The GOAL intervention in the Netherlands is unique: guidance sessions can be characterised as very short relative to those in the other participating countries (average 16 minutes).

The participants come from two very different types of organisations: a social service and a prison. This distinction is clearly reflected in the goals of the clients coming into the organisation. Participants from the municipality of Emmen come to the social service for practical reasons: for support with finding a job and making a CV. They have a clear focus, which is not necessarily directed at personal development/learning. Within the penitentiary institutions, the focus is almost not at all on work; people there are indeed more interested in personal development (educational opportunities).

Guidance activities and processes: qualitative findings

In all four of the pilot organisations, administering the Literacy Screener and the discussion about the outcome are fixed parts of the work process (standard procedure). The Literacy Screener is administered immediately upon arrival, and although PI Lelystad does sometimes encounter some resistance, participants generally do cooperate. The outcome provides the organisations with relevant information for the further performance of their work process.

The different parts of the guidance process (administering the Literacy Screener and discussion about the outcome/referral to a language course) are not always performed by the same person/department. This requires good arrangements and communication between the different people involved. It is striking that three of the four pilot organisations use unpaid workers (trainees or volunteers) to administer the Literacy Screener. In chapter 7, we go further into the competences they need to have.

4.4 Key implications

Implications for future programme development

Aksept, PI Lelystad and PI Achterhoek provide the language lessons within their organisation themselves. This is not common in the Netherlands: clients are usually referred to a language point to be connected to language lessons there. Internal language lessons can be an advantage because the different parts of the guidance process are then more integrated. However, service delivery and/or quality still depends on a good partnership between the different departments/employees

involved that are responsible for the different parts of the guidance process. Within one of these three pilot organisations, it is evident that information is not exchanged between departments and that the internal cooperation is not optimal.

The special character of the penitentiary institutions can make the guidance process more difficult, in the sense that clients with (very) short sentences do not see the added value of this. If they do undergo the Literacy Screener, a process cannot be started/finished within the penitentiary institution if the client has an indication of low literacy. It would be nice if these clients would receive further guidance in this area outside penitentiary institution.

Policy implications

Implications of policy

The Dutch approach to low literacy focuses on finding more low literate people by having organisations with a main purpose other than addressing low literacy screen their clients for low literacy in a fast and easy way. Four organisations of diverse types are participating in the Dutch GOAL project: organisations focusing on labour participation and prisons. They show that the Literacy Screener can be used effectively in different types of organisations. The common factor (and **an important condition for the successful use of the instrument**) is that the Literacy Screener provides useful information for the organisations' own work processes.

5 Partnerships and Networks

This chapter provides description and analysis of the partnerships and networks that have been developed to support the work of GOAL. This analysis includes an assessment of the strengths, achievements and challenges involved in developing and maintaining these partnerships and networks.

5.1 Developing partnerships and networks: programme aims

An important focal point in addressing low basic skill levels in the Netherlands is **the establishment and strengthening of regional networks**. There has been a focus on regional collaboration for some time. The preconditions for addressing low basic skill levels were mapped out in a number of regions in the Literacy for Life pilot programme (2012 and 2015). It is important that the regional literacy training services on offer meet the needs of potential students. To this end, regional ‘literacy teams’ have been established, which work with regional parties to make existing literacy services more effective. They do this by **ensuring that organisations which identify service users with low literacy** such as the UWV (Employee Insurance Agency), the Public Employment Services, Service Points for Career Orientation & Guidance, and social district teams, **cooperate more effectively with organisations offering literacy courses**, including ROCs (Regional Education Centres), libraries and community centres. **This creates a regional ‘literacy network’**, enabling municipalities to develop a more effective approach to addressing low basic skills. It also clarifies the role and responsibility of other parties, including employers and care organisations. More low literacy service users were trained in the Literacy for Life pilot regions and it also appeared that they made advancements regarding literacy proficiency and participation in society. Partly because of the outcomes of the previous pilot programme, **strengthening networks is now incorporated as one of the five action lines in the national Count on Skills programme** and the aim is to establish active networks in all 35 employment regions in the Netherlands. The goal of the action line during the action programme (2016-2018) is to ensure that at least 45,000 participants start literacy training, in which materials and volunteers from the programme will be used. The intended results of the action line ‘local network approach’ are described as follows²⁰:

‘1a. In all employment market regions, a sustainable infrastructure has been created in which municipalities, together with local and regional partners, take the lead in better identifying and addressing low basic skills.

1b. New literacy volunteers will be trained in each region for deployment as a literacy buddy, literacy coach or guide for semi-literate service users. At least 3,000 volunteers will be trained throughout the Netherlands in 2018.

1c. In each region, at least one recognisable permanent meeting point will be designed for students, volunteers, teachers and other network partners (Literacy Point)’.

²⁰ Ministerie van OCW, VWS en SZW (2015). Actieprogramma Tel mee met Taal. Source: <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/kamerstukken/2015/03/06/actieprogramma-tel-mee-met-taal>

The above-mentioned literacy teams will be deployed in order to stimulate cooperation. The literacy teams (established by *Stichting Lezen en Schrijven*, the Reading and Writing Foundation) will ensure that the municipalities and other involved parties in a region build a sustainable regional infrastructure in order to identify service users with low literacy and guide them to literacy or other training. This basic infrastructure, as described in the *Count on Skills* action programme, comprises amongst others:

- **A Literacy Point**, which acts as local or regional contact point for the literacy network. All regional information about literacy training will be collated here, the target group will be able to contact the point with any questions, and courses and events can be organised.
- The **Literacy Screener** will be used by organisations such as temporary employment agencies, the UWV (Employee Insurance Agency), Service Points for Career Orientation and Guidance and care providers to identify service users with low literacy more quickly and to refer them to an appropriate literacy training.
- **A range of training for literacy volunteers**, the development of training and testing materials.

Once the regional networks have been established, a second and important challenge follows: embedding. A main target has been incorporated in the *Count on Skills* programme with the aim of ensuring that, following temporary support from a literacy team, municipalities and other regional parties continue the regional literacy network themselves. In order to ensure that this is embedded, **regional literacy agreements will be signed**, in which all network parties will make a commitment to contribute towards preventing low literacy and to address low basic skills.

With regards to GOAL, organisations make use of these networks from the *Count on Skills* programme if they are already in place, but also need to identify which organisations are relevant within those networks. These **partners can provide clients** (e.g. a municipality refers clients to the reintegration company) **and also act as partners where they can refer their clients to** (e.g. libraries, or education centres). The Reading and Writing Foundation provides support to identify and reach out to network partners.

5.2 Existence and scope of partnerships and networks

The interviews with national stakeholders demonstrated that in locating, referring and supporting clients with low basic skill levels, **a network in which the different parties can contact each other and cooperate easily is of great importance.** Various interviewees referred to the situation in the Province of **Friesland, which is seen as good practice in the area of networking.** In this province a broad alliance was set up to tackle the problem of low literacy, including amongst others employers and educational institutions. A regional assessment was made of the number of low literate adults in the region. Also all partners identified what they could do to contribute to tackling the problem of low literacy. At the regional level an inventory was made of the quantity and quality of educational services for low literate adults, as a basis for further developing the regional infrastructure. An important result of the activities in Friesland is that the problem of low literacy is on the agenda at various organisations and an infrastructure has evolved to refer clients to education. In the

Netherlands, the nationwide action plan to combat low literacy, ‘Count on Skills’, provides new opportunities for partnership building, especially because of the new involvement of the ministries of Health and Social Affairs in low literacy action plans. The participating organisations in our sample originate from different regions. A description of their (network) partnership follows below.

Aksept

Aksept is an alliance partner of the local network in the municipality of Hengelo. The local project leader from the Reading and Writing Foundation explains what this entails:

“The language point tries to be a sort of umbrella: a collection point of the possibilities if someone with a language question, numeracy question or computer skills question comes to the municipality of Hengelo. In the municipality of Hengelo, the core of the local network consists of the library, municipality, welfare organisation and ROC and the Reading and Writing Foundation. Beyond this, we also look for a whole shell of partners that can be places to find people with low literacy. Aksept is one of these. They are not involved in the core of the network, but as an organisation around it.”

In the municipality of Hengelo, the language point coordinator is appointed from the welfare organisation involved. Together with ROC instructors, the language point coordinator ensures that people who are registered (or register themselves) at the language point receive a suitable course. It was decided to appoint the language point coordinator from welfare (instead of the library) because of:

- their expertise in reaching participants;
- their expertise in making a link between participants and resources;
- their large network, because there are often additional problems among people with low literacy.

Aksept has chosen to offer language lessons itself and therefore does not have intensive collaboration with the network around their clients. If their participants need extra support after an internal process or if the coaches have questions about materials, Aksept can tap into the network for this. Also, Aksept attends information meetings about low literacy, together with partners from the local network. The Reading and Writing Foundation organises these meetings. Aksept attends these meetings in order to be better prepared to address low literacy in their coaching.

The Municipality of Emmen

The Municipality of Emmen has set up an infrastructure as mentioned above in the section on the *Count on Skills* programme. In January 2016, they established a **local network** in Emmen with the training and diagnostic centre, library, social work and the regional community college. A Literacy Point was opened and the partners collaborate to get more adults with low literacy into coaching or reintegration trajectories. The municipality of Emmen is the client and subsidises the network. The library is the contractor. This means that the language point coordinator is appointed from the library

and that the director of the library is the chair of the network. The Reading and Writing Foundation supports the network. The language point coordinator interviewed said the network has two goals:

- That every person with low literacy in the municipality of Emmen knows that help is available, is accessible and is based on his/her needs.
- That there are enough volunteers so everyone who asks for help can actually get help.

PI Lelystad and PI Achterhoek

At PI Lelystad and PI Achterhoek the situation is different. Because of their closed nature, the prisons are not part of a local or regional network focused on addressing low literacy. They do have an internal network: the Literacy Screener is administered in the penitentiary institution's reintegration centre and the literacy lessons are offered by the education department. To do this, the education department works together with volunteers from Language for Life (*Taal voor het leven*).

For the penitentiary institutions, cooperation with external parties is important when detainees are released. Clients sometimes have (very) short sentences, as a result of which there is no time to start or complete a process within the penitentiary institution if the client has an indication of low literacy. To be able to follow up properly on the low literacy identified, collaboration with a local network outside the penitentiary institution is important. A point that makes this more difficult is that the detainees come from different municipalities and therefore also leave for different places.

5.3 Developing and sustaining partnerships and networks: programme challenges and barriers

The following bottlenecks and challenges were identified on the basis of the interviews with policy makers and programme partners from pilot organisations and employees of the Reading and Writing Foundation:

Excessive workload for language point coordinator: the role of the language point coordinator covers too many tasks, at the levels of both coordination (connecting clients to a suitable language programme) and execution (providing suitable language lessons). One sticking point that was experienced is that language point coordinators are overburdened because they do not have enough hours available to perform all their tasks. In turn, this hinders rapid follow-up after a participant scores inadequately on the Literacy Screener:

"In particular, you cannot let NT1 students wait for help. You have to tackle it immediately, otherwise they go home, the door shuts and they don't come back." (local Count on Skills project leader)

Furthermore, an excessive workload of the language point coordinator hinders further development of the network:

“Then you get stuck at the basis: we deal with what comes in. But when it comes to growing the network, finding new partners and going into more depth, that is difficult.”

The language point coordinator from the municipality of Emmen would like to see her position split into two positions: someone who only coordinates and someone who only does the implementation. She explains this as follows:

“Because there is a lot of switching back and forth. You get confused and you lose your focus. Even if I had an extra 30 hours per week, it is just too different.”

Dedication of network partners: the approach to low literacy is not the number one objective for all the partners. The role of core partner demands an active contribution to the network, but, in practice, this does not always come off the ground for reasons such as ‘no money, no time, no staff’. According to a language point coordinator interviewed, a sustainable network requires partners who are willing to invest in it: ‘not only with money, but also with time and energy.’

Financing structure: the local network in Emmen is only financed by the municipality’s education funding (that the municipality receives from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science). The network has to perform a substantial number of language processes, otherwise the process price becomes too high. This ‘settlement regime’ does not help (starting up) the network. The policy maker interviewed states that aside from the education funds, the municipality should also make other resources available for the network.

Cooperation between volunteers and formal language providers (ROC): ideally, volunteers and professional instructors work side by side to provide support for people with low literacy. The policy maker said this cooperation can grow further in the municipality of Emmen:

“Make sure that someone who is being guided by a volunteer also comes into contact with what a school has to offer. And that a school more explicitly looks at what is a good approach to get someone further along in his or her language level.”

The policy maker also sees a role for professional instructors in the training and support of language volunteers.

Limited scope and diversity: in the municipality of Emmen, the language point coordinator and policy maker would like the network to be expanded with alliance partners so that more people with low literacy are found and this leads to more language processes. When looking for alliance partners, there has to be an eye for organisations/companies from sectors that are not yet represented, so more people with low literacy can be discovered.

Change of functions within participating organisations: this can delay or temporarily halt processes.

5.4 Strengths and achievements

The following success factors were identified on the basis of interviews with policy makers and programme partners from pilot organisations and employees of the Reading and Writing Foundation:

- A language point as a central basis of the network;
- Each organisation adds something to the network out of its own strengths: *“You let organisations do what they already always do and they reinforce each other.”*
An example of this is the cooperation between welfare (the language point coordinator) and education (the ROC) in the municipality of Hengelo. The language point coordinator works at a welfare organisation and draws on the expertise of the instructors from the ROC to find a suitable offer for every client and to support the volunteers. The language point coordinator has a permanent contact point for this at the ROC. The local project leader from the Reading and Writing Foundation points to the power of exchange: *“For referral to the ROC at the moment there is more need for a professional process, so there is enough of a challenge for the participant. Or otherwise, the ROC can say: we have a number of people who want to take a course, but are not ready for it yet. It would be better for them to start with volunteers. You want to offer people the best possible process. The language point coordinator and instructor are working hard to make that happen.”*
- A network does not have a formal decision maker, all the core partners are equal. Because of this, there is room to respond to innovations and to enter new alliances with each other.
- The support of the Reading and Writing Foundation in setting up the local infrastructure (bringing parties together and having structural agreements made)
- An influential and enthusiastic driving-force
- The urgency of the low literacy problem is recognised by all parties
 - For example, the municipality of Emmen has someone within the municipal council who explicitly feels they are the owner of the low literacy problem.
- Commitment from all parties involved, at all levels: at strategic, tactical and operational levels
- Clear agreements are made
- Enough language volunteers (who are settled in their work)

In comparison with other European countries, **the Netherlands can be regarded as a forerunner in the area of networking**. The GOAL programme manager from the Reading and Writing Foundation explains this as follows:

“The decentralisation of national government funds to municipalities means there is the will locally to look at where they can connect and cooperate better.”

Because of the decentralisation of national government funds, municipalities are enabled to address low literacy in a more diverse way, attuned to their local situation. As a result, more local parties are involved in the approach to low literacy.

5.5 Key findings

Developing partnerships and networks: programme aims

An important focal point in addressing low basic skill levels in the Netherlands is the establishment and strengthening of regional networks. A condition for addressing low basic skills is ensuring that the offer of local literacy training meets the needs of potential participants. In order to ensure better cooperation between the organisations in which service users with low literacy are identified and the organisations in which literacy lessons are offered, regional 'literacy teams' are deployed. Other parties, such as employers and care organisations will also be involved by the literacy teams.

Existence and scope of partnerships and networks

The basic infrastructure of a network is threefold: a **Literacy Point**, which acts as local or regional contact point for the literacy network, use of the **Literacy Screener** to ensure that service users with low literacy are recognised and referred to an appropriate training provider, and a **range of training** to increase the skills of literacy volunteers. These are factors that have proven to be successful in various regions.

Two of the four GOAL pilot organisations form part of a local network that is set up according to the structure of the Count on Skills programme. As an alliance partner, Aksept is peripherally involved in the network in the municipality of Hengelo. Aksept does not have intensive collaboration with the network around their clients because they offer their own language lessons within their organisation.

The municipality of Emmen is the client (subsidy provider) of the network in Emmen. The core partners that work together in the network to identify more adults with low literacy and to get them into a language process, are the training and diagnostic centre, library, social work and the regional community college. In the municipality of Emmen, the language point coordinator is appointed from the library; in the municipality of Hengelo from a welfare organisation.

Because of their closed nature, PI Lelystad and PI Achterhoek are not part of a local or regional network. There is an internal network within the penitentiary institutions that consists of the reintegration centre and the education department. The penitentiary institutions currently do not work with external local networks yet. This is however crucial to continue support in the area of language when detainees are released (early).

Challenges and barriers

The bottlenecks and challenges identified primarily concern **cooperation between different parties**:

- **Insufficient dedication** of the **network partners**: not all partners are willing to invest money, time and energy into the network.

- **Insufficient cooperation** between **volunteers and formal language providers** (ROC)
- **Limited number of network partners**
- **Pressure from the financing structure:** if a network is only financed with education funds from the municipality, a 'settlement regime' (performing a substantial number of language processes to avoid letting the price per process run too high) arises that can stand in the way of productive cooperation.

Several bottlenecks were also identified with regard to performing tasks:

- **Excessive workload of language point coordinator**, which then hinders rapid follow-up for clients and further development of the network.
- **Change of functions** within participating organisations.

Strengths and achievements

The success factors identified can be divided into factors concerning the **structure of networks** and factors concerning **community support**.

Structure:

- A language point as a central basis of the network (strengthening the coherence); the organisations around it each add something to the network from their own strengths;
- Because a network does not have a formal decision maker, there is room to respond to innovations and to form new alliances with each other;
- Clear agreements are made;
- Enough language volunteers, who work side by side with formal language providers;
- The support of the Reading and Writing Foundation in setting up the local infrastructure.

Support:

- An influential and enthusiastic driving force (an individual or organisation);
- The urgency of the low literacy problem is recognised by all parties;
- Commitment of all parties involved at the strategic, tactical and operational levels.

5.6 Key implications

Implications for future programme development

The Netherlands' approach to GOAL differs radically from the approaches of the other partner countries. The **diffused nature of GOAL in the Netherlands means that the programme is particularly dependent on the establishment of strong partnerships**, with partners themselves administering the Literacy Screener and then referring potential clients on to another organisation. Whereas in other countries GOAL is a discrete service that works with partners, **in the Netherlands GOAL is more of a process distributed across a network** of organisations. This has clear implications

for programme development: **partners must be convinced of the benefits of contributing to GOAL, despite the administrative and other burdens this creates for themselves.**

For the penitentiary institutions, both internal and external cooperation are important: internal cooperation to ensure that detainees with an indication of low literacy enter a suitable language course, and external cooperation to continue support in this area outside the penitentiary institution. The latter still requires attention at both penitentiary institutions. The internal cooperation can also still be improved at one penitentiary institution; see chapter 8 for more about this.

Policy implications

Implications of policy

In the Netherlands, the **education funds are decentralised to municipalities**. This creates the willingness locally to set up and improve the approach and collaboration. As part of the decentralised approach, **language points form the axis of local networks**. The interviews showed that language points are an important success factor for a well-functioning network.

Implications for policy

Because of the diffused nature of GOAL in the Netherlands, policy support may be particularly important. By encouraging and supporting GOAL activities across a range of partners, policy may help GOAL to better establish itself, and thus to contribute to broader policy objectives. It is notable that, in general, **the Netherlands has a strong policy focus on improving literacy and numeracy skills**, and GOAL is seen as contributing to this policy.

A well-functioning network requires commitment from all parties involved. First of all, there needs to be a commitment from municipalities due to their subsidising role. There must therefore be at least one person within the municipal council who explicitly feels they are the owner of the low literacy problem. To support sustainability, this ownership should be part of the job role.

6 Counsellor competences

This chapter focuses on guidance counsellors, first providing an overview of counselling activities and the competences required to meet the needs of the GOAL target groups. The chapter also focuses on challenges to high quality counselling, and how those challenges may be overcome.

6.1 The job of the counsellor

Background

Nearly all adult guidance practitioners in the Netherlands have experience in education and/or reintegration practices. However, there are **no formal criteria for guidance practitioners** and thus a **great divergence in quality** between various service points. No research is available from the Netherlands on the effectiveness of guidance practitioners. One reason for this is that effectiveness is strongly dependent on the quality of the individual practitioner, but there is currently no policy focus on the quality of the practitioners.

Turning specifically to the Literacy Screener being used in the Dutch GOAL project, these screeners are conducted by a range of different people. This could include professionals, but also interns and/or volunteers. Prior to their participation in GOAL, all four pilot organisations had two workshops from the Reading and Writing Foundation:

- Recognition and Referral Workshop: explains how to recognise low literacy and make it discussable and how you can then help low literate people find a language course.
- Literacy Screener Workshop: goes into the technical side of using the Literacy Screener and discusses embedding the Literacy Screener in the organisation.

As conducting the screener is technically relatively simple, no extensive training is needed in order to use it. It helps programme staff members to do the Literacy Screener themselves first, before administering it to clients.

Programme staff experience, education and training prior to GOAL

The training and work experience of the programme staff members (prior to GOAL) is very diverse. In Aksept and PI Lelystad, the Literacy Screener is administered by trainees studying social sciences. In PI Achterhoek, this is done by general volunteers from the penitentiary institution:

“The volunteers we get here are actually general volunteers who can do all kinds of things. We don’t really set special requirements. We do not test whether they are suitable in one way or another. They do get instruction on how to work here in our institution.”

The municipality of Emmen is the only pilot organisation where the Literacy Screener is administered by professionals. These are process supervisors from the training and diagnostic centre. They work at the job fair department, where they support people who receive benefits with making a CV, formulating an action plan and writing a job application letter. In this way, they were already involved in language before GOAL:

“Here at the job fair, we were already very extensively and meticulously involved in language. In this sense, it [administering the Literacy Screener] is a good extension of this and it fits very well in our system.”

Counselling activities

In contrast to the other participating countries, **the GOAL intervention in the Netherlands does not consist of coaching, rather a short screening and referral**. The pilot organisations have a different main objective and have incorporated GOAL into their regular work process. This means that the programme staff members who administer the Literacy Screener spend most of their time on tasks that are part of their regular work process and do GOAL ‘on the side’. This regular work is the following:

- **Aksept:** the trainees have different tasks in the area of reintegration such as supporting clients on work projects, job coaching and acquisition (making contacts with potential employers for clients).
- **Municipality of Emmen:** process supervisors provide the basic job application training for people who apply for social security benefits.
- **PI Lelystad:** at the reintegration centre department, the trainees help detainees with practical matters focused on a successful return to society, such as arranging a DigiD or housing.
- **PI Achterhoek:** the volunteers who administer the Literacy Screener are general volunteers who work on various kinds of supporting work.

Administering the Literacy Screener (and discussing the outcome and referral to a language course) can fit into their regular work well, given that this takes a total of only 20 to 30 minutes. The sector head of the training and diagnostic centre of the municipality of Emmen, where administering the Literacy Screener takes a maximum of half an hour every two weeks, says the following about this:

“As far as I’m concerned, it absolutely does not get in the way of our process and it can even be a way to start the discussion about low literacy with people. I see no objection to having this be part of the work process.”

Defining competences

The skills that programme staff members need to have to administer the Literacy Screener and to discuss the outcome primarily involve social skills and (motivational) speaking techniques.

Administering the Literacy Screener

Clients are given instructions before they do the Literacy Screener. PI Lelystad in particular emphasises the importance of good instruction, given the suspicion their target group often has. If a colleague has difficulty expressing the instructions well, this leads to resistance among detainees:

“It doesn’t inspire confidence for the client. If the information is unclear, more will refuse than agree to do it. So it is important to know what you’re talking about and to provide as much information about it as possible.”

To give good instruction, the programme staff members interviewed said that the following aspects are important:

- The instruction must be clear and concise.
- Empathy: *“You receive a response from clients when you explain and you have to act on that response.”*
- Enthusiasm
- Good language skills

PI Lelystad adds to this that their target group needs to feel supported.

Administering the Literacy Screener is relatively simple. The required technical competencies are minimal, programme staff members only have to be proficient in working with a computer.

Discussing the outcome and referral to a language course

Discussing the outcome of the Literacy Screener can be seen as the most difficult part of the Dutch GOAL intervention, because low literacy is a sensitive subject that is often accompanied by shame and avoidance. One interviewed staff member remarked:

“If [the clients] sit behind the computer and can’t read a word, then that is a painful moment.”

According to the Reading and Writing Foundation and the pilot organisations, the following skills are important when discussing an insufficient outcome:

- Empathy
- Being to connect with the client (creating a sense of trust)
- Speaking in a motivating manner: *“Do not enter the conversation with a negative tone, but on the basis of alternatives and possibilities.”*

Several examples of programme staff members with respect to speaking in a motivating manner:

“I would first mention language coaching: we are going to coach you instead of: you are low literate. Presenting a positive message and mentioning what can be done.”

“Conducting such a meeting without the guy feeling like he has been made fun of or feeling offended: You are well on your way but you could still do a little better.”

Aims

No specific targets have been formulated in the Dutch GOAL pilot with respect to counsellor competences, because the intervention consists of a brief screening and referral.

6.2 Achieving high standards of counsellor competence

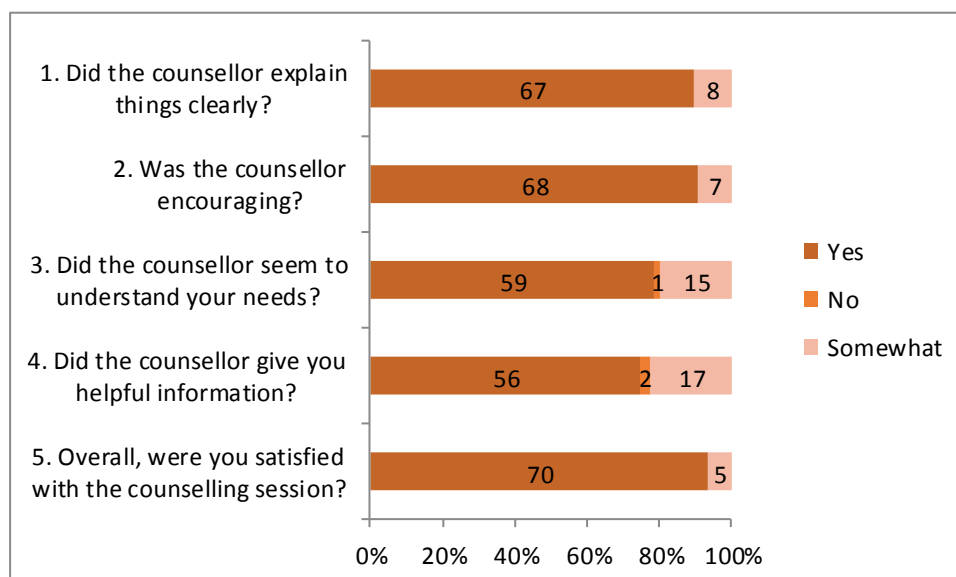
Service user perceptions

The client satisfaction survey asked service users about several aspects of their counsellor's competences, for example, "Did the counsellor explain things clearly?" For each question, service users could tick a box indicating an answer of 'yes', 'no' or 'somewhat'. The evaluation team opted for this simple three-point scale (as opposed to a more detailed five-point scale) as one of a number of steps aimed at making the client satisfaction survey as user-friendly and non-demanding as possible – steps that were felt to be essential given the limited reading skills of many programme participants. The number of questions service users faced, and the wording of the questions varied slightly between the participating countries because of programme differences, although four questions featured in all six user surveys.

In the Netherlands, the client satisfaction survey was completed by 75 of the 76 clients in respect of whom monitoring data is available. They provided almost no negative answers. It should be noted here that **43 percent of the clients received assistance in completing the client satisfaction surveys** (32 of the 75). This may have influenced the answers due to social pressure.

Figure 6.1. shows that clients felt that the counsellor explained things clearly and that the counsellor was encouraging. The opinions of the participants concerning the extent to which the client manager knows what the client wants and the extent to which the client manager has provided useful information are somewhat more divided. Although the majority of the participants responded that the client manager is aware of his/her needs and has provided useful information, there are a few more participants when compared to the first two questions who entered 'somewhat' and even some participants who answered 'no'. This is perhaps related to the fact that, **in the experience of the municipality of Emmen, many clients do not agree with the result from the Literacy Screener**. Overall, clients are satisfied with the counselling session.

Figure 6.1. Service User Satisfaction, the Netherlands



Staff and other stakeholders' perspectives

Programme staff see no need for additional training, apart from the training they receive from the Reading and Writing Foundation on the causes, consequences and extent of low literacy, conducting the Literacy Screener, feeding back the results and referral to training institutes. Combined with experiencing the Literacy Screener once yourself this is all it takes to get started, they felt.

6.3 Challenges and barriers

A possible challenge for programme staff members is to incorporate the Literacy Screener in their regular work process, since they spend most of their time on tasks that are part of their regular work process and do GOAL 'on the side'. The four pilot organisations have succeeded in this and do not experience bottlenecks in this area. Three of the four pilot organisations deploy unpaid workers (volunteers or trainees) to administer the Literacy Screener. This requires proper guidance in order to deliver high quality service, in particular when discussing a poor outcome on the Literacy Screener.

6.4 Key findings

Background and aims

Nearly all adult guidance practitioners in the Netherlands have experience in education and/or reintegration practices. However, there are no formal criteria for guidance practitioners and thus a great divergence in quality between various service points. These differences are evident in the Dutch GOAL pilot organisations, which deploy people in a variety of job roles to conduct the Literacy Screeners. No specific targets have been formulated in the Dutch GOAL pilot with respect to counsellor competences, because the intervention consists of a brief screening and referral.

Counselling activities

The programme staff members have other main tasks in the Netherlands and have integrated the GOAL intervention (conducting the Literacy Screener, discussing the findings and referral to a language course) therein. They consider that the brief intervention can be embedded well in their regular activities.

Defining competences

The main competences programme staff members need to have to administer the Literacy Screener and to discuss the outcome are primarily in the area of social skills and (motivational) speaking techniques. Discussing the outcome of the Literacy Screener can be seen as the most difficult part of the Dutch GOAL intervention, because low literacy is a sensitive subject that is often accompanied by shame and avoidance. Empathy, creating trust and conducting the interview on the basis of alternatives and possibilities are therefore essential.

Achieving high standards of counselling competence

The client satisfaction survey shows a (very) positive image of the performance of the counsellor. It should be noted here that 43 per cent of the clients received assistance in completing the client satisfaction surveys, which may have influenced the answers due to social pressure.

The opinions of the participants are somewhat more divided in two areas: the extent to which the client manager knows what the client wants and the extent to which the client manager has provided useful information. This is perhaps related to the fact that, in the experience of the municipality of Emmen, many clients do not agree with the result from the Literacy Screener.

Challenges and barriers

A possible challenge for programme staff members is to incorporate the Literacy Screener in their regular work process. All four pilot organisations have succeeded in this, of whom three deploy unpaid workers (volunteers or trainees) to administer the Literacy Screener. This requires proper guidance in order to deliver high quality service, in particular when discussing a poor outcome on the Literacy Screener. The fact that many clients at the municipality of Emmen do not agree to the outcome of the Literacy Screener and do not wish to participate in a Language Course, does suggest that programme staff members may have trouble conducting the meeting regarding the outcome of the Literacy Screener in an appropriate manner.

6.5 Key implications

Implications for future programme development

According to respondents, no extra training (in a technical sense) is required for conducting the Literacy Screener. However, the person conducting the test does need social skills, because low basic skills are often accompanied by feelings of shame. An implication for programme development is

that **steps should be taken to ensure that staff members are empathetic and have good interview skills** in order to deal with the issue of shame.

Policy implications

Implications of policy

In the Netherlands, there are no formal criteria for guidance practitioners and thus a great divergence in quality between various service points. Three of the four pilot organisations deploy unpaid workers (volunteers or trainees) to administer the Literacy Screener. The organisations are of the opinion that these workers are sufficiently able to do so because the Literacy Screener is easy to administer. If organisations wish to deploy unpaid workers, this is subject to the condition that they are properly supervised.

An **advantage of the deployment of volunteers and trainees is that they may appear less intimidating to clients**. A disadvantage is that continuity is more easily jeopardised as they stay only temporarily (trainees in particular).

Implications for policy

The structure of GOAL in the Netherlands may have implications for policy more broadly. If policymakers can foster an environment in which more organisations see it as **their responsibility to contribute to literacy and numeracy gains**, this may in turn encourage organisations to make time for Literacy Screeners, and to support the development of screener administrators' competencies in this area. In order to accomplish this, it is important for organisations, in particular businesses, to see the returns. If they can be persuaded that improved language proficiency will lead to fewer accidents and more productivity (amongst other positive outcomes), they will see the benefit of investing in their employees' language proficiency. This investment should be incorporated in their policy.

7 Guidance tools for low educated adults

This chapter provides descriptive information on the tools which the GOAL counsellors in the Netherlands used to support and enhance their GOAL guidance programmes, offering analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of these tools in terms of impact and quality. In the Netherlands, no quantitative data on tools were collected from clients or from counsellors; the findings presented here are based on qualitative interview data only.

The range of tools that support staff and clients in adult guidance is broad and can include:

- Traditional, paper-based resources and newer online and digital tools.
- Tools to diagnose and assess levels of skills, including basic skills.
- Tools to support the validation of prior learning (VPL) processes.
- Tools for evaluation and self-evaluation (such as interest inventories, tools for making action plans, goal-setting pro forma).
- Tools that help counsellors to reflect; professional development tools for counsellors.
- Information tools (internal and external sources), including both those which inform the counsellor and those which can be used to disseminate information to clients (such as job-search tools, college websites).
- Data monitoring tools and registrations systems, where analysis of the variables can be used to develop the programme and track outcomes.
- Tools that help to structure the guidance session such as scripts for interview. Data monitoring templates can also support this aspect of the counselling.
- Tools that help clients with job-search, such as tools to assist with CV writing.

From this range, GOAL programmes sought to develop a toolbox of resources that could support guidance services for low-educated adults.

7.1 Context and aims

As described in chapter 1, the national action programme Count on Skills (*Tel mee met Taal*) provides a basis for **dealing with low literacy at the municipal level**. This approach consists of a **four-step cycle: recognition, referral, education and measuring progress**. The **GOAL project focuses on the first two steps: recognising and referring low literate people**. Identification of low literate people takes place on the basis of a screening instrument the Reading and Writing Foundation had developed: the Literacy Screener (*Taalmeter*). The Literacy Screener is the core instrument of the GOAL pilot in the Netherlands. The deployment of this instrument supports the following goals of the GOAL pilot:

- **Increasing the number of organisations that use the Literacy Screener** as an integrated part of their working procedures.
- **Integrating basic guidance services into the working procedures of organisations** that use the Literacy Screener.

- **Training staff** of organisations that use the Literacy Screener to provide basic guidance services.

Additionally, the **road map tool** can be used. The road map is an overview of all basic skills courses (both formal and non-formal) that are available in a given region. This tool aims to facilitate follow-up after guidance services have taken place and to improve the quality of the match between client needs and service provision.

7.2 Guidance tools for low educated adults

Tool selection, development and use

In 2013, CINOP developed the **Literacy Screener** on the instructions of the Reading and Writing Foundation, because there was a need for a validated instrument that helps identify low literacy. This means that the development of the Literacy Screener constitutes an investment in the approach to the recognition, reduction and prevention of low literacy.

The Literacy Screener is an online tool with which organisations can identify quickly and easily those people who may have difficulty reading. The Literacy Screener can test the literacy level but **does not determine the precise level of basic skills**. The Literacy Screener does, however, give a good **indication of whether someone may have low literacy or low basic skills**. The instrument comes in two versions: version 1F (A2 European reference) and version 2F (B1 European reference). Version 1F is comprised of five reading assignments. Each reading assignment has several questions associated with it, with a total of 24 different questions. Each of the five reading assignments has 19 different versions, which makes for a large range of possible combinations. Participants have up to 12 minutes to answer the questions. Once the time has elapsed, the Literacy Screener stops automatically. The Literacy Screener 2F has only one version. It is comprised of three reading assignments, with a total of 24 different questions. Participants have up to 15 minutes to answer the questions.²¹

The **road map tool** is an overview of all basic skills courses (both formal and non-formal) that are available in a given region. The overview is publicly available on a website (Google Maps embedded feature, www.taaloeker.nl). The road map is updated for the GOAL regions. The regional project coordinator has contacted the relevant libraries and 'language points' and asked them to update the roadmap.

User experiences from the pilot organisations

All four pilot organisations are positive about the Literacy Screener. They are of the opinion that the instrument is easy to administer, fits well into their work process and offers insight into language skills. The latter point is important in particular:

"We sometimes overestimate the level."

²¹ See www.lezenenschrijven.nl/hulp-bij-scholing/Taalmeter

“The strength of the Literacy Screener is that you obtain general insight into a participant’s literacy level in an entirely objective and rather quick way.”

The pilot organisations wish to continue to deploy the Literacy Screener in the future, because the instrument offers **added value for their service provision**. The **insight into the client’s language skills, which comes about by means of the Literacy Screener, helps the organisations tailor their services to their clients’ needs**. The training and diagnostics centre of the municipality of Emmen is adjusting its job application training, for example. Aksept knows, on the basis of the Literacy Screener, whether they should devote more attention to language when guiding people to work. Insight into the language skills of clients constitutes important basic knowledge for PI Lelystad and PI Achterhoek for structuring the reintegration process in such a manner that they are not overburdened or underburdened:

“Our target group can often express itself well, they manage to paint a good picture of themselves. The results are disappointing when you start measuring their skills by means of Literacy Screener. This results in the failure or interventions and efforts to raise their level because they are not literate enough. This is a shame because it is a disappointment for the client and a confirmation of what they have often been hearing all of their life: ‘you can’t do it, you are simply too stupid.’”

Insight into the language skills of detainees also constitutes important information for the department they are residing, because language is an important means of communication:

“Is the command of language sufficient to have a normal detention climate? Not understanding half of the questions asked by members of staff quickly leads to frustration or violence.”

In addition to added value for the organisations, the pilot organisations also feel that the instrument provides **added value for the client**. The Literacy Screener helps organisations to identify low literacy and make it discussable with the client. This makes an improvement in the level possible which increases the self-reliance of clients and make them better able to participate in society. Furthermore, improving the level is a form of personal development which provides a positive contribution to the self-assurance of clients.

The **road map tool is almost unused by the four pilot organisations as three of the four organisations organise the language lessons internally**. PI Achterhoek did use the instrument once or twice for the purpose of finding language support outside the PI as follow-up after a detainee was released. This now occurs very rarely, however:

“We did manage to check by means of the language searching whether we could transfer them. I think this does not happen enough and should happen more often. Our first objective is inside the facility. Actually, we have already realised our objective if they are motivated and attend language lessons every week. It would be nice if we could place them outside the facility as well.”

The municipality of Emmen is the only pilot organisation where language lessons do not take place internally. The language coordinator did not mention the road map tool in the interview, however.

Almost all social services clients refuse to attend language lessons. Clients who are an exception to the above are linked to a volunteer in the language point. Language points often use their own ways to identify the language offer in their area, according to the Reading and Writing Foundation. The foundation will remind the organisations of the road map tool once the implementation of the Literacy Screener has been completed. For example, the road map tool is used in the regions of the Literacy for Life pilot programme (2012 and 2015).

Service users' experiences

During the interviews with service users (clients of social services in the municipality of Emmen with an insufficient Literacy Screener score), they were asked how they experienced completing the Literacy Screener. **Of the fourteen service users interviewed, eight found taking the Literacy Screener to be a positive experience**, because they considered it useful and/or considered it interesting. Several examples of their responses:

- *"I thought it was good, it is also important that people do this. It also indicates how far they are, how far they have progressed in everything. Are they able to read the papers they receive from the municipality? Do they also understand what is written? That was the purpose of the entire exercise. That is not a problem at all for me."*
- *"Fantastic, it is what I always wanted. I wanted to learn certain things about the Dutch language. Because my parents did not allow me to go to school in the past. That is why I was quite pleased."*
- *"I thought it quite interesting. I took my time to do this. It shows you how you are doing, language is important to our society."*

Three service users were explicitly **negative** about completing the Literacy Screener. They did not consider it useful or thought that taking the test was annoying/difficult. Several examples of their responses:

- *"I do not care much about language. I did not enjoy doing it very much."*
- *"I thought it rather confusing. I did not do well at all. In the end I simply pressed any random button. We were in a very large group. I do not enjoy working that way. That is why I did not do well at all."*

The other three service users who were interviewed commented on the Literacy Screener in a neutral manner. The interviews show that the **circumstances in which the participants completed the Literacy Screener can play a role in the negative or positive experience**. For example, two of the fourteen respondents mention that they considered it difficult that they had to complete the Literacy Screener in a large group. One of them explains this:

"It is very important to me to be in a quiet environment so that I can concentrate."

Another respondent indicates that he did not receive a proper explanation:

“You receive no explanation at all. If you are new or you do not consider it to be useful, you already start the test with a negative attitude, you will not be interested while taking the test. You take the test more seriously if you receive a proper explanation.”

And finally, one respondent considers that the Literacy Screener is not suitable at all for identifying reading skills:

“I think that this test does not provide solid information about someone’s level.”

A paper test instead of a computer test and a test that allows participants more time would be better according to her.

Strengths and achievements

A strong feature of the Literacy Screener is that it can be administered quickly and easily. In the interviews with policymakers from the pilot organisations, it was also repeatedly stated that they consider the systematic approach to be an added value of the Literacy Screener. All four pilot organisations consider that the deployment of the Literacy Screener fits well in their work process. This reflected in the number of Literacy Screeners conducted within the organisations. In each organisation, it was projected that the Literacy Screener would be completed by at least 100 people. With the exception of Aksept, the organisations exceeded this figure to a high extent (see table 7.1.). Very few clients have registered with Aksept since January 2016. The number of Literacy Screeners administered is not related to problems involving the Literacy Screener.

The advantage of the Literacy Screener is that the test provides an objectively determined result. In theory, this result should make the subject of low basic skills concrete and easier to discuss. Discussing the result and referral to a language course nevertheless remains a problematic issue. During the GOAL pilot (1 January 2016 up to and including 7 April 2017), the four pilot organisations jointly conducted 1,525 Literacy Screeners; 30 per cent (N=465) indicated low literacy. As shown in table 7.1., the figures with respect to the number of potentially low literate people that subsequently start a language course at PI Lelystad and PI Achterhoek is (considerably) lower.

Table 7.1. The Use of the Literacy Screener (Taalmeter) and Referrals 1 January 2016 – 7 April 2017, the Netherlands

Pilot organisation	Number of completed Literacy Screeners (Taalimeters)	Number of indications of low literacy	Number of referrals to a language course
Aksept	24	8	12 (as on 1-4-2016)
PI Lelystad	689	171	10 (as on 1-7-2016)
The Municipality of Emmen	477	225	Unknown
PI Achterhoek	335	61	21 (as on 1-1-2016)
Total	1525	465	-

There is no information available for the municipality of Emmen regarding the number of clients who have gone on to start language lessons after an unsatisfactory Literacy Screener score. The reason is that they (as sole pilot organisation) do not organise language courses themselves, but refer their

clients on to the language point. However, the interview with the language point coordinator shows that the inflow into a language course is very low there. The underlying reasons for these low figures are discussed in more detail in chapters 8 and 10 (under challenges and barriers).

The Aksept figures show that an unsatisfactory Literacy Screener score is not a condition for assistance in the area of language skills.

7.3 Challenges and barriers

At the level of implementation, experiences with the Literacy Screener are generally positive, but several respondents (professionals and one service user) mentioned the time limit as being a bottleneck. The **time pressure (i.e. the need to complete the test in 12 minutes) could have a negative impact on the client.** A second point that could contribute to a negative result is the digital nature of the test. **Some clients have difficulty using a computer.** The PI Lelystad education department does add that many detainees can read, but do not know how to write a letter. They require a **screening instrument that not only measures reading skills, but also measures writing skills.**

In addition to the GOAL pilot, the Reading and Writing Foundation also endeavours to ensure that the Literacy Screener is applied at a larger scale in the Netherlands. Although the four pilot organisations involved in GOAL are very enthusiastic about their use of the Literacy Screener and the instrument fits well into their regular work process, the Reading and Writing Foundation regularly **encountered resistance against working with the Literacy Screener when it was recruiting organisations for GOAL** as well as outside the context of the pilot. This is related to **two problems.** Firstly, **many organisations already have a sufficiently large number of participants on their language courses without using a screening instrument:**

“This means that interest in using such a Literacy Screener is actually limited because it means that the municipality runs the risk that they identify more low literate people than they can afford to educate.” (Count on Skills project leader)

Secondly, **it remains a challenge to identify and refer low literate people in the work processes of organisations whose primary task is not addressing low literacy, but rather guiding to work or arranging for benefits, for example.**

“GOAL has revealed that screening and referring has a fundamental impact on the work processes of organisations.’ This means that the challenge is: ‘How can we embed this identification and referral of people with low basic skills within organisations in such a manner that it does not come across as a burden but rather as something that benefits them?’ (Count on Skills project leader)

For this reason, the Reading and Writing Foundation is in the process of developing variants of the Literacy Screener that are shorter and thus potentially more appropriate in organisations that have less elaborate work processes: *“There are now language explorers and literacy screeners. All variants that can also provide an indication in three minutes or five questions. Whereafter a more*

comprehensive meeting or screening or interview can take place in one of those language houses or language points, because people who work there do have time for a client.”

7.4 Key findings

Context and aims

The Dutch GOAL project focuses on recognising and referring people with low literacy. Identification of low literate people takes place on the basis of a screening instrument the Reading and Writing Foundation had developed: the Literacy Screener (*Taalmeter*). This is the core instrument of the GOAL pilot in the Netherlands, in which connection, the following goals were formulated: **increasing the number of organisations that use the Literacy Screener** as an integrated part of their working procedures; **integrating basic guidance services into the working procedures of organisations** that use the Literacy Screener, and **training staff** of organisations that use the Literacy Screener to provide basic guidance services.

Tool selection, development and use

The **Literacy Screener** is an online tool which organisations can use to identify quickly and easily those people who may have difficulty reading. According to all four pilot organisations, the **Literacy Screener fits well into their work process and has added value for their services**: insight into the language skills of the client, which comes about through the Literacy Screener, helps the organisations to offer a customised approach to their clients. In addition, the Literacy Screener helps organisations to identify low literacy and make it discussable with the client. Improving his/her language skills can make a positive contribution to self-reliance, participation and the self-confidence of the client.

A small majority of the service users interviewed found taking the Literacy Screener to be a positive experience, because they considered it useful and/or considered it interesting.

Strengths and achievements

A strong feature of the Literacy Screener is that it can be administered quickly and easily and that it provides organisations with a structured method for identifying low literacy. All four pilot organisations consider that the deployment of the Literacy Screener fits well in their work process. Together, during the GOAL pilot, the four organisations conducted 1,525 Literacy Screeners (far more than the intended 400), identifying 465 people with potential low literacy.

Challenges and barriers

The interviews with the service users generally present a positive image of taking the Literacy Screener. However, one respondent indicated that she does not consider the Literacy Screener a suitable instrument for identifying reading skills. She argues in favour of a written test that allows participants more time. In a triple interview with educational professionals from PI Lelystad (in Wave 1) the time limit and digital nature of the test were also mentioned as being a presenting challenge.

The four pilot organisations that participate in GOAL consider that the deployment of the Literacy Screener fits well in their work process. However, the Reading and Writing Foundation repeatedly experienced when recruiting organisations to deploy the Literacy Screener (for participation in GOAL, but also outside the pilot) that the Literacy Screener is not seen as applicable in all organisations.

The four pilot organisations jointly identified 465 potential cases of low literacy. Only a small number of these persons start language lessons at PI Lelystad, the municipality of Emmen and PI Achterhoek. The problems in this area are discussed in more detail in chapters 8, 9 and 10.

7.5 Key implications

Implications for future programme development

The Reading and Writing Foundation and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science acknowledge, in part thanks to GOAL, the importance of customisation: checking how you can provide custom support for various types of instruments. For this reason, the Reading and Writing Foundation is currently developing variants of the Literacy Screener that are shorter and better applicable in organisations that have less elaborate work processes.

The pilot organisations make almost no use of the road map tool, partly because three of the four organisations provide internal language lessons. The Reading and Writing Foundation has also experienced (outside GOAL) that the road map tool instrument is not yet used often. This deserves additional attention after organisations have familiarised themselves with the use of the Literacy Screener.

Policy implications

Implications of policy

In the Netherlands, the focus is on one instrument: the Literacy Screener. This instrument can be administered quickly and easily and provides the pilot organisations with a structured method that allows them to identify low literacy among their clients. The organisations are convinced partly as a result of the assistance from the Reading and Writing Foundation of the importance of screening for low literacy and the Literacy Screener has been implemented successfully in their working process. The intensive and personal nature of the assistance has proved successful.

Implications for policy

It is evident from the experiences of the pilot organisations that they appreciate the added value of screening. However, the Reading and Writing Foundation has clearly experienced (inter alia during the recruitment for GOAL pilot organisations) that this added value is not always sufficient. The Count on Skills project leader and the initiator of GOAL in the Netherlands draws the following conclusions from the above:

“Screening does provide for a need, but the challenge is how we as the government and in this case the Reading and Writing Foundation can facilitate and support municipalities in such a manner that it actually aligns with their regular work processes. The Literacy Screener sometimes fits and sometimes does not. [...] The tension lies in the practical feasibility and the extent to which such an instrument can be implemented.”

8 Outreach

This chapter provides analysis of the outreach strategies adopted by the GOAL programme in the Netherlands, including a description of the challenges involved and analysis of the strategy's strengths and achievements.

By 'outreach' the GOAL project refers to strategies for bringing the guidance programmes to the target group, for example, by setting up drop-in services in locations that are easier for marginalised clients to access, and strategies for bringing the target group to the guidance programmes, such as establishing referral structures, or awareness-raising measures. Outreach may occur through **'reaching out' to the target group** directly, but it also will occur through **'reaching into' organisations** that serve the target group. At its core, outreach in GOAL aims to identify and attract those adults who would not normally engage with either counselling services or further education and training.

8.1 Context and aims

As described in chapter 1, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment aim to "collectively **counteract the marginalisation of people with limited language skills**" by means of the national Count on Skills action programme. **Seeking guidance is still considered taboo, especially among native Dutch speakers.** The first step in the approach to low literacy is therefore the identification of more low literate persons. A policy actor (member of the Count on Skills steering group) says in this connection:

"What is difficult is that low literate people generally do not report in with the question: 'I am low literate and I would like to go to school'. Quite the contrary, it concerns people who have been confronted with very negative school experiences and for whom the idea of education has a negative rather than a positive effect. This means that the most complicated task is perhaps finding people and then assisting them in a manner that is suitable for them."

The Count on Skills programme manager adds:

"It is very important that organisations in the social domain speak with people about the problem of low literacy and that it is acknowledged. [...] This has not yet been formulated and investigated so systematically in the national [Count on Skills] programme. What is unique about the GOAL project is that it is actually considered together with those four participating organisations: what does this process look like exactly in your organisation? And what are the benefits?"

The following objectives were therefore included in the original GOAL project plan:

- **Increasing the number of organisations that use the Literacy Screener** as an integrated part of their working procedures. Recruiting at least eight new organisations, divided equally over two regions.

- **Integrating basic guidance services into the working procedures of organisations** that use the Literacy Screener.

Recruitment of pilot organisations proved more difficult in practice than was anticipated, which meant that, in the end, four organisations (from three different regions) participated in GOAL. In the Netherlands, it is difficult to speak of outreach activities in the literal sense. **The pilot organisations are outreach organisations in themselves**, that is, clients come for different purposes to the organisations (e.g. to get assistance with finding a job) and are asked to take the Literacy Screener.

8.2 Outreach strategies

Overview

In the context of the national action programme Count on Skills, the three Ministries express the wish that ‘more social organisations recognise their role in finding and educating low literate persons and work together well.’ In order to find more people with low literacy, the Dutch GOAL pilot had the objective of **finding new locations that can deploy the Literacy Screener: organisations where people come for a completely different reason and where the work activities are not primarily associated with low literacy**. This includes social services, prisons, the cleaning industry, social community teams and debt assistance. A policy actor (member of the Count on Skills steering group) explains this:

“There are many conceivable places of which we know that they are visited by a relatively high number of low literate people. If you can use those locations to find people, provide an ‘indication’ that they are low literate quickly, you can also refer them on more quickly to a low-threshold approach that fits their needs.”

Within the GOAL pilot, four organisations (sites) are involved: a social service, an agency specialised in services related to labour participation and two prisons. The fact that recruitment of pilot organisations proved more difficult in practice than expected means that not all four organisations are entirely new: the pilot organisations were already using the Literacy Screener prior to their participation in GOAL with the exception of the municipality of Emmen. This was still at an early stage at the penitentiary institutions, however.

The two prisons formed a relatively new identification site within this pilot. Strengthening the literacy skills of detainees may help in their successful reintegration into society. This evaluation study explores what the deployment of the Literacy Screener means for people with low basic skills and for the organisations that work with this instrument. Information about the (positive) effectiveness of this approach may strengthen the resolve of other organisations to start using the Literacy Screener. This creates a **snowball effect** as increasingly more organisations are/become part of a local network.

Their closed nature and the involuntary context in which they work means that the two PI’s that participate in the GOAL pilot are not part of a local network aimed at reduction of low literacy.

However, the PI's do form part of a national network of PI's in which they are able to share their (positive) experiences and results.

Strengths and achievements

Reaching the target group of service users with low literacy forms the core of the Dutch GOAL intervention. As described in chapter 7, during the lifetime of GOAL in the Netherlands (1 January 2016 up to and including 7 April 2017), the four pilot organisations together conducted 1525 screenings with the Literacy Screener and identified 465 potential cases of low literacy. The evaluation study linked to the GOAL pilot is a strong point according to policy actors:

"The added value of GOAL is that we look intensely at how we identify and refer on, how you can implement such a guidance process involving language education within organisations whose primary task is something else. What the success factors are, what you should and should not do, how to go about this."

An important first result is that the participating organisations are now thinking about how they can organise the recognition and referral (and education) of low literate persons and understand its importance:

"That organisations have started thinking about: how can we get people to come in, how can I organise the administration of the Literacy Screener within my regular work process, how do I then ensure that people are referred on to a course or language point? That is profit. The cooperating organisations are very convinced of its importance."

8.3 Challenges and barriers

Although the identification of low literate persons with the aid of the Literacy Screener is progressing well within the four pilot organisations, the qualitative and quantitative data (as described in chapter 7) show that in three out of the four pilot organisations, the number of people identified with low literacy who then enrol for a language course is still (very) low. The *identification* of those with low literacy is in itself not sufficient, we can only speak of outreach if those with low literacy are also *helped* in a suitable manner and are 'not left to fend for themselves.'

Aksept is the only pilot organisation where all clients with a low literacy indication have started a language course on the basis of the Literacy Screener. There are also clients who started a language course who obtained a sufficient Literacy Screener score (see table 8.1.). Aksept organises the follow-up itself. The success of the high follow-up at Aksept lies in the fact that both the supervisors and the clients recognise the importance of language support and that language support can be embedded in day-to-day assistance in a very natural manner:

"They come to us to be guided to work and realise that they need something to make this possible. It is not much of a problem to guide people onward once we have identified low literacy. Perhaps because our supervisor is providing assistance anyway. It is part of the whole, it is not given too much importance."

**Table 8.1. Number of Indications of Low Literacy and Referrals to a Language Course 1
January 2016 – 7 April 2017, the Netherlands**

Pilot organisation	Referrals start date	Number of indications of low literacy	Number of referrals to a language course	Referrals as a percentage of the number of indications of low literacy
Aksept	1 April 2016	8	12	150%
PI Lelystad	1 July 2016	171	10	6%
The Municipality of Emmen	-	225	Unknown	Unknown
PI Achterhoek	1 January 2016	61	21	34%
Total	-	465	1525	-

Similarly to Aksept, PI Lelystad and PI Achterhoek organise the language courses internally. This does not mean by definition that follow-up is smooth. Within PI Lelystad, **things go wrong in the referral between the department operating the Literacy Screener and the department in which language lessons are given**. It is not practicable for the education department to collect from their cells all detainees who obtained an insufficient score for the Literacy Screener for the purpose of an intake interview. That is why, currently, **language support is only offered to detainees who come to them voluntarily and who register for language courses**. As shown by the low follow-up figure in table 8.1. (N=10), only a few men have thus far been willing to take this step themselves. In order to improve follow-up, the education department expressed the wish during the interview for an intermediate link between them and the reintegration centre in the form of the mentors²²: an insufficient score for the Literacy Screener would be emailed to the mentor instead of the education department. The mentor then conducts the meeting as regards this subject and is able to guide the detainee in the move towards education. This should improve follow-up because the education department has good contact with the mentors and the mentors have a bond (of trust) with the detainees.

Referral to the reintegration centre and the education department progresses well at PI Achterhoek because one person coordinates both the administration of the Literacy Screener and the organisation of the language courses. One of the problems they encounter is that **clients do not always opt for language course because they would rather spend their time working and thus earn a little money** within the PI. The interviewed policy maker provides the following example of the unfair competition between language courses and work:

“Will I have an additional telephone card later so that I can call my children or shall I combat illiteracy with a course?”

If clients do decide to attend a language course, they are always placed on a waiting list first. The PI has only three language volunteers and they are fully booked constantly. In addition, it is difficult to

²² A personal mentor is assigned to every detainee.

fit a language course into the daily programme followed by the detainees. This is also the case in PI Lelystad.

As can be seen in table 8.1., the municipality of Emmen identified the highest number of potentially low literate persons during the term of GOAL. Nearly half of their clients taking the Literacy Screener recorded an unsatisfactory score. Although we do not have specific figures, the interview with the language point coordinator shows that follow-up is practically zero. People with an unsatisfactory score on the Literacy Screener do not acknowledge the result and are not open to taking a course to improve their language skills. **Only people for whom Dutch is not their native language are open to taking language lessons**, according to the language point coordinator:

“What we already thought and what is actually the case: people coming from abroad do not have a barrier; they immediately indicate: I want to work but I do not speak the language, help me. Native speakers of Dutch do not come forward.”

According to the programme staff member, people often invent excuses for their unsatisfactory Literacy Screener score. Frequently heard responses include, for example:

“I do not have a language problem at all, it was very noisy, I was not wearing my glasses.”

There is not much the training and diagnostic centre and language point coordinator can do if the clients do not wish to participate. The **client managers of the municipality of Emmen, who assist social services clients in finding employment, have several follow-up contact moments with the clients and could bring language courses to their attention once more. This does not happen, however, because the approach to low literacy has no priority for client managers.** Their task is to get clients to work as quickly as possible, which means that the **focus is fully on the outflow to work.** There is a group of people who are able to work just fine despite their low language skills. By extension, the clients, too, prioritise finding work over improving their language skills.

The language point coordinator of the municipality of Emmen suggested the idea during her interview to have language courses organised internally by the training and diagnostic centre, which is also the place where the Literacy Screener is administered:

“This allows you to retain people who drop out and place them in training inside their own organisation.”

The step towards language courses becomes less intimidating, because clients attend basic training at the training and diagnostic centre for a period of two weeks and can attend language courses immediately thereafter.

8.4 Key findings

Context and aims

In the area of outreach to service users with low literacy, gains can be made in the Netherlands. That is why this aspect forms the core of the Dutch GOAL intervention. This involves expanding

identification sites and screening of people who potentially have low basic skills in an accessible setting. Relatively new identification sites are, for example, prisons, with two participating in the pilot.

Outreach strategies

In order to find more people with low literacy, the Dutch GOAL pilot has the objective of finding new locations that can deploy the Literacy Screener: organisations where people come for a completely different reason and where the work activities are not primarily associated with low literacy. Within the GOAL pilot, four organisations (sites) are involved: a social service, an agency specialised in services related to labour participation and two prisons. The two prisons form a relatively new identification site within this pilot.

This evaluation study offers leads for improving the guiding process - low literacy screening and referral to a suitable language course in organisations where tackling low literacy is not the main task - and for implementation on a larger scale in the Netherlands.

Strengths and achievements

Reaching the target group of service users with low literacy forms the core of the Dutch GOAL intervention. During the lifetime of GOAL, the four pilot organisations together have conducted 1525 screenings with the Literacy Screener and identified 465 potential cases of low literacy.

An important first result is that the participating organisations are thinking about how they can organise the recognition and referral (and education) of those with low literacy within their mainstream work processes, and understand the importance of this guidance service. A strong point is that, with the aid of this evaluation study, these findings can be disseminated further. The study has helped to identify what is required for proper implementation of the Literacy Screener in organisations where tackling low literacy is not the main task.

Challenges and barriers

The identification of those with low literacy is in itself not sufficient, we can only speak of outreach if those with low literacy are also helped in a suitable manner and are 'not left to fend for themselves.' In three out of the four pilot organisations, the identified number of people with low literacy who then enrol for a language course is still low.

Within PI Lelystad, things go wrong in the referral between the department operating the Literacy Screener and the department in which language lessons are given. The lack of a common vision and an integrated approach hinders the design of a good follow-up for clients. The municipality of Emmen is also confronted with this problem; client managers who provide guidance for social service clients with regard to employment, do not see tackling low literacy as part of the guidance they provide (in contrast to the counsellors from Aksept).

It is the experience of the municipality of Emmen and of PI Achterhoek that the clients themselves often do not decide to enrol for language lessons. In both organisations, the competition with work is

an obstacle; **clients give priority to (finding) work rather than to taking language lessons.** Contrary to the municipality of Emmen, the clients of PI Achterhoek are generally more forthcoming about having problems with the Dutch language. In the municipality of Emmen, where the target group largely consists of native Dutch speakers, this is not the case. People with an unsatisfactory score on the Literacy Screener do not acknowledge the result and are not open to taking a course to improve their language skills. Only people for whom Dutch is not their native language are open to taking language lessons.

In the municipality of Emmen, nearly half of the clients taking the Literacy Screener recorded an unsatisfactory score. This is high when compared with the national average of 30 per cent. This is perhaps due to the dialect spoken (from an early age) in this area. This can in turn be linked to the opinion of the clients that they do not require any help with regard to language.

Lastly, the prisons experience specific difficulties in the follow-up owing to the special nature of the organisations. Because of the limited number of language volunteers, they have a limited capacity for language lessons and it is difficult to fit the language lessons into the daily programme followed by the prisoners

8.5 Key implications

Implications for future programme development

Thanks to GOAL, the pilot organisations are thinking about how they can incorporate the Literacy Screener into their mainstream work process and about identifying the successes and difficulties of this process. The organisations have succeeded with incorporating the Literacy Screener in their work process in such a way that it contributes to the improvement of their service provision and assists in bringing low literacy to light. The Reading and Writing Foundation can also use the good examples from these organisations to implement the Literacy Screener successfully in new organisations. At the same time, the study exposes where the process in the organisations can be improved further, for example with regard to internal communication and cooperation and with regard to the follow-up. In particular, people of low literacy whose native language is Dutch are not enrolling in a language course. These findings offer opportunities for the organisations, together with the Reading and Writing Foundation, to learn from the experiences up to now and to think about how the follow-up can be improved.

Policy implications

Implications of policy

An important aspect of tackling low literacy in the Netherlands is finding new sites which can deploy the Literacy Screener: organisations which people enter for a completely different reason and where the work activities are not primarily associated with low literacy. On the one hand, the involvement of new sites is a strength, because more people with low literacy will be discovered (the pilot organisations are a good example of this). On the other hand, the character of the new sites also brings difficulties, because people with a different aim and mindset who are not necessarily

motivated to tackle their identified language problem come into the organisation. The clients of the social service in the municipality of Emmen are a clear example of this.

Implications for policy

One potential policy issue to consider is that of the recommendations made by the European Union High Level Group of Experts on Literacy²³. This Group, chaired by Princess Laurentien of the Netherlands, called on Member States and the EU more broadly to support the development of policy environments in which individuals and organisations were more aware of low literacy as an issue for all of society to address.

With regard to the identification of low literacy, successes have been achieved. The efforts of the Reading and Writing Foundation have contributed to this. These successes in identification are, however, only really a success if there is proper follow-up, in the form of service users' increased enrolment on appropriate courses to improve their literacy skills. This evaluation study shows that extra focus must be given to this latter aspect in the Dutch approach to low literacy. Support from the Reading and Writing Foundation continues to be important after the successful implementation of the Literacy Screener, for example in the making of strict working arrangements with regard to the follow-up. Furthermore, an attention point for the follow-up is to examine how to better connect with someone's personal situation and to motivate them to take language lessons.

²³ EU-HLG (EU High Level Group of Experts On Literacy) (2012) *Act now! Final report: EU High Level Group of Experts on Literacy*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
https://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/school/doc/literacy-report_en.pdf

9 Service user outcomes

In the Netherlands, the GOAL intervention consists of a screening for low literacy using the Literacy Screener, a discussion about the outcome, and a possible referral to a language course. This means that the outcomes of the participants in the Netherlands are of a different nature than those for participants from other countries who take part in GOAL. This chapter examines the quantitative and qualitative data that we have collected regarding the service user outcomes.

9.1 Quantitative findings, by data source

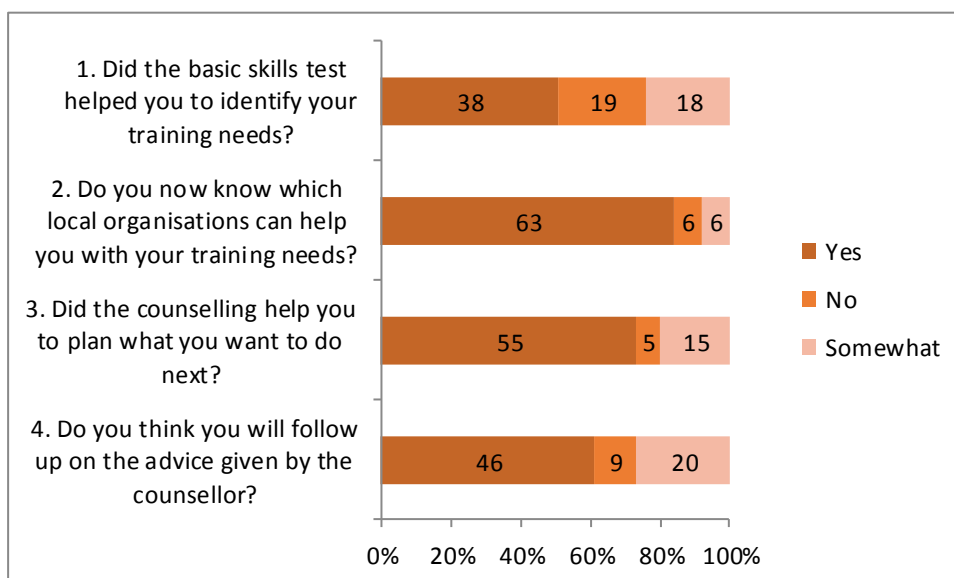
Service User Satisfaction Survey

In the Netherlands, the client satisfaction survey was completed by 75 of the 76 clients for whom monitoring data is available. It should be noted that 43 percent of the clients received assistance in completing the client satisfaction survey (32 of the 75). This may have influenced the answers due to social pressure.

As Figure 9.1. shows, half of the participants think that, thanks to the Literacy Screener, they now know better what they need to learn. Conversely, a quarter of the participants do not think that the Literacy Screener has provided any insight. The remaining quarter think that, through the Literacy Screener, they know somewhat better what they need to learn.

After the discussion about the outcome of the Literacy Screener, the majority of the participants know where they can take language lessons. A few of the participants know this a little bit (N=6) or not at all (N=6). The majority of the participants know (a little) what they can now do further. Several participants do not know what they should do now (N=5). Six out of ten participants said that they are going to use the tips from the client manager. Slightly more than a quarter of the participants still need to think about this. Nine participants (12 per cent) said that they are not going to use the tips.

Figure 9.1. Service User Outcomes, the Netherlands



It is not possible to create pivot tables between the answers from the participants to the above questions and their background characteristics.

Programme exit data

Results of the session

Table 9.1. provides an overview of the results of the sessions as recorded in the data monitoring: the most common results are **development of a personal action plan** and **being informed about what can study and where**. In line with expectations, the result of 'being informed about what can study and where' correlates significantly with the current educational status of the respondent. This result of the session is primarily mentioned by respondents who currently are not engaged in any kind of education/learning (see table 9.2.). Only one respondent who's currently engaged in education mentioned this result of the session.

Table 9.1. Results of the Session (multiple answers possible), the Netherlands

	N	% of responses	% of cases
Being informed about what can study and where	21	17	28
Information on formal qualifications	1	1	1
Information about formal education courses	2	2	3
Information about non-formal learning	3	3	4
Information on short time courses	9	7	12
Information on retraining courses	2	2	3
Development of a personal action plan	34	28	45
Career plan/portfolio	1	1	1
Interest inventory	13	11	17
Given information on how to overcome barriers	13	11	17
Given information on how to find financial resources for taking up a study course	1	1	1
Referral to other professionals/specialists	13	11	17
Other	8	7	11
Total	121	100	159

Table 9.2. 'Results – Being Informed About What Can Study and Where', By Current Educational Status, the Netherlands

	Not engaged in any education		Currently engaged in education		Total	
Results – Being informed about what can study and where	N	%	N	%	N	%
No	40	67	15	94	55	72%
Yes	20	33	1	6	21	28%
Total	60	100	16	100	76	100%

$\chi^2(1) = 4.663, p < .05$ (1 cell has expected count less than 5)

Over the course of this evaluation, three of four pilot organisations have collected quantitative data on adults identified as having low basic skill levels who subsequently enrol in a language course. As table 9.3 shows, Aksept is the only organisation where all participants with an unsatisfactory score have gone on to start a language course. In Aksept, there are even participants with a satisfactory score on the Literacy Screener who have received additional guidance in this area. In PI Achterhoek, a third of the participants with an unsatisfactory score on the Literacy Screener have gone on to start language lessons. In PI Lelystad, this is the case for only 6 per cent of the participants. For the municipality of Emmen, no quantitative data is available about the number of clients who have gone on to start language lessons after an unsatisfactory score. However, from the interview with the language point coordinator, this percentage appears to be very low.

**Table 9.3. Number of Indications of Low Literacy and Referrals to a Language Course 1
January 2016 – 7 April 2017, the Netherlands**

Pilot organisation	Referrals start date	Number of indications of low literacy	Number of referrals to a language course	Referrals as a percentage of the number of indications of low literacy
Aksept	1 April 2016	8	12	150%
PI Lelystad	1 July 2016	171	10	6%
The Municipality of Emmen	-	225	Unknown	Unknown
PI Achterhoek	1 January 2016	61	21	34%
Total	-	465	1525	-

Quantitative data is not available from any of the four pilot organisations about the result of the language lessons in terms of improving the level of clients' Dutch language skills.

Follow-up survey

In the Netherlands, interviews have been conducted with 14 service users, all clients of the social service in the municipality of Emmen with an unsatisfactory score on the Literacy Screener. Because of the short time gap between the date on which the participants took the Literacy Screener and the date on which the interviews were conducted, the interviews provide no information about the results of the language lessons. They do, however, provide information about the **motivations of clients** to want to take language lessons or not. These motivations are shown in the tables below.

After the discussion about the outcome of the Literacy Screener, the majority of the participants interviewed did not enrol for language lessons (see table 9.4). Only four participants enrolled/are enrolling²⁴ for a language course after the discussion about the result. They have been referred to a suitable offering via the language point coordinator.

Table 9.4. Have You Enrolled on a Course After You Took the Literacy Screener?', the Netherlands

	N	%
Yes	4	29
No	10	71
Total	14	100

The four participants who are going/want to enrol in a language course were asked about their reasons for doing so. As table 9.5 shows, all four need the lessons in order to improve their chances of (specific) work. Furthermore, two of the participants want to improve their skills in general.

²⁴ For three of every four respondents, the lessons had not started at the time of the interview (which took place shortly after the respondents had taken the Literacy Screener).

Table 9.5. ‘Why Have You Enrolled on This Course? (multiple answers possible)’, the Netherlands

	N	% of responses	% of cases
I need to do the course to get a specific job	1	6	7
I need to do the course to improve my career prospects	4	24	29
I want to improve my skills in general	2	12	14
Not applicable (did not enroll on a course)	10	59	71
Total	17	100	175

The ten other participants were asked why they did not want to enrol for a language course. The reasons they gave include that they have been too busy and that they never wanted to enrol for a language course (table 9.6). Other reasons given were:

- Two respondents have found a new job (with the help of the basic training);
- One respondent was exempted from applying for jobs because of personal circumstances;
- One respondent ended up in another procedure immediately after the basic training, namely a technical assessment;
- One respondent still has to decide if he wants to enrol for a language course.

Table 9.6. ‘Why You Have Not Enrolled on a Course? (multiple answers possible)’, the Netherlands

	N	% of responses	% of cases
I was too busy	3	19	21
I never wanted/aimed to enrol on a course	4	25	29
Other	5	31	36
Not applicable (enrolled on a course)	4	25	29
Total	16	100	114

9.2 Qualitative findings: benefits of guidance

Client perspectives

Discussion of the outcome of the Literacy Screener

To start with, the service users were asked about how they experienced the discussion in which the (unsatisfactory) result of the Literacy Screener was discussed. Nine of the fourteen interviewed service users were positive about the discussion. Points appreciated by the service users were the clear explanation of the guidance available, the positive approach taken in the discussion and the space to make decisions for themselves. Several examples of their responses:

- *“She asked me questions and recorded everything, all the details about what I have studied, my work experience. They asked me if I have studied Dutch. She was good. She was nice.”*
- *“They were very helpful. I received plenty of help.”*

- *“Very friendly. Very positive. They give you a good feeling, that’s true.”*
- *“I appreciated that. That somebody approaches me: we have the result from your language test, this is the outcome. It was explained what I can do, to the language point to achieve further language improvement. [...] ‘They said: it is a possibility, but not obligatory. I think that’s a good idea. Not everyone participates and also cooperates. This way you get to take the initiative yourself - will I continue or not.’”*

Amongst the nine positive service users, there are also several people who did not agree with the unsatisfactory result. Because they were given the opportunity to explain this in the discussion, they still experienced it as positive.

In the discussion, two service users were negative about the outcome of the Literacy Screener. Both service users did not agree with the unsatisfactory result.

- *“The discussion wasn’t good. They said immediately that I must do computer lessons and that my language was not good, I could use language lessons. Then I explained: I know the language, but the large group was too crowded for me. According to them it was better for me to take a language course.”*
- *“I write journalistic articles. At least once per week for a journal, a small sports journal. If it is then said that I have a language deficiency or an indication of one, I find that strange. I resent it.”*

One of these two service users also emphasised that it is important that this discussion is conducted with someone who knows the service user:

“I should have had that discussion with my manager but he wasn’t there, thus someone who was just there to help you, just did the interview. While a manager should do it. I didn’t like that.”

Finally, one service user was neutral about the discussion about the outcome of the Literacy Screener and two service users said that they have not had a discussion.

First experiences with language lessons

As already shown in table 9.7, four out of fourteen interviewed service users are open to enrolling for language lessons. For three of these four respondents, the lessons had not yet started at the time of the interview. The fourth respondent had had one lesson. She made the following comments:

“Great. The lady is very patient and explains exactly how it works. And she said: you will get there soon enough, perhaps in three months. Then you understand where you can use ‘could and can’. And the different forms of ‘this’. All those errors in my application letter are terrible. You gain self-assurance with lessons.”

The respondent has a one-on-one lesson with a volunteer. She is very happy with the individual lesson:

“It is probably more difficult for me to follow lessons in a group. In a different group, there are also people who don’t understand Dutch at all. I do, I speak it, it’s only that uncertainty about writing letters myself.”

As part of the guidance, the respondent also needs to prepare a report about her aims regarding work.

Reasons for not wanting to take language lessons

The ten participants who are not going to enrol for a language course were asked about their reasons for this. As already shown in table 9.9, the **main reasons are that they were too busy and that they have never wanted to enrol for a language course**. Additional amplification of this was sought in the interviews. One respondent who was too busy to take language lessons explained it as follows:

“I am working. Each morning I leave home at 5.30 and with a bit of luck I am home again between 6.00 and 6.30. These long days tire me out.”

The respondents who indicated that they have never wanted to enrol for a language course are all of the opinion that their language skills are good:

- *“It wasn’t necessary. They asked if I had problems with the Dutch language. You don’t really pay attention to writing errors. I don’t have any problems with writing a letter. I do have become more aware of the spelling checker on the computer.”*
- *“My vocabulary and my language knowledge is generally always very good. Writing as well. A language course was unnecessary for me.”*
- *“It is because of the large group. Everyone sits closely together. Someone talks, someone else laughs, then I can’t do it anymore.”*
- *“I write journalistic articles. It would be strange if I write articles and after that do a language course. That doesn’t flow. I don’t agree with the result. The error is not mine. I also said that to the municipality of Emmen. That I thought the outcome was strange.”*

To gain insight into the factors that should motivate them to undertake language lessons, the ten participants were asked if they would perhaps want to follow a language course in the future (under different circumstances). Their answers indicate that people **do not see the added value of language lessons because (in their opinion) they were already able to get by perfectly**. Several examples:

- *“I would only do so if I had to. I manage perfectly myself so I will never do it voluntarily.”*
- *“I wouldn’t know what for. If I am going to take language lessons, it will be for Italian or Spanish, but not Dutch. That is too loose for me. I am someone from Drenthe-Groningen. Do you really have to learn how to speak like they do in The Hague when you are 62 years old?”*
- *“I don’t have problems with the language itself. I talk in normal Dutch in a job interview. If someone talks to me in my native dialect then I am also going to use it because we grew up with it. If the employer talks in normal Dutch, then I do so as well.”*

The above respondents seemed particularly to apply the expression ‘language lessons’ to the *speaking* of the Dutch language. One respondent who is open to taking language lessons in the future, emphasised that his *writing skills* could perhaps be improved:

“Perhaps I should take courses in the future. I have taught a lot abroad and, because of that, my Dutch has faded. Verbally, it’s ok, but not in writing.”

Finally, several answers indicated that work has the highest priority:

- *“Certainly for my job. I’m always prepared to learn. I do it if it’s necessary.”*
- *“I don’t have a problem with the language. I want to be able to work again.”*

Programme staff perspectives

Local evaluators in the Netherlands spoke to all four pilot organisations about their participation in GOAL and the outcomes they desired for clients. By participating in GOAL, the pilot organisations hoped to get **tools for improvement of their guidance services to clients with low levels of basic skills**. One of the interviewed policymakers illustrates this as follows:

“We noticed that we had a lot of low literate clients and we wanted to improve our service to them. We participate in the GOAL project because it provides us with a proven method and structural approach.”

The main goal of the guidance that PI Lelystad and PI Achterhoek provide is **to prevent recidivism**. Low literacy hampers a positive, successful return into society. The interviewed policymakers of PI Lelystad hope that the use of the Literacy Screener will enable them **to distinguish incapable clients from unwilling clients**:

“There are a lot of people who frequently get in trouble because of their low literacy. It would be a great thing if we are able to offer this group guidance and support in Dutch language, which will give them more opportunities and prevent them from returning to prison.”

For the municipality of Emmen, the motivation for participating in GOAL is the desire to reduce the high percentage of people with low literacy in the region. The taking of the Literacy Screener is arranged by the training and diagnostic centre, where people applying for a social welfare benefit are obliged to undertake a basic training. According to the head of the training and diagnostic centre, participation in GOAL fits in well with the services it provides for the following reason:

“What I would like to see is a diagnostic centre where especially people themselves are able to make an assessment. This is an additional instrument for this. People themselves get an idea of whether their literacy is low and are able to talk about it. You make it discussable and visible. In doing so, you can really serve a higher purpose in making people even more suitable for, for example, the labour market on which we as a training and diagnostic centre focus.”

In conclusion, the pilot organisations think the Literacy Screener is a good screening instrument. All of the four organisations are happy to continue to deploy the Literacy Screener in the future,

because the instrument offers **added value for their service provision**. The insight into the client's language skills, which comes about by means of the Literacy Screener, helps the organisations tailor their services to their clients' needs. In addition to added value for the organisations, the pilot organisations also feel that the instrument provides **added value for the client**. The Literacy Screener helps organisations to identify low literacy and make it discussable with the client. This makes an improvement in the level possible which increases the self-reliance of clients and make them better able to participate in society. Furthermore, improving the level is a form of personal development which provides a positive contribution to the self-assurance of clients.

In practice, **the pilot organisations do not register whether an improvement in the level takes place**. This was included as an aim in the original GOAL project plan in the Netherlands (developing a monitoring system to measure improvements in the advice-to-action-to-impact ratio of guidance services). Improvement of language skills is very diverse in all four organisations because they supply customisation (suitable offering, often one-to-one). Qualitative information about the results of the language lessons for clients is, however, available from the interviews with the pilot organisations.

According to the Aksept policy maker, the language lessons lead to improved language skills, mainly because the language lessons are very practical:

"The result is most visible in those areas where improvement is most required. For example, as support with homework, a bit of language development at the same time. On the work floor, people need to be able to understand work instructions and know what safe working is. We have made hand-outs of this with instructions in images and text."

A programme staff member from Aksept provides a small case study of one of the clients for whom she provides guidance:

"This girl is Syrian of origin and for her it is really necessary because she works at the ice rink and has to come in contact with customers. So it is very important that her Dutch improves. I often take her to one side at her work and we sit down for language lessons. It has had an effect. I can definitely see that she is more certain of herself. To start with, she was uncertain because she did not speak the language and was afraid of saying something stupid. Now she makes much more contact with other participants and coaches, she speaks much more. And for us, she is easier to understand than she was in the beginning."

PI Achterhoek has seen rapid advances made by clients during the one-to-one sessions with language volunteers. However, the **continuity of the lessons is hampered because of the temporary nature of the stay**:

"At the moment, we have many prisoners who stay in the prison. When someone from the group has language lessons, it is difficult to make a plan. Many of these prisoners are gone again from one day to the next. We hope that, during their stay here, they become sufficiently motivated to continue, but for us, they disappear from the picture."

The prisoners say that they enjoy the individual approach. The policy maker commented as follows:

“We have established that the linking of a language volunteer to a prisoner certainly has added value. The prisoners enjoy this. We can also see this in the low drop-out rate for prisoners who participate in the language project.”

Because of the (very) low follow-up for PI Lelystad and the municipality of Emmen, no clear judgements can yet be made in this regard.

Other stakeholders' perspectives

Central government steers people on the basis of customised training opportunities with a low threshold for people with low basic skills. The interviewed member of the steering group ‘Tel mee met Taal’ emphasised the importance of an approach that is suitable for the course participant:

“Because, if I am 78 and want to read the medication leaflet, then I have other needs than someone of 24 who still has their entire working life ahead of them. If I go to the UWV (national public employment service) or the social service and I am 46 and I want to retrain then that is somewhat different than if I want to go to school with my daughter.”

9.3 Key findings

Key outcomes

In the Netherlands, the client satisfaction survey was completed by 75 of the 76 clients of whom monitoring data is available. Three quarters of the participants reported that they now know (somewhat) better what they need to learn. Conversely, a quarter of the participants do not think that the Literacy Screener has provided any insight. This is in line with the findings of the municipality of Emmen that many clients do not agree with the unsatisfactory result from the Literacy Screener.

After the discussion about the outcome of the Literacy Screener, the majority of the 75 participants who have completed the client satisfaction survey know (a little) about where they can enrol for language lessons and what else they can do next. This is in line with the results from the data monitoring questionnaire which indicates the development of a personal action plan and being informed about what can be studied and where are the most frequently occurring results of the session.

A small majority of the participants (six out of every ten) said that they are going to use the tips from the client manager. In practice, the percentage of clients going on to a language course after an unsatisfactory score on the Literacy Screener is a little lower in the three organisations from which the client satisfaction data comes. The follow-up interviews with service users confirm this.

Of the fourteen service users interviewed, the majority found the process of taking the Literacy Screener and the discussion about the findings to be a positive experience. They recognised the usefulness of the Literacy Screener and/or found taking the Literacy Screener interesting, and they appreciate the fact that in the discussion about the findings, a clear and positive explanation was given of the guidance available. However, most of them did not start language lessons, because they

were too busy or because they did not see their usefulness, because they feel they can manage perfectly well without them.

Strengths and achievements

All four pilot organisations think that the Literacy Screener is a good screening tool and want to continue to use it, because it offers added value for their services. The insight into the client's language skills, which comes about by means of the Literacy Screener, helps the organisations tailor their services to their clients' needs.

Aksept is the only organisation where all participants with an unsatisfactory score on the Literacy Screener have gone on to start a language course. In Aksept, there are even participants with a satisfactory score on the Literacy Screener who have received additional guidance in this area. According to the organisation, the language lessons lead to improved language skills, mainly because the language lessons are very practical. In PI Achterhoek, 30 per cent of the prisoners with an unsatisfactory score on the Literacy Screener have gone on to start language lessons. The organisation has seen rapid advances made by clients during the one-to-one sessions with language volunteers. Although the flow into language lessons in the municipality of Emmen is virtually zero, they do achieve success on a small scale with people for whom Dutch is not the native language. Interviews with professionals and clients demonstrate that these people would like to take language lessons in order to improve their chances of (specific) work.

Although too few interviews have been conducted to be able to say anything certain about this, the follow-up interviews are a first indication that the accessibility of language courses (individual and taught by a volunteer) is appreciated by service users. The policy maker at PI Achterhoek echoed this.

Challenges and barriers

The municipality of Emmen is facing the basic difficulty that clients who are native Dutch speakers are not willing to enrol for language lessons. The main reasons for this that come out of the follow-up survey are that clients are too busy and/or that they have never wanted to take language lessons.

The original idea was that client managers, who offer guidance to social service clients with regard to employment, would conduct the discussion about the Literacy Screener outcome. They see their clients on a regular basis and build a relationship of trust with them. In practice, however, client managers are not involved, because tackling low literacy has no priority for them. Their objective is the outflow into work, and most social service clients can get a job for which their poor language skills are not directly an obstacle. The follow-up survey indicates that the clients themselves also prioritise work over improving their language skills. Furthermore, most service users do not see the added value of language lessons. Taking language lessons is too distant from people; in their opinion, they speak excellent Dutch and they do not see how a Dutch language course could improve or make their life and participation in society any easier.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that the municipality of Emmen is the only pilot organisation deploying the Literacy Screener in a group setting. In such a situation, clients can experience feelings of insecurity and shame in the event of an unsatisfactory score

9.4 Key implications

Implications for future programme development

The findings from this chapter indicate that the discussion about the outcome of the Literacy Screener is of essential importance. The **follow-up can perhaps be improved by having this discussion conducted with someone who the client sees more often and who has built up a relationship of trust** with him or her. This is important not only because of the feelings of shame which often accompany low literacy, but also because such a person is better able to judge how the language lessons have practical added value for the client. Furthermore, such a person has the opportunity to emphasise the importance of language lessons on a frequent basis (and the client does not need to make an immediate decision).

One of the reasons why service users with an unsatisfactory score on the Literacy Screener do not take part in language lessons is that they are too busy (with work). At Aksept, the language lessons are integrated in the guidance that clients receive, which means that they do not require any extra time either for the organisation or for the clients. Sometimes, the language lessons are organised on the work floor. The availability of language lessons during working hours can make them more accessible for service users.

In practice, the pilot organisations do not register whether an improvement in language level takes place. This was included as an aim in the original GOAL project plan in the Netherlands (developing a monitoring system to measure improvements in the advice-to-action-to-impact ratio of guidance services). All four organisations provide customised language lessons, therefore the improvement in clients' language skills is very diverse. Thought needs to be given, in consultation with the organisations, about how progress with the language lessons can best be registered and made visible.

Policy implications

Implications of policy

In the Netherlands, no formal criteria have been established for the programme staff members who perform the Literacy Screener and who conduct the discussion about the outcome. In practise, these components of the Dutch intervention are performed by different people. Sometimes these are people that the clients see only once. For a good follow-up, it would perhaps be more beneficial if the discussion about the outcome of the Literacy Screener is assigned to a person who the client sees more often and with whom a relationship of trust has been built up. Furthermore, the **pitfall of single contact is that the responsibility for the subsequent steps is lost with the ending of the contact**.

Implications for policy

As outlined in chapter 8, it is important that extra focus in the Dutch approach to low literacy is given to the follow-up to the literacy screening. Support from the Reading and Writing Foundation is crucial in this, amongst other things, so that strict working arrangements about the follow-up are made within and between organisations. (Because of the diffused model it is crucial to make strict agreements about who does what and when.) An important question that needs to be answered is what must be asked of organisations in order to make the follow-up a success.

Central government has the task of creating a political environment in which both individuals and organisations become more aware of the personal and social importance of tackling low literacy. A requirement for this awareness is that people look further than just the short-term. At the social service in the municipality of Emmen, for example, the focus of the client managers on a (fast) outflow into work is not beneficial for a successful follow-up of the identified language problem. Looking further than just the short-term is also advisable for those with low literacy. The clients of the municipality of Emmen, whose native language is Dutch, are of the opinion that they do not need language lessons because they can manage perfectly well themselves. In the short-term that is perhaps so, but this can change in the long-term. For example, because of the (repeated) loss of a job or the loss of a partner. **An attention point for central government is the embedding of its long-term vision (which they have a clear idea of) in organisations and individuals** and the facilitation of this. For example, for social service clients, it is perhaps a help to involve employers in government efforts to improve language levels: for example, within the context of corporate social responsibility, they could offer people with low literacy the opportunity to take language lessons during work time.

10 Service quality

One of the five intervention strategies piloted in GOAL is the implementation of high-quality guidance services. This chapter provides findings and analysis on the quality of the guidance service provided by GOAL in the Netherlands. It draws on quantitative data from the client satisfaction survey as well as qualitative data gathered from the range of GOAL stakeholders in interviews and in focus groups.

10.1 High quality guidance services for low-educated adults: implementation and aims

The hypothesis underpinning GOAL was that an independent one-stop guidance service that puts the specific needs of low-educated adult learners at its centre may help to increase the participation of this target group in adult education. To this end, each of the six countries piloted new guidance models, in two locations²⁵, to specific target groups within the low educated adult population. Five intervention strategies were implemented by the GOAL partners, although not all strategies were implemented in all countries:

1. **Networks and partnerships** with relevant organisations were established or improved.
2. **Tools** were developed to facilitate the delivery of guidance specifically to low-educated adults.
3. The **competences** which counsellors require to enable them to address the specific needs of low-educated adults were defined.
4. **Outreach activities** designed to bring guidance services to specific target groups within the low-educated population were developed.
5. Each country sought to provide **high-quality guidance services** with the aim of optimising individuals' learning and/or employment outcomes.

In the Netherlands, the focus was on three of the above intervention strategies:

- **Tools** – At the heart of the GOAL project in the Netherlands is a Literacy Screener, the Taalmeter. The Literacy Screener is an online tool with which organisations can identify quickly and easily those people who may have difficulty reading. The pilot in the Netherlands can be characterised as a quick screening for low literacy and referral to appropriate training facilities where the education and coaching would take place.
- **Outreach activities** – In terms of reaching service users with low literacy, gains can be made in the Netherlands. That is why this aspect forms the core of the Dutch GOAL intervention. This involves expanding identification sites and screening people who potentially have low basic skills in an accessible setting (organisations in which people enter with a different

²⁵ Three locations in the Netherlands.

purpose). Relatively new identification sites are, for example, prisons, with two participating in the pilot.

- **High-quality guidance services** – The evaluation study linked to the GOAL pilot provides insight into what the deployment of the Literacy Screener means for the organisations that work with this instrument and for people with low basic skills. Information about success factors and bottlenecks offers leads for improving the guiding process – low literacy screening and referral to a suitable language course in organisations in which tackling low literacy is not the main task – and for implementation on a larger scale in the Netherlands.

Moreover, there is also attention for networks and partnerships. Within the Dutch GOAL project, no specific aim was formulated with respect to networks. The setting up of local and regional networks is, however, an important aim of the national action programme Count on Skills (*Tel mee met Taal*) through which a connection exists with GOAL. Two of the four organisations (the municipality of Emmen and Aksept) taking part in the GOAL pilot form part of a local network.

The Reading and Writing Foundation, in spite of all efforts, found it **very difficult to get organisations to participate in the GOAL project. This had mainly to do with the anticipated additional staff effort, the costs associated with this and the apparent lack of clear and direct added value for the organisation itself.** For many of the organisations, sessions with clients are carried out with a completely different main objective and any screening for low basic skills is carried out as an extra. Due to this difficulty in recruiting organisations, fewer pilot organisations participated than was projected. Ultimately, four organisations (from three different regions) have participated in GOAL.

Three of the four organisations organise language lessons internally themselves. This is not the usual way in the Netherlands; generally, clients are referred to a language point and from there linked to language lessons. As a consequence, the outcomes from the evaluation study in some respects are somewhat less of a good fit than for organisations outside GOAL. Nevertheless, the outcomes offer useful leads for a further implementation of the guidance process.

10.2 Challenges and barriers to high quality services

GOAL is primarily focused on finding people with low literacy by including new sites at which clients are screened for low literacy by means of the Literacy Screener. These are organisations where people with low literacy come for an entirely different purpose: a social service, an agency specialised in services related to labour participation, and two prisons. One of the major challenges of this intervention is the integration of the recognition and referral of people with low literacy into work processes in organisations that do not have addressing low literacy as their primary task, in a way that it has added value for the organisation and that does not pose a burden to it. Although the four pilot organisations have succeeded in doing so, there are some other organisations that consider the Literacy Screener not practically applicable. For this reason, the Reading and Writing Foundation is developing variants of the Literacy Screener that are shorter and more applicable in organisations that have less elaborate work processes.

In the four pilot organisations, conducting the Literacy Screener could be implemented in their regular work processes, but they are facing various problems when organising a follow-up. The follow-up (i.e. clients with an unsatisfactory score on the Literacy Screener moving into a language course) is the major difficulty of the Dutch intervention.

Municipality of Emmen

The municipality of Emmen is facing the basic difficulty that clients who are native Dutch speakers are not willing to enrol for language lessons. According to the language point coordinator, a sense of shame has much to do with this. She **believes that the circumstances under which the Literacy Screener is conducted have an adverse impact:**

“It’s only at the intake that they hear they have to take the Literacy Screener; that’s a bit of a shock. Next, they fail the Literacy Screener: that’s a double shock. After this, you have to come for an interview. Everybody can see you are called to account, for you are the one who has failed the Literacy Screener. It makes you shut up completely. At the interview, you have to meet with someone you don’t know – a person you don’t trust at all – and talk about problems that are very personal to you, problems that are part of your identity. Take it from me that they won’t be identified in this way.”

The original idea was that client managers, who offer guidance to social service clients with regard to employment, would conduct the discussion about the Literacy Screener outcome. They see their clients on a regular basis and build a relationship of trust with them. In practice, however, client managers are not involved, because tackling low literacy has no priority for them. Their objective is the outflow into work, and most social service clients can get a job for which their poor language skills are not directly an obstacle. Consequently, there is no integral approach with a common aim in the municipality of Emmen (the same applies to PI Lelystad).

The clients, too, prefer work to improving their language skills. The interviews we have conducted with service users confirm that the importance of language courses is not recognised. Taking language lessons is too distant from people; in their opinion, they speak excellent Dutch and they do not see how it could improve or make their life and participation in society any easier. Consistent with these findings, the client satisfaction survey shows that participants are slightly less enthusiastic about two aspects: the extent to which the client manager knows what the client wants and the extent to which the client manager has provided useful information. In 2018, the training and diagnosis centre and the client managers will be combined into a single work training company. According to the policy-maker of the municipality of Emmen, this will provide opportunities to develop a more integrated approach:

“Paying attention to the language level of the target group should be part of the basic services in this company. The management will also have to believe that, in the long term, this is good for the participant as well as for the local economy and participation in this region. This is a capital-intensive investment.”

Penitentiary institutions

With respect to organising language courses at PI Achterhoek and PI Lelystad, difficulties are experienced concerning the specific nature of the organisations. First of all, some detainees spent only a short time at the PI, so that a follow-up could not be organised for them. At PI Achterhoek, some of the detainees have a short-term focus: they would prefer to spend their time on work (to earn some money in the PI) than on a language course. This could be solved by continuing to pay the detainee during the course if their language skills are so poor that they are an obstacle to successful reintegration. For detainees who do want to take a language course, only a handful of language volunteers is available in each PI. In combination with the detainees' regular (and busy) daily programme, which changes when detainees are (suddenly) transferred to another department, this problem renders planning language courses and monitoring their continuity difficult. This could potentially be solved by disconnecting education from the daily programme: an open hour instead of a regular educational programme for every department. Finally, continuation outside the PIs is a challenge. The policy-maker from PI Achterhoek gave the following explanation:

“First of all, we make a zero measurement. On the basis of this, we invest, and we hope this investment will take root. The time spent at the PI differs considerably from person to person, of course. With detainees who are here for many years, we can monitor developments and continue investing, but most people do not spend that much time here, so their course would stop. It would be nice if we had a safety net for these people [outside the PI] to continue the programme they have started.”

Collaboration with a local network is essential for this. However, one local network is not enough, as the detainees go to various municipalities.

10.3 Strengths and achievements

Service user perspectives

The 75 clients who have completed the client satisfaction survey are generally (very) satisfied with the session. In particular, the client managers' clear explanations and the trust they show the participants are highly appreciated. After the interview about the outcome of the Literacy Screener, the majority of the participants know or somewhat know where they can take a language course and what they can do next. With respect to this outcome, it should be noted that 32 out of 75 clients (43 per cent) received help to complete the questionnaire. In some cases, this may have led to socially desirable answers.

Of the fourteen service users interviewed, the majority found the Literacy Screener and the discussion about the findings to be a positive experience. They recognised the usefulness of the Literacy Screener and/or found taking the Literacy Screener interesting, and they appreciate the fact that in the discussion about the findings, a clear and positive explanation was given of the guidance available. However, most of them did not start language lessons, because they were too busy or because they did not see their usefulness, because they can manage perfectly well without them (they said).

Programme staff perspectives on guidance quality

The programme staff members interviewed are positive about the use of the Literacy Screener. The tool can be used quickly and easily, and the outcome provides information that helps them develop their services further.

In general, clients react well to the Literacy Screener and are cooperative (without any problems). The main reason for this is that the programme staff members introduce the Literacy Screener to them in the proper way: the introduction is formulated in positive terms. It is explained that the Literacy Screener is not a test to measure if the client is doing well, but that it is intended to get an idea of his/her language skills. It is also stated what possibilities are available to the client if the Literacy Screener reveals he/she has difficulties with the Dutch language. What is more, the programme staff members do not exaggerate the Literacy Screener, by introducing it as a standard procedure. However, it should be noted here that the language point coordinator from the municipality of Emmen believes that the circumstances under which the Literacy Screener is conducted unfold in a daunting way.

The positive experiences with the use of the Literacy Screener are reflected in the number of Literacy Screeners conducted in the organisations. In each of the four organisations, it was projected that the Literacy Screener would be completed by at least 100 people. With the exception of Aksept (where a very low influx of new clients had to be dealt with) the organisations exceeded this figure to a high extent. Together, during the GOAL pilot (1 January 2016 up to and including 7 April 2017), they conducted 1,525 Literacy Screeners, identifying 465 people with potential low literacy.

Partner and policy stakeholder perspectives on guidance quality

In the four pilot organisations, conducting the Literacy Screener could be implemented in their regular work processes. The policy-makers of the pilot organisations mention the following success factors for good implementation:

- The use of the Literacy Screener fits in perfectly with the services of the organisation, since its outcome provides relevant information (added value) for the details of their services.
- The Literacy Screener is conducted immediately at the first contact with the clients, so that low literacy can be embedded immediately in further support/services.
- The Literacy Screener is conducted by people who have time to do so. In three of the four organisations, this is done by unpaid workers (trainees or volunteers).
- The Literacy Screener is implemented as a standard procedure; except for Aksept, all new clients are asked to complete it.
- Designating a person in the organisation to act as the person who carries the load for the implementation and who continues to coordinate the process and by so doing is a regular contact for everybody involved.
- Responsiveness/support in the organisation (among everybody involved).

Aksept is the only organisation in which the follow-up is running smoothly. In the organisation and among the clients, there is support for this working method, due to the fact that language support is embedded in the guidance in a very natural way. With Aksept, clients are given one-on-one support to improve their participation in the labour market. Language support can be provided by the same assistant and is often very practical, for instance at the workplace. In this way, it does not take the clients and assistants any extra time.

10.4 Key findings

Implementation and aims

The pilot in the Netherlands can be characterised as a quick screening for low literacy, followed by referral to appropriate training facilities where the education and coaching would take place. In the Netherlands, the focus is on three intervention strategies:

- **Tools** – At the heart of the GOAL project in the Netherlands is a Literacy Screener, *the Taalmeter*. This is an online tool with which organisations can identify quickly and easily those people who may have difficulty reading.
- **Outreach activities** – In terms of reaching out to service users with low literacy, gains can be made in the Netherlands. That is why this outreach aspect forms the core of the Dutch GOAL intervention. This outreach involves expanding the number and range of identification sites where people are screened for low basic skills in an accessible setting (organisations in which people enter for a completely different – i.e. non-literacy-related – reason).
- **High-quality guidance services** – The evaluation study linked to the GOAL pilot offers leads for improving the guiding process – low literacy screening and referral to a suitable language course in organisations where tackling low literacy is not the main task – and for implementation on a larger scale in the Netherlands.

Strengths and achievements

The major success of the Dutch GOAL pilot is the successful screening of people who potentially have low basic skills in an accessible setting. In the four pilot organisations, use of the Literacy Screener was implemented into regular work processes. This was possible with a devoted person ‘carrying the load’ in each organisation. At their arrival, clients are asked to take the Literacy Screener as standard. Programme staff members found good ways to introduce the Literacy Screener to clients. In general, clients react well to the Literacy Screener and are cooperative. This is confirmed by the outcome of the client satisfaction survey and the follow-up interviews with participants.

The Literacy Screener is conducted by people who have time to do so (in many cases unpaid workers: trainees or volunteers). The tool can be conducted quickly and easily, and the outcome provides information that helps organisations develop their services further. Together, during the GOAL pilot, they conducted 1,525 Literacy Screeners (far more than the intended 400), identifying 465 people with potential low literacy.

Challenges and barriers

The follow-up (i.e. the flow of clients with an unsatisfactory score on the Literacy Screener into language courses) is the major weakness of the Dutch intervention. Especially in the municipality of Emmen and PI Lelystad, this inflow is very low. In all four pilot organisations, various departments/functions are involved in the guidance process. In the municipality of Emmen and PI Lelystad, however, there is no common vision or integrated approach yet. This makes setting up a proper follow-up for clients more difficult.

In this evaluation study, it was found that a considerable number of clients (especially in the municipality of Emmen, but on a smaller scale also in PI Lelystad and PI Achterhoek) were not willing to consider taking a language course. In the first place, clients do not recognise or admit they have language problems (this applies to clients from the municipality of Emmen whose native language is Dutch). On the one hand, a sense of shame has some influence here. On the other hand, some clients really do not recognise the added value or the practical importance of a language course. Speaking a language is only one part of literacy; there is also reading and writing. It seems that because people speak fluently Dutch, they feel that they have no need of improvement in the other aspects of language. In the second place, taking a language course takes time which clients would rather spend on something else.

Additionally, the penitentiary institutions experience specific difficulties that are related to the special nature of the organisations: limited capacity (limited number of language volunteers available), complicated planning (including language courses in the detainees' schedule and the language volunteers' schedule) and difficulty of monitoring continuity (detainees are transferred to other departments, sometimes suddenly, or are released from prison).

Baseline and progress across GOAL's five intervention strategies

Table 10.1 provides a brief evaluative summary of the quality of different aspects of the GOAL programme in the Netherlands, comparing quality at the start of the evaluation (baseline) and at the end. In this table, we provide numerical ratings for each of the five intervention areas, and an explanation of that rating for each category. These ratings and explanations are provided for the start of the evaluation and the end, with the aim of briefly summarising key issues and change over time. In addition to provide ratings and commentary for the five core GOAL intervention areas, we also address overall service quality and policy interest/support. The latter is a key factor in determining future programme sustainability.

Table 10.1. Baseline and Progress Across GOAL's Five Intervention Strategies, Plus Policy Interest/Support

ASPECT OF PROGRAMME OR POLICY		LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT
Partnerships and networks	Start of GOAL	6
		There has been a focus on regional collaboration for some time. The preconditions for addressing low basic skill levels were mapped out in a number

		of regions in the Literacy for Life pilot programme (2012 and 2015). Partly because of the outcomes of the previous pilot programme, strengthening networks is incorporated as one of the five action lines in the national Count on Skills programme (2016-2018) and the aim is to establish active networks in all 35 employment regions in the Netherlands. The goal of the action line during the action programme is to ensure that at least 45,000 participants start literacy training, in which materials and volunteers from the programme will be used.
	<i>End of GOAL</i>	7
		The Dutch GOAL pilot didn't explicitly focus on the development of partnerships and networks. However, the information from this evaluation study does make an indirect contribution to this aspect of the programme, because further improvement and dispersion of the guidance process (screening for low literacy and referral to appropriate training facilities) means more organisations will work together to tackle low literacy. Once the regional networks have been established, a second and important challenge follows: embedding. It emerged from the interviews with pilot organisations and partners that there is room for improvement on this.
Counsellor competences	<i>Start</i>	4
		Nearly all adult guidance practitioners in the Netherlands have experience in education and/or reintegration practices. However, there are no formal criteria for guidance practitioners and thus a great divergence in quality between various service points. No research is available from the Netherlands on the effectiveness of guidance practitioners. One reason for this is that effectiveness is strongly dependent on the quality of the individual practitioner, but there is currently no policy focus on the quality of the practitioners.
	<i>End</i>	5
		No specific targets have been formulated in the Dutch GOAL pilot with respect to counsellor competences, because the intervention consists of a brief screening and referral. Those administering the Literacy Screener have received instruction from the Reading and Writing Foundation on how to recognise low literacy, how to discuss this issue with clients and how to use the Literacy Screener (<i>Taalmeter</i>). The client satisfaction survey shows a (very) positive image of the performance of the counsellor. It should be noted here that 43 per cent of the clients received assistance in completing the client satisfaction surveys, which may have influenced the answers due to social pressure.
Outreach	<i>Start</i>	3
		In the area of reach of service users with low literacy, gains can be made in the Netherlands. That is why this aspect formed the core of the Dutch GOAL intervention. This involves expanding identification sites and screening of people who potentially have low basic skills in an accessible setting.
	<i>End</i>	5
		An important first step in the Dutch approach to low literacy is finding more persons with low literacy. The pilot organisations have succeeded in this and their successful implementation of the Literacy Screener gives leads regarding how to disperse the implementation on a larger scale in the Netherlands. The identification of those with low literacy is in itself not sufficient; we can only speak of outreach if those with low literacy are also helped in a suitable manner and are 'not left to fend for themselves.' In three out of the four pilot

		organisations, the number of identified people with low literacy who then enrol for a language course is still (too) low. Especially low literate people whose mother tongue is Dutch hardly take part in language lessons.
Tools	<i>Start</i>	7
		At the heart of the GOAL project in the Netherlands is a Literacy Screener, the <i>Taalmeter</i> . The Literacy Screener is an online tool with which organisations can identify quickly and easily those people who may have difficulty reading. In 2013 this instrument was developed by the Reading and Writing Foundation because there was a need for a validated instrument that helps identify low literacy. This means that the development of the Literacy Screener constitutes an investment in the approach to the recognition, reduction and prevention of low literacy.
	<i>End</i>	8
		In the four pilot organisations, conducting the Literacy Screener could be implemented successfully in their regular work processes. The tool can be conducted quickly and easily and provides the organisations with a structured method for identifying low literacy. The organisations use this information to tailor their services to the client's needs. The pilot organisation's successes give leads for implementing the Literacy Screener on a larger scale in the Netherlands. The Reading and Writing Foundation regularly encountered resistance against working with the Literacy Screener when it was recruiting organisations for GOAL as well as outside the context of the pilot. For this reason, the Reading and Writing Foundation is in the process of developing variants of the Literacy Screener that are shorter and more applicable in organisations that have less elaborate work processes.
Overall service quality (holistic judgement)	<i>Start</i>	5
		<p>Successes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experiences from the previous Literacy for Life pilot programme (2012 and 2015) Several national action programmes provide a basis for dealing with low literacy at the local level, with the national action programme Count on Skills (<i>Tel mee met Taal</i>) parallel to GOAL. Involvement of the Reading and Writing Foundation, which operates both on a national and local level. <p>Room for improvement: people with low literacy generally do not register themselves for language lessons. Finding low literate people and then assisting them in a manner that is suitable for them is a complicated task. The national government seeks to develop a culture in which more social organisations recognise their role in finding and schooling people with low literacy.</p>
	<i>End</i>	6
		In order to find more people with low literacy, the Dutch GOAL pilot had the objective of finding new locations that can deploy the Literacy Screener: organisations where people come for a completely different reason and where the work activities are not primarily associated with low literacy. Within the GOAL pilot, four organisations (sites) were involved: a social service, an agency specialised in services related to labour participation and two prisons. All four organisations have successfully implemented the Literacy Screener into their

		<p>regular work processes and are convinced of the added value of the instrument. The pilot organisation's successes give leads for implementing the Literacy Screener on a larger scale in the Netherlands.</p> <p>Next to this success, the evaluation study has also revealed a major bottleneck: in general, the flow into language courses of clients with an unsatisfactory score on the Literacy Screener is still low. Finding more people with low literacy is only useful if this is succeeded by a good follow-up. This should be focused on more specifically in the Dutch approach to low literacy.</p>
Policy interest and/or support	Start	7
		<p>In general, the Netherlands has a strong policy focus on improving literacy and low basic skills. For example, this shows from the national action programme Count on Skills (2016-2018), in which three ministries together have invested 18 million euros to improve the Dutch approach to low literacy.</p> <p>In spite of the policy focus, too few people with low basic skills are reached. Extra focus and effort is needed to better address this problem.</p>
	End	7
		<p>The national government makes experiments possible to develop proven, effective methods to address low literacy. GOAL is an example of this kind of experiment. As mentioned, important lessons can be learned from the pilot for the further improvement and roll-out of the guidance process. In this regard, GOAL does not so much influence the extent to which the government is involved, but it does give an outline of the involvement. The lessons that can be drawn from this study should be the focus of future policy on improving literacy and low basic skills.</p>

10.5 Key implications

Implications for future programme development

Introducing and conducting the Literacy Screener is a smooth process in the four pilot organisations. Good examples in this respect can be used by other organisations for implementing the Literacy Screener in their work processes.

The follow-up is a major difficulty: in general, the inflow into language courses of clients with an unsatisfactory score on the Literacy Screener is still low. The low follow-up is partly due to the fact that the clients do not want to participate. The Literacy Screener provides an indication; not everybody will actually need guidance. Yet, especially in the municipality of Emmen and PI Lelystad, the current follow-up percentage is very low. We conclude that **the way in which the interview about the outcome is conducted has to be reconsidered carefully**, with respect to both the content (identifying the practical value for the client and linking up with this) and the person who conducts this interview (somebody with whom the client has a relationship of trust and who meets with the client on a regular basis).

Policy implications

Implications of policy

The national government makes experiments possible to develop proven, effective methods to address low literacy. GOAL is an example of this kind of experiment. As explained above (and in previous chapters), important lessons can be learned from the GOAL pilot, so that further improvement and dispersion of the guidance process is possible.

Implications for policy

In the approach to low literacy, the national government seeks to provide an easily accessible assortment that is tailored to the personal situation and needs of people with low literacy. A major finding of the current survey is that users of the social service in the municipality of Emmen are still insufficiently convinced of the added value of language courses. Therefore, closer attention should be paid to the inflow in a suitable language course. The findings suggest that time is a major difficulty. The pilot organisations have a different chief objective; the guidance process (low literacy screening and referral to a suitable language course) is an additional task. Designing a suitable follow-up requires time to identify the context and needs of the respective client. Organisations with a different chief objective often do not have this time. Additionally, the lack of time is another difficulty for the clients, manifested through: (a) lack of time to think about the possibility and added value of language courses; and (b) lack of time to take a language course. PIs have found that sufficient time may motivate clients to work on their development and take a language course. For the PIs, however, time can also be a major difficulty: the temporary nature of detention makes continuity of the follow-up difficult.

11 Conclusions: answering the evaluation questions

The GOAL evaluation was underpinned by five overarching research questions :

1. What programme processes and resources were developed? To what degree did programmes achieve their implementation aims across the five intervention strategies, and what factors at programme and policy level appeared to influence this?
2. What service user outcomes were achieved, for what groups, and to what degree?
3. What was the Return on Expectations? That is, to what degree were programme expectations met?
4. What programme-level factors were associated with the achievement of high service quality and/or positive service user outcomes?
5. What policy-level factors were associated with the achievement of high service quality and/or positive service user outcomes?

In this concluding chapter, we address each of these questions. We then highlight some key messages for policy and future programmes.

11.1 What programme processes and resources were developed? To what degree did programmes achieve their implementation aims across the five intervention strategies, and what factors at programme and policy level appeared to influence this?

The Dutch GOAL project focused on three out of five intervention strategies:

- **Tools** were developed to facilitate the delivery of guidance specifically to low-educated adults.
- **Outreach activities** were designed to bring guidance services to specific target groups within the low-educated population are being developed.
- Each country sought to provide **high-quality guidance services** with the aim of optimising individuals' learning and/or employment outcomes.

The Dutch guidance process consists of identifying more people with low literacy with the help of the Literacy Screener and referring them to a suitable language course. From this perspective, the GOAL pilot had the objective of finding new sites for screening with the Literacy Screener (organisations where people come for a completely different reason and where the work activities are not primarily associated with low literacy) and then referring the clients to a suitable language course. The GOAL pilot had the object of implementing the guidance process successfully within the regular working processes of these organisations, and the corresponding survey had to provide insight into the

successes, difficulties and results of these efforts, for both the organisations and the people with low literacy.

The Reading and Writing Foundation (*Stichting Lezen en Schrijven*), in spite of all efforts, **found it very difficult to get organisations to participate in the GOAL project**. This was mainly to do with the anticipated additional staff effort, the costs associated with this and the lack of direct added value for the organisation itself. Eventually, four (instead of the proposed eight) organisations participated in GOAL. These are organisations where people come for an entirely different (i.e. non-literacy-related) purpose: a social service, an agency specialised in services related to labour participation, and two prisons. In these four pilot organisations, the **Literacy Screener was implemented successfully into the regular work processes**. This was possible due to the personal guidance of the Reading and Writing Foundation, the use of a devoted person carrying the load in every organisation, and the fact that insight into the clients' language skills has added value for the services of the organisations: by conducting the Literacy Screener immediately upon the client's arrival, the organisations can tailor their services to the client's needs. The Literacy Screener is conducted by people who have time to do so (in many cases, unpaid workers: trainees or volunteers). They have found a good way to introduce the Literacy Screener to clients. In general, clients react well to the Literacy Screener and are cooperative.

Together, during the GOAL pilot, these four organisations **conducted 1,525 Literacy Screeners (far more than the intended 400)**, identifying 465 people with potential low literacy. Their successful implementation of the Literacy Screener gives the Reading and Writing Foundation leads to convince even more organisations of the importance of screening for low literacy and of implementing the Literacy Screener successfully on a larger scale in the Netherlands. The **follow-up, however, is less successful. More people with low literacy are identified, but the majority do not take any subsequent language courses**. Especially in the municipality of Emmen and PI Lelystad, this inflow into language courses is very low. On the one hand, this low follow-up is due to the **internal processes of organisations**. In the two organisations mentioned, the cooperation between various departments involved is not running smoothly (lack of a common vision and integrated approach). Additionally, the penitentiaries experience specific difficulties that are related to the special nature of the organisations: limited capacity (limited number of language volunteers available), complicated planning (e.g. fitting language courses into the busy schedules of the detainees and language volunteers) and difficulty of monitoring continuity (detainees are transferred to other departments, sometimes suddenly, or are released from prison).

On the other hand, the low follow-up is also related to the people with low literacy themselves. In the first place, **people whose native language is Dutch do not typically recognise or admit they have language problems**. On the one hand, a sense of shame has some influence here. On the other hand, some clients really do not recognise the added value or the practical importance of a language course. In the second place, **taking a language course takes time** which clients would rather spend on something else. For these clients, the opportunity cost of the language course is too high – i.e. they feel that taking the course would cause them to miss out on more than they would gain.

11.2 What service user outcomes were achieved, for what groups, and to what degree?

The client satisfaction survey was completed by 75 service users. A positive picture emerges from their responses: **the majority of the participants say they now know (somewhat) better what they need to learn, where they can take a language course, and what they can do next.** This is in line with the results from the data monitoring questionnaire which indicates the development of a personal action plan and being informed about what can be studied and where are the most frequently occurring results of the session. A small majority of the participants (six out of every ten) said that they are going to use the tips from the client manager.

However, this positive picture is not reflected in the follow-up. In practice, the percentage of service users flowing into a language course after an unsatisfactory score on the Literacy Screener is lower in the three organisations from which the client satisfaction data is obtained. The follow-up interviews with service users confirm this. Although the majority of the fourteen service users interviewed considered taking the Literacy Screener and the interview about the findings to be a positive experience, **most did not start with a language course** after that. They indicated they were too busy, or they did not recognise the use of it as they felt they could manage perfectly well without it.

Aksept is the only organisation where all participants with an unsatisfactory score on the Literacy Screener have gone on to start a language course. In Aksept, there are even participants with a satisfactory score on the Literacy Screener who have received additional guidance in this area. **According to the organisation, the language lessons lead to improved language skills, mainly because the language lessons are very practical.** In PI Achterhoek, 30 per cent of the prisoners with an unsatisfactory score on the Literacy Screener have gone on to start language lessons. The organisation has seen rapid advances made by clients during the one-to-one sessions with language volunteers. Although the flow into language lessons in the municipality of Emmen is virtually zero, **they do achieve success on a small scale with people for whom Dutch is not the native language.** Interviews with professionals and clients demonstrate that these people would like to take language lessons in order to improve their chances of (specific) work.

Although the number of interviews conducted is not enough to say anything substantial about this, the follow-up interviews and the interviews with programme staff members from Aksept and PI Achterhoek are a first indication that the accessibility of language courses (individual and taught by a volunteer) is appreciated. Quantitative data is not available from any of the four pilot organisations about the result of the language lessons in terms of improving the level.

11.3 What was the Return on Expectations? That is, to what degree were programme expectations met?

The Reading and Writing Foundation **had not expected beforehand that finding organisations that wanted to participate in GOAL would be so challenging.** GOAL focused on organisations in which sessions with clients are carried out with a completely different main objective and any screening for

low basic skills is carried out as an extra. For many of the organisations that are interesting for this research, the emphasis lies on **working efficiently**, partly because of past cost-cutting, and intake and other interviews are conducted according to **strict procedures and strict time limits**. Many organisations considered the effort that is necessary for conducting the Literacy Screener and the additional monitoring surveys to be too high. Due to this difficulty in recruiting organisations, only four (instead of eight) pilot organisations participated.

By participating in GOAL, the **pilot organisations hoped to get tools for improvement of their guidance services to clients with low literacy**. The main goal of the guidance that PI Lelystad and PI Achterhoek provide is to prevent recidivism. Low literacy hampers a positive, successful return into society. New detainees take the Literacy Screener immediately upon their arrival. If this yields an indication of low literacy, the respective client (in PI Achterhoek) will be referred to a language course, and his further reintegration programme will be adjusted to his poor language skills. In PI Lelystad, the referral to a language course is not yet as it was intended. The cooperation between the department in which the Literacy Screener is conducted and the department in which language courses are taught could be improved, for instance by involving the detainees' mentors as links in between.

For the municipality of Emmen, the motivation for participating in GOAL is the desire to reduce the high percentage of literacy difficulties in the region. The taking of the Literacy Screener is arranged by the training and diagnostic centre, where people applying for a social welfare benefit are obliged to undertake a basic training. The training and diagnosis centre hopes it can **use the Literacy Screener to make low literacy visible and discussable to make people more suitable for the labour market**. During the GOAL pilot, low literacy was made more visible: the Literacy Screener was conducted at the start of every basic training. However, making low literacy discussable and referral to a language course are not yet smooth processes. The municipality of Emmen is facing the basic difficulty that clients whose native language is Dutch do not recognise and/or admit the unsatisfactory score on the Literacy Screener and are not willing to take a language course. **The original idea was that client managers, who offer guidance to social service clients with regard to employment, would conduct the discussion about the Literacy Screener outcome. They see their clients on a regular basis and build a relationship of trust with them. In practice, however, client managers are not involved, because tackling low literacy has no priority for them.** Their objective is the outflow into work, and most social service clients can get a job for which their poor language skills are not directly an obstacle.

Aksept gives clients guidance to enable them to participate in the labour market (better). Aksept participated in GOAL, because they had often overestimated their clients. By participating, they hoped to gather knowledge and skills to recognise low literacy and embed these well in helping clients find a job. During the GOAL pilot, Aksept unfortunately had to deal with a very low influx of new clients. For this reason, they did not collect quantitative data, and they only used the Literacy Screener on a small scale.

All four pilot organisations think that the Literacy Screener is a good screening tool and want to continue to use it, because it offers added value for their services. The insight into the client's

language skills, which comes about by means of the Literacy Screener, helps the organisations tailor their services to their clients' needs. At PI Lelystad and in the municipality of Emmen, the inflow in language courses is still below standard.

The ministry of Education, Culture and Science and the Reading and Writing Foundation expect they will learn some important lessons from the evaluation study that is linked to the GOAL pilot. In Wave 1 of the evaluation, this study got going with difficulty, contrary to expectations. Partly thanks to the extra efforts of the Reading and Writing Foundation, the collection of data was improved in Wave 2. Nevertheless, a smaller total amount of data was collected than originally intended. Too little attention has been paid to the client's perspective in particular. Yet, the evaluation study offers valuable leads for improving and dispersing the guidance process further.

11.4 What programme-level factors were associated with the achievement of high service quality and/or positive service user outcomes?

The Literacy Screener can be conducted quickly and easily and does not require any extensive training. According to the pilot organisations, a workshop by the Reading and Writing Foundation on using the Literacy Screener and the experience of having taken the Literacy Screener themselves is all it takes for workers to get started with conducting the Literacy Screener. Since the **Literacy Screener is easy to use**, it can be conducted by unpaid workers. Only one of four pilot organisations uses (paid) professionals to conduct the Literacy Screener. Two organisations have the Literacy Screener conducted by trainees and the fourth organisation uses volunteers for the purpose. Due to the use of unpaid workers (volunteers or trainees), these organisations can embed the tool in their regular work processes. A key success factor for all four pilot organisations is the fact that the outcome of the Literacy Screener provides information that is relevant for the further set-up of their services.

Unpaid workers, in particular volunteers, play an essential role in the Dutch approach to low literacy – not only in providing language lessons, as well as in the screening of low literacy. Volunteers (and trainees) may appear less intimidating to clients, because the relationship is more equal. In addition, they often have more time to spend with clients. A disadvantage is that continuity is more easily jeopardised, as they often stay only temporarily. Their professionalism is also a point of attention.

11.5 What policy-level factors were associated with the achievement of high service quality and/or positive service user outcomes?

In the Netherlands, the policy toward people with low basis skills deviates from that of other European countries because **this policy is largely decentralised in the Netherlands**. The national government has the task of enabling other parties to address poor basic skills at a local level. For example, an important role is the specific transfer payments the national government gives municipalities to address low literacy and granting subsidies to the Dutch Reading and Writing Foundation. Additionally, the national government has set up the national action programme Count on Skills (Tel Mee met Taal), which offers a foundation for the cycle that needs to be set up at the local level.

People with low literacy, especially people whose native language is Dutch, do not apply for language courses. The first step in the Dutch approach to low literacy is therefore to find people with low literacy by having organisations with another chief objective than addressing poor language skills screen their clients for low literacy in a quick and easy way and have them referred to a suitable language course in the event of an indication of low literacy. The Reading and Writing Foundation has developed a validated tool (the Literacy Screener) to screen clients in a quick and easy way. Organisations are given personal and fairly intensive guidance from the Reading and Writing Foundation to implement this tool in the regular work process. During the pilot, the four organisations succeeded in implementing the Literacy Screener in this way, and together they conducted 1,525 Literacy Screeners (far more than the intended 400), identifying 465 people with potential low literacy.

The **decentralisation of educational funds has locally been a reason for the willingness to set up and improve the approach to low literacy** and collaboration. In comparison with other European countries, **the Netherlands can be regarded as a forerunner in the field of networking.**

Finally, the national government makes experiments possible to develop proven effective methods to address low literacy. GOAL is an example of this kind of experiment. Important lessons can be learned from the pilot for the further improvement and roll-out of the local approach to low literacy (screening in organisations with a different chief objective and referring clients to a suitable language course).

11.6 Implications and recommendations for future programme development

The Netherlands' approach to low literacy differs radically from the approaches of the other partner countries. **The diffused nature of the Dutch approach to low literacy means that the programme is particularly dependent on the establishment of strong partnerships**, with organisations who have a completely different main objective administering the Literacy Screener and then referring potential clients on to another organisation. Social organisations have to recognise their role in finding and schooling people with low literacy, despite the **administrative and other burdens** this creates for themselves. The pilot organisations recognise the importance of screening for low literacy, as information about low literacy also has added value for setting up their services. The use of unpaid workers (volunteers or trainees) in three of the four organisations leads to a reduction of the additional costs. In the Netherlands, there are no formal criteria for guidance practitioners and thus a great divergence in quality between various service points. An implication for programme development is that **steps should be taken to ensure that staff members are empathetic and have good (motivational) interview skills** in order to deal with the issue of shame and avoidance.

Introducing and conducting the Literacy Screener is a smooth process in the four pilot organisations. Good examples in this respect can be used by other organisations for implementing the Literacy Screener in their work processes. The follow-up is a major difficulty: in general, the inflow in language courses of clients with an unsatisfactory score on the Literacy Screener is still low. This is due to difficulties in the organisations and in the service users.

In two organisations, the internal cooperation between various departments/employees involved is not running smoothly. A **common vision and integrated approach with clear working arrangements** are essential for the design of a good follow-up. Additionally, the penitentiaries experience specific difficulties that are related to the special nature of the organisations: they have a limited number of available language volunteers, they have to try to include language courses in the detainees' schedule, and they have difficulty monitoring continuity (detainees are transferred to other departments, sometimes suddenly, or are released from prison). A solution that might make planning language courses easier is disconnecting education from the daily programme: an open hour instead of a regular educational programme for every department. Additionally, collaboration with local partners/networks outside the PI is important for continuing the language support that was started in the PI.

In addition to the difficulties organisations are facing, the low follow-up is partly due to the fact that the clients do not always want to opt for a language course. People with low literacy whose native language is Dutch, do not recognise or admit the unsatisfactory score on the Literacy Screener and are not open to taking a language course. Lack of time is another reason for clients for not being prepared to take a language course. At Aksept, the language lessons are integrated in the guidance that clients receive, which means that they do not require any extra time either for the organisation or for the clients. Sometimes, the language lessons are organised on the work floor. The availability of language lessons during working hours can make them more accessible for service users. This also applies to PIs where clients often prefer work to education. In addition, we've found differences between male and female respondents in the obstacles that have stopped them from improving their education or career up till now. Too busy taking care of family, lack of confidence and other personal reasons were more often mentioned by female respondents, whereas the obstacle of low main language proficiency was significantly more often mentioned by male respondents. These gender related differences are important to address when referring clients to a language course.

In the context of the low follow-up figures, the interview about the result of the Literacy Screener is essential. The follow-up can perhaps be improved by having this interview conducted by someone who sees the client more often and who has built a relationship of trust with the client (e.g. the mentors in the PIs and the client managers in the municipality of Emmen). This is important not only because of the feelings of shame which often accompany low literacy, but also because such a person is better able to judge how the language lessons have practical added value for the client. Furthermore, such a person has the opportunity to emphasise the importance of language lessons on a frequent basis (and the client does not need to make an immediate decision).

In practise, the pilot organisations do not register whether an improvement in the level takes place. Thought needs to be given, in consultation with the organisations, about **how progress with the language lessons can best be registered and made visible.**

11.7 Policy implications and recommendations

Implications of policy

An important aspect of tackling low literacy in the Netherlands is finding new sites which can deploy the Literacy Screener: organisations in which people enter for a completely different reason and where the work activities are not primarily associated with low literacy. On the basis of the four organisations that have participated in the Dutch GOAL project, it is clear that **the Literacy Screener can be used well in various types of organisations**. The common factor (and an important condition for the successful use of the instrument) is that the **Literacy Screener provides useful information for the organisations' own work processes**. Besides, the personal and intensive **guidance of the Reading and Writing Foundation appeared necessary for a successful implementation** of the Literacy Screener.

On the one hand, the involvement of new sites is a strength, because more people with low literacy will be discovered (the pilot organisations are a good example of this). On the other hand, the character of the new sites also causes difficulties, because people with a different goal and mindset come into the organisation and are not necessarily motivated to address their identified language problem. What is more, the object and vision of the organisations are initially not focused on addressing low literacy. It is a **challenge to create a common vision and responsibility throughout the organisation** (not only in the department where the Literacy Screener is conducted) about the use of the Literacy Screener and the approach to low literacy.

In the Netherlands, no formal criteria have been established for the programme staff members who perform the Literacy Screener and who conduct the discussion about the outcome. In practice, these parts of the Dutch intervention are performed by different people – in the pilot organisation often by unpaid workers (volunteers or trainees). The programme staff members need to have the required (social and interview) skills and meet the basic qualifications. This calls for good **support and coordination of the process by a regular person (who carries the load)**. This person can also be given the responsibility for a proper transfer of tasks between varying unpaid workers, so that the quality and continuity of the guidance process are monitored.

The interview about the outcomes of the Literacy Screener is sometimes conducted by persons who meet the client only once. For a good follow-up, it would perhaps be more beneficial if the discussion about the outcome of the Literacy Screener is assigned to a person who the client sees more often and with whom a relationship of trust has been built up. Furthermore, the pitfall of single contact is that the responsibility for the subsequent steps is lost with the ending of the contact.

In the Dutch approach to low literacy, cooperation in and between organisations is crucial. The decentralisation of educational funds to municipalities has locally been a reason for the willingness to set up and improve the approach and collaboration. In comparison with other European countries, the Netherlands can be regarded as a forerunner in the field of networking. **The set-up with language points as a basis of the network has proven to be successful.**

Implications and recommendations for policy

In the context of the national action programme Count on Skills (Tel Mee met Taal), the national government has expressed the wish that ‘more social organisations recognise their role in finding and schooling people with low literacy and mutually collaborate well.’ Finding people with low literacy by means of the Literacy Screener is a smooth process in the four organisations that have participated in GOAL. They clearly recognise the added value of screening. Finding people with low literacy, however, is only useful if this is succeeded by a good follow-up. This evaluation study shows that this is often an obstacle and that this should be focused on more specifically in the Dutch approach to low literacy. The Reading and Writing Foundation has a prominent role in this respect. Their support remains important after the Literacy Screener has been implemented successfully, especially to make strict working arrangements about the follow-up in and between organisations. An important question that needs to be answered is **what must be asked of organisations in order to make the follow-up a success.**

The organisations that are assigned a role in finding persons with low literacy are pursuing a different goal in their daily practice. The **national government should create more awareness among organisations and individuals of the (long-term) importance of addressing low literacy.** A social service, for instance, should **focus on sustainable labour participation instead of on the direct outflow to any available employment.**

People with low literacy often also use a short-term vision. The national government is aware of the big challenge of reaching and schooling people with low literacy. The Dutch approach is therefore focused on creating an easily accessible range of educational opportunities that are tailored to the personal situation and needs of people with low literacy. A major finding of the current study is that service **users (especially from the social service in the municipality of Emmen) are still insufficiently convinced of the added value of language courses.** Together with the organisations, the parties involved should consider how obstacles can be overcome and how people with low literacy can be helped to recognise the personal and practical added value of developing their language skills. Creating a tailor-made range of educational opportunities that allows for this personal and practical added value requires time and a programme staff member who has a relationship (of trust) with the client.

Clients of the social service of the municipality of Emmen mentioned lack of time as a reason for not taking a language course. PIs have the experience that sufficient time may motivate clients to work on their development and take a language course. For clients of the social service, it might help to involve employers in language schooling: in the context of corporate social responsibility, they could offer people with low literacy the opportunity to follow a language course during working hours. Aksept successfully uses this working method in its work processes.