

Belgium partnership strengthens the international Shared Reading movement

Written by Rachael Norris, 25th February 2020

The Reader has partnered with Belgium-based Het Lezerscollectief to support the growth of Shared Reading in Belgium and the Netherlands.

The first Shared Reading training courses in Belgium took place in 2013. Since then, Het Lezerscollectief - inspired by The Reader's work in the UK - has been developing Dutch-language Shared Reading projects in Flanders.

The new partnership makes the long-standing friendship between the two organisations official and signals their commitment to building the international Shared Reading movement around a set of common mission and values.

Under the new agreement, The Reader and Het Lezerscollectief will deepen their working relationship and share their learning, expertise and quality practice. Het Lezerscollectief will lead on the development of Shared Reading projects in the region of Flanders and in the Netherlands, with the support of The Reader and local partners.

Dirk Terryn, co-founder Jan Raes and a team from Het Lezerscollectief are currently preparing to visit the International Centre for Shared Reading at Calderstones in March for a field trip. During the visit, which is being recorded as part of a Dutch-language film to promote Shared Reading, Jane Davis, The Reader's Director and Founder will be formally welcomed on to the Het Lezerscollectief Board of Trustees.

In May, Jane will reciprocate the visit with a trip to Affligem in Belgium for the launch of a new anthology *Grenzeloos (Boundless)*. Jane will also attend a Shared Reading group for people living with cancer and hear about the results of a study by the University of Ghent which explores Shared Reading's impact.

Dirk Terryn from Het Lezerscollectief, said: "We're very glad that our 'letter of friendship' has now evolved into a partnership that will help us to learn from each other, share experiences, develop quality practice and be fully transparent. I'd like to thank chair and co-founder Erik Van Acker for his help in getting our dream on paper."

Jane Davis, The Reader, said: 'The Reader and Het Lezerscollectief have had a long, happy and mutually beneficial relationship for the last seven years. Having made many visits to our friends in Belgium, I am personally delighted that we have been able to cement our friendship, and I look forward to our shared future.'

"We have relationships with partners in many countries, but it feels particularly fitting that the first formalisation of this kind should be with Het Lezerscollectief, who have worked so hard to establish the mutual ground on which we now stand. It's also great to be cementing a European partnership at this particular point in UK history."