

France - country profile

1 General background and who's who. Four organisations — Enssib (École nationale supérieure des sciences de l'information et des bibliothèques), Cfibd (Comité français international pour les bibliothèques et la documentation), Bpi (Bibliothèque Publique d'Information) and ABF (Association des bibliothécaires de France) — have set up a Working Group in charge of monitoring the follow up to the UN 2030 Agenda in French libraries. These four organisations play an active role in mobilising libraries around SDGs and have created a joint website where library experiences are listed in a database and new activities are announced. In addition, ABF has created some SDG-related specific groups, such as Accessibib, Livre vert, Legothèque, Livr'Exil.

In general, SDGs are implemented in a convincing and active way; nevertheless, in many cases activities are still lagging behind, in spite of widespread awareness. Academic libraries seems to be more advanced than public libraries in this regard.

2 SDG priorities and policies in French libraries. There is widespread consensus among all entities being involved in SDG activities that they should mainly concern the following:

- debates on SDGs with citizens,
- projects in co-creation with partners/citizens (digital inclusion; digital citizenship).

The French Library Association has set up a whole apparatus which will draft documents in relation to SDG specific areas. These documents are produced, or will be produced by Committees such as Livr'exil, with a specific focus on welcoming migrants in libraries, Accessibilités, with a focus on the disabled, hospitals, illiteracy and prisons, Légothèque, with a focus on people's empowerment to access collections, spaces and services.

The Working Group in charge of monitoring the follow up to the UN 2030 Agenda in French libraries considers that priority SDGs for French libraries are:

- SDG 1. No Poverty: Access to basic human needs of health, education, sanitation,
- SDG 4. Quality Education: Inclusive education to enable upward social mobility and end poverty,
- SDG 5. Gender Equality: Education regardless of gender, advancement of equality laws, fairer representation of women,
- SDG 10. Reduced Inequalities: Reducing income and other inequalities, within and between countries,
- SDG 13. Climate Action: Regulating and reducing emissions and promoting renewable energy,
- SDG 15. Life on Land: Reversing man-made deforestation and desertification to sustain all life on earth.

3 SDG-oriented projects

1. Project one Migrants in libraries — Bibliothèques Sans Frontières (SDG 1, 2, 3, 4, 8).

How to welcome someone who does not speak French in a library? What resources can be offered on access to rights? How do you register a person having no administrative record? How can you promote cultural diversity by adapting the existing resources and actions of your library?

Faced with the many questions of librarians, in 2018 Bibliothèques Sans Frontières produced a dedicated online training course, “Welcoming people with migration in libraries”. The result of a collaboration with librarians, associations and researchers, the training course is now available on the BSF Campus platform, which offers eight free and certifying training courses for French-speaking library stakeholders.¹

2. **ENSSIB guide to implementing SDG’s in libraries (SDG 9, 10, 11, 12).** The role of research, public and school libraries in the context of climate change is important, not only for the activities they can promote, but also in the advocacy they can raise with local elected officials and decision-makers. Climate change affects social, economic and ecological issues. This resource site, created by the Enssib library and the Enssib Sustainable Development working group, aims to give you access to a selection of documents on the 17 fields of global change that our societies are experiencing today, so that readers can draw on them for information and inspiration to implement their institutional sustainable development strategy.²
3. **Many projects of libraries in prison (SDG 4, 8).** For people in custody, the library is a right and an asset for rehabilitation. It is the duty of the public authorities to make this service available to them in viable conditions of use. Citizens, even when detained, continue to be human beings deserving of respect. They have the right to read, a right that is not limited by a court decision or the internal rules of an institution, including in the case of solitary confinement, disciplinary sanction or psychiatric internment. It is necessary and legitimate that the public authorities really ensure the satisfaction of this right. The media library must be able to promote a taste for leisure and entertainment among this population and give them the opportunity to carry out an important recreational activity.³
4. **One example of inclusive library open to disabled people (SDG 8, 10).** The Marguerite Duras and Marguerite Yourcenar media libraries in Paris, just as no few other libraries in France, offer a “Lire autrement” (Reading differently) space for the visually impaired. The librarians offer you a personalised welcome: they are available to guide you and advise you on what to find in library stacks. On request, they can accompany you from the metro station or bus stop to the library.⁴
5. **Gender equality, a specific collection and space in Olympe de Gouge in Strasbourg (SDG 5).** The City of Strasbourg is committed to promoting equality between women and men in all its public policies. One area of intervention is information and awareness-raising of the public and professionals in order to reduce gender stereotypes and facilitate a change in behaviours.

The desire to make documentation and information more accessible and to support documentary research on the subject of gender has motivated the creation of a resource space on gender equality open to all, where it is easier to meet with women’s and feminist associations in the vicinity. The city is honouring more women with street names and public buildings in their honour; therefore the media library was designated with the name of Olympe de Gouges, as centre of excellence on the theme of equality.⁵

¹ <https://www.bibliosansfrontieres.org/2021/02/05/comment-mieux-accueillir-les-publics-migrants-dans-les-bibliotheques>

² <https://enssib.libguides.com/c.php?g=682683>

³ <https://www.abf.asso.fr/4/107/257/ABF/la-bibliotheque-de-prison-un-droit-pour-les-personnes-detenues>

⁴ https://bibliotheques.paris.fr/poles-deficients-visuels.aspx?_lg=fr-FR

⁵ <https://www.strasbourg.eu/documents/976405/1439068/0/36e98635-5292-b100-ee98-b167e8160910>



4 Funding sources and evaluation. Normally, SDG-oriented library projects are evaluated in accordance to standard library procedures and only in relation to building aspects. SDG official indicators (UN, UNESCO, Eurostat) are difficult to apply because they are not connected with library activities; nevertheless, academic libraries seem less reluctant to use them.

The bulk of SDG-oriented activities is funded through ordinary library budget generated from local Councils and Non-Governmental Organisations normally active in the cultural field. Nevertheless, EU Structural and Investment Funds have been used in the past and there is serious commitment to use them in the near future. Tools set up by EBLIDA and the results of the Survey will be used to enhance SDG-oriented library policies in France.