



European Bureau
of Library,
Information and
Documentation Associations

Libraries and literacy

An EBLIDA statement

The Hague, 17 February 2015. **The European Bureau of Library, Information and Documentation Associations (EBLIDA) calls on the European Commission to acknowledge the role of libraries in promoting literacy.**



Libraries are gateways to recorded human knowledge. Work promoting literacy is important to European libraries. It fits well into the social inclusion agenda that is a key motivator for many library services. It forms part of a broader set of literacies that libraries are keen to facilitate including digital literacy and information literacy, all important living skills of the modern world. It is set within a context of libraries providing individuals and communities with access to ideas, information and works of imagination, and supporting and enriching all aspects of human life, from work to learning, citizenship to leisure and health to creativity. In these ways libraries in Europe underpin the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy by enabling “smart, sustainable and inclusive growth”¹

Yet the key to unlocking these library resources is ***literacy***.

The European Literacy Policy Network

The low skilled, especially those with literacy problems, have lost out badly in the recession and as the digital world becomes ever more pervasive their exclusion from society risks becoming more deeply embedded.

To tackle this issue, the European Commission is funding a two year project, ELINET² (European Literacy Policy Network). As a member of ELINET, EBLIDA aims to raise the profile of literacy work and sharpen its impact especially in libraries. ELINET is very timely since ***never before has literacy been so important to the well-being of individuals, communities or nations.***

¹ See importance of basic skills in Europe 2020, the strategic growth strategy.
http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/school/math_en.htm

² ELINET is a two year project funded by the EU and bringing together 79 interested organisations from 29 European countries.

Literacy for all – European Library network

Across Europe Libraries of all types – school, public, college and others - are already taking steps to tackle low literacy levels and nurture reading. They do this from the youngest of ages – parents are encouraged to share books with their babies and toddlers – to older people who may have hidden their disability for years. They reach out to marginalised communities where literacy levels may be lowest including prisons or deprived neighbourhoods. They work in close partnership with other agencies to bring together the skills and resources necessary to support and develop the reading ability of those who have been left behind.

Libraries must be seen as an essential part of literacy development programmes. It is EBLIDA's task, as the voice of libraries in Europe and the only European library partner involved in ELINET, to champion the role of libraries and help harness their power in support of literacy development.

Therefore EBLIDA will:

- **Actively participate in ELINET**
- **Provide strong support to Literacy for All – the European Library Network**
- **Share good practices across the library network in Europe**
- **Raise awareness amongst MEPs**
- **Meet and talk to European Union and Council of Europe officials about the role of libraries in literacy development**

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Libraries in the EU
70000 structures
215000⁺ staff
Ready to help

About EBLIDA

The European Bureau of Library, Information and Documentation Associations (EBLIDA) is an independent umbrella association of library, information, documentation and archive associations and institutions in Europe representing 100+ members in all EU member states and other European countries, as well as by extension 70.000 libraries in Europe.

EGCIS - The Expert Group on Culture and Information Society (EGCIS) is EBLIDA's expert group which aims to maintain a good general awareness of European cultural and information society issues, make proposals and formulate position statements for the EBLIDA Executive Committee to address the European institutions regarding cultural issues so as to improve the position of libraries and archives in relation to this area and co-operate and work with other organizations and institutions for these purposes.

Press contact

Vincent Bonnet Director EBLIDA European Bureau of Library, Information and Documentation Associations Prins Willem-Alexanderhof 5 2595 BE The Hague The Netherlands	Tel: +31 70 31 40 137 Mob: +316 31 96 55 11 Vincent.bonnet@eblida.org www.eblida.org
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