1. Editorial, by Ton van Vlimmeren

On the northern hemisphere the longest day has already passed. Summer is abundant in many countries. At the same time, we see everywhere the worrying consequences of climate change. A reason for EBLIDA to continue to inform libraries about the Sustainable Development Goals, create awareness and stimulate action. We do this in our contributions to library conferences in many countries, with the project Resourcing Libraries EU (RL:EU) we execute together with Public Libraries 2030, engaging in other projects, improving the way we communicate on our website and creating an instrument for libraries to connect. But more about that tool in September when it will be launched.

The work at hand continues. After the approval by the ministers of culture of the Council of Europe of the Recommendations for Library legislation these are now translated into different languages to ensure their accessibility to as many as possible and to make implementation easier.

Also, the process to create concrete actions based on the EU Workplan for Culture 2023-2026 continues. You can read more about this further on in this Newsletter.

I wish everyone a great summer with time to relax from work and energise for the new challenges and great results to come after we are back to work.

Yours sincerely,
Ton van Vlimmeren
EBLIDA President

2. Which indicators for library advocacy?

A response to Bok og Bibliotek (and NAPLE) by Giuseppe Vitiello

“That, Sir, is the good of counting. It brings everything to a certainty which before floated in the mind indefinitely”

(Samuel Johnson)

The same can be said for library advocacy. You can plea for libraries through stories (which ones? why some stories rather than others?) or best practices (based on which best criteria?). But there is nothing more effective than data: a graph or a table to show evidence about an argument and gain support for the library cause among politicians and policy-makers.

Comparative figures in the library world conjure up the IFLA Library Map of the World. A cursory look at this tool is little short of disappointing. Quantitative data also including library expenditure only concern a very limited number of European countries; they are non-homogeneous, related to different years and do not lend themselves to dynamic inference. What is defective is the inflow process and not the quality of the tool; we are very much into what I would call the NINO effect: Nothing In, Nothing Out.
Hageberg demonstrates that Germany is the leading country in Europe in terms of library expenditure (930 million euro in 2021 spent on public libraries). Nevertheless, when expenditure is broken down by number of inhabitants, the quartet of Nordic countries is first in the ranking with Finland taking the lead and Denmark closely following (Source: Arne Olav Hageberg, 1 February 2023).

We should be grateful to Bok og Bibliotek (and NAPLE) for having raised issues that are central to library policy and library advocacy: what is the right level of library expenditure in a country? Should there be a ceiling under which any service level agreement cannot be successfully implemented?

Nevertheless, the Bog og Bibliotek (and NAPLE) perspective is very much on the side of the club of riches. It may be relatively accurate to compare public libraries in Germany and Finland, since their GDPs is almost equivalent (in 2021, €45,283 per capita in Finland, €40,594 in Germany, -11%). But it is unfair to compare library expenditure in Finland with that of Croatia, whose GDP is three times lower (€15,015 per capita in 2021). Therefore, more balanced figures imply an additional step consisting of expressing library expenditure per inhabitant as a ratio of GDP per capita (or library expenditure / GDP, which is the same) (Sources: Arne Olav Hageberg, 1 February 2023 and Focus economics, 2021).

In this case, Germany still comes last in the ranking, although its level of expenditure is "only" five times lower than that in Finland. Strikingly enough, some relatively low-income Eastern European countries (Croatia, Estonia, Slovenia) invest considerably in libraries, more than, or at least as much as, prosperous Nordic countries.

Library expenditure traditionally falls into the category of cultural expenditure. Culture itself is hard to define, to the point that Eurostat provides for two sets of data for cultural statistics: “Government expenditure on recreation, culture and religion” (broader scope), and “Government expenditure on cultural, broadcasting and publishing services” (narrower scope). Within the scope of cultural services (narrower), the incidence of library expenditure can be measured as follows. (Sources: Arne Olav Hageberg and https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Government_expenditure_on_cultural,_broadcasting_and_publishing_services&oldid=593681#General_government_expenditure_on_cultural_services%2C_broadcasting_and_publishing_services)

This is still another perspective, very much linked with the idea of cultural policy and what is worth being considered a priority in terms of national cultural development. In this case, Ireland – a country which is in the mid or low levels of the scale in previous graphs – scores high together with Finland. In other countries, state or local investment on culture may be dominated by the preservation of the cultural heritage (in all likelihood, in Estonia, Czechia and Croatia) or the development of live performance (opera and theatres, very likely in Norway).

Is that all? Library services themselves can be part of a very narrow concept of library (for instance, a library only supplying books to users) or of an extended concept of library (for instance, libraries delivering social services to the communities they serve, libraries as third place). A possible indicator would be to divide library expenditure into three items: personnel costs, library expenditure on acquisitions, library expenditure on other activities. The variable nature of this percentage for each country may be an indicator describing the social dimension of libraries in Europe.

Are these calculations too complex? For advocacy purposes, but also for European projects, setting up an appropriate set of indicators is fundamental. The publishing sector releases reports every year with precise figures on national turnovers, range of activities and number of employees – this partly explains the success of their advocacy. Libraries, too, need to define their activities in qualitative and quantitative terms to show politicians and policy-makers the size of their operations, from different perspectives, and the width of regional disparities.

This is a step to be undertaken in collaboration with policy-makers themselves, sociologists and statisticians. Library policy is too important to be left in the hands of librarians only.
In previous EBLIDA Newsletters (December 2023, February 2023, March 2023, May 2023) we have informed our readers about the Library priority action within the EU Work Plan for Culture 2023-2026, also making reference to the OMC (Open Methods of Coordination) methodology. In this Newsletter we will try to define which strategy EBLIDA could undertake in relation to the EU Library action.

What is it then, exactly? Let’s ask official EU sources.

The OMC provides a new framework for cooperation between the EU countries, with EU countries being evaluated by one another (peer pressure) and the Commission playing the role of surveillance.

The OMC is principally based on:

- jointly identifying and defining objectives to be achieved (adopted by the Council);
- jointly established measuring instruments (statistics, indicators, guidelines);
- benchmarking, i.e. comparison of EU countries’ performance and the exchange of best practices (monitored by the Commission).

At the end of 2022, the European Council defined objectives and target outputs: promoting and strengthening libraries; identifying different dimensions and areas with potential, and finding funding lines under EU programmes; bringing together policy makers and library professionals; explore possibilities for training and further activities for professionals.

From 2024 to 2026, some 30-40 delegates designated by the 27 EU Member States will operate on the basis of a mandate now being defined by the European Commission and EU Member States. Among them, 8-10 experts will be in charge of drafting a report. What about money? There is no budget, or very little, to be spent on meetings and ad hoc investigations, if the case. And there is very likely no budget for projects.

The Library Priority Action is the only current European Commission action specifically designed for libraries. Should EBLIDA mobilise its network of members, Expert Groups, tools and assets in order to ensure that the Library Action does not result in a band-aid report with no long-lasting effects on the library sector? My answer is yes, along the following six lines.

1. Measuring instruments and benchmarking: statistics and indicators

Lithuania hosted a NATO Summit on 11-12 July 2023. On that occasion, Jens Stoltenberg, NATO SG, urged the 31 NATO countries to commit to spending at least 2 percent of their gross domestic product on defence.

The meeting of governmental experts engaged in the OMC exercise is only a pale imitation of a summit; nevertheless, it represents the most authoritative professional / political gathering European libraries may aspire to. Based on the figures illustrated in the previous article (Which indicators for library advocacy? A response to Bok og Bibliotek (and NAPLE), would for instance a figure close to one per thousand of the GDP of a country be a realistic objective for library expenditure? If experts came to this conclusion, an important message would be transmitted to governments. EBLIDA can make its know-how available for this objective.

2. Target output: Funding lines under EU programmes

European Union funding can be divided into two categories: indirectly managed funding which is delegated to Member States (European Structural and Investment Funds) and directly managed funding (EC programmes such as Creative Europe, Erasmus+, etc.). In an intergovernmental environment, experts do not have any say about directly managed funds. They can instead make proposals to their governments about indirectly managed funds.

Museums benefit from a special line within ESIF whose title is “Culture and tourism”. Could libraries be the beneficiaries of a special line within ESIF 2028-2035 whose title might be “Culture and Social Inclusion”, or “Culture and SDGs”? This proposal is ambitious, but worth pursuing and perfectly fitting the OMC intergovernmental context. EBLIDA should advocate for it.

3. Measuring instruments: Guidelines

There is no need for OMC experts to reinvent the wheel because Guidelines already exist: the 2023 EBLIDA Guidelines included in the Council of Europe Recommendation on Library Legislation and Policy in Europe. This Recommendation is a political document, signed by 46 members states of the Council of Europe, half of them also being EU countries. Article 167 of the Lisbon Treaty mandates the European Union to collaborate with the Council of Europe in the field of culture and the 2007 Memorandum of Understanding details the subfields where both organisations should work together. In the Recommendation, libraries have “a crucial role to play as community hubs striving towards a democratic, cohesive, inclusive and equitable society”.

The Council of Europe Recommendation did not come out of the blue; its roots are to be found in Nordic legislation where libraries are “meeting places”. OMC experts could easily suggest the adoption of the Council of Europe Recommendation in all states. OMC experts could also propose the Recommendation be a pre-requisite for library-oriented projects receiving grants from the European Union. EBLIDA is in the best position to advocate for it.

4. Benchmarking and areas with potential - SDGs as a comprehensive library framework

A strong point of the Council of Europe Recommendation is the new framework for library operations: the European Agenda 2030 on sustainable development (and no longer the book and information chains as in the past 2000 Guidelines). SDGs represent the most comprehensive agenda for library operations: book activities mainly fall into the scope of SDG 4; democracy-oriented library projects are normally an SDG 16 target; the social and environmental dimensions of libraries are covered by SDGs 10/11 and SDGs 13/14.

The Agenda 2030 is also a concrete umbrella, since it comes together with targets and indicators. EBLIDA should raise the SDG issue at OMC level in such a way that library governance could be enlarged to levels of administration (in particular social departments) other than strictly cultural. With its reports, tools and strategic action, EBLIDA can well put emphasis on this governance shift.

5. Benchmarking: - Equal access to content through e-lending

EBLIDA’s Handbook of Comparative E-lending Policies in Europe is unanimously acknowledged as a landmark in e-lending development. EBLIDA did not opt for the legal / Controlled Digital Lending perspective, promoted by the IFLA Knowledge Rights 21 project. EBLIDA has taken a socio-economic perspective and is pleading for library control, or public control, of the platforms aggregating content for e-lending purposes.

If these aggregation platforms stay under public control, there are more chances that paid-for content is associated with local, open access content in order to contrast the monetisation of spontaneously or institutionally produced community content. EBLIDA should continue its work on e-lending through the maintenance of statistics and indicators, as well as monitoring library market developments.

6. Benchmarking as exchange of best practices: E-PANEMA

Library work needs not only policy and planning, but also developments. These developments can easily be financed by European programmes. EBLIDA is about to launch the successor of the EBLIDA Matrix: E-PANEMA (the Eblida PArtNErship MAtching tool).
EBLIDA should make E-PANEMA and its resources available to OMC experts.

We are suggesting these six lines of action to EBLIDA bodies and EBLIDA members as food for thought and a commitment that the EBLIDA Secretariat is able to successfully link its work to the Library priority action within the EU Work Plan for Culture 2023-2026.

4. Announcing four translations of the Council of Europe Recommendation on Library Legislation and Policy

The Council of Europe / EBLIDA Recommendation on Library Legislation and Policy in Europe continues to make its mark in the European library world – after its approval by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 5 April, the Recommendation is being translated into four European languages for easier access and implementation in the respective countries.

The Portuguese translation is being developed in partnership with the Direção-Geral do Livro e das Bibliotecas (Directorate-General for Books, Archives and Libraries), while the Swedish translation is being led by the National Library of Sweden.

In Croatia, Hrvatsko Knjiznicarsko Društvo (the Croatian Library Association) is leading the translation, while in Slovenia this work is being carried out by Zveza Bibliotekarskih Drutev Slovenije (the Union of Library Associations of Slovenia).

In fact, according to the Expert Group which led the development of the Recommendation, EBLIDA's LIBLEG, the translation of the Recommendation is only one of the recommended next steps for the successful implementation of this instrument.

Other steps include:

1. ensuring coherence between rules relating to library legislation and rules applied in other associated fields, together with their related policies;
2. enlarging the scope of traditional rules for libraries, to take into account all the different issues relevant for library legislation and policy;
3. striking a balance between the interests of individuals and corporate bodies, both public and private;
4. while ensuring that library legislation takes account of the different circumstances and interests of member States, to be effective:
   o adopt adequate legislative or other policy measures that are in line with the principles outlined in this recommendation and the appended guidelines, and bring existing legislation into line with the same principles;
   o translate this recommendation and the associated Council of Europe/EBLIDA Guidelines on Library Legislation and Policy in Europe into their respective official languages and disseminate them as widely as possible to the relevant bodies and persons.

5. RL:EU: next local events

The “RL:EU - connecting libraries to EU resources” project is underway with a series of successful local events, webinars and coaching sessions – and more to come! A total of four local events are planned for this summer and autumn:

- On 31 August 2023, you can find us in Brussels, Belgium, for a local event in the context of the ADELE Learning and Training Week.
- As Autumn starts, we may have a RL:EU local event in Toledo, Spain (to be confirmed).
- October will also be a fruitful month, with one local event in the context of the Croatian Conference on Public Libraries (11-14 October 2023, local event date to be announced), and another shortly after, on 19 October 2023, in Oostende, Belgium, in the context of Informatie aan Zee.

Would you like to host a RL:EU local event in your own community?

Contact us using our website! Here you will also find the latest news about the project and upcoming events.

We hope to see you there!

6. The Spanish public library conference under EU Presidency
(Pamplona, 18-20 October 2023)
by Diego Gracia

The 11th National Conference of Public Libraries will take place in Pamplona from the 18th to the 20th of October 2023, under the topic “Democracy, reading and the right to information”.

This year we’d like to show videos of Best Practice from outside Spain, to see what libraries in other European countries are doing in relation with the topic of the Conference.

You can check all the information about how to submit proposals here: Best Practices 11th Congress on Public Libraries.
7. SLA Sections Conference 2023
by Damjana Vovk
The Slovenian Library Association's Conference of SLA sections 2023 will take place from 20 to 22 September 2023 in a hybrid format – at IZUM (Maribor) and online.

The topic is “Libraries' Proactive Activities (2): successes, experiences and dilemmas in practice.”

At the SLA 2022 Congress the main focus was around the discussion about the theoretical aspects of proactive action, so this year, the SLA Sections Conference would like to shed light on proactivity in libraries from a different, experiential perspective - by discussing the best examples of proactive action in libraries in practice.

We are interested in how different types of libraries have responded to the many micro and macro phenomena that are changing society, the needs of users and the expectations of the communities in which they operate, as well as the collective itself. Have libraries perceived them and how are they monitoring them? What changes do librarians expect to see in the future that might affect the functioning of libraries? Are they consciously proactive or is it part of their daily routine?

At the Conference we are expecting to hear about libraries experiences, answers, constructive discussions and perspectives on how to be proactive.

Experts will discuss topics central to libraries such as their engagement in the environment, sustainability, democracy, active citizenship, and digital transformation.

Giuseppe Vitiello, EBLIDA’s Director, will present on the topic *EBLIDA: Recommendation on Library Legislation and Policy in Europe*.

You can register and find more information about the Conference, rates, and accommodation recommendations on the Conference website.

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8. 14th Croatian Conference on Public Libraries
by Dunja Marija Gabriel (Library Advisor for Public Libraries at National and University Library in Zagreb)
Jasenka Pleško (President of the Croatian Library Association)

The 14th Croatian Conference on Public Libraries which will take place on October 11-14, 2023 at the University of Dubrovnik (Dubrovnik Student Center) is organized by the National and University Library in Zagreb with the support of the Croatian Ministry of Culture and Media.

The co-organisers of the Conference are the Croatian Library Association, Dubrovnik Libraries – Public Library Grad and Dubrovnik Library Association.

Partners in the program of the Conference are the National and University Library in Ljubljana, the Slovenian Library Association, and the Slovenian Public Libraries Association.

The central theme of the Conference is *Public libraries – funding sources for sustainable development*, and the conference programme will address with a number of subthemes:

- the role and value of public libraries,
- the status, funding and funding models of public libraries,
- lobbying for libraries and financing,
- funding programmes for sustainable development through green and digital transition,
- the development of libraries as places of social and digital inclusion, as laid out in the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) 2021-2027 programme, ERASMUS+ programmes and Desk Creative Europe funding opportunities for libraries.

We expect participation of distinguished guests from EBLIDA, NAPLE Forum and IFLA Europe Regional Division, as well as national and regional authorities responsible for EU funds.

Also, the translation of the Recommendation CM/Rec(2023)3 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on library legislation and policy in Europe into Croatian will be presented at the conference.

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9. Libraries of Today 2023 - the largest library conference in the Czech Republic
by Veronika Chruščová (The Czech Republic Libraries Association)

The National Annual Conference of The Czech Republic Libraries Association will be held from 12 to 14 September and is open to international participants.

The conference is called *Libraries of Today and this year’s subtitle is Beyond the Threshold of Change*.

Simultaneous interpretation into English is available for participants in the opening session (12 September), when we will have a keynote by colleagues from Kenya on the Book Bunk project and also a lecture by Ulrike Kraß from Germany. On the second day there will be interpreted workshops by international guests as well as the Young and Punk sessions. There will also be time for a tour of the libraries.

The conference will be held in Olomouc, which is a beautiful historical city, rich in monuments, but also with nice cafes and pubs.

You can look forward to the programme, but also to friendly and active colleagues from the Czech Republic who will be happy to work with you and develop international relations.

Registration [here](#).

We are looking forward of your visit.

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10. Save the date – Day of European Authors – 25 March 2024
The next and second edition of the Day of European Authors will take place on 25 March 2024 with the same objectives: encouraging reading – in particular among young people - and promoting the linguistic diversity of literature in Europe.

Like in 2023, the day will be built around 3 pillars:

1. Reading events - in particular in schools:
   Schools in all Creative Europe countries will be invited to organise reading aloud sessions. Our ambition is to significantly increase the number of schools participating in the event. We will also reach out to partners such as bookstores and libraries.

2. Tour of European Authors:
   The European Commission will organise a tour of 100+ European authors who will visit schools to present their books and discuss about European literature.

3. Conference:
   Taking place on 25-26 March 2024, the conference will offer a follow-up to the march 2022 conference in Sofia and will unite not only representatives of ministries of Education and Culture responsible for reading policies but also representatives of the book sector (authors, publishers, librarians and booksellers) and reading promotion organisations.

The European Commission will be happy to hear from you how your organisations and your members could be involved – either by organising events (on a voluntary basis) during that day and/or by contributing to the conference.

We will organise a meeting with you early September (or earlier if necessary) to discuss the matter with you. In the meantime, please save the date in your agenda…

11. Call for papers for the 17th International Conference on Metadata and Semantics Research (MTSR 2023)

The 17th International Conference on Metadata and Semantics Research (MTSR 2023) will be held at the University of Milano-Bicocca, Italy, between 23 and 27 October 2023.

It will feature a Special Track on Metadata & Semantics for Digital Libraries, Information Retrieval, Big, Linked, Social & Open Data, for which a call for papers is open.

Please note the following deadlines:

- 16th July, 2023: Submission deadline (Full and Short papers)
- 16th July, 2023: Submission deadline (Posters, Workshops, Tutorials, Demos & Panels)
- 27th August, 2023: Notification of decision
- 24th September, 2023: Camera-ready papers due

For more information about the Special Track and call for papers, please visit the Conference website.

Major library events in 2023

EBLIDA is promoting major library events in your country in 2023.

Please submit your future events for the next edition of the Newsletter here.

Thank you.

05-07 July
Liber 2023
Budapest, Hungary
https://liberconference.eu

17-21 July
IASL 2023: Flourishing School Libraries - Research, Policy, and Practice
Rome, Italy
http://www.iasl2023.com

21-25 August
88th IFLA World Library and Information Congress (WLIC): “Let’s work together, let’s library”
Hybrid & Rotterdam, Netherlands
https://2023.ifla.org/

29-30 September
BIC - Biblioteche Innovazione Comunità
Bergamo, Italy
https://2023.ifla.org/
Please look at the Four good reasons to become EBLIDA member and at the membership fee which varies according to the organisation’s turnover and the status of the organisation wishing to join EBLIDA: Full or Associate Member. For the registration form please fill out the Membership Enquiry Form or contact the Secretariat: eblida@eblida.org

About the Newsletter

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