The President’s Editorial

Dear colleagues,

We are drawing near the end of 2020 - a very complicated year for all of us, our families and the libraries where we operate. According to most favourable forecasts, we do not expect to return to normality before Spring or even Summer 2021. During the first semester we will still have to go through the new normality with which we have had to become accustomed to for such a long time now.

2020 has been a very difficult year in EBLIDA’s history. Distant operations cannot replace face to face meetings. We were unable to go ahead with our annual conference in Belgrade, to shake hands, to be within physical reach of our Members. On the other hand, we held three online conferences with the number of participants much higher than we normally have for our annual conference.

Many other events were held online having as common thread sustainable development goals in their relations with citizen science, information literacy, fake news, and, especially, ways of funding the Agenda 2030 in libraries through the European Structural and Investment Funds 2021-2027.

The 2019-2022 EBLIDA Strategic Plan has been implemented and also re-adjusted in light of the many events and initiatives triggered during 2020. EBLIDA has acquired a strong reputation in Europe as a library hub in terms of incubator, fund-raiser and platform of exchange for SDG-oriented library projects and policies. The recent creation of an ELSIA Expert Group, which may be called ELSIA community replacing the ELSA working group, will reinforce EBLIDA action in the very near future, in particular, but not only, in the field of project evaluation (see the report of the ELSA working group). The EBLIDA Sustainable Development House is getting richer and more crowded.

The year 2000 has focused greatly on researching new ways for EBLIDA to expand its scope and meeting EBLIDA Members’ needs. In this new normality we did our best to serve Members in difficult circumstances: the EBLIDA Executive Committee has done tremendous work - its Members met almost once a month to review reports, approve documents and organise events and the manyfold activities that were carried out.

The year 2021 must be focused on action. Coming back to normality means to get out of the virtuality and to come back to the real world of libraries reaching their users in novel and unusual ways – those that were emphasised during the Covid-19 crisis: socially inclusive and digitally.

In the meantime I wish you, your beloved, your library colleagues and friends all the best for a Christmas that is peaceful and full of hope and a happy, really happy new Year!

Yours sincerely,

Ton van Vlimmeren
EBLIDA President

The ELSA (European Libraries and Sustainable development Assessment) Report: Towards the implementation of SDG Indicators in European Libraries

The EBLIDA ELSA (European Libraries and Sustainable Assessment) Working Group started in October 2019 with the following mandate:

- To establish proper methodologies for the assessment of library performance in the social and economic field, in addition to current collection-oriented quantitative library measurement;
- To advocate for libraries at European level by measuring the impact of libraries on society as a whole and link this impact to socio-economic indicators of a more general nature, such as Eurostat-based SDG Indicators,
- To disseminate WG-ELSA results through awareness, evaluation and training activities.

Meanwhile, The EBLIDA Secretariat released the EBLIDA First European report on “Sustainable Development Goals and European Libraries”. The EBLIDA First Report claims that stories about sustainability need to be embedded in a narrative of policies and indicators where SDGs:

- are part of the library core mission,
- concern life-style orientations in addition to fiscal and legislative macro-policies, and
Within this broad framework, library policies need to link with indicators of a different nature to be evaluated in the SDG perspective. The ELSA reflection is included in the report: *Towards the implementation of SDG Indicators in European Libraries*.

The ELSA Group evaluated current studies assessing the socio-economic impact of libraries. While emphasising their usefulness both for library evaluation and advocacy, ELSA Group Members stressed the importance of an SDG-centered methodology with practical examples in Serbia, Romania, The Netherlands, France and, for the fake news concern, in Italy, France, Germany and the UK.

Assessing the implementation of SDGs in libraries is a thorny issue. On the one hand, libraries need figures in order to show that their commitment to sustainable development is not just a nice story to be told, but a sound policy to be pursued. On the other hand, they also need to be realistic. Putting it bluntly: what is more effective for the 2030 Agenda: a fiscal incentive providing pocket money for the acquisition of electric cars or an exhibition on electric cars held in a library? This is not the point, however. Libraries and other cultural institutions operate on the construction of mental beliefs and social habits; therefore they contribute to shaping, reinforcing and consolidating trends and opinions. A choral, systematic library action may therefore be decisive, provided that the SDG-oriented library policy is well constructed and corroborated by sound indicators.

The ELSA Group worked therefore on working methods and tried to extract some of the best practices in several library domains. The evaluation of SDGs in libraries is too fresh a topic to allow for definitive conclusions; it needs further reflection and extraction. Nevertheless, it is to be hoped that this first attempt will encourage a change of perspective about SDGs, with library projects being transformed into policies and isolated or random figures being converted into SDG-oriented library indicators.

The full report is available [here](#).
To find the appropriate links between the European Structural and Investment Funds 2021-2027 and SDGs in national contexts, thus promoting further funding opportunities in the library field;

- To encourage the setting up and the establishment of proper methodologies for the assessment of SDG projects in libraries, in addition to current collection-oriented quantitative library measurement;
- To disseminate ELSIA-EG results through awareness, evaluation and training activities.

Many librarians expressed their willingness to participate in the ELSIA action, which also includes national TTUs (Think The Unthinkable. A post-Covid Library agenda meeting sustainable development goals and funded through European Structural and Investment Funds 2021-2027) workshops. The amount of people on the list involved in the ELSIA action is so high that, more than an Expert Group, we can call it an ELSIA community. Experts will be designated in relation to the needs expressed by the progress of the ELSIA activities.

Library Legislation and Policy in Europe: Interim Report

“Hard” legislation at national level is only one of the ways library policy unfolds; some European countries - Germany, France and Italy, for instance - have functioning library systems, but no national Library Act.

In this report, which was prepared in collaboration with the French Ministry of Culture, library needs within a national library system are examined, together with library needs at local level and library needs in regard to policies other from cultural and educational policies.

The EBLIDA Secretariat started a consultation with its Members with the ultimate view of revising the Council of Europe-EBLIDA Guidelines on Library Legislation and Policy approved in 2000.

This objective is one of the Strands of the 2019-2022 EBLIDA Strategic Plan.

With the assistance of the recently created Working Group on Library Legislation and policy in Europe we can proceed now to step 2 of the process: the elaboration of more modern instruments designed to face contemporary library challenges: the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development and the presence of Information Content and Service Providers, like Google or Amazon, as library competitors.

A Working Group on Library Legislation

In its September 2020 meeting, the EBLIDA Executive Committee also decided to create the LIBLEG (Library Legislation and Policy in Europe) Working Group with the following aims:

- Investigating current developments in library legislation and policy in Europe and identifying most innovative aspects / features;
- Drafting the final report on Library Legislation and Policy in Europe.

This objective is one of the Strands of the 2019-2022 EBLIDA Strategic Plan.

Giuseppe Vitiello, Director EBLIDA, is in charge of the Working Group. Experts are now being designated.

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**Bibliothèques: l'Europe peut subventionner vos projets!**

The first of the national Think The Unthinkable workshops took place on Tuesday 24 November, co-organised by EBLIDA and the Public Information Library (Bpi, France). Annie Brigant, Deputy Director of BPI and Ton van Vlimmeren, President EBLIDA introduced the Webinar’s objective which was two-fold:

1. to present the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development both in its French and European dimensions;
2. to find possible European funds supporting SDG-oriented projects in libraries.

The task of presenting the UN 2030 agenda, sustainable development and the way French libraries support them was assigned to Raphaëlle Bats (ENSSIB, the French library school). She pointed to the multitude of initiatives having taken place in France – not the least, 1,600 SDG events being held in just one week in French libraries on the occasion of the 4th anniversary of the official approval of the UN 2030 agenda. This important lobbying work led to the embedding of libraries within the French roadmap for the implementation of the 2030 agenda.

Giuseppe Vitiello, EBLIDA Director, presented the EBLIDA approach to SDG implementation in a framework that is:

- conform to the European 2030 agenda;
- policy-oriented at national or regional level;
- evaluative, and following international and national indicators.

Moreover, EBLIDA policies is linked with the development of European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) 2021-2027.

To this end, the case study of the Montreuil library, which used European Regional Development Funds to prevent school drop-outs and subsequent reintegration of young people into school. Fabrice Chambon (director, Montreuil Libraries), Guillaume Gast (former Intern, Montreuil Library) and Juliette Limouzin (Est Ensemble) presented the project, which ran for two years and would never have been undertaken without European grants. Project stakeholders were able to present the project in detail, from its search for funding to the different phases as well as administrative features and the reporting system. It also made clear that there is a network of agencies assisting in the administrative burden.

Nearly 115 people attended this webinar, which can be listened to again online. The next step will
Covid-19 and Libraries: the Case of the Czech Republic

Providing Access to Library Collections for Students and Researchers

In the follow-up to a closely similar solution in the spring wave of the Covid-19 epidemic, the National Library of the Czech Republic concluded with Czech CMOs DILIA (for literary and scientific works) and OOA-S (for fine-arts components of the text-based publications), with a generous support by the SČKN (Union of the Czech Publishers and Booksellers), agreements on pro bono licences. They allowed, in the time national state of emergency and ensuing closure of libraries, for providing access, from 2 November 2020, to digitised collections of the largest libraries of the country, those of the National Library and of the Moravian Library in Brno, as well as of some university and other libraries.

In this way, as many as 215 000 titles of monographs and periodicals (about 64 million pages) of the period of the 19th – to the 21st century can be made available to the university and college students and their pedagogues, as well as to the researchers of scientific institutions by way of a password-protected access. Students, their teachers and researchers appreciate the service as a vital help for their study and work in the time of the Covid-19 crisis - even if the access allows for reading the material only on screens of their devices.

The National Library has been involved in digitisation activities for almost 30 years – since 1992, also in a partnership with a private firm, AiP Beroun. Since 2003, it has been developing a digital library Manuscriptorium as a European Digital Library of Manuscripts. For its achievements, it has been awarded the first-ever UNESCO/Jikji – Memory of the World Prize, in 2005. In a parallel line, a digital library of the modern-period monographs and periodicals Kramerius (named after the Czech 18th-century translator and publisher Wáclaw Kraméryus) has been developed.

In 2013-2019, in the National Library public-private partnership with Google, 203,784 documents, were digitised. They are mostly old imprints prior to 1800 (predominantly in the German language, partially in Latin, and, to a lesser extent, in the Czech and other languages) and the documents of the 19th century of the collection of the Slavonic Library. The modern-period documents are made available, in a standard way, on terminals in the library and, from this year on, a part of them also via protected remote access, as out-of-commerce works. Digitised manuscripts in the Manuscriptorium digital library and the documents digitised by the Google are freely available online (the latter ones via the NL OPAC and the Slavonic Library OPAC).

The national forum “Libraries Today” organised by Global Libraries Foundation – Bulgaria was held on 24 November 2020. As the public libraries are playing an increasingly important role in the information age and are key to equal access to information and e-services, culture and education and lifelong learning for all citizens, the motto of the conference this year was “Libraries: Skills for the 21st Century”.

Due to the changed working conditions related to the COVID pandemic, this year the forum took place as a mixed event with up to 20 people on site at the national literary club “Peroto” (“The Quill”) and online video broadcasting to the network of over 1000 libraries in Bulgaria via YouTube and Facebook channels of the Foundation.

Marina Encheva, EBLIDA Executive Committee Member, presented “Think the Unthinkable” report at the conference in the framework of a session “Libraries in the post COVID environment”.

The paper focused on how libraries in Europe can cope with the COVID challenge meeting Sustainable Development Goals as the funding opportunities through the European Structural and Investment Funds were also outlined. The other two papers in the session were related to the measures concerning the security of library staff and users taken in Bulgaria at national and local level during the COVID crisis in order for the provision of free and equal access to information and knowledge for citizens to be guaranteed, and to the practices of the Bulgarian libraries implementing the Sustainable Development Goals 2030, in the context of the National Development Program: Bulgaria 2030.

The topic of offering e-books and audio books not only for purchase, but also for borrowing through libraries is becoming more and more relevant, and during the COVID crisis, it is clear that the supply of these services lags far behind in Bulgaria. At the “libraries today” forum, an active discussion on the topic was initiated as opinions from all stakeholders were heard, and various solutions from Europe and North America were shared.

Other topics addressed at the conference were digitalisation, access to e-resources, e-learning for librarians and citizens, in the context of the new skills everyone needs in order to work in the 21st century.
In Italian:

"Pensare l’impensabile - Un’Agenda bibliotecaria europea post-Covid 19 finalizzata alla realizzazione degli obiettivi di sviluppo sostenibile e finanziata attraverso i Fondi Strutturali e di Investimento Europei (2021-2027)";
and
I Fondi Strutturali e di Investimento Europei (FSIE) 2021-2027: Finanziare le biblioteche per progetti di sviluppo sostenibile

In French:

Les Fonds Européens Structurels et d’Investissement (FESI) 2021-2027: opportunités de financement pour les bibliothèques

They add to the literature currently available in different languages:

Danish:

Dutch:

Italian:
Nuove opportunità di sviluppo per le biblioteche europee, Biblioteche oggi, Settembre 2020

Dutch/French:

This list will be updated as new documents come to light.
Latest hit: A financial envelope of 30 million euro in support of Italian libraries during the pandemic

The Italian Ministry of Culture has established a fund through which 30 million euro is being allocated to libraries under the condition that purchasing takes place through at least three bookshops in the province or metropolitan city where the beneficiary library is located.

The aim of this one-off measure, is to provide immediate support to the book trade, which has been greatly affected during the pandemic, and to safeguard the plurality of its various stakeholders. It wishes also to stimulate closer territorial cooperation between libraries, bookshops and publishers and provide momentum to the national plan for reading.

Further information will be provided about this news, which may be a good practice to propose for other library associations.

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About the Newsletter

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Editors: Unless otherwise specified, all articles are written by the EBLIDA Secretariat.

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