1. Editorial

Once more – SDGs in libraries! EBLIDA is releasing the “2nd European Report on Sustainable Development and Libraries”.

This issue of the EBLIDA Newsletter gives the conclusions of the Second European report on sustainable development and libraries and emphasises its most important highlights.
Once more – SDGs in libraries! EBLIDA is releasing the "2nd European Report on Sustainable Development and Libraries" – a milestone in understanding the role of libraries in the attainment of SDGs.

One year ago, when EBLIDA released the first European report on this issue, the response given by library associations was enthusiastic, but the global picture was quite disparate, from front runners fully committed to the attainment of SDGs to a minimal level of awareness. In general, the Agenda 2030 was still considered an accessory objective, not pivotal in library activities. One year after, an interesting turn can be noticed and the situation reported by the 2nd European Report offers a totally different picture.

Not only is the level of awareness much higher than in the past, but a good number of library associations have convincingly embarked upon the Agenda 2030 pathway. In spite of, or perhaps because of, the catastrophic effect of the pandemic, coherent and fully-fledged policies are now being enforced. There is a clear understanding, at least at top level, of how libraries can make the most out of SDG strategies.

This provides evidence of the validity of the EBLIDA approach. In 2019, six months before the European Commission re-oriented its work programme towards full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for SD, EBLIDA made the proposal that SDGs implemented in libraries should not only be stories told to administrators and policy-makers for advocacy purposes, but ought to consist of a fully-fledged integrated concept framing library work into a much broader and far-reaching scope.

This strategy has proven to be appropriate during the Covid crisis, when libraries developed along two directions: the digital library and the socially inclusive library.

This issue of the EBLIDA Newsletter gives the conclusions of the Second European report on sustainable development and libraries and emphasises its most important highlights.

The report will be presented on the occasion of the 23rd November Webinar “Better funding for a great good place - SDGs in public libraries”, jointly organised by EBLIDA and the Urban Agenda for the EU (Partnership "Culture and Cultural Heritage"). A group of remarkable panellists will provide insights about European funding in the European Union and discuss the new library governance that is emerging in the light of the pandemic.

Even more remarkable is the fact that EBLIDA is not alone in implementing its strategy at European level. EBLIDA and the National Library of Latvia are joining forces in diffusing the results of the 2nd European report and, in the future, to work closely for further dissemination of results and awareness on SDGs. The National Library of Latvia is among the most active EBLIDA partners in this field, both in the ELSIA (European Libraries and Sustainable development Implementation and Assessment) Expert Group and in the "Think The Unthinkable" programme, which addresses SDGs in libraries through possible financing under the European Structural and Investment Funds.

United we stand – it is the very essence of the EBLIDA mission, which we implement in collaboration with national library associations and other organisations active at European level, with a view to being the community hub of Libraries in Europe striving towards an equitable, democratic and sustainable society.
Not only SDG 4, but other SDGs, projects and activities going in the direction of new library governance and diversified sources of income.

In Spring 2021, EBLIDA launched a survey intending to explore SDG-oriented library policies among its Members. The response was overwhelmingly positive, both in quantity and in quality, and allows EBLIDA and the National Library of Latvia to generate a series of products which will be presented over the course of 2021-2022.

Seventeen countries are covered by the survey. In some of them, answers are officially provided by Library Associations; in other countries, a local expert opinion evaluates the state of the art of SDG library implementation.

In general, it can be said that the level of awareness around SDGs in libraries has increased, but activities are still lagging behind. The crucial point for the successful implementation of SDGs is librarians’ self-awareness. The commitment of professional organizations and librarians’ associations to SDGs has been instrumental in creating more active library participation, inspiring a strategic progress and fostering evaluation, as well as in raising awareness about EU Structural and Investment Funds.

Overall in Europe, it can be noticed that SDGs in libraries develop in a heterogeneous way, with a range of responses that vary from active involvement and numerous applications being central in library activities to national SDG-oriented policies where libraries are ignored.

Quite obviously, libraries pursue SDGs in areas traditionally linked to their activities - education, sustainable communities, access to information, freedom of expression and peace. In these areas, a multitude of projects and activities shows the multiplicity and diversification of courses of action. Obviously, SDG 4 is mentioned almost all the time; nevertheless, SDG 4’s association with other SDGs may conclude that libraries are more aware of targeted publics. Many of them have shifted from “what?” to “what for and to whom?”, paying attention to connections rather than collections.

Less relevant seems to be the link between European libraries and “scientific” SDGs related to preserving the environment, the living nature and biodiversity as well as the reduction of global hunger. SDGs 2 “Zero Hunger”, SDG 14 “Life below water” and SDG 15 “Life on Land” were not among priorities of library work, although occasional projects may take place within the framework of research libraries.

The evaluation of SDG-oriented library projects through indicators is an issue which is also perceived as important by the respondents to the survey. SDG-oriented library projects are normally realized with libraries own budgets and therefore are evaluated according to standard library procedures. At least one third of countries, however, declare that additional library funding for SDG projects is provided by ministries, international organisations (European Commission, Structural Funds, etc), national or international foundations, City/Provincial/Regional Councils, Non-Governmental Organisations and commercial enterprises.

The Covid crisis has clearly shown that open access to information does not necessarily mean...
Therefore, SDG-oriented projects are multi-layered and multi-tasking with a focus on renewed library governance and diversified sources of income. Library collections are instrumental in attaining this goal, although exhibitions are not considered a particularly successful exercise.

The chapter of the socially inclusive library fully complies with the social and economic pillars of the Agenda 2030. The EBLIDA Second European Report on Sustainable Development and Libraries provides many hints on how SDGs are perceived in libraries, but also on how libraries are perceived in society. The EBLIDA accompanying programme Think The Unthinkable – a European library agenda meeting sustainable development goals to be funded through European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) 2021-2027 lays the foundation for possible funding to SDG-oriented projects. Interestingly enough, almost half of the responses stated that they have either embarked on the EBLIDA programme, or are thinking of filing projects within ESIF 2021-2027.

This report meets the objectives set up by the EBLIDA Strategic Plan 2019-2022 and is opening new pathways for future EBLIDA directions in the SDG field. It fulfils library commitment towards the attainment of SDGs in society, reinforces SDG-oriented policies in libraries at European scale and boosts the preparation of projects at national and international level. In this respect, it is a milestone for library work whose impact will be assessed only in the years to come.

A synthesis of the report will be presented during the webinar on 23rd November (see below).

A longer version, also including country profiles, will be presented on 24th February in the course of a meeting organised by the French Presidency of the European Union. Meanwhile, several by-products will be released focused on SDG-oriented national policies, coordinating centres, SDG projects in Europe, etc.

Please follow the next Newsletters.

3. Webinar: Sustainability in Public Libraries - Better funding for a great good place
23 November 2021, 16:00 CET

After the first successful joint webinar in May 2021, EBLIDA joins forces again with the initiators of the action Raise Awareness for Public Libraries in Europe within the framework of the Urban Agenda for the EU (Partnership “Culture and Cultural Heritage”).

The Action Group is led by the Berlin Senate Department for Culture and Europe and consists of EBLIDA, the the city of Espoo, the German Library Association (dbv), the Finnish Library Association (Suomen Kirjastoseura), Public Libraries 2030, the Central and Regional Library Berlin and the School of Library and Information Science (Humboldt University Berlin).
Two freshly released reports will be presented during the webinar. The first includes an evaluation of funding structures of European public libraries, as a result of a survey carried out by the Action Group of the Urban Agenda for the EU.

The other report is a synthesis of the 2nd European report on Sustainable development and libraries, a survey carried out by EBLIDA in the course of summer 2021.

You are cordially invited to attend and to use the opportunity to find out more about current developments in the important topics of sustainable financing of public libraries and how the Agenda 2030 is applied in European public libraries.

- Programme
- Registration is required: anymeeting.com/PIID=E152DB8989483E

The event will be visualized by graphic recording.

We look forward to meeting you on 23rd November, 16.00-17.30 (CET).

4. EBLIDA and the National Library of Latvia united in the implementation of the SDGs in European libraries

"The National Library of Latvia is extending the scope of SDG promotion from the Baltic area to the rest of Europe and EBLIDA is happy to consolidate its community of SDG promoters."

Last 23-24 September, the National Library of Latvia organised an online conference – Localising Sustainable Development Goals through Baltic museums and libraries – in collaboration with the Latvian Museum Association and the Library Association of Latvia. This conference strengthened the role of museums and libraries as key local actors in promoting sustainable development through cultural heritage.

In the wake of the success of this conference, the National Library of Latvia decided to join forces with EBLIDA, whose three-year commitment in the implementation of SDGs in libraries is boosting SDG activities all over Europe. Thanks to EBLIDA, the National Library of Latvia’s effort to promote SDGs will extend from the Baltic area to the rest of Europe. The conference findings and conclusions will be consolidated, as well as cooperation and exchange of experiences (https://baltic-museums-libraries-sdg.lnb.lv/).

Some National Library staff – Katrīna Kukaine, Kristine Deksne, Māra Jēkabsone and Inga Surgunte – have collaborated with the EBLIDA Secretariat for the release of the 2nd European report on sustainable development and libraries.
This report is so informative, rich and tantalising that further output will be produced in the near future to inspire European libraries in their activities, governance and opportunities for funding.

On its turn, EBLIDA is happy to consolidate its community of SDG promoters while multiplying its tools (EBLIDA Matrix, EBLIDA SDG-KIC, etc.), its services (consultancy service for funding opportunities through the European Structural and Investment Funds 2021-2027), and training activities (ESIF 2021-2027, a Guide for Library Applicants).

5. Mairead Owens, new EBLIDA Treasurer

"An experienced library manager will hold the EBLIDA purse strings."

Mairead Owens was appointed Dublin City Librarian on 1 April 2019. She joined the City Council from Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council (DLRCC) where she had been County Librarian for ten years. She was responsible for the development of the internationally acclaimed dlr LexIcon, the central library and cultural centre in Dún Laoghaire.

A non-conventional employment background brought Mairead to DLRCC as a temporary librarian in 2002. Within six years she was Country Librarian. Mairead has a degree in History from Trinity College Dublin. After university, she worked as a business information librarian for the state venture capital company, the National Development Corporation. She later worked in a number of marketing and development roles in education, charity and business sectors.

Her vision is to foster a ‘transformative and vibrant library service that touches every community in the city’. She manages a network of 21 libraries across the city of Dublin with 280 staff. Mairead is passionate that Dublin City Libraries will create a model and inspiration for public libraries nationally and internationally.

6. Report from the Congress of Swiss Libraries
(Bern, 26-28 October 2021)

"What is neutrality for library work? A sustainable definition."
There is a country in Europe where, in the midst of the Covid crisis, an in-presence library conference has been organised – participation was ensured after a thorough Green Pass check and identity recognition. Well-appreciated keynote speakers addressed topical issues in sync with the hits of the moment and participants gathered in working groups for high quality and in-depth debates. In this country, the traditional separation between public libraries and university libraries is intertwined with municipal and cantonal administrative layers, not to mention the relevant contribution of the private and/or non-governmental sector.

If we multiply this complexity - German, French, Italian and, whenever necessary, English as a vehicular language - everyone will understand that miracles of this kind may come true only in Switzerland. The Congress of Swiss Libraries took place in Berne on 27-28 October, in a rejoicing sunny setting and soft Autumn colours. Main topics: community, digitisation and the library challenges of the future. These themes are ordinary if compared with the rest of Europe; what is not-ordinary is how they are interpreted in Switzerland.

Take Vevey, for instance, a 20,000 inhabitants small city situated in a French-speaking Swiss canton. Those who are fuss enough to read the labels on the bottom of coffee capsules will discover that Vevey is the headquarters of Nestlé, the firm producing the famous "Nespresso, what else?". Nespresso’s record on carbon footprint is very poor; its waste is disposable in about 500 years. Nevertheless, Nestlé’s commitment to Sustainable Development Goals is based on the short-chain relationship with coffee farmers and the building up of closely linked communities of producers and consumers.

Why shouldn’t libraries achieve the same - a short chain relationship between information producers and consumers? It is precisely in Vevey that cultural mediation is implemented in a high-value scheme where a burraco game goes along with the much more controversial assimilation of LGBTQIA+ into the local community. This demonstrates how SDG 5 "Gender Equality" may help form a library community whose members never or rarely entered into library premises. The Bern University Library is taking up the challenge of promoting "scientific" SDGs along the communication chain of information/awareness-raising/collections/events, whereas the "Libraries for Future" movement is engaging libraries in the eco-friendly requalification of library buildings.

A sustainable approach in Switzerland goes so far as to undermine the principle of neutrality – a value well rooted in the Swiss national history going back hundreds of years. Now, what does library neutrality consist of? It certainly does not mean retreating in the face of social facts and giving free rein to any opinion, even the most offensive and damaging to the dignity of others. On the contrary, a militant perspective in favour of democracy and participation is emerging among Swiss librarians, a Volterrian stance where one position is strongly promoted through discussion and after confrontation with other positions, even more so if they are opposed.

There were many other topics discussed at the Swiss Library Congress – which this brief one-day tour cannot cover. This focus on sustainable development, however, gives an idea of how Swiss librarians are managing to tame complexity and bring to life the new normality of the post-Covid era.

7. Social Hackademy – #HackAD
(7 December 2021, 17:00 CET)
The Social Hackademy is wrapping up with a final policy event on December 7 at 17:00 CET. Focusing on the impact of the Social Hackademy in Croatia, France, Greece, and Italy, this event dives into policy recommendations to support the implementation of the Social Hackademy’s inclusive and collaborative educational methodology and bringing together policymakers, local authorities and education providers, this event is a great opportunity to learn about the Social Hackademy project and take part in a mini hack!

Join us to find out how you can kickstart your own Social Hackademy!

- Registration

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Get Involved!

EBLIDA members comprise a robust network of libraries and our aim is to strengthen libraries in Europe. Please look at the Four good reasons to become EBLIDA member.

For the registration form please fill out the Membership Enquiry Form or contact the Secretariat: eblida@eblida.org

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Events and Dates

**November 23**
**Sustainability in Public Libraries - Better funding for a great good place**
**Place:** Online
**Organizer:** EBLIDA, Senate Department for Culture and Europe Berlin, City of Espoo, German Library Association (dbv), Finnish Library Association and Public Libraries 2030

**December 3**
**Meet the National Libraries - featuring the National Library of Poland**
**Place:** Online
**Organizer:** Slavic Reference Service, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

**December 9-10**
**10th International Summit of the Book 2021 & Western Balkan Information and Media Literacy Conference 2021**
**Place:** Bihać, Bosnia & Herzegovina
**Organizer:** International Summit of the Book

**December 9**
**Libraries and the UN 2030 Agenda: the Role of Libraries in Promoting Sustainable Development**
About the Newsletter

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

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