1. Editorial

It is a privilege for me to work for an organisation where a new Executive Committee is initiating a vibrant era full of energy and activities, expert groups are helping us define the perimeter of our strategy and the Executive Committee sub-groups are fine-tuning the scope and objectives of EBLIDA governance.

I have the feeling of being located into a beehive where the movement of the single actors is not
Let's try to map what is happening inside the EBLIDA beehive.

First of all, our consultative bodies. In 2021, three expert groups started operations at full speed: ELSIA (European Libraries and Sustainable development Implementation and Assessment), LIBLEG (Library Legislation and Policy in Europe) and EGIL (Expert Group on Information Law). Some of them were newly created, others were regenerated.

All members of these groups deserve our deep gratitude for the already extraordinary achievements they have accomplished. ELSIA produced the Second European report on SDGs and Libraries; it is a report that is mapping, to a much greater extent and as precisely as possible than the First Report, SDG-oriented policies and projects all over Europe. A salient part of the report is reproduced in this Newsletter. In the Second report EBLIDA's contribution, too, is easily detectable: it is to stimulate national SDG-oriented library policies in Europe; beyond local show-cases. It is also to closely look at the requirements of, the levels of governance in, and the evaluation criteria of, SDG-oriented projects.

The LIBLEG group has also made great strides in starting the revision of the 2000 Council of Europe-EBLIDA Guidelines on Library Legislation and Policy in Europe. After four meetings and plenty of fruitful discussions and exchanges of views, new headlines have been established for the Guidelines. The first, major step has been taken. The next will be to actually draft the Guidelines.

Equally precious is the underground work performed by the Executive Committee sub-groups having the duty to re-design EBLIDA governance and prepare the decision-making process for the Annual Council 2022 by our members.

Three groups have been set up:

- the EBLIDA Strategy Group, in charge of connecting to needs of members and thereupon drafting the EBLIDA Strategic Plan 2022-2025;
- the EBLIDA Communication Group, that will reshuffle EBLIDA communication, and
- the EBLIDA Conference Group, in charge of preparing the EBLIDA Conference in June 2022.

Although Europe has entered the winter period and bees tend to relax then, the image and spirit of the beehive is an inspiring one that will bring us full speed into the new year.

I thank everybody for the great work libraries all over Europe have delivered in the past challenging year.

And on behalf of EBLIDA I all wish you a healthy and happy finish of this year and a great start in 2022.

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SDGs in European libraries are not only about projects, they are also about how library personnel and users perceive and apply them in their everyday work. Respondents were given the possibility of choosing different
libraries has increased, but activities are still lagging behind. Remarkably enough, 47% of the responses conclude that SDGs are implemented in a convincing and active way.

Another third expresses the opinion that, in spite of a good understanding of policies and objectives, SDGs are not implemented in libraries. No one, however, shows total ignorance of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development.

A good 84% of national library associations and/or library agencies state that there is a clear promotion of SDG-oriented schemes, with a selection of SDGs that are relevant at national level and the definition of well-established policies. This result confirms that awareness, at least at top level, has increased from 2020 to 2021, together with the understanding that SDGs are a central drive for library development.

15 out of 17 SDGs are recognised as being relevant for ordinary library work. Not all of them, however, enjoy the same priority and are implemented with equal effort. Unsurprisingly, almost all respondents (95%) selected SDG 4 “Quality education” as the pivotal SDG for libraries. Interestingly enough, SDG 11 “Sustainable Cities and Communities” and SDG 16 “Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions” are also strongly associated with library work (respectively 68% and 63% of the answers) - library heritage is core in SDG 11, whereas SDG 16, Target 10, deals with access to information. SDG 17 is also strongly associated with library work, although this SDG is understood more in the sense of traditional library cooperation than recognition of the need for international partnership (57% of responses). In the wake of the Covid disaster, it is not surprising that SDGs 3 “Good Health and well-being” (47%) and SDG 10 “Reducing Inequality” (48%) are also at the core of library policies – evidence, if any, of the socially inclusive nature of library work.
Library professionals are women to a large extent; therefore, it may be surprising that SDG 5 “Gender Equality” is considered a core business for libraries by only 42% of respondents. Awareness activities about SDG 12 “Responsible Consumption and Production” and SDG 13 “Climate Action” also enjoy popularity in SDG-oriented library activities (42%).

All other SDGs – SDG 1 “No poverty”, SDG 8 “Decent Work and Economic Growth”, SDG 6 “Clean Water and Sanitation”, SDG 7 “Affordable and Clean Energy”, SDG 8 “Decent work and economic growth”, “SDG 9 “Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure”, SDG 15 “Life on Land” – are less popular in libraries (from 10% to 30% of the answers). SDG 2 “Zero Hunger” and SDG 14 “Life below water” are not immediately perceived as close to library work, although occasional projects may take place within the framework of research libraries.
3. “Sustainability in Public Libraries - Better funding for a great good place”
Joint Webinar organised by EBLIDA and the Urban Agenda for the EU (Partnership “Culture and Cultural Heritage”) 23rd November 2021

"Sustainability in Public Libraries - Better funding for a great good place" was the focus of the webinar that EBLIDA and the Urban Agenda for the EU Action Group "Raise awareness for public libraries and their new tasks on a European and national level" co-hosted on 23rd November.

[Graphic Recording of the webinar by the illustrator Anne Lehmann (https://annelehmann.de/)]

The Action Leader, the Berlin Senate Department for Culture and Europe, presented first excerpts
The Urban Agenda for the EU action made visible that:

- public libraries can support the EU in achieving its goals.
- public libraries can be important local partners and multipliers for promoting the European idea and common goals for the future - because they reach citizens in their neighbourhoods and enjoy a very high level of trust among citizens.
- there is a lack of clearly defined contacts, knowledge and data base for public libraries at European level.
- there is also a difficulty for public libraries to access European funding.

One central activity of the action has been the implementation of a survey on funding structures for public libraries in Europe with a view to gaining knowledge about financial sources and opportunities for modernisation and innovation in public libraries. 92 public libraries in cities with more than 90,000 inhabitants from 20 different EU member countries replied. The results are not to be seen as representative but provide a rough overview of the funding situation of public libraries in Europe.

The 92 public libraries clearly made the point that their particular funding needs for building and infrastructure cannot be met at city or regional level. This is the reason why both the European and national level should step in and reinforce their efforts. Public libraries also saw a great deal of uncertainty about possible budget cuts, as a consequence of further developments of the Covid pandemic.

Better funding is closely linked to the implementation of SDGs in public libraries, with full commitment of libraries both at European and national level. The 2nd European Report on “Sustainable Development Goals and Libraries” was presented by Katrina Kukaine (EBLIDA Executive Committee Member) and Kristine Deksne (National Library of Latvia). The report shows quite a heterogeneous picture: in some countries, libraries are fully integrated into national SDG policies; in others, SDG attainment is done in a practical way, with no involvement from national authorities.

Panelists in the following session were: Steffen Nissen (Odense Library and City Centre, EBLIDA ELSIA Expert Group), Barbara Schleihagen (NAPLE Chairwoman, Executive Director German Library Association) and Rauha Maarno (Director at Finnish Library Association, EBLIDA Executive Committee Member).

They all agree that European public libraries, as great good sustainable places, need to learn from each other and work together at the national and European level for better funding conditions and better governance in order to get the necessary support for their tasks.

All information (the presentations, the graphic recording and the video-recording of the webinar) can be found here: http://www.eblida.org/eblida-online-meetings/

4. Report from the EBLIDA Groups: ELSIA (European Libraries and Sustainable development Implementation and Assessment)

The 2nd European Report on European libraries and Sustainable development goals has been published in a short Synthesis version (excerpts in the article above; full Synthesis is here).
The EBLIDA Secretariat and the National Library of Latvia, who are the authors of the report, are preparing a full version, which will include a series of country profiles covering some 15 countries.

There are already several indications on how national library associations and institutions can use this report. The most obvious exploitation is exchange of information from country to country, and the stimulation of cross-European transfer of experiences with a view to creating further awareness of SDGs in libraries.

However, the report is so rich that it is already inspiring EBLIDA’s action in several directions:

- Monitoring SDG implementation in European libraries,
- Fundraising – with a focus on European Structural and Investment Funds 2021-2027 (the richest, most accessible and least bureaucratic European source of funding);
- Advice and consulting, where EBLIDA is often seen as an actor accompany project preparation in its early stages and in their internationalization; d) Research and development, in particular in the field of evaluation.

The ELSIA Group also suggested several sub-products to be generated from the full version of the report in the form of infographics and podcasts to be distributed through social media.

5. Report from the EBLIDA Groups: LiBLEG (Library Legislation and Policy in Europe)

In 2000, EBLIDA, in collaboration with the Council of Europe Secretariat, drafted the Council of Europe / EBLIDA Guidelines on Library Legislation and Policy in Europe.

These Guidelines, subsequently assessed by the Council of Europe CDCCP, have been highly influential in shaping policies and inspiring library-related legislation throughout the Council of Europe Member States.

They have also been a base of reference for individual libraries working in sometimes challenging local situations, as well as for regional and municipal administrators willing to restructure local library systems towards more advanced agendas.

In 2000, the Council of Europe / EBLIDA Guidelines on Library Legislation and Policy in Europe included recommendations in the following five domains:

- Freedom of expression and free access to information
- Libraries within the national cultural and information policies
- Libraries and the creative and/or knowledge industries
- Libraries within the national social policy
- The protection of library heritage.
After 20 years, EBLIDA Members observed that, while the main directions of the Guidelines are still solid, cultural and societal changes and developments in information technology are challenging libraries in new ways. In the last two decades, libraries developed as an enriching space for human interaction, knowledge creation and civic engagement. In all Council of Europe countries, and in particular in Nordic states, library legislation reflects these new concepts and roles in line and compliance with a good number of Council of Europe and European Union documents.

Therefore, a revised Council of Europe / EBLIDA instrument can only reinforce our European wide effort to strive towards a well-informed, inclusive and democratic society.

The Working Group on Library Legislation and Policy, set up by EBLIDA, drafted revised headings for the 2000 Council of Europe / EBLIDA Guidelines and re-oriented them towards democracy and democratic participation, the European 2030 Agenda on sustainable development, digital transformation and the expansion of Artificial Intelligence.

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6. EBLIDA invited to the Thessaloniki Book Fair: Sustainable Development Goals (SDG’s) and Public Libraries (November 25th – 28th, 2021)

In November 25th - 28th 2021, the 18th International Book Fair (IBF) took place in Thessaloniki. This year, due to COVID-19 restrictions, the Greek book fair was moved from May to November.

It is the biggest and most popular book event in the year, with the participation of the bulk of Greek publishers and books being displayed for the joy of readers. It is also a great opportunity for the citizens of Thessaloniki and Northern Greece to visit a book fair and be more in touch with book trends.

Traditionally, the Association of Greek Librarians and Information Scientists (AGLIS) and the Department of Library Science, Archives & Information Systems (Thessaloniki) organise a joint event during the fair. This year, two important events took place: on Friday, 26th a round table about fake news and libraries, and on Saturday, 27th a one day event about SDG’s and libraries.

A one-day hybrid conference was organised in relation to the Agenda 2030 and colleagues from Greece and Europe gave their overviews about the implementation of SDG’s in libraries and how the latter can benefit from the first. The conference consisted of two sessions.

In the first, important presentations were delivered by colleagues dealing with SDGs; in the second session, case studies were presented by five invited Greek libraries. Open discussion followed.

The target of the conference was twofold:

1. To be informed about recent developments on the implementation of SDGs and about funding opportunities through the European Structural and Investment Funds, and
All presenters emphasised the need for the implementation of SDGs in libraries. The new Structural Funds scheme (2021 – 2027) is a great opportunity for Greek public and municipal libraries; they should join forces and collaborate in the launch of new projects. A fruitful and constructive dialogue will follow this event in the entire Greece and AGLIS (the Greek Library Association), EBLIDA and schools of librarianship will start meeting central government and local authorities in order to identify next steps.

7. EBLIDA invited to the Conference "Libraries today and the Digital Single Market" (Sofia, 25 November 2021)

On 25th November, our EC member, Zélia Parreira, spoke at the conference "Libraries today and the Digital Single Market" held by the Global Libraries - Bulgaria Foundation.

Her communication was based in the report "Libraries Acquisition Policies, Open Access and related Copyright Strategies" that has been in discussion within EBLIDA.


We receive from Public Libraries 2030 and gladly publish.

The Digital Travellers project is an EU-funded project aiming to foster social and digital inclusion of vulnerable populations through tailored digital education activities in Belgium, Finland, the Netherlands and Poland.

Drawing from the Voyageurs du Numérique project carried out by Bibliothèques Sans Frontières France, the Digital Travellers project sought to upscale this approach on a European level and target librarians as digital facilitators.

The project’s initial scope was focused on the library users and the resources they would need to...
As the Digital Travellers set out on this journey, they wanted to replicate the Voyageurs du Numérique methodology, however, with the pandemic, the team observed that librarians did not feel confident in delivering digital education online. To remedy this, the Digital Travellers team decided to focus on the development of efficient digital facilitation training. As librarians were now operating in a fully online environment, it was crucial that the training took this into consideration and all the challenges that working in online environments presents. Additionally, the training had to incorporate in person elements of digital facilitation as librarians would need these skills when in person activities could resume. This led to a switch in the project’s focus to not be based on library users but on librarians and their skills needs to successfully deliver digital education both online and offline.

Once the piloting phase came to a close, the team knew that there needed to be support through targeted policies at all levels of policy making. The Digital Travellers team developed a comprehensive set of policy recommendations based on the experiences of the librarians and areas where support could be improved.

In terms of European support, non-formal digital education activities would benefit from investment in digital infrastructure ranging from capacity building measures, professional development and investment in digital infrastructure in non-formal learning spaces including libraries.

When we look at national and local support, the Digital Travellers team identified a few key areas of support needed for libraries and the broader non-formal digital education sector. This included developing educational strategies around lifelong learning and ensuring that this is a feature of competence development including digital competence development and fostering cooperation between stakeholders in different fields and at different levels.

At the local level, libraries should be seen as evolving spaces and their responsibilities and objectives will change in line with this. Therefore, local policies should reflect this and aim to provide support in terms of resources and flexibility regarding the scope of activities libraries can take over. Additionally, local policymakers should develop strong outreach strategies that focus on underrepresented and underserved groups and ensure they are aware of the digital competence development opportunities available to them.

These are the key asks identified by the Digital Travellers team in regards to policies that would support libraries and non-formal digital education overall. However, for a more complete look at the policy recommendations, we invite you to consult the full policy recommendations. While these recommendations were based on the feedback from the librarians involved in the project, these can be for digital education advocacy in other countries and for other libraries.

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**HAPPY HOLIDAYS TO YOU ALL!**
Our office will be closed from 24th December until 3rd January.

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.

Please fill out the Membership Enquiry Form or contact the Secretariat: eblida@eblida.org

Events and Dates

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
Place: Online
December 14-16
18th Serbian Library Association Conference
Place: Kragujevac, Serbia
Organizer: Serbian Library Association (SLA)

January 14-15
16th International Conference on Digital Libraries (ICDL)
Place: Rome, Italy
Organizer: World Academy of Science, Engineering and Technology

About the Newsletter

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