Editorial, by Ton van Vlimmeren, President

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President’s Editorial

Nine months have elapsed since the war in Ukraine broke out and we still do not see any light of the end of the tunnel.

The war in Ukraine will not come to an end any time soon; it could take months, even years, before Ukrainian migrants will be able to flow back to Ukraine.

As of 7 November 2022, UNESCO has verified damage to 213 sites since 24 February – 92 religious sites, 16 museums, 77 buildings of historical and/or artistic interest, 18 monuments, 10 libraries.
The educational and cultural needs of Ukrainian children and adult migrants should therefore be taken into account.

There are two ways European libraries can support Ukraine:

The first way is to provide technical assistance to libraries and library heritage in Ukraine, which is constantly under attack. Interventions on theatres of war may not always be possible, but there are several ways European libraries can support – first and foremost by providing financial help for local projects and initiatives. Ukrainian libraries are providing support to some 8 million displaced Ukrainians within Ukraine.

The second way is to provide support to displaced Ukrainians outside Ukraine – some 7.7 million people according to recent statistics. Europe has a long tradition of hospitality; nowadays, libraries in Poland, Romania, Italy, Germany, the Baltic States and other countries are mobilised to provide support to refugees through emergency plans adjusting their services and literature to new user groups.

But, as you can read in Giuseppe Vitiello’s contribution in this newsletter there is more to it. Take Moldova, for instance, where the dominance of Russian media is overwhelming. Moldovan libraries try to maintain forms of critical tevent episodes of cancel culture or ideological ways of presenting facts. The war in Ukraine is the acid-test for European values applied in libraries and the formation of independent and autonomous opinions.

The EBLIDA Secretariat will promote a series of initiatives about Ukraine in the near future. This adds to the ordinary work intending to support the commitment of libraries to a sustainable, democratic and equitable society.

The aim of this Newsletter is to review initiatives in the three priority fields of the EBLIDA 2022-2025 Strategic Plan. With this issue we are also initiating an “SDG corner”, where, country by country, the policies towards SDGs undertaken by the libraries of several EBLIDA states will be described.

Follow us on Twitter, too, and get in touch with us to support the initiatives listed here.

Yours sincerely,

Ton van Vlimmeren
EBLIDA President
The Latvian Platform for Development Cooperation Association (LAPAS), in cooperation with the Moldovan Librarian Society, the Latvian National Library and Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences, has launched a development cooperation project called "Libraries as Builders for Local Democracy, Development and Resilience"

The project was launched on the 31 October with the hybrid public event “Libraries as the game changers for the local social resilience and democracy in times of security challenges”.

EBLIDA director Giuseppe Vitiello opened this event with his keynote speech highlighting how the soft power of libraries’ enables them to face uncertainty and change.

The Latvian and Moldovan experience on media literacy and democratic participation activities showed that libraries have been and remain important for the existence and sustainable development of every community. Librarians, on the other hand, are leaders of change in their communities, working and cooperating with the most diverse population groups in the local community on daily basis, providing information, organising cultural and educational activities.

Librarians, particularly in rural areas, have an enormous role to play in strengthening their communities and society as a whole, by engaging in promoting mediums and critical thinking.

The public event was followed by the exchange of experience in the region of Latgale (South Latvia) with local librarians. Considering the global challenges, the two main topics discussed were media literacy and participatory approach in the library’s work for social resilience of local communities. Under the leadership of Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences, a methodology for understanding and building social resilience will be developed and multiplied by all project partners at national level and in further projects.

The head of LAPAS, Inese Vaivare, explains the necessity of the project:

“The war caused by Russia in the independent Ukraine has highlighted the problem of pro-Russian propaganda in Moldova and the need to improve public media literacy, particularly by enhancing media literacy as a critical skill for people living and working in a highly digitized and constantly changing world. Building bridges between people and information is the overarching framework of the project, but at the same time, while strengthening local resilience in both Moldova and Latvia, we will also work on directly related topics – local democracy and the integration of Ukrainian refugees.”

Elena Pintilei, President of the ABRM, on the cooperation objectives of the project: “Democracy defines the content of the work of the librarians. We will continue to tirelessly strengthen the democracy in our Moldovan society by developing new partnerships to interact and grow.”
The project received development cooperation financing from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Latvia in 2022.

2. EBLIDA commitment towards a democratic society: Library legislation and policy in Europe

Giuseppe Vitiello, EBLIDA Director, will stand up for the draft Council of Europe / EBLIDA Recommendation on Library Legislation and Policy in Europe at the CDCPP meeting, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, on 24 November 2022.

What is the Council of Europe?

The Council of Europe, based in Strasbourg – not to be confused with the Council of the European Union - is an international organisation whose aim is to achieve greater unity between its members through the protection of human rights, the promotion of democracy and democratic participation and the implementation of the rule of the law. Membership is open to all European states who seek harmony, cooperation, good governance and human rights, accepting the principle of the rule of law, and are able and willing to guarantee democracy, fundamental human rights and freedoms.

Founded in 1949, the Council of Europe has 46 member states, with a population of approximately 675 million.

In relation to the European Union, the Council of Europe member states maintain their sovereignty but commit themselves through conventions/treaties to co-operate on the basis of common values and common political decisions. The Council of Europe conventions/treaties are also open for signature to non-member states, thus facilitating equal co-operation with countries outside Europe.
The Steering Committee for Culture, Heritage and Landscape (CDCPP) is the Committee responsible for activities related to Culture, Heritage and Landscape and for following-up on their implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

In addition to the 46 Council of Europe member states, the following states have a statute of Observer with CDCPP: Canada, Holy Sea, Japan, Mexico and the United States.

According to the Council of Europe, culture is an essential component and a key factor for the promotion of human rights, the practice of democracy and the rule of law. Culture as the “soul of democracy” means advocating strong cultural policies and governance - aimed at transparency; access; participation and creativity; respect for identity and diversity; intercultural dialogue and cultural rights – as the basis for respectful and tolerant living together in an ever-more complex world.

3. EBLIDA commitment towards an equitable society: E-Lending

Last June, at the EBLIDA Conference in Athens, EBLIDA EGIL (Expert Group on Information Law) released the First Overview on e-lending in Europe, a series of e-lending profiles concerning nine countries with rich descriptions for each of the reviewed countries. The EBLIDA Council mandated EGIL to continue their work and to enrich the scope of the study in length, width and depth.

Since June 2022, more countries have been covered. Interviews were carried out with e-lending experts in Belgium (Flemish community), Finland, Ireland and The Netherlands. We wish to have a deeper insight into various aspects of e-lending through closer observation and analysis of the attitudes of the actors involved in its process.

Extending the scope of the study in width means to apply epistemological categories which may explain why the results of e-lending achievements can differ from one country to another.

Categorisations may be based on a variety of criteria, such as:

- Countries where there is a substantial offer of resources available for e-lending and countries where this offer is small (Greece, Latvia) or not relevant (Romania);
- Countries where e-lending resources are aggregated and offered by an intermediate layer (mediator) who negotiates with publishers on behalf of libraries (Germany, France, Italy, Denmark, Norway), and countries where negotiations with publishers are carried out.
Countries where mediators also aggregate resources, and countries where the functions of aggregation and mediation are undertaken by different actors (in France, Réseau Carel);

Countries where aggregating agencies are controlled by local governmental agencies (Denmark and, to a certain extent, Norway), by publishers (France and, to a certain extent, Norway) or are independent (Germany and Italy);

Countries where the national library plays a distinctive role in the e-lending process (Latvia, Greece and, to a certain extent, Norway);

Countries where the role of governmental agencies at national (Latvia, France) or at regional level (France, Norway, Denmark) is significant, and countries where this role is minimal (Italy).

Enlarging the scope of the study in-depth means to find the appropriate arguments to advocate for libraries at European level. The variety of solutions that have been found at national level shows that it is hard to find a common model and that Europe-wide e-lending solutions are still to be worked out. Nevertheless, with the exception of very few countries, libraries are unsatisfied with current practices and often report about publishers’ attitude to refuse or remove certain titles or prescribe their terms for access. This is a direct challenge to the core activities and responsibilities of libraries.

A new report will be released on 18\textsuperscript{th} April 2023, during the EBLIDA Conference in Luxembourg.

4. EBLIDA commitment towards a sustainable society: Sustainable Development Goals

Focus on Bulgaria

A key role in the development of sustainable development goals in Bulgarian libraries has been played by the Global Libraries - Bulgaria Foundation, which is project manager in some of the SDG-oriented library projects and creates awareness activities and expertise for libraries. Many of these activities are organised in collaboration with the Bulgarian Library Association.

Model projects include:

“Digital Skills for SME (Small and Medium Enterprises) in Bulgaria”, an educational project where the regional libraries of Plovdiv, Smolyan and Stara Zagora districts become third place and offer equal access to information and communication, lifelong learning, collaboration with SME workers and their families. Two aspects raise the profile of this project. The first is that libraries work in partnership with the Bulgarian Union of Small and Medium Enterprises; the second is that the project is funded by the 2014-2020 European Social Fund, one of the European Structural and Investment Funds.

The Yavorov Regional Library has set up the project “The land is cleaner, we are more
The project “Wildlife around us: get to know and protect” is implemented by the Zachary Kniazheski Library and aims to make people aware of the wildlife around them and targets students, teachers, parents and the public as a whole with a view to creating awareness about the benefits of living together with our wild friends.

The E-Portal of Memory and Knowledge is dedicated to European history and science; the Tech Lib offers a Mini Technology Center at the Regional Library “Hristo Botev” – Vratsa: children and teenagers get acquainted with the opportunity to experience new technological wonders.

Global Libraries - Bulgaria Foundation (FSBB) is also a partner in the “Get Your Facts Straight! Media Literacy for All” - a program co-funded by the European Commission which provides media literacy training to students and young people from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds, as well as to their parents and / or grandparents.

Global Libraries - Bulgaria Foundation also implements “E-skills for E-inclusion” project, whose main purpose is to develop a computer literacy training program for vulnerable groups and facilitate their access to the labour market. This project is being implemented in partnership with 5 other organisations from Northern Ireland, Spain, Italy and Romania and is funded by the European Erasmus + program.

See the interview with Ms Marina Encheva

Focus on Czech Republic

 SKIP (The Czech Association of Library and Information Professionals of the Czech Republic) considers the following SDGs relevant for libraries in the Czech Republic:

SDG 3. Good Health and Wellbeing: Better, more accessible health systems to increase life-expectancy,

SDG 4. Quality Education: Inclusive education to enable upward social mobility and end poverty,

SDG 10. Reduced Inequalities: Reducing income and other inequalities, within and between countries,

SDG 12. Responsible Consumption and Production: Reversing current consumption trends and promoting a more sustainable future,

SDG 17. Partnerships for the Goals: Revitalize strong global partnerships for sustainable development.

Library Development Strategy 2021-2027 introduces libraries as pillars of civil society and natural community centers, educational and education supporting institutions and curators of cultural and knowledge wealth. This national strategic plan (adopted by the government in July 2020) is directly linked to Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030 - basic document of state administration for sustainable development and improving the quality of life of the population.

In 2019 an informal workgroup “Sustainability in Libraries” was founded (within the Masaryk University project Social Innovation in Libraries, 2017-2020) with the Information Officer of UN Information Centre Prague as one of the founding members. It’s main goal is to raise awareness
Year 2021 was chosen by the Association of Library and Information Professionals of the Czech Republic (SKIP) to be the Year of Sustainability in Libraries.

The main activities consist of:

- year-round educational cycle for libraries on SDGs, officially supported by Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Environment and Czech Commission for UNESCO,
- developing knowledge-base in Trello notice board and website,
- networking of libraries interested in topic: map of libraries, Facebook page and group,
- networking with other organizations and stakeholders: KUMU map of topics, initiatives and inspiration,
- sharing know-how and examples of good practice.

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

Events and Dates

November 21
How Do We Fix eBook Markets? A Discussion on the Future of Libraries and Authorship
Place: Online
Organizer: Knowledge Rights 21 (KR21)

November 24
Tussen bubbel en silo: sporen naar adequate informatie
Place: Brussel, Belgium
Organizer: FELNET

November 29
ConTech 2022: “Shifting from Power to Purpose in the Age of Data”
Place: London, UK / Hybrid
Organizer: ConTech
[contact him by email: g.vitiello at eblida.org]

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

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