



**EBLIDA response to the European Commission's Green Paper:  
Unlocking the potential of cultural and creative industries  
July 2010**

EBLIDA is the European Bureau of Library, Information and Documentation Associations. We are an independent umbrella association of national library, information, documentation and archive associations and institutions in Europe and through our members we represent 90,000 individual libraries in all EU member states and other European countries.

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EBLIDA welcomes the opportunity to comment on the European Commission's Green Paper "*Unlocking the potential of cultural and creative industries*".

According to the definition in KEA's 2006 report for the European Commission, "The Economy of Culture in Europe", libraries form a sub-sector of the Core Arts Field of the cultural sector. They are a non-profit making part of the industry but valuable nonetheless and we believe that any consultation in the field of culture should not ignore them.

Libraries, ranging from public to academic to national libraries, are not only members of the cultural industry who create services and products in their own right, but also key customers of, and providers of support for the staff and activities of other cultural and creative industries. Libraries also provoke ideas and creativity in individuals, provide a stimulating and safe place to work and study, and professional staff support to provide training and guidance in using and exploiting IT and information services.

Libraries stand not only for information but also for inspiration. They form a Europe-wide, in fact global, network, providing the potential to inspire directly and to offer support for other cultural partners. Creative industries already benefit from this network, but it could do much more so if major obstacles were abolished.

The abolishment of these obstacles can be summarized as:

- Providing improved funding and financial stability for libraries.
- Regulating the internal market to support digital services and new business models.
- Making EU policy for libraries and library services.

The return on the investment in libraries has been shown in studies to give significant increases in economic revenue for the local community through their innovative activities and local partnerships. However, this is under-recognized by the bodies from which libraries are

generally funded. Libraries are a powerful and successful tool in supporting creativity and cultural activities and should receive further investment in order to form part of the underpinning services that should be boosted to support creativity and culture in general. Too many libraries are under threat to their funding because the national or local authorities underestimate their contribution to society. The EU could help to stop this trend.

The main hindrance to European creativity, however, is the lack of a well-regulated digital infrastructure. The technology for IT-infrastructure on an EU level exists, the obstacles are regulatory: the lack of legal harmonization between the Member States is an obstacle to the establishment of the necessary infrastructure. For a proper functioning internal market and for new business models to thrive, the problems of territoriality need to be solved.

Creativity depends on access to creative content: creators build on their predecessors' work. This goes for all kinds of creativity, be it within the information industry, education or research, and all kinds of creators whether already working in the CCIs<sup>1</sup> or ordinary citizens of the EU. The internet sets the standard for information access. Most users expect to have the information they need for their work or exploration to be presented to them via their computer. When workers or citizens travel, they expect to be able to access the same resources as they did at home or work on a computer abroad. The most serious obstacle for realizing this vision is the geographical limitations of copyright regulations. Copyright legislation is national legislation.

Research, education and creative work are internationalized. Research is organized in international project groups. For example art and design students are encouraged to supplement their studies with visits to universities abroad, and educational establishments compete for students on a global market. This means that electronic library services need to be able to cross borders, which would technically and organizationally be easy to fulfill. However, copyright legislation is in principle national, based on mutual protection for citizens in those countries which have signed the copyright treaties. This also applies to copyright license agreements. They normally only apply within national boundaries. This is a serious problem for the European Union regarding the realization of the Internal Market. The Information Society Directive (2001/29/EC) was an attempt to solve this problem. But the Directive only harmonized the rights. Exceptions which are in reality the basis for use of the copyrighted material were not harmonized.

The basis for "*Unlocking the potential of culture and creative industries*" is the establishment of an infrastructure for creative workers. This requires a common regulatory framework. The EU will be at a disadvantage until this is accomplished.

The 'Copyright for Creativity'<sup>2</sup> declaration is supported by many libraries in Europe as a legal framework for CCIs by which a balanced, flexible and harmonized system of exceptions would support creativity. It was signed in May 2010 by EBLIDA and other library associations in Europe. A firm response from the EU to this declaration would be a step towards

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<sup>1</sup> CCI = Culture and Creative Industries  
ICT = Information and Communication Technologies

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.copyright4creativity.org>

improving the regulatory framework and answering some of the questions in this consultation.

Libraries are a key link between CCIs and education institutions, businesses and administrations. Libraries can provide a show-case for creative services and products, a neutral forum for the meeting of stakeholders and individuals, and a medium for disseminating ideas and best practice. A Europe-wide library policy would help to better value the benefits of libraries, identify and support best practice and improve the development of the library infrastructure across Europe. Public libraries, university libraries, and national libraries all offer unique cultural and creative services to their community and they support innovation, creativity, entrepreneurship, skills development, lifelong learning and education in their communities. Building on the funding and investment already put into libraries would make effective use of the existing infrastructure. Encouraging national authorities to invest in staff and project funding in line with identified best practice in areas related to the support of CCIs would rapidly improve the ability of the industry to help itself.

EBLIDA invites the European Commission to advance and facilitate the development of the existing library infrastructure for the benefit of European creativity through funding, legislation changes and policy support in order to prompt more innovative and beneficial products and services within and across the EU with the aim of unlocking the potential of culture and creative industries – both within and outside the EU.

**Section 3.1 Question: How to create more spaces and better support for experimentation, innovation and entrepreneurship in the CCIs? More particularly, how to increase access to ICT services in/for cultural and creative activities and improve the use of their cultural content?**

**How could ICTs become a driver of new business models for some CCIs?**

Libraries are a widespread network across Europe and offer through their physical spaces the possibility to meet, to consult, study and explore a rich and varied array of information and ICT services for individuals, organizations and businesses. Improving and supporting this existing library infrastructure across the EU, especially in remote or less-well-funded regions, would create more spaces (both real and digital) for experimentation, innovation and entrepreneurship and would increase access to ICT services – also for individuals and businesses who cannot afford their own.

Public libraries have a clear benefit for society and for the support of creative and cultural activities but must be funded up-front with proper buildings, staff, materials and project funding, not just for digitization but for other cultural services and for supporting and working with other CCI partners.

Libraries buy and create digital cultural content, but access is limited both by contractual agreements with suppliers that restrict access and over-ride exceptions, and by the legal framework that restricts the crossing of national boundaries. Some libraries commercialize their services or self-created content but they tend to be the larger and financially better supported libraries. Commercializing library products and services and identifying potential new business models requires the kind of staff expertise which is currently rare, if non-

existent, in libraries. ICTs could be used as drivers for new business models if libraries could take advantage of staff with the necessary skills to identify potential commercial opportunities and to create business plans for these. Partnerships could be encouraged and librarian training programmes could be envisaged to assist this change in thinking.

### **Section 3.3 Question: How to improve the investment readiness of CCI companies?**

#### **Which specific measures could be taken and at which level (regional, national, European)?**

Librarians are not trained for, and rarely do libraries have individual staff allocated to, obtaining external financing nor commercializing their services and products. EBLIDA suggests this could be improved by encouraging partnerships between libraries and bodies with this knowledge and expertise or between libraries who have current success in this area and others who wish to learn from them, and introducing training opportunities for current and future librarians. Action at regional and national level could help introduce business skills and business partnerships to individual libraries and regional library networks, but Europe-level action would help library networks to share best practice and to spread the ideas and success from the few existing libraries who participate in commercial activities.

### **Section 4.1 Question: How to strengthen the integration of CCIs into strategic regional/local development?**

#### **Which tools and which partnerships are needed for an integrated approach?**

As the opening of new library buildings all over Europe ([www.librarybuildings.info](http://www.librarybuildings.info)) shows, a library is a cultural city mark, a sign of creativity, enhanced by opening up unexpected cross-over partnerships.

Libraries can also support small local businesses giving access to information, databases, and services. They offer an outlet, venue or potential audience for cultural services and products created locally and a gateway to Europe-wide platforms such as Europeana.

Libraries should always be considered as hubs for cultural and creative activities along with other places such as theatres, workshops, etc.

Economic and cultural departments of local authorities need guidance from a national and European level helping to show the benefits of integrating libraries into the regional and local development. They need policy encouragement to understand the investment in a library and support for business and cultural services can have a huge economic return for the region.

### **Section 4.2 Questions: What new instruments should be mobilized to promote cultural diversity through the mobility of cultural and creative works, artists and cultural practitioners within the European Union and beyond?**

#### **To which extent could virtual mobility and online access contribute to these objectives?**

Cultural diversity could be greatly improved and supported through the virtual mobility of creative and cultural works and online access. This means that electronic library services need to be able to cross borders, which would technically and organizationally be easy to fulfill. However, copyright legislation is in principle national, based on mutual protection for citizens in those countries which have signed the copyright treaties. This also applies to copyright license agreements. They normally only apply within national boundaries. This is a serious problem for the European Union regarding the realization of the Internal Market. The Information Society Directive (2001/29/EC) was an attempt to solve this problem. But the Directive only harmonized the rights. Exceptions which are in reality the basis for use of the copyrighted material were not harmonized.

Changes to legislation would increase the mobility and online access to creative and cultural works but would also mean it was possible to better support mobile workers including students, and give access to materials from their own country to support them socially and professionally.

Libraries also offer a platform – both virtual and physical – from which to promote cultural activities and products to diverse audiences thereby helping integration of immigrants and spreading culture. Examples already exist of libraries being used as small theatres and venues where cultural groups can perform. There are also examples where books and newspapers for migrant workers and their families have been circulated between libraries and across national borders. Books and newspapers in their native language help migrant workers retain links back to the country of origin and information about the country of origin can help people of the destination country integrate better with immigrant communities.

#### **Section 4.3 Question: Which tools should be foreseen or reinforced at EU level to promote cooperation, exchanges and trade between the EU CCIs and third countries?**

Libraries need to co-operate in a global information environment, and to take advantage of innovations in others countries. Cutting edge services are developed in individual countries, even in individual libraries and the network to share these, and to learn about others, should be improved through professional library exchanges.

Existing library networks such as EBLIDA could be reinforced and supported to build bridges between EU libraries and their projects, and third countries. Such networks could also help in collecting good practice examples from libraries and in collecting evidence of the benefits that libraries bring to cultural industry in general.

#### **Section 5 Questions: How to accelerate the spill-over effects of CCIs on other industries and society at large? How can effective mechanisms for such knowledge diffusion be developed and implemented?**

**How can 'creative partnerships' be promoted between CCIs and education institutions / businesses / administrations?**

**How to support the better use of existing intermediaries and the development of a variety of intermediaries acting as an interface between artistic and creative**

## **communities and CCIs on the one hand, and education institutions / businesses and administrations, on the other hand?**

Libraries have experience in a wide variety of networks and partnerships, especially in the educational, cultural and social field. They often serve as intermediaries in practice, but are not always recognized as potential partners by businesses, administration and sectors with less experience with libraries. Libraries should be considered in policy and project funding plans as potential partners for creative partnerships. Libraries are existing intermediaries offering platforms etc. as mentioned previously.

Creative partnerships are for example created by new forms of library housing, e.g. in "Kulturhus" in Denmark, combinations of non-profit services (school, library, museum), public (police) and profit services (cafés, bank) are found under one roof. These co-locations, even extended with senior housing, local radio, child care, etc. invite various forms of co-programming, using the entire building and premises, and sharing sources.

A number of libraries also have a writer or artist in residence. Others invite artists to give workshops and master classes with children, seniors etc.

Such successful creative partnerships, which help to understand and make better use of libraries as partners, belong to the best practices and can be promoted through international exchange, seminars and master classes, for all involved. Funds are needed for coordinating the different sector networks on an international basis.

Better use of libraries as CCI's can also be made by looking at the subject of media literacy education. The paper states (p. 18): "Media literacy education is also a very important way to promote citizens' creativity and participation in the cultural life of society". One of the libraries' core activities is promoting media literacy at all levels, and they can be a strong tool for developing personal skills in this field. The same is true for IT and information literacy skills which are also lacking - the former enables a person to use computers and technology but the latter enables them to search for relevant information, value it critically and then to organize and re-use the information found in creative and learning environments.

Librarians are trained and specialized in these information literacy skills but need legislation, regulation and funding to expand and adapt their currently existing, successful courses to make them available more widely and also to workers in other CCIs, and for cross-border settings. They need a sustained policy for combining libraries with, for example, medialab's, which have a supportive role in implementing IT for small CCI's, also on local and regional scales. Together they can then create a sustainable Europe-wide learning exchange platform starting from the existing infrastructure.

Lifelong learning, intercultural dialogue, community building, knowledge based society, information society, partnerships with education – for all these, libraries are key partners having experience, knowledge, skills and a functioning network, - if they can count on sustainable funding and policy support.