



Libraries as information partners in Europe: eliminating frontiers

Community initiatives in establishing support programmes in the field of books and reading are very much welcomed by EBLIDA. The European library community appreciated the adoption of the European Parliament Gutenberg resolution in 1992 and the European Commission campaign 'Reading for Pleasure' in 1993. Unfortunately little has been done in this area since then. The following recommendations have been made by library institutions throughout Europe to initiate new cultural programmes.

I General recommendations

- Since libraries are the information intermediaries of today, they should be recognised as such by the European institutions. Therefore they should be included automatically in every EU programme, as they form an integral part of community life.
- Support should be given to spread the idea of a public information relay network among all European public libraries, to inform the general public on the activities of the European Union, the European Parliament and the European Commission.
- Community action in the cultural field of the promotion of books and reading should be aiming at the following objectives: to combat illiteracy, to stimulate reading, to preserve and conserve the printed word and in general to improve cultural cooperation projects between Member States and with other European countries. The promotion of books and reading by libraries will be enhanced by improving the cultural, social, physical, and technical accessibility to books.

II Recommendations for cooperation within the book sector

- EU programmes should stimulate cooperation within the book sector between libraries, publishers, and booksellers by means of joint projects.
- Joint ventures between publishers and the small publishing houses within the library associations should be stimulated, in order to co-produce publications of little commercial interest. Especially for minority groups like the deaf, people with reading difficulties, the mentally handicapped, second language teaching, and so on. The specific needs of people with disabilities and minority groups must also be recognised by integrating their needs in existing programmes and not by creating new programmes which will broaden the gap between different groups of population.

III Recommendations on vocational training and exchange of experience

- With the emergence of new technologies in a multimedia society, library professionals need further training in order to keep up-to-date with the demands of the library user. The exchange of experience with professionals from other countries is of vital importance. Grants and scholarships for librarians and library student exchanges are needed.
- The European book sector should also be encouraged to cooperate and to exchange experience on a cultural level with other countries outside the EU.

IV Recommendations to improve cultural access to books

- Foreign literature in the original language and in translated form should be available in public libraries to demonstrate the diversity of the cultures in Europe, to promote language learning and to preserve and foster the lesser used languages. A starting point for broader European cooperation could be established by circulating collections of books,

novels and short stories in a wide range of European languages.

- A specific programme for library networking and cultural events should be initiated along the lines of the [Kaleidoscope Scheme](#).
- Translation schemes are important for the dissemination of European cultures, especially for the lesser used languages. Therefore special attention should be given to the professional training of translators.

V To enhance the social accessibility of books and cultural heritage

- To combat illiteracy, the promotion of reading should be directed at children. It is essential to start as early as possible. Story telling, childrens' book promotions and festivals are excellent examples for promotion. Cooperation between parents, schools and public libraries is necessary. The European Theatre Reading Day and the Hans Christian Andersen Day are good examples of multidisciplinary cooperation in a European setting. Such programmes should continue and require EU support.
- To promote reading among the most disadvantaged people in society, an Easy-to-Read database should be set up to monitor and encourage the production of appropriate reading and audio-visual materials accessible to persons with reading difficulties. This database should be made available in all Member States as appropriate.

VI Recommendations on physical accessibility of books and other media

- The necessity of a good public library infrastructure by branch libraries and mobile libraries, with a view to putting people in touch with books and with new technologies. Especially in areas where library facilities are non-existent or inadequate, in rural or isolated areas and in areas with low reading levels. The nature of the stock should be relevant to the social and cultural profile of the areas concerned.
- A wide selection of books and non-book materials (e.g. talking books, multimedia and videos) should be readily available to all EU citizens through the assistance of public libraries in every possible environment: at school, at work, at home, in the hospital, etcetera.

VII Recommendations to improve technical access to books and other media

- To develop a browsing and selection mechanism for collections in each European language, for instance through databases or by co-producing CD-ROMs with European libraries and publishers.
- To connect European libraries via networks, and to connect them to other sectors of the book industry. To set up a database on new released publications in the EU.

We hope that you will discuss these recommendations with your political group and within the Cultural Committee. A European Parliament report on the information services of libraries in Europe, in close cooperation with other sectors of the book industry, has not been done yet. This would greatly support both the European citizens and the book sector.

The Hague, November 1995

