

THINK THE UNTHINKABLE

**A post Covid-19 European Library Agenda
meeting Sustainable Development Goals and
funded through the European Structural and
Investment Funds (2021-2027)**

(September 2020)



EBLIDA
The European Bureau of Library,
Information and Documentation
Associations

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Foreword

The Report [“Think the unthinkable - A post Covid-19 European Library Agenda meeting Sustainable Development Goals and funded through the European Structural and Investment Funds \(2021-2027\)”](#) aggregates three reports already released by the EBLIDA European Sustainability House in the first half of 2020. All reports were based on direct input provided by our Members to various Surveys elaborated by the EBLIDA Secretariat.

The first report, [“A European library agenda for the post-Covid 19 age”](#) explores the new library normals and detects library policies and trends during Covid-19 with an attempt to keep separate library activities based on Covid-related contingent factors – which hopefully will not replicate – from library activities and trends that will become permanent in the post-Covid 19 age.

EBLIDA identifies five new normals for a European Library Agenda in the post-Covid-19 age:

- Exponential social distancing: a well-connected two-meter library;
- Technologies are mutating and shaping libraries in new ways;
- Uncharted economic territory: review the library budget composition;
- Library governance at central and local levels;
- Do not forget the climate change opportunity and threat.

The second report, [“European Structural and Investment Funds 2021-2027: Funding opportunities for Libraries”](#), describes a potentially strategic and considerable source of income for libraries which may offer a solution for strained library budgets in 2021, and beyond.

Finally, [“Sustainable Development Goals and libraries. First European Report”](#) focuses on the scope of libraries’ activities and emphasises the need for European libraries to set the 2030 Agenda on sustainable development as a possible framework for an extended concept of the library.

The three combined reports are going to update the [EBLIDA Matrix](#), now available on the EBLIDA website. The reason for drafting the “Think the unthinkable” Report is easy to understand. We are living hard times with little certitudes ahead of us – first and foremost: what will be the future of libraries after Covid-19 crisis? This uncertainty translates itself into a quest for identity based on several hard questions. Will libraries revert to the past after the crisis and smoothly re-integrate assets and roles they were used to hold and play? How will they overcome the financial storm which is now affecting all European societies , to a bigger or lesser extent? And will the Covid-19 outbreak imply further divide in library development among European states, and among regions in the same State?

It is very likely that the resilience and eventual survival of European libraries will not be left to the fittest, but to those libraries which will be able to innovate, cooperate, learn from others and be open to non-library actors. This line of action can highly benefit from the progress of the Agenda 2030 in libraries in a Europe that is smarter, greener, more connected, more social and closer-to-its-citizens - the five objectives of the 2021-2027 European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF). ESI Funds are now being negotiated with national and regional stakeholders with crucial decisions to be taken at the very moment this report is being released. If libraries expect to play a role in ESIF, in Europe, and more in general in the 2020-2030 decade, they have to focus on the social, creative, innovative, technological and participative nature of their cultural action. Libraries and sustainable development, and sustainable development in libraries funded by ESIF – this is the realistic strategy libraries could and should embrace, also in the light of the uncertain prospects dictated by post-Covid.

To do that, libraries have to show courage, drive and determination. In an appeal launched during the Covid-19 crisis, Mr Enrico Giovannini, former Minister of Labour and now Spokeperson of the Italian Alliance for Sustainable Development ([ASviS](#)), has invited organisations working on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda to “think the unthinkable”. The devastating results of the Covid-19 crisis can only find positive solutions thanks to an unprecedented effort made by organisations and individuals. This effort must be imaginative, open to new solutions and cannot be treading conventional paths – which will not be practicable anyhow after the Covid-19 crisis.

This Report gives a few examples on how the unthinkable comes true in European libraries. At the end of March 2020 the National Library of Lithuania, in cooperation with some 50 libraries, started the production of 3D printed face masks in cooperation with the Robotics School. The release of 58 new 3D printers for the major public libraries of Lithuania was envisaged under ESI Funds 2014-2020; what was unthinkable is that they would be applied for prevention against Covid-19. Also visionary is the policy proposed by CCB (Council of Library Cooperation) in Spain to re-think the whole of the Spanish library system as an institutional engine designed to attain SDG 5: Gender equality.

“Think the unthinkable” is partly a list of best practices, partly an agenda for European libraries, and certainly no book of dreams. It is a practical instrument which should help professionals all over Europe to develop library strategies that are in line with sustainability plans and regional/national/European objectives. It is also a practical Guide on how to be familiar with ESI Funds through the use of the EBLIDA Matrix.

I hope that this Report will trigger further cooperation and change in libraries. Let’s join our efforts in thinking the unthinkable.

Ton van Vlimmeren
President EBLIDA

1. Introduction: The aim of the present paper and library policies after the Covid-19 crisis

In March 2020, Mr António Guterres, UN Secretary General, launched a Call for Solidarity aiming to face “a global health crisis that is spreading human suffering, infecting the global economy and upending people’s lives.”¹ The spread of Covid-19 has exposed the danger and fallacy of cutting spending for public health services. All countries are re-prioritizing their agendas; it is expected that public policies, including cultural and educational policies, will be reshuffled. As an organisation working in the European field, EBLIDA is closely monitoring these developments and is exploring ways through which libraries may align with new priorities in a proactive way.

In response to this appeal, EBLIDA created a “[Checklist for Library Associations and Libraries in the Face of Covid-19 Crisis](#)”. The checklist aimed to showcase the effort made by libraries in Europe to compensate for the harmful effects of the Covid-19 outbreak on human beings. It also aimed to indicate a way forward for libraries now entering the post-Covid-19 Phase. The European Union is setting up a panoply of financial and operational instruments to get out of the current predicament. EU action, however, has to be complemented by the professional effort in a common and cohesive endeavour.

As for libraries, it is hard to believe that things will revert to a business-as-usual mode once the pandemic is over. One of the ways to provide impulsion to the library sector is to integrate library policies into the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) of the European Union. ESIF is a strange case in the library world. They are used for large investments in infrastructural projects and should be perceived among the most crucial financial opportunity for libraries. Unfortunately, they are possibly the worst known among European programmes. This is probably due to an exceedingly structured implementation process, which results in a partnership agreement made by the European Commission, each Member State and, within Member States, regional and local stakeholders.

The European Structural Funds conjure up ideas of a cohesive Europe based on hard infrastructure: railway corridors, motor highways, broadband wirelines, subsidies to farmers. According to this perspective, ESI Funds would deal with cars and wagons, plants and cows, cables and labels, and they would know nothing about human souls and cultural needs. It is true that big ESIF money is invested in the construction of a European large scale infrastructure. But the image of ESIF discarding culture in general, and libraries in particular, is false. Not only do the ESI Funds take into consideration the cultural dimension of the Cohesion Policy of the European Union. They also show that a large amount of money is devoted to the improvement of the cultural infrastructure and that this money is normally spent in a wise and effective way.

The aim of this Report is to show that, despite this basic legal impediment, ESI Funds do take cultural policies, and library policies, into account. The inclusion of library projects and policies may be expressed in a “hidden” form, for instance as implementation of a policy objective which does not seem to be at the core of library missions. National policies for library development, therefore, should look more closely at ESI Funds and on the way they work and are implemented.

The optimal framework through which library projects can be implemented within ESIF is the European 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. For years, public and research library policies have solely nestled within the framing of cultural and educational/research policies. In the last twenty years,

¹ Secretary-General Remarks on COVID-19: A Call for Solidarity 19 March 2020, https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sg_remarks_on_covid-19_english_19_march_2020.pdf.

however, the mission of libraries has expanded and the “social” function of a library is emerging as a core mission. The “social” library is the one where cultural integration and social inclusion become ordinary activities: non formal and informal learning are an important part of lifelong learning and people of all ages are helped to develop their skills and knowledge.² But a social library can only expand within a larger framework which looks both at Europe and at local needs. Through the EBLIDA Matrix, available on the EBLIDA Website,³ EBLIDA has shown how important it is for libraries to adopt a European approach to the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. With the “Think the unthinkable” Report, EBLIDA hopes to spur library projects inspired by European policies, but also to closely meet the local needs of libraries.

In order to show the link between a post-Covid 19 library agenda on the one hand, and SDGs and ESI Funds on the other, we have followed an approach that is both descriptive and analytical. In the first chapter we report about the results of the EBLIDA inquiry concerning the state of the art of European libraries during and after the Covid-19 crisis together with medium- and long term perspectives. A paragraph on learned lessons describing possible trends of European libraries in the post-Covid 19 age is followed by a set of operational recommendations. The following Chapter provides for a plural definition of a library, both professional and functional. The professional definition is the one that is present in main professional documents (for instance the IFLA-UNESCO Public Library Manifesto, 1994, and the Council of Europe /EBLIDA Guidelines on Library Legislation and Policy in Europe, 2000) and is also emerging in internal, more recent documents, as the Interim Report on Library Legislation and Policy in Europe, soon to be published.⁴ The functional definition of a library is two-fold. The first is related to the cultural pillar of the 2030 Agenda and its relation to the UN SDG social, economic and environmental pillars. The second definition is in connection with the vision of Europe that is inscribed in the five ESIF objectives.

The Report continues with a presentation of ESI Funds and their implementation scheme. This part of the Report has a descriptive nature and is largely a compilation extracted from official EU documentation. The description of the ESI Funds is drawn from the EU website; the mechanics and dynamics of ESIF implementation are taken from two official EU reports illustrating the cultural dimension of the ESI Funds 2007-2013 and 2014-2020. Special attention is devoted to the presentation of ESI Funds 2021-2027 and the list of 21 ESIF 2021-2027 specific objectives, as they represent the directions along which Europe will progress in the next decade and the way this vision is interpreted by local actors. It is worth remembering that administrators are now making choices that are determining the future of what accounts for a third of the EU budget. The opportunity for libraries to be present in this European vision lies in the hands of librarians, library policy-makers and national/local administrators. Librarians should be able to decline the professional definition of a library into a functional perspective and national and local administrators should be able to identify in libraries one of the links of the ESIF value chain.

Similar to ESIF, the UN SDG Agenda does not include culture as an explicit Goal, despite the fact that the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda is a matter of life-style and individual cultural changes. Cultural objectives are present only in several UN SDG Targets. “Think the unthinkable” presents the European 2030 Agenda for libraries in four paragraphs. The first deals with the rationale

² Directorate – General for Internal policies – Policy Department B. Public Libraries – their new role – Workshop, by Barbara Lison and Natascha Reip (Co-Author), Frank Huysmans, Dan Mount, IP/B/CULT/IC/2016-023/26/26 July 2016, p. 11.

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/585882/IPOL_STU\(2016\)585882_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/585882/IPOL_STU(2016)585882_EN.pdf)
<https://www.ifla.org/publications/node/10546>

³ EBLIDA Matrix: <http://www.eblida.org/activities/the-eblida-matrix.html>.

⁴ EBLIDA-Service du Livre et de la lecture (Ministère de la Culture). Library Legislation and Policy in Europe. Interim Report (soon to be released).

for a European approach to the Library 2030 Agenda. The European contribution is clearly ambitious: it concerns the European Green Deal and its ambition to be climate-neutral by 2050 – an economy with net-zero greenhouse gas emissions. It also deals with highly ambitious social and economic objectives – which are going to be even more essential in the post Covid-19 crisis. The approach for Europe adopted in this Report focusses on flagship projects, European policies and library indicators. EBLIDA is supporting this vision in two ways. The first are the tools, the services and the training provided by the EBLIDA European Sustainability House. The second is individual consultancy for our Members.

The final Chapter present the conclusions of the Report through a synoptic Table linking ESIF 2021-2027 specific objectives with SD Goals, on the one hand, and European library policies and projects on the others. This Table matches information extracted from EU official reporting with information extracted from the reports sent to the Secretariat by EBLIDA Members. The ESIF-SDG matching is based on the analogies in wordings and objectives present in the two large-scale programmes; libraries can use these suggestions to devise SDG-oriented concrete projects for which requesting related ESIF funding.

Two Appendices are included in this Report. The first describes how EBLIDA members and European libraries can use the EBLIDA Matrix in an optimal way. The second appendix reports on a selection of library policies present in the EBLIDA “Sustainable Development Goals and Libraries – First European Report.

Readers of the “Think the Unthinkable” Report are Cultural Policy Administrators in Public Administrations, Library Directors and general managers, and library mid-managers in charge of research and development and/or SDG-oriented services. We hope that the first will use libraries as an instrument for a broader coverage of their social, economic, environmental and cultural policies; the second will get inspiration for library planning and operations; and the third will feel how the events, perhaps circumscribed in time and space, are chains of a much larger strategy which opens new horizons to library work.

Paraphrasing the well-known statement ascribed to Jean Monnet - *If I were to do it again from scratch, I would start with culture* – we may come to the conclusion that if EBLIDA were to start its Europe-wide library action from scratch, it would start from the European Structural Funds.

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The EBLIDA Secretariat

2. A Post Covid-19 European Library Agenda

Between March and May 2020, libraries all over Europe were locked down in different modalities. All of them provided minimal library services. For a library being closed is much more than the opposite of being open. Access to collections, service availability, human inclusion and librarians' attitude - all in a library speaks the language of openness. To be closed for a library is a non-identity clause. It is the paradox of this crisis. Normally during crisis the library is an information centre and a safe haven for citizens. In this crisis however the library cannot act as a gathering point for sharing stories, answering questions and be a hub in the community.

In order to monitor the state of libraries during the Covid-19 crisis, EBLIDA created a "Checklist for library associations and libraries in the face of Covid-19 crisis" and initiated a survey which involved 17 European countries. The aim of the survey was not only to showcase the effort made by libraries in Europe to mitigate the harmful effects of the Covid-19 outbreak on human beings. It also pointed the way forward for libraries entering the post-Covid-19 age.

The main objective was to find a common strategy in the face of Covid-19 and also to detect the legacy left by library policies and trends during Covid-19 and to keep separate library activities based on contingent factors – which hopefully will not replicate – from library activities and trends that will become permanent in the post-Covid 19 age.

The resulting report "A European library agenda for the post-Covid 19 age", published in May 2020, clarified possible outcomes of the Covid-19 crisis and provided for the solutions which were received from, and are offered to, EBLIDA Members and European libraries as a whole. This report comes together with an analysis of the risks and challenges and a set of recommendations which should be considered the EBLIDA Agenda for European Libraries in the Post-Covid 19 age.

The post-Covid 19 library agenda is not a stand-alone programme but complements the experience matured by libraries in implementing the Agenda 2030 for sustainable development. The engagement of European libraries in this broader framework is the mirror in which libraries can prove how "structurally" essential they are for the social and economic development of a country in the post-Covid 19 age. Hence, the link with the European Structural and Investment Funds.

With an easy metaphor we can describe the relation between the Post-Covid 19 library Agenda, the implementation of sustainable development goals in libraries and their link with ESI Funds as the making of a car, where the agenda is the engine, sustainable development is the chassis and ESI Funds may be the fuel.

EBLIDA has identified five new normals for a European Library Agenda in the post-Covid-19 age:

1. Exponential social distancing: a well-connected two-meter library;
2. Technologies are mutating and shaping libraries in new ways;
3. Uncharted economic territory: review the library budget composition;
4. Library governance at central and local levels;
5. Do not forget the climate change opportunity and threat.

In the following lines, we shall describe possible activities to be given priority during the post-Covid phase together with a set of recommendations. These recommendations will be linked with the 2030 Agenda and a few tables where library activities are matched with SDGs and the financial opportunities provided by the European Structural and Investment Funds 2021-2027.

2.1 Library resilience combined with innovation

Access policies, personnel security, social distancing and sanitation of collections

During and after the Covid-19 crisis, there were strong derogations to the otherwise indivisible principle of universal access to library collections and services. Derogation to human rights in time of public emergency are envisaged under Article 15 of the European Convention of Human Rights only “to the extent strictly required by the exigencies of the situation” and with measures that should not be “disproportionate to the strict requirements of the situation”.⁵ Therefore, when libraries deliver public information about their reduced or limited services, a reminder should clearly state that these derogations are limited in time and scope.

The new normal in library practices concerns access policies, personnel security, social distancing and sanitation of collections. Rules and regulations have been, and will be, driven by three factors: a) national health regulations; b) risk perception, which varies from one country to another; c) the size and the arrangement of library spaces.

EBLIDA has diffused recommendations and guidelines for handling physical material in libraries enacted in several European libraries and countries.⁶ Interestingly enough, these recommendations are in line as far as basic points are concerned (for instance the 72-hours isolation for books after they are returned). On other points, however, they follow different perspectives. In the Netherlands, for instance, detailed instructions concern procedural rules for the different categories of people who access libraries. In Ireland and Italy more emphasis is put on the handling of physical collections. As for Germany, the experience of the Public Library of Cologne focusses on organisational aspects.

Also worth a mention is the fact that library spaces and offices are being re-designed in order to reduce the risk of creating crowds. Library rooms are full of separations and well-spaced desks instead of crowded open spaces. Common areas like canteens and meeting rooms have fewer chairs and log information about the last time they were cleaned. Cleaning policies are frequently updated.

In the longer term, in order to avoid touching handles and pressing buttons, all doors in libraries may open automatically and you might tell the elevator which floor you would like to go. This trend may have a long-term effect also on library architecture, with the architecture of library buildings being revised in light of the need to modulate open access spaces and re-design them in case of an outbreak. Social distancing and the 2-meter society may have a strong impact on the concept of a “complete self-service” or unstaffed library and on the responsibility of a facility being used by patrons without direct human surveillance.

Since library services could not be performed onsite, a home delivery service was often activated with book packages to be picked up at the door. Library services were fine-tuned to meet customers’ needs under extreme circumstances. As a result, new services have been implemented; reviewing a few of them provides but a small grasp of how creativity has reigned and flourished amidst these trying circumstances.

With a view to combating fake news on Covid-19 and to providing a one-stop access to information, the most common service in European libraries has been the creation of platforms ensuring centralised access to Covid-19 related health information produced by governmental authorities, health institutes

⁵ European Court of Human Rights. Derogation in time of emergency (April 2020). https://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/FS_Derogation_ENG.pdf.

⁶ See for instance, <http://www.eblida.org/news/april-newsletter-special-issue3.html>; more guidelines have been published in most recent Newsletter issues.

and the World Health Organisation. The Cyprus Association of Librarians and Information Specialists created its own webpage and so did all other library associations engaged in health information. The French Library Association released a padlet to gather Covid-related information and in Portugal, the library association channelled Covid-related information through a flipboard-based platform, which included official or newspaper sources and exposed fake news related to the subject. In Sweden the platform was created by the National Library. In Ireland, librarians have been heavily involved in a national Covid-19 support service - 'Community Call' delivered via phone, text and email which provides support ranging from a friendly voice to talk to, organising food, transport and medicine and signposting information together with online classes and other wellbeing supports. And in the Bibliothèques Municipales de Genève it has been possible to “borrow” a librarian online.

Social media was used to offer story time (in Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Spain) through Facebook groups and YouTube profiles, or also for library exchange and (re-)use of digital products (Bulgaria). Sometimes, stories were distributed through library websites, for instance in Switzerland, Germany and in many other countries; digital storytelling as a new library services is rather popular in Germany.

More advanced services concerned elderly people in lockdown, who were reached by telephone calls and storytelling. In some cases, for instance in Finland, libraries also delivered food when necessary. In the Netherlands, the library association has been negotiating with the association of local councils library guidelines aimed to support education for those kids who cannot access online teaching from home or who are in vulnerable home circumstances. Librarians are engaged in all kinds of different roles and tasks. They deliver books to elderly people at home, they organise foodbanks in towns and collections for day care centres, they collaborate with schools taking care of the children of people working in vital services, they call elderly patrons to have a chat and check if they need reading materials.

Automatic door opening, voice commands in elevators, homeworking, tele-libraries and online help desks will very likely be the new normals for libraries. Searching library catalogues will be done by voice command. Many of these adjustments, however, are just accelerations of already existing trends in real estate, industrial relations, and office automation.

The effects of social distancing can be offset by a transformative and adaptive library, able to fill social differences and bridge digital gaps. In order to do that, however, libraries need to monitor the movements taking place in their functional domains and exert full control over the data produced within their space and concerning their operations.

In some European libraries, activities were even further integrated into national health policies. In Lithuania and, to a lesser extent, France and Portugal, libraries helped produce 3D printed face masks for healthcare workers in response to the growing demand for protective equipment. In other countries, like Ireland, libraries were so tightly integrated into national health policies during the Covid-19 crisis that equipment was donated to hospitals, online lectures and interactive workshops were provided in collaboration with mental health services and care boxes with reading material were delivered to vulnerable members of the community, producing oral history and online projects archiving the present. In Ireland, librarians were taking on new roles to support the national response which includes contact tracing of confirmed Covid cases. In a state of the nation address on St Patrick's Day, the Irish Prime minister, Leo Varadkar, specifically mentioned librarians together with the news that additional funding for e-books would be allocated due to unprecedented demands.

Mask production and some of the mentioned initiatives may stop soon – and this is good news. These initiatives, however, can be considered the historical legacy of the Covid-19 crisis for future library emergencies. They show library resilience and their ability to promptly meet an acute demand for empathy expressed by their communities in case of need. The concept of the library as a community

resource, and not a book reservoir, has been steadily growing for years. What matters, however, is the direction rather than the function. During the Covid-19 crisis there has been a strong acceleration of all these trends with a considerable number of new digital services.

Technologies are mutating and shaping libraries in new ways

Libraries promoted access to online resources via their websites pointing to platforms of e-books, and e-media. Statistics concerning the use of digital platforms in March-April 2020 compared to the same period in the previous year show that the use of platforms - such as divibib and Overdrive in Germany, MLOL in Italy, etc. - has increased exponentially during the Covid-19 crisis, with an avalanche effect of library websites pointing to national digital platforms and a dense interchange between collections and connectedness.

Access to digital resources rocketed instead in public libraries, as the following examples demonstrate:

- **In Estonia**, where there is no national e-book lending system, the Tallinn Central Library opened its e-lending system to the public at large and scored a 1,400 % increase in e-lending in the period between 13 March – 19 April 2020 compared to the same period in the previous year, with the number of registered users going from 373 in 2019 (March-April 2019) to almost 10,000 (same period, 2020). In Estonian state libraries, increases were less consistent, but still significant: 45 % in comparison to the same period;
- **In Ireland**, digital services provided by the public library sector and freely accessible to everyone witnessed a considerable rise in the week commencing 29 March compared to the week commencing 1st of March. Figures broken down by area show the following increases: an increase of 313% in new users of e-books and e-audiobooks service, of 467% and 227% in, respectively, e-learning courses and language courses being taken, 246% in usage of the online newspapers/e-magazines. As a result of this increase in demand, the Irish government has purchased an additional €200,000 worth of e-books;
- **In France**, a flash-enquiry carried out by the Ministry of Culture on a significant sample of libraries showed that the demand for digital resources boomed in 68% of the libraries included in the sample, with reported increases of 200 and 300 % in the number of connections (and also 1,500 % increase in a library for a video on demand service targeted at young people). In 79 % of departmental libraries (in small rural and municipality libraries) the growth of registered users was also reported to be significant;⁷
- **In Italian libraries**, e-book circulation increased by 104% from 24 February to 24 March (against an average annual increase of 20 %);⁸
- In Luxembourg, access to the collection of 620,000 e-books in German, English and French offered for free through a reader card by the National Library increased by 40 % in March and 78 % in April 2020;
- **In Norway**, all platforms providing access to digital services worked at full speed and new ones were being created for e-lending. In the biggest Norwegian county, Viken, from March, 12th to April, 15th e-lending increased by 139% also because a new platform was started;
- **In Latvia**, the total number of unique users of the periodicals portal has doubled while concurrent users are 5 times greater on average than before. As a whole, the Latvian national digital library has witnessed an increase of new users by 61 % (and 70 % in terms of sessions);

⁷ <https://www.culture.gouv.fr/Sites-thematiques/Livre-et-Lecture/Actualites/Enquete-l-impact-de-la-crise-sanitaire-Covid-19-sur-l-offre-numerique-des-bibliotheques-des-bibliotheques-territoriales>.

⁸ Lorenzo Baldacchini. Le biblioteche ai tempi del virus, <http://aibnotizie.aib.it/le-biblioteche-ai-tempi-del-virus/>.

- **And in Switzerland**, the platform e-bibliomedia (run by Bibliomedia Switzerland), with literature in French and English, almost doubled its loans in April 2020.

All kinds of digital initiatives have experienced a boost. In Bulgaria, traditional meetings with poets and writers went online through social media – Facebook and Instagram (e.g. Poetry without Quarantine initiative, Sofia City Library and the International Children’s Book Day – 2 April). Digital resources offered by French libraries include self-training, video on demand, music, press, e-books. In Sweden, many public libraries provide online services, such as free e-books and audiobooks in different languages. In the Netherlands, the Royal Library launched the “Library at Home” programme with 100 e-book titles for free to everyone. By law, the Dutch Online Library is only fully accessible for those who pay an annual membership fee of €42 or more, but many libraries reduced the fee. This created additional use of the Online Library; both local libraries and the Royal Library put in a lot of effort into helping everyone to access the service. Also in the Netherlands, some libraries held workshops, talk shows and lectures through live streaming even when closed to the public; they made the most out of technologies in order to maintain contact with, and find new ways of, reaching out to citizens.

In order to overcome the contingent nature of the shift in demand for digital resources, a critical factor is the quality of the relationship between publishers and libraries and how prices for digital publications will level off in spite of the library’s increasing demand. No changes have been detected in contractual conditions for the delivery of e-copies in public libraries; only the National Library of Latvia managed to come to an agreement with the Latvian Copyright and Communication Agency and the Latvian Authors’ Association in relation to the offer of e-periodicals and e-books. In Sweden, the platform of e-periodicals was offered for free for a limited period of time.

Another key determinant of the spectacular increase in access to digital platforms has been distance-learning in schools and universities. Distance-learning has generated positive externalities in libraries during the Covid-19 crisis but their effects may not be long-lasting; after all, it is not taken for granted that school children will continue to use distance-learning in school intensively and that universities will drop taught classes in the post-Covid 19 age.

The consolidation of digital trends in libraries in the post-Covid-19 age can be seen in two complementary frames of reference: a strictly cultural perspective and a broader societal vision.

The strictly cultural perspective concerns music, performing arts and live performance. The Covid-19 has dealt a fatal blow to the organisations and enterprises operating in these fields. The ecosystem built around a concert or a theatre production may be amplified through the creation of post-production events which can be distributed in libraries at local level and help capture and retain the attention of the public. When they get a grip on live performances, ministries of culture and/or local cultural actors may contemplate the capillary distribution of library networks as an integral part of the live performance ecosystem and re-design the system of local aids, fiscal incentives, policy measures and other form of culture subsidies in a broader holistic perspective.

In a broader sense, and much closer to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, a society pivoting around social distancing may end up creating negative requirements leading to social exclusion. European libraries will have to look at the scale, the scope, the learning objectives and the virtual dimension of their activities. The implementation of high tech and AI tools in libraries may be a strong incentive to re-modulate the European library agenda towards sustainable development. A critical factor for libraries aimed to shape technologies is also the control of the data produced within the library ecosphere. Access to data concerning movement of people, resources and equipment need to be transparent for policy-making and data-sharing purposes.

2.2 Lessons to be learned from the Covid 19 crisis

What does it mean for a library to be closed? If libraries are community hubs, the first lesson to be learned is that this library function is easily lost if the communities they refer to are not circulating. Library configurations resulting from the introduction of public health measures entail a new library “atlas”, to use Lankes’ expression:⁹ it is not easy to run, or to re-invent, a library in a generalised two-meter society where events are forbidden, 75 % of chairs are removed, services to customers have to comply with social distancing rules and library’s outreach is restricted in many ways. And why is it that if library activities are considered “essential”, “vital”, “key” for society, they can be locked down when confronted with the acid test of the Covid-19?

The most frequent response during the crisis has been resorting to digital media in order to channel library information. Therefore, the second lesson to be learned is that libraries should build up contingency plans in case of disasters affecting society and make attempts to work on a reaching their communities in a blended way (physical and digital), with the ability to shift from physical to distance or vice versa, should one not be possible. Unfortunately, this long-term vision may be illusory and, to a certain extent, misleading for a series of reasons.

Users that are at the targets of the two channels - physical vs digital – are not the same, rather the opposite. The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted a new digital divide between the have and the have-nots, in terms of access to broadband, equipment, digital literacy skills, quality technical support, online content designed to enable and encourage self-sufficiency, participation and collaboration.¹⁰ Furthering technological inclusion, digital literacy, non-formal and informal learning is a big challenge for libraries which have to revise the scale, the scope, the learning objectives and the virtual dimension of their operations to make this happen. It is a fact that targeted communities are not easily interchangeable and, when one of the two channels is missing – the physical channel to the detriment of the digital, and the other way round – a great number of library users become out of the library’s reach.

Contingency plans conjure up scenarios where society is fully re-designed as in the case of a war or, as for Covid-19, of a viral disease having wide-ranging effects on human lives. But there are also small-scale, sectoral disasters which can be just as calamitous for libraries. During the crisis libraries increased their offer of digital content and doubled or tripled the number of accesses to their digital platforms. Even more spectacular, albeit less transparent, has been the expansion of digital platforms made available by Big Tech companies. This is well demonstrated by their performance on the stock exchange markets at the time of the Covid-19.¹¹

⁹ R. David Lankes. Atlas of new librarianship. MIT Press, 2011.

¹⁰ <https://www.kb.se/samverkan-och-utveckling/nytt-fran-kb/nyheter-samverkan-och-utveckling/2020-04-08-svens-ka-dags-tid-ning-ar-till-gang-li-ga-for-alla-under-coro-nakrisen.html>

¹¹ Widely reported in the press; see for instance: [Robin Wigglesworth](#), How Big Tech got even bigger in the Covid-19 era, Financial Times, 1 May 2020, <https://www.ft.com/content/d2e09235-b28e-438d-9b55-0e6bab7ac8ec>; Naomi Klein, How big tech plans to profit from the pandemic, <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2020/may/13/naomi-klein-how-big-tech-plans-to-profit-from-coronavirus-pandemic>, The Guardian, 13 May 2020; Netflix stock up 14% in 2020 at \$375 despite COVID-19; is it sustainable?, Forbes, 2 April 2020, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/greatspeculations/2020/04/02/netflix-stock-up-14-in-2020-at-375-despite-covid-19-is-it-sustainable/>.

Quite rightly, open access is a dogma for libraries since it allows them to fulfil their role of non-commercial, universal distributors of cultural and educational content. Now, imagine a scenario where Big Techs and content service providers (from Google to Netflix, and from Amazon to Apple) start offering aggregated cultural products – films, books, educational content, etc. – at extremely attractive prices or as a freemium offer combined with add-on paid-for services. Instead of libraries, Big Tech companies may start taking the lead in the universal distribution of content and, once they have reached monopolistic or oligopolistic positions in this market, use their dominant position to set prices and the terms of their offer from a position of strength. “Big deals” may be offered to users in conjunction with other non-cultural services, thus undermining the scope of library action and their universal mission. Therefore, the second lesson to be learned from the Covid-19 crisis – resorting to digital platforms in order to enhance library services - has to be inflected in relation to short- and long-term visions: if in the short-term the digital channel has magnified library resilience in a calamitous time, in the long-term, it is not taken for granted that public libraries will continue performing the role they have been able to play so far. E-lending and the rules allowing libraries to continue practicing it are therefore of fundamental importance for the future of public libraries.

Libraries have to take stock of the activities implemented during the Covid-19 crisis; after all, they may be useful for the next emergency. The third lesson learned is that libraries should be able to decouple connectivity and technology: it is not because they are technology-intensive that libraries are in the position of mastering the technologies they use. Libraries need to monitor the movements taking place in their functional domains and exert full control on the data produced within their space and concerning their operations. In other words, they have to master data produced by the technologies used in their operational arena or at least, when this is not possible because of privacy laws, this data should be shared with library policy-makers as much as possible.

Scaling up library activities by expanding their scope, enhancing learning objectives by emphasising the virtual dimension, data control – all this requires money. It would be a mistake to scale down R&D investments in future library agendas: the challenge is to integrate traditional “core” library activities with sustainable development and investment in digital resources and high tech / AI tools. More than ever, library economics is therefore crucial. If librarians do not start taking action, administrators and politicians will play a key role in the post-Covid-19 age with their usual glossary of restructuring, core investments, financial cuts and pruning non-essential library branches. If this comes true, the whole scaffolding built in the last decades on the concept of libraries as “third” and/or “meeting place” may get lost. The fourth lesson learned is that libraries should maintain their focus on sustainable development goals and R&D, in spite of possible financial cuts generated from the contraction of national GDPs.

A good crisis should never be wasted. The post-Covid-19 Agenda cannot delay or dilute the 2030 European Agenda for Sustainable Development or exchange recovery against funding provided for polluting and unsustainable activities (high carbon emission companies and health-damaging industries) to the detriment of activities addressing vulnerable people and the left-behind. During the Covid-19 crisis the most effective and impressive action has been developed towards the elderly and vulnerable in lockdown. Covid-19 support service consisting of “community calls” delivered via phone, text, email and through platforms, the provision of face masks for healthcare workers through 3D printers, food delivery where and when necessary - these services showed library empathy towards the communities they refer to - and this is the fifth and most important lesson to be learned at the inception of the post-Covid age.

2.3 Thinking the unthinkable: recommendations for a post-Covid 19 library agenda

During the Covid 19 crisis practically all European libraries and library associations provided health information services. A good number of them, however, departed from the narrow concept of libraries as information service supplier and developed a wide range of social activities aimed at vulnerable people. In spite of social distancing and requirements limiting people's access to library premises, advanced and/or new direct services to users were engineered. In the aftermath of the Covid 19 pandemic, a European library agenda should progress around three main axes:

- A. A social axe, aimed to strengthen library links with the communities they refer to;
- B. A technological axe, with an enriched offer of digital services and a seamless ability to reach a broader range of users;
- C. A governance axe, with new models and more flexibility in adapting library structures to diversified sources of income.

In regard to the social axe, a European library agenda should:

- 1) To a greater or lesser extent, libraries have been integrated into national health policies during the Covid 19 crisis. Activities in the health (information) field should be preserved and reinforced in locally distributed health policies with services provided through voice (community calls and audiobooks) and making (3D printers), complementing visual-based services (consultation of websites, and visual tools).
- 2) Social distancing and re-thinking library spaces should bring about new ways of re-designing the flow of people, matching them with movements of resources, ideas, and equipment and reinforcing the use of technologies in monitoring users' flows.
- 3) During the Covid 19 crisis libraries very often offered a one-stop access to accurate Covid-19 related health information. This is a further demonstration that combatting fake news should be at the centre stage of library mission.
- 4) A society pivoting around social distancing may end up creating negative requirements leading to social exclusion. European libraries should embark upon a fully-fledged strategy aimed to the vulnerable, the elderly and left-behind and adopt hybrid methods (physical and technological combined) to reinforce their action.

With regard to the technological axe, a European library agenda should:

- 5) Reinforce its focus on e-copies (an item deliberately removed from the EU Directive on Copyright in the Digital Single Market) and use data and experiences matured up during the Covid-19 crisis to design new models of e-copy distribution in libraries, taking into account the economies and policies pursued both by information service providers (free and universal access to content based on advertisement revenues) and aggregators (massive distribution of content at low subscription costs);
- 6) Reinforce digital literacy activities for targeted categories of people in close link with general policies aimed to fill the digital divide, foster digital intelligence in libraries and stimulate multiple use of technologies (for instance, 3D printers used for cultural, educational and health policies);
- 7) Be active partners in national digitalisation and artificial intelligence plans through cutting edge experiences which may scale up library practices from the analogue to the digital and from the digital to the analogue, and combining the two in order to meet library traditional objectives;
- 8) Pursue distance-learning objectives in alliance with educational establishments, stretching out as far as possible the virtual dimension, and capitalise on the library digital offer in order to become hotspots for young people.

- 9) In compliance with privacy regulations, exert control over data and metadata affecting library operations and re-use them for policy-making and decision-making processes, in particular when they concern movements of people and resources and related library outcomes;
- 10) Be active actors in the distribution cycle of the post-production events likely to be built around music, performing arts and live performance as a result of the lethal effects of the Covid-19 crisis in this domain, and therefore request ministries of culture and/or local cultural department/agencies to re-design the system of local aids, fiscal incentives, policy measures and other form of subsidies to culture in a broader holistic perspective.

In regard to the library governance axe, a European library agenda should:

- 11) Request local governments to find additional budget for library services at national and European level in order to compensate for shortcomings in library's future budgets and make the most out of the experience matured by libraries during the Covid-19 crisis;
- 12) Think of themselves as "structurally" essential to the development of a country and, in this way, manage possible financial resources generated from the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) 2021-2027, in particular when dealing R&D, artificial intelligence and technological projects, as well as social missions;
- 13) Link the development of the public library to sustainable development activities at local and national level;
- 14) Encourage libraries to be champions of sustainable development policies in all their actions and apply the taxonomy regulation on social development set up by the European Commission in all library operations, for instance, in library procurement policies;
- 15) Adopt flexible forms of library governance in order to manage European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) 2021-2027 in an appropriate way.

3. Sustainable Development Goals and European Structural and Investment Funds: which library concept?

Last January, EBLIDA and the French Ministry of Culture circulated a Questionnaire on Library Legislation and Policy in Europe among EBLIDA Members (largely library associations and some library institutions). Responses to the Questionnaire showed two attitudes emerging in the library profession, varying from tradition to innovation and from real to progressive visions.¹² A set of responses to the Questionnaire identified in a public library an institution hosting a collection of books/ media and information resources, in a plurality of published/released formats and media, working on a continuity chain. As a respondent nicely put it, library offer is a continuum going “*from collection to connection*”.

A different set of responses highlighted the importance of libraries in the society with their focus on education (“*servicing further education*”, the development of “*people’s reading habits*”), lifelong learning for the younger and older layers of population, and integration. In line with a previous EU study on public libraries,¹³ the role of a library is also advocated when respondents consider as core library mission the promotion of an active citizenry and the development of a democratic and sustainable society. It is worth noticing that two thirds of respondents made the remark that their professional representation of libraries is mirrored in national library acts or, where national library acts do not exist, in public policy documents.

At a larger scale, this extended concept of library corresponds to an evolving concept of culture. In the ESI Funds several notions of culture are identified and promoted. In addition to the anthropological meaning of culture - a set of attitudes, beliefs, customs, values and practices commonly shared by a (political, geographical, religious, ethnic) group - the ESI Funds seem to address two precise domains of cultural policies. The first concerns cultural content and the creative industries – all sectors linked with the development of a prosperous cultural industry which relates to publishing, music, film, audio-visual, artistic, and art performance. The second is related to the instrumental role of culture in urban regeneration, landscape attractiveness, tourism, entrepreneurship, economic development, social integration and innovation.¹⁴

The UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development does not explicitly addresses culture. Through its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Agenda approved by the UN General Assembly In September 2015 provides a roadmap for UN countries towards sustainable prosperity, social inclusion and equality while at the same time preserving our planet and leaving no one behind.¹⁵

UNESCO is considered the “custodian agency” for all aspects linked with culture and cultural development. The UNESCO SDG 2030 Agenda develops a conceptual framework based on four transversal thematic dimensions and a series of thematic indicators which measure and monitor the progress of culture’s contribution to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and Targets.¹⁶

¹² EBLIDA – Ministère de la Culture. Library Legislation and Policy in Europe. Results of a Questionnaire - Interim Report (Draft March 2020), prepared by Ms Apolline Sans, French Ministry of Culture (soon to be released).

¹³ Directorate – General for Internal policies – Policy Department B. Public Libraries – their new role, cit.

¹⁴ Culture and Education. Use of Structural Funds for Cultural Projects, cit., p. 15.

¹⁵ UN Sustainable Development Goals, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300>.

¹⁶ UNESCO. Culture 2030 Indicators. UNESCO, 2019, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000371562>

The four identified thematic dimensions are:

- *Environment & Resilience*, a thematic dimension which addresses tangible and intangible heritage, as well as natural heritage, as a lever for sustainable development. The Environment & Resilience dimension meets SD Goals 2,6,9,11,12,13,14,15,16 and corresponds to the 'Planet' pillar of the SDGs.
- *Prosperity & Livelihood*, focused on sustainable economies, income and employment generated through cultural goods and services; it meets SD Goals 8,10,11 and corresponds to the 'Prosperity' pillar of the SDGs.
- *Knowledge & Skills*, empowered through education training, processes, policies and materials and addressing SD Goals 4,8,9,12,13.
- *Inclusion & Participation*, a thematic dimension concerning the abilities of people to access culture and participate in cultural life, freedom of cultural expression, access to information, and how cultural practices, sites, elements, and expressions convey values and skills conducive to social inclusion. SD Goals reflecting this dimension are 9,10,11,16.¹⁷

The development of a solid SDG policy through the inclusion of the cultural dimension in all public policies has been strongly emphasised by the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG).¹⁸ In 2018, UCLG released a *Guide* on how cities can use cultural objectives and institutions to attain each of the SDGs for local action.¹⁹ In its Durban Political Declaration (December 2019) UCLG identifies culture as fourth pillar of sustainable development:

“Culture is a core component of local identity, the fourth pillar of sustainable development, and has a key role as a strand of global solidarity. Local cultural policies and programmes on memory, heritage, creativity, diversity and knowledge are key vectors, everywhere, of people-centred local sustainable development.”²⁰

An empirical way to see how culture is instrumental in implementing SDGs is to examine Voluntary National Reports (VNRs) drafted by UN Member States in order to detect how they report about cultural activities. A group of culture-oriented organisations associated in the Culture2030Goal, among which the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), participated in the elaboration of the report which was materially drafted by ICOMOS.²¹

In Europe, from 2016 to 2019 ten out of fifteen VNRs have put emphasis on cultural aspects. Andorra, France, Greece, Italy, Montenegro, Portugal, Latvia and Estonia have prioritised the protection of cultural heritage - archaeological, architectural and artistic, both tangible and intangible, sometimes in conjunction with landscape and natural heritage, most times in association with the UNESCO World Heritage List. In Cyprus, Finland, Montenegro, Norway and Serbia cultural diversity is seen as a driver for the implementation of SDGs (in Norway, in connection to a sustainable Sami culture). Access to culture, to cultural assets and to cinema is considered a priority, respectively, in France, Latvia and

¹⁷ UNESCO. Culture 2030 Indicators, cit., pp. 26 and ss.

¹⁸ UCLG is a global network of cities and local, regional, and metropolitan governments and governmental associations representing the voices of local and regional governments.

¹⁹ United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG). Culture in the Sustainable Development Goals: a Guide for local action (May 2018), https://www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/culture_in_the_sdgs.pdf.

²⁰ https://www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/uclg_thedurbanpoliticaldeclaration_en_rv.pdf

²¹ Yildirim, Ege; Baltà Portolés, Jordi; Pascual, Jordi; Perrino, Massimo; Llobet, Marta; Wyber, Stephen; Phillips, Peter; Gicquel, Laurent; Martínez, Raquel; Miller, Shanon; Guerra, Claudia (2019). *Culture in the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda*. Project Report. Culture2030Goal campaign, Paris.

[http://openarchive.icomos.org/2167/.](http://openarchive.icomos.org/2167/)

Portugal; the promotion of cultural and artistic expression and of creative industries is relevant in the Greek, Finnish, Montenegro and Portuguese NVRs. And culture is defined as an essential tool to promote innovation in Cyprus and Latvia.

Starting from 2017, NVRs were more precise in defining cultural priorities in relation to specific SDGs. Cyprus, for instance, identifies SDGs 4, 11 and 16 as relevant for, respectively, a) cultural projects embodying the values of equality, inclusivity, creativeness and innovation, b) protection of cultural heritage, and c) Illicit trafficking and destruction of cultural goods.

More than nation-wide, library policies implementing SDGs were particularly effective at local level. In Voluntary Regional Reports (VRRs) libraries are mentioned several times. In Europe, for instance, Barcelona libraries have monitored the attainment of SDG 4; in Helsinki, the Oodi central library is used as platform for “the development of new solutions with business potential” (SDG 8) and all its 38 libraries fight to reduce inequalities as learning platforms targeted at high-risk target groups and people in need of special support (SDG 10).²²

The range and variety of library initiatives present in VNRs does not do justice to the profound involvement of European libraries in in ESI Funds and SD Goals. As we are going to see in the Sections 6 and 7 of the current report dedicated, respectively, to libraries and European Structural and Investment Funds and the implementation of the Agenda 2030 of sustainable development in libraries, a much wider engagement of libraries can be detected. To give an example, more than 1,600 library events took place in France in a week of September 2019!²³ The professional concept of library has to be reinforced by the experience gained in the last four years of library involvement in SDGs and ESIF, which shows the following trends.

Concerning the 2030 Agenda, libraries do participate in the “Planet” pillar of SDGs – Environment and Resilience – through a wide number of citizen science and cultural heritage projects. This SDG aspect is of interest to both public and university libraries.

The prosperity pillar is represented in libraries by making freely available cultural products and services in physical and digital forms. Among cultural institutions libraries showed much resilience during the Covid 19 crisis, since they were able to shift from the physical to the digital mode and continued to be meeting users’ needs. Knowledge and skills may be diffused by libraries in the form of informal learning in lifelong learning of people of all ages. In its digital version, literacy is provided to targeted groups of people including workers and marginalised people.

And social inclusion and participation is an objective explicitly addressed in all activities aiming to integrate large layers of population who are now excluded from the social life and political participation. There is no doubt that in a Disaster Plan scenario, a list of cultural and educational services deemed indispensable and viable in emergency times would include library material, both in digital and traditional form.

Both ESIF and SDG, therefore, leave room for an extended concept of library. The definition of an extended concept of library which is functional both for embedding libraries in the 2030 Agenda and in the provision of ESI Funds may be the following:

²² Yildirim, Ege; Baltà Portolés, Jordi; Pascual, Jordi; Perrino, Massimo; Llobet, Marta; Wyber, Stephen; Phillips, Peter; Gicquel, Laurent; Martínez, Raquel; Miller, Shanon; Guerra, Claudia (2019). *Culture in the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda*. Project Report. Culture2030Goal campaign, Paris.

<http://openarchive.icomos.org/2167/>

²³ <https://agenda2030bibfr.wixsite.com/agenda2030bib/presentation>.

By making available a wide offer of cultural and educational products in a continuum going from collection to connection, European libraries are providing services to citizens aiming at social inclusion; they are also key players in lifelong learning, citizen science, research, innovation and the promotion of an active citizenry for a democratic and sustainable society.

4. Sustainable Development Goals and their implementation in European libraries

4.1 Why a Europe-oriented library approach to SDGs

Sustainability is no longer an issue to be dealt with in small circles or specialised departments. In September 2015, the UN General Assembly approved the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development including 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), 169 targets and 232 indicators. The Agenda, adopted by all Member States of the United Nations, provides a roadmap for UN countries towards sustainable prosperity, social inclusion and equality while at the same time preserving our planet and leaving no one behind.

All countries share the responsibility to contribute, within the limits of their capacity, to the attainment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. All of them embark upon specific ways of implementing goals and targets. When the UN 2030 Agenda was approved in September 2015, the European Union did not find itself unprepared.

A European Union Strategy for Sustainable Development has been running since 2001. In the face of the new, ambitious UN programme, the EU presented its response in November 2016 and initiated a sustainable development package, which reflects the priorities set up by Member Countries. A multi-stakeholder platform, including high-level experts and policy-makers in sustainability issues across all EU countries, was set up in 2017 to support and advise the European Commission on the implementation of the SDGs at EU level.²⁴

There are several reasons why the EU approach can be considered different from the one set up at UN level.

First of all, the goals are interpreted according to the EU context. For example, Goal 1, “No Poverty” is considered a multidimensional phenomenon. EU Programmes and projects within Goal 1 deal with absolute poverty. An even greater deal, however, focuses on relative poverty with a view to breaking the poverty chain. Goal 2: “Zero Hunger” in Europe focusses more on food waste and security than on food shortage. Unlike many disadvantaged regions of the world, which face hunger, the EU’s central nutritional challenge is obesity; therefore, the European Commission has given priority to the fight against obesity by encouraging organic farming.

Second, sustainability indicators in the European Union reflect the priority changes described in EU National Voluntary Reports. Eurostat has set up its own series of indicators. In most cases they mirror those present in the UN SDG scheme. In several cases, however, EU indicators depart from them and evaluate sub-targets which are EU country specific. For instance, the main Eurostat indicator assessing the implementation of Goal 2 is the percentage of obesity in population – an indicator which is not present among the 13 UN indicators used to measure the attainment of Goal 2 at international level.

Third, EU programmes and projects have been subjected to a re-think and are re-adapting in order to comply with UN SDGs. The European Commission has made extensive efforts to introduce elements of sustainability into EU activities integrating the SDG targets. A large amount of funding opportunities are therefore available to European stakeholders involved in the implementation of SDGs, provided that they take into account EU specific policies and the objectives set up by EU programmes.

²⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/international-strategies/sustainable-development-goals/multi-stakeholder-platform-sdgs_en.

European libraries, too, can apply to EU schemes in order to consolidate and boost their activities in favour of sustainable development. They have to keep in mind, however, that there is a specific European approach that differs from that of the UN in terms of SDG interpretation, assessment and funding criteria.

European libraries may be tempted to place more emphasis on certain goals and discard others that don't align with presumed European priorities. Goal 2, for instance, may be felt "inappropriate" to a European library framework since cases of malnourishment, food insecurity, malnutrition and stunting in Europe may be limited in relation to the rest of the world or, if they exist, they are concentrated in a relatively small number of areas. This lack of a European perspective is misleading. SDGs in Europe are more often about changes in lifestyle and individual habits. Therefore, the fight against obesity can also become a priority for European libraries which could, in association with third-party sectors (NGOs, associations and charitable organisations), initiate awareness activities and training events aiming to weaken bad nutritional habits among library users.

Among European libraries there is a clear awareness that SDGs are an extraordinary opportunity for libraries. More than two third of the respondents to the EBLIDA Questionnaire "Sustainable Development Goals and Their Implementation in European Libraries" expressed this consideration and almost one third think that SDGs can be an additional activity for libraries. Interestingly enough, library associations' representation of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development are both green and social and shows an orientation including green library objectives on the one hand, and active inclusion / digital citizenship objectives on the other. Having said that, two thirds of the respondents say that SDG-oriented projects contribute to the three SD pillars: economic, social and environmental.

Libraries are considered not only *lieux du livre* (book places), but *lieux du vivre* (life places).²⁵ They can cover SD Goals in a way which is consistent with the objectives set up by a European Union which ambitions to be climate-neutral by 2050, as well as "smarter" and "closer" to its citizens. The next three paragraphs will describe the content of the European library strategy to attain SDGs. The first paragraph includes an overview of library projects, goal after goal. The second explores the SDG policies pursued in some library systems at national level. Finally, a paragraph will be devoted to SDG indicators in libraries.

4.2 SDG-oriented Library projects in European libraries: some examples and best practices

The implementation of SDG projects in libraries dates back to 2016, after the approval of the SDG 2030 Agenda in 2015 and the launch of the IFLA International Advocacy Programme one year after. The UN Sustainable Development Goals have had a pervasive effect on libraries. Libraries are setting up SDG projects with a view to meeting SDG objectives and enlarging their scope of action. Evidence for such successful implementation can be found in the number of websites dedicated to SDG projects in libraries.²⁶ Rarely in the past has an UN or EU programme encompassing such complex social, economic and environmental issues been so spontaneously and enthusiastically received in libraries – and libraries are a good barometer for assessing the success of innovative ideals in the society.

²⁵ Ministère de la Culture. Voyage aux pays des bibliothèques Lire aujourd'hui, lire demain Par Erik Orsenna et Noël Corbin. Février 2018, [file:///fs-srv-p100/users\\$/gvi010/Desktop/20182002%20Rapport%20Voyage%20au%20pays%20des%20biblioth%C3%A8ques.pdf](file:///fs-srv-p100/users$/gvi010/Desktop/20182002%20Rapport%20Voyage%20au%20pays%20des%20biblioth%C3%A8ques.pdf).

²⁶ To mention a few: In France: Agenda 2030 et bibliothèques, <https://agenda2030bibfr.wixsite.com/agenda2030bib>; in Germany: Netzwerk Grüne Bibliothek, <https://www.netzwerk-gruene-bibliothek.de/>; in Spain: Grupo de trabajo estrategico Bibliotecas I Agenda 2030, <https://www.ccbiblio.es/estructura-del-consejo/grupos-de-trabajo/estrategicos/>.

UN SDGs, however, are embedded in a complex and ambitious architecture. Altogether, the 2030 Agenda is the most overarching and complete global plan for the sustainable development of our society: an ambitious attempt to map out what is universal and indivisible in development, to chart the requirements for the planet to be sustainable, to address a wide spectrum of targets leading to the well-being and the prosperity of our world. It includes seventeen objectives which should be considered macro-objectives. The SDGs real lifeblood lies in the 169 targets or sub-objectives. This objective/sub-objective machinery comes together with a system of 232 indicators used to monitor SDG implementation.

Four false myths go along with the implementation of SDGs in libraries. The first is that SDGs are sort of accessory objectives for libraries, working together with library's core missions, but not strictly linked with them. The second is that SDGs mainly concern environmental projects focused on climate change and low-carbon emissions; the social and economic pillars, directly generated from the UN Millennium Development Goals, are neglected, or taken into low consideration. The third is that, with 169 sub-objectives and 232 indicators, the 2030 Agenda is perceived as a complex framework, to be administered at macro-level through fiscal and legislative policies, rather than through micro-policy objectives to be implemented at sectoral level. And finally, the fourth false myth claims that SDGs in libraries fit small-scale, locally based projects, having a limited impact and being of purely demonstrative nature. EBLIDA action aims to show that these are misconceptions and that SDGs should be considered as part of the core library's missions.

It is not easy to map information about SDG-oriented projects in libraries. Some of them clearly indicate which SDG they are trying to attain, although many library projects cover more than one SDG. Some other projects are compliant with the Agenda 2030 in a hidden form, since they are not clearly embedded in one or another SDG. In this case, the EBLIDA Secretariat has taken the initiative to match the objectives of the projects with SDG targets. In the following paragraphs the description of each SD Goal comes together with one or more flagship projects, in the hope that EBLIDA Members can get inspired and apply projects of a similar nature in their own country.

The list of SDG-oriented library projects mentioned in this report has been drafted on the basis of the responses received from EBLIDA Members to two EBLIDA Questionnaires: "Sustainable Development Goals and their Implementation in European Libraries" and "The European Structural and Investment Funds". When needed, we have also used published sources to list additional projects and more examples of best practices.

SDG 1: No Poverty



The concept of poverty must be declined in relation to the relative wealth of the European continent and therefore be interpreted as a multidimensional phenomenon. Apart from occasional library initiatives – for instance, distribution of food or libraries opening as dorms during emergencies - most European projects in libraries aim to break the poverty chain: i.e., children born into poverty bear a higher risk of poverty in adult life than those not born into poverty. They target categories of people having a marginal role in the society.

Library activities of social inclusion often concern groups of people residing in sensitive urban districts, rural areas or prisons. They may consist of literacy activities managed by librarians or third party monitors, or of inter-ethnic, inter-religious sessions integrating groups of a different nature. Projects often mentioned within the scope of SDG 1 are libraries open to homeless people, distributing food and other basic goods, and helping illiterate groups in the population. It is almost impossible to organise such activities without resorting to the third sector.

In Europe, a possible flagship policy is implemented in the Netherlands, where an ambitious project focussed on vulnerable elderly citizens (funded by the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived, FEAD) supports EU countries' actions in providing **food and/or basic material assistance to the most deprived**. Material assistance needs to go hand in hand with **social inclusion measures**, such as guidance and support to lift people out of poverty and integrate most deprived people better into society.²⁷

In France, public libraries make available an *écrivain public* to their illiterate users. This “public writer” regularly attends libraries and facilitates those with literacy problems in their administrative tasks, helping them fulfil their civil rights.²⁸

SDG 2: Zero Hunger



Rural libraries are community information centres disseminating the necessary information for farmers' day to day problems. They promote community engagement and participation, also trying to encourage economic vitality within the community. They are, therefore, the natural prime movers of projects falling within the scope of SDG 2, especially in those regions where agriculture is still a significant source of income for the population.

When situated in cities, public libraries have often promoted seed banks for loan exchange. It is in rural areas, however, that ambitious projects implementing SDG 2 seem to take place. The Jagodina municipality (Republic of Serbia) is an area where half the population lives in villages and 70% of the economy is agricultural. In this region, the Agrolib project aims to fill the gap existing between the Serbian government online notification system about subsidies and incentives for farmers and the level of ICT literacy in the region. By revitalizing five rural libraries, the Agrolib project endowed them with modern technologies and advanced library services, aiming to link farmers with the State, farmers among themselves and farmers with potential sellers and buyers of agricultural products, machinery and services. Farmers' visits to rural libraries boomed and changed the local cultural outlook. The Agrolib project was replicated in rural areas of Latvia, Lithuania and North Macedonia.²⁹

In Romania, through the Biblionet project funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, public libraries saved \$1.25 million and 230,000 working days for 116,000 farmers between 2011 and 2014. Furthermore, farmers received \$205 million of subsidies. This impressive score was achieved thanks to an activity implemented by IREX Romania, which concluded a collaboration agreement with the Agency for Payments and Interventions in Agriculture (APIA), aimed at using the computers donated to the public libraries to fill in online the agricultural subsidy applications managed by APIA.³⁰

²⁷ See EBLIDA. The European Structural and Investment Funds 2021-2027: Funding Opportunities in Libraries, <http://www.eblida.org/publications.html>.

²⁸ SDG 1 in <https://agenda2030bibfr.wixsite.com/agenda2030bib>; see also Ministère de la Culture. Voyage aux pays des bibliothèques Lire aujourd'hui, lire demain, par Erik Orsenna and Noël Corbin. Février 2018, [file:///fs-srv-p100/users\\$/gvi010/Desktop/20182002%20Rapport%20Voyage%20au%20pays%20des%20biblioth%C3%A8ques.pdf](file:///fs-srv-p100/users$/gvi010/Desktop/20182002%20Rapport%20Voyage%20au%20pays%20des%20biblioth%C3%A8ques.pdf).

²⁹ Crnkovic, Vesna (2013). Access to Information and Knowledge: AgroLib Ja (Agricultural Libraries in Jagodina) (Serbia), W SIS Stocktaking: Success Stories 2013, https://read.itu-ilibrary.org/science-and-technology/wsis-stocktaking_pub/80858f17-e0df5802-en#page1

³⁰ IFLA Library Map of the World, <https://librarymap.ifla.org/stories/Romania/PUBLIC-LIBRARIES-IN-ROMANIA-FACILITATE-ACCESS-TO-AGRICULTURAL-SUBSIDIES/21>

SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being



Health libraries normally provide access to the results of medical research and diffuse information related to health services. If the implementation of SDGs is above all a matter of life style, libraries can do a lot to fight erroneous eating practices and unhealthy life-styles. Information about obesity, narcotic drug abuse and the harmful use of alcohol are usually developed in public libraries in collaboration with organisations operating in the third sector.

The alliance between public libraries and health associations is perhaps the most interesting development of the SDG implementation in European libraries, especially in the of a possible Covid-19 strategy. Interestingly, during the Covid-19 crisis, the National Library of Lithuania in cooperation with the country's public libraries and the Robotics School's initiative help produce 3D printed face masks for healthcare workers. Over 50 public libraries of Lithuania joined the initiative.³¹

"Book start" entails a wide range of activities encouraging reading among the young and the very young. Some of the projects, like Book Start in Belgium, provides free book packages to babies aged six months and older. This project is a joint undertaking of the National Health Agency Kind en Gezin (Child and Family), other health insurance agencies and public libraries.³²

In Italy, the success of the "Nati per Leggere" (Born to Read) initiative should also be mentioned. "Born to Read" is set up by the Italian Library Association in collaboration with paediatric associations and centres.³³

The Active Living Area project is a Citizen Science project aimed at transforming 80 ha of farmland and woods surrounding the Southern Denmark University (SDU) into a community driven outdoor living lab. Part of the project is to include staff and students at SDU in order to work with the UN SDG's. As of now the project has received over 1.000 proposals from citizens and staff. It worked thanks to a media partner and included workshops, festivals, town hall meetings, surveys and curriculum teaching in cooperation with the neighbouring University College Lillebælt.³⁴ The project links to SDG 3 (good health and wellbeing) and SDG11 (make cities and human settlements inclusive).

SDG 4: Quality education



SDG 4 is quite obviously the natural river bed for many library activities. Reading is at the core of the mission of public libraries; therefore, their initiatives encompass a wide range of activities both in content and in the public that is targeted. They promote the difference between deep reading (of books and other digital or printed matters) and light reading (in social media), as highlighted in EU-read, a Consortium of European entities dealing with reading activities.³⁵ An impressive number of projects, often funded by the Erasmus+ programme, are being implemented for children as well for adults engaged in digital literacy.³⁶

³¹ <https://www.lnb.lt/en/news/5242-lithuanian-libraries-offer-support-to-healthcare-professionals>.

³² <https://www.euread.com/projects/projects-programmes/baby/boekstart/>

³³ <http://www.natiperleggere.it/>

³⁴ <https://insights.uksg.org/articles/10.1629/uksg.431/>.

³⁵ <https://www.euread.com/>

³⁶ <https://publiclibraries2030.eu/2020/02/embarking-on-the-digital-travellers-journey/>.

The French *Agenda 2030 et bibliothèques* website lists some 100 activities taking place in French libraries and covering SDG 4.³⁷ The “IFLA Library Map of the world” lists SDG stories in at least five European countries (Belgium, the Czech Republic, Germany, the Netherlands, Romania).³⁸ “Treffpunkt Deutsch” is a cooperative library project providing access to language training and educational resources to the immigrant community in Germany; it is implemented at the Stadtbibliothek Heilbronn (and meets both SD Goals 4 and 5).³⁹

While the nature of the content is more or less determined by library specializations (academic, public, research, school, special libraries), a reinforced investment concern library services oriented at special publics. Without pretending to be exhaustive, these are the fields in which SDG 4 applies in libraries:

- Extended general support to students;
- Young students having special needs (dyslexia, etc.),
- Relapse into illiteracy;
- Digital illiteracy
- Language courses and in particular, language courses for the host country for immigrants;
- Extended library openings on special events;
- Libraries as social meeting points for women at home and/or of non-national origin;
- Vocational training;
- Use of digital resources and databases;
- Children reading;
- EU information and access to EU databases;
- Sources in open access.

SDG 5: Gender Equality



“The services of the public library are provided on the basis of equality of access for all, regardless of age, race, sex, religion, nationality, language or social status.” (IFLA UNESCO Public Library Manifesto, 1994),⁴⁰

“Library services should be provided to citizens without regard to race, nationality, religion, culture, politics, age, physical or learning impairment, gender, or sexual orientation” (Council of Europe /EBLIDA Guidelines on Library Legislation and Policy in Europe, 2000)⁴¹

The principle of non-discrimination is embodied in all declaration of principles elaborated by international, European and national library associations. SDG 5, however, is not limited to principles; it aims to promote positive policies and measures intending to fully implement gender equality. Library campaigns in SDG 5 may help promote the European Union Social Charter and the European Pillar of Social Rights as keystone for a sustainable society.

Library projects may address the violence perpetrated against women and, more in general, against vulnerable groups of people. The concept of the library as a “safe space”, where survivors of rape or

³⁷ <https://airtable.com/shr7YkW20CqgiOhP1/tbl4WuWFb7hdaw1UY/viwNeF7J9TNh6gEZE/recqXbTf4Ai5femw9?blocks=hide>

³⁸ <https://librarymap.ifla.org/stories/sdg/4>

³⁹ <https://www.biblio2030.de/treffpunkt-deutsch-stadtbibliothek-heilbronn/>.

⁴⁰ <https://www.ifla.org/publications/iflaunesco-public-library-manifesto-1994>.

⁴¹ <http://www.eblida.org/Documents/Council-of-Europe-EBLIDA-Guidelines-on-Library-Legislation-and-Policy-in-Europe.pdf>

incest could talk about their experiences without judgement, and where LTGB communities feel confident - here are a few policy objectives for a positive policy.⁴²

According to Wimmer, libraries have a big role to play in SDG 5, and not because of the dominant number of women who are librarians. One reason is that reading is an activity that - according to all surveys - more women practice than men. Libraries pay attention to children and to young people and are places that can be trusted by parents. Libraries are a space where children are allowed to go on their own and decide what to choose very early in life. They can develop their own interests and world views. This has an emancipating effect - you decide what to read, watch, hear or play, without a teacher or parent. In countries where gender equality is far from being achieved, emancipation from discriminatory habits also applies to older girls and even women: the library is one of the few public places they can visit on their own."⁴³

The most ambitious policy proposal covering SDG 5 has been made in Spain by the Consejo de Cooperación Bibliotecaria (Council of Library Cooperation) and consists of re-thinking the whole of the Spanish library system as an institutional engine designed to attain SDG 5: Gender equality. In this way, library results may be aggregated and indicators re-assessed and aligned with UN-SDG and Eurostat indicators. A Committee evaluating gender equality in libraries has been created within CCB.⁴⁴

Also worth a mention is the network of libraries (and also museums) dedicated to the promotion of LGBT and gender equality, such as the International Homo/Lesbian Information Center and Archive (IHLIA) in the Public Library of Amsterdam and the Atria Institute on gender equality and women's history, also in Amsterdam, or the Centrum Schwule Geschichte in Cologne.

SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation



The bulk of EU citizens have access to basic sanitation and are connected to secondary wastewater treatment. Differences between Member States do exist and awareness activities in libraries may concern clean water and its use at local level. In places where sewage and waste disposal is poor and sanitation does not reach adequate standards, libraries can denounce this state of affairs through campaigns and exhibitions with a view to enhancing the health conditions of the communities they refer to. Where universities and research or monitoring centres are present in the regions where they are installed, libraries can act as liaison agents to transmit and circulate information about sanitation and set up citizen science projects.

SDG 6 in European libraries also means the full implementation of the Green Library, which will be dealt with in greater detail under SDG 7. An introduction is the IFLA Checklist, which covers the following items: green building project planning, financing, site selection, structure, construction, materials, climate, energy management, recycling as well as green information and communication technology (Green IT), user services, library facility management, strategic goals, marketing and PR, green building certificates and more.⁴⁵

⁴² Rachel S. Wexelbaum. *Advances in Library Administration and Organization: The Future of Library Space*, Publisher: Emerald Group Publishing Limited, Editors: Samantha Schmehl Hines, Kathryn Moore Crowe, pp. 37-78.

⁴³ Libraries and SDG 5. Three questions to Ms Ulla Wimmer, Research Assistant at the Alexander-von-Humboldt University and ELSA Member, <http://www.eblida.org/news/eblida-newsletter-december-2019.html>.

⁴⁴ III Plan Estratégico del CCB 2019-2023. Bibliotecas en Igualdad, <https://www.ccbiblio.es/wp-content/uploads/III-Plan-Estrat%C3%A9gico-CCB-def.pdf> (Febrero 2019).

⁴⁵ <https://www.ifla.org/publications/node/12621>

SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy



The most important application of SDG 7 in libraries is the Green Library - a library where construction, internal spaces, sanitation and heating systems meet green standards. The Green, or better “Sustainable library” is defined in ODLIS (the online Dictionary of Library Science: “A library designed to minimize negative impact on the natural environment and maximize indoor environmental quality by means of careful site selection, use of natural construction materials and biodegradable products, conservation of resources (water, energy, paper), and responsible waste management (recycling, etc.).”⁴⁶

In Europe, examples of green libraries are, for instance, the Robert de Sorbon Library of the University of Reims (France), the Brighton’s Jubilee Library in the United Kingdom, the McClay Library of the Queen’s University of Belfast and the Amsterdam Public Library. The five crucial criteria are: a) reducing energy consumption; b) efficient use of the energy supply; c) minimizing the time of equipment operation through a default powering off or going into standby mode; d) use of the simplest and most user-friendly solutions; and e) use of passive systems for the environment adjustment.⁴⁷

Library activities pursuing SDG 7 mainly concern awareness on zero-, low-carbon sources of energy – green energy, blue energy - performed in collaboration with organizations belonging to the civil society. In this respect, the implementation of citizens’ science projects, where scientists can test new solutions through the support of an active and well informed citizenry, may play an important role for the attainment of SDG 7. In Belgium *The air seekers* project (see SDG 11.6) has been developed by Transport and Development.

SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth



Libraries are already intensively working towards the attainment of SDG 8. Some of them act as liaison agents between employers and job-seekers. Job desks where librarians or experts help the unemployed to file job applications are frequently hosted in libraries and free access to Internet, as well as other cutting-edge technology provided by libraries, encourage people to make use of advanced technologies.

SDG 8-oriented work would mean for libraries to intensify the quality of their activity in times of stagnation and poor job opportunities, in collaboration with the private sector. A possible activity, for instance, would be to act as an information centre in relation to the European Social and Investment Funds, thus increasing citizens’ awareness on how sustainable European expenditure is.

There is a substantial overlap between SDG 4- and SDG 8- oriented activities running in libraries. The organisation of sustainable development workshops on robotics and 3D in the Madrid library system as well as in some other libraries in Spain is an example of the link between quality education and

⁴⁶ https://products.abc-clio.com/ODLIS/odlis_s.aspx#sustainablelib

⁴⁷ The checklist was developed by Klaus Ulrich Werner, Werner, Klaus Ulrich: Sustainable buildings, equipment, and management. A checklist, which has received translations into eighteen languages. For an overall review, see: Malgorzata Fedorowicz-Kruszewska. Sustainable libraries – fashion or necessity? JLIS.it, 10, 1 (January 2019), ISSN: 2038-1026 online, <https://www.jlis.it/article/view/12500/11355>.

sustainable economic growth since it enhances job-seeking. In Madrid, children too are encouraged to have fun by using new technologies in an appropriate way.⁴⁸

Similarly, Global Libraries - Bulgaria Foundation (FSBB) is a partner in the “Get Your Facts Straight! Media Literacy for All” in Bulgaria - 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. The 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 organizations from Northern Ireland, Spain, Italy and Romania and is funded by the European Erasmus + program.⁴⁹ The E-Portal of Memory and Knowledge is dedicated to the European history and science; the Tech Lib offers a Mini Technology Centre at the Regional Library "Hristo Botev" – Vratsa: children and teenagers get acquainted with the opportunity to experience new technological wonders.⁵⁰

SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure



Maker Faires, the social events sprouting engineering-oriented pursuits organized by the Make magazine, are often organized in libraries. The National Library of Norway started working on Artificial Intelligence schemes;⁵¹ this makes citizens familiar with new technologies against any neo-luddite inclinations.

Libraries should become a permanent infrastructure encouraging innovation in a social context. This model of “social” library should be established in collaboration with advanced institutes and technological centres. “Digital Skills for SME (Small and Medium Enterprises) in Bulgaria” is 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.⁵²

And finally, mention should be made again of the Lithuanian initiative of producing 3D printed face shields for healthcare workers – resulting from collaboration with the Lithuanian Robotics School.

SDG 10: Reducing Inequality



Supporting individual development and integrating those who are socially excluded (from people below the poverty line to immigrants, from minorities to imprisoned people) are at the core of the library’s work. Library efforts take advantage of their proximity to people living in socially sensitive areas or in difficult situations and provide them with access to media and culture, as well

⁴⁸ Madrid city libraries and 2030 Agenda,

<https://bibliotecas.madrid.es/UnidadesDescentralizadas/Bibliotecas/BibliotecasPublicas/Noticias/ficheros/MannualAgenda2030.pdf#page=82>

• ⁴⁹ Respectively <http://www.glbulgaria.bg/bg/node/35265> and <http://www.glbulgaria.bg/bg/node/31318>.

⁵⁰ Respectively <http://libsilistra.bg/index.php/2018-06-19-13-26-56> and <https://libvratsa.org/tiyneydzhari-testvat-novi-technologichi-chudesa/>

⁵¹ <https://www.nb.no/hva-skjer/ai-conference/>.

⁵² <http://www.glbulgaria.bg/en/digisme>.

as exchange systems for books and other cultural products. In this respect, the implementation of library exceptions to the EU Copyright Directive approved in 2019 is a measure supporting the reduction of inequality in situations of market failure.

In Germany, the BIST programme in Berlin (Bibliotheken im Stadtteil, "Libraries in the City area") implies a fully-fledged library initiative structured in three clusters: a) improvement and adaptation of the social infrastructure (construction or renovation and modernisation of libraries); b) social development of library services in disadvantaged neighbourhoods (intercultural library work, welcome culture, family library); c) Further development of library services (active services, collection development, new services).

An organisation engaged in reducing inequalities is Bibliothèques Sans Frontières, operating in some 50 countries. One of its flagship projects is the Ideas Box: users have access to a satellite internet connection, digital server, a power generator, 25 tablets and laptops, 6 HD cameras, 1 large HD screen, board games, arts and crafts materials, hardcover and paperback books, and a stage for music and theatre. Each Ideas Box is customized to meet local needs in collaboration with organizations, leaders and members within the community it applies to. In Europe, BsF operates in Belgium, France, Germany, Greece and Italy.⁵³

The Veria Public Library located in Northern Greece sits at a confluence of numerous ethnic identities that are moving into the region. It offers immigrants from Albania, Russia, Ukraine and Bulgaria access to computers to create visual narratives about their lives. These stories are then posted on YouTube, and on a dedicated project website.⁵⁴

SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities



In many European cities, libraries are an essential element of contemporary urban planning. City administrators and urban planners place libraries along strategic urban development axes in order to enhance socialization, the aggregation of people and inter-ethnic integration in large as well as in small cities. The regeneration of depressed and deprived city areas has often started with the creation of libraries and their qualification as "meeting places" for citizens.

Examples of libraries being the focus of, or a chain for, urban regeneration are present in many European cities, from Aarhus to Helsinki, from Paris to Copenhagen.

Cities may also be the ideal ground field from which to develop Citizens Science projects. In Belgium *The air seekers* is developed by Transport and Development, an NGO with its headquarters in Brussels. T&D allied with several Belgian libraries to develop a citizen science project that aims at creating as much data as possible on air pollution. Sensors detecting the air quality are given to users of public libraries and data are transmitted to research centres analysing the quality of air. The *air seekers* project is a perfect match for SDG 11.6.

Book heritage projects qualify for Target 11.4 which aims to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage. Most library cultural heritage projects create links with Europeana, which

⁵³ <https://www.librarieswithoutborders.org/ideasbox/>.

⁵⁴ Peter Genovese and Patricia Albanese. Sustainable libraries, Sustainable Services: A Global view. (IFLA 2011, Puerto Rico), <https://www.ifla.org/past-wlic/2011/196-genovese-en.pdf>

provides access to millions of books, music, artworks and more – with sophisticated search and filter tools.⁵⁵

In Bulgaria, a number of projects on cultural heritage have been funded by the European Structural and Investment Funds, namely: a) the “St. Cyril and Methodius” National Library of Bulgaria, which has been established as a Centre of Excellence for the Bulgarian Heritage; b) the “Written treasures of the Lower Danube”, also involving a library in Craiova, Romania; and c) the “cultural and historical destinations”, in collaboration with a Turkish library.⁵⁶

In Germany, two projects were funded through the European Structural and Investment Funds in Oranienburg - a city of 40,000 inhabitants in the region of Brandenburg - and Waltershausen - 13,000 inhabitants, in Thuringia. In Oranienburg, the region decided to restore the library with a tourist information and a Galerie after having requalified the Old Castle, the Castle Park and the Havel promenade. The Stadtbibliothek Waltershausen was re-qualified in an historical complex, which also includes the town hall (1441).⁵⁷

SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production



Sustainable development is first and foremost a matter of lifestyle : any educational activity linked with waste disposal of non-recyclable material is supporting sustainable practices. Libraries and documentation centres may greatly influence human behaviour. Awareness should be raised on sustainable practices linked with the circular economy, and the misuse of cosmetics and pharmaceuticals.

An example of a library project meeting SD Goal 12, easily extendible to other libraries, is the one set up by the Yavorov Regional Library “The land is cleaner, we are more knowledgeable”: a 3D Printer is made available to every student in return of plastic bottles.⁵⁸

BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) was a Citizen Science project taking place on the island Funen, Denmark within the Life Cycle Studies. The project aimed to engage citizens in research regarding electronic waste (mobile devices, T.V.’s, vacuum cleaners etc.) in order to establish whether decommissioned products were recyclable with major involvement of citizens in new and more sustainable life cycles. The outcome of the project served as a basis for new local, national and European legislation. 1,500 citizens participated and handed over products, while interviews and surveys on social media, T.V. and on the Internet reached ca 130,000 citizens.⁵⁹

Another library project aiming to substantially reduce waste generation through prevention and recycling was implemented by the Future Lab in the LoHal Library in Tilburg, The Netherlands. As part of the “Plastic Troop Challenge”, a substantial number of citizens collected all their plastic waste for a week.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ <https://www.europeana.eu/en/about-us>.

⁵⁶ See EBLIDA. The European Structural and Investment Funds 2021-2027: Funding Opportunities in Libraries, <http://www.eblida.org/publications.html>.

⁵⁷ Ibidem.

⁵⁸ <http://3d-burglib.org/bg>

⁵⁹ The project was carried out in partnership between the University of Southern Denmark (SDU), TV/2 Funen (regional broadcaster), Refurb (a private company), four municipalities and 15 partners from the private sector and not least civil society (e.g. Repair Cafés), <https://www.ecsite.eu/activities-and-services/ecsite-events/conferences/sessions/citizen-science-case-study-bring-your-own>.

⁶⁰ The LoHal Library is committed to a more sustainable Tilburg, <https://www.bibliotheekmb.nl/nieuws/1912-dec/de-bibliotheek-lochal-zet-zich-in-voor-een-duurzamer-tilburg.html>.

SDG 13: Climate Action



Freedom of expression is a sacred principle in libraries; therefore, those who deny climate change may be listened to in libraries, but also have a hard life: climate change has become an emergency also because of them. Awareness activities and campaigns / exhibitions promoting good practices should awaken people's consciousness and accelerate the attainment of SDG 13. Cooperation between citizens and universities through public libraries would reverse the current consideration that climate emergency is something beside and ahead of us, and not inside of us and now.

One of the most popular standards applied in sustainability is the ISO standard 14001:2004: Environmental management systems — Requirements with guidance for use, a standard that is successfully applied in many aspects of SDGs.⁶¹ The University Library of Huelva set up an ISO standard compliant system designed to manage processes and procedures related to environmental aspects. It was applied to all library activities and services having an impact on the environment.⁶²

SDG 14: Life below water



Rivers, lakes and the sea are a source of transportation and power over which our cities were born and libraries can document well this richness. Access to information related to life below water may educate people in having a sustainable relation with their water environment.

The Municipal Library in Lyon organises a regional book prize for environment and makes available collections related to the interpretation of the environment.⁶³

SDG 15: Life On Land



Activities in libraries on biodiversity should start with the promotion of the Convention on Biological Diversity dedicated to promoting sustainable development, which was signed by 150 government leaders at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit.

It is a common practice in libraries to set up collections dedicated to biodiversity. Workshops on gardens, nature ecology and sustainable development are being associated. In France, this has been the case, for instance, at the Médiathèque in Pézilla-la-Rivière (Perpignan region).⁶⁴

Another project - "Ernte Deine Stadt" (Harvest your city) – clearly illustrates the more advanced concept of Green Library at the Stadtbibliothek Bad Oldesloe, with the local library becoming a urban

⁶¹ UN Sustainable Development Goals – can ISO 14001 help? - Yes! Version – December 2016, <https://committee.iso.org/files/live/sites/tc207sc1/files/Final%20UN%20SDG%20and%20ISO%2014001%20071216.pdf>.

⁶² Marta Garcia (2020), "La agenda 2030 en las bibliotecas universitarias: qué es y ejemplos de aplicación", *Desiderata*, n. 13. <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=7217946>.

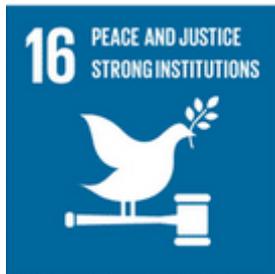
⁶³ <https://www.bm-lyon.fr/16-bibliotheques-et-un-bibliobus/bibliotheque-du-6e/zoom-sur/article/le-prix-regional-du-livre-environnement-a-la-bibliotheque-du-6e>.

⁶⁴ <https://www.ledepartement66.fr/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Rapport-DD-2019.pdf>.

garden and library rooms transformed into spaces for reflection and creativity about Sustainability (meeting SD Goals 4, 11, 12, 15, 17).⁶⁵

The project “Wildlife around us: get to know and protect”, implemented by the Zachary Kniazheski Library, 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.⁶⁶

SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions



Especially in Northern Europe, libraries are considered by definition “meeting places” (in Norway it is officially inscribed in the law); they are usual venues for civic engagement and political debate. In general, libraries strive for an active and well-informed citizenry: “to engage libraries in taking care of people and their rights by encouraging democratic participation of citizens in society” is for instance a central mission of the EBLIDA strategy.

It is no surprise that SDG 16.10 *Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements* enjoys high popularity in European libraries. Fighting against discrimination also includes migration policies and literacy programmes for immigrants. A Human Library – where collections are not based on books, but on conversations with human beings - concerning forced migration is organised within “the Madrid city library and 2030 Agenda”, in collaboration with public and NGO bodies dealing with migration.⁶⁷ Public debate around environmental sustainability is organised in the Bibliotecas Municipales de La Coruña and the Biblioteca de la Universidad de las Palmas de Gran Canaria. The library network of Barcelona identified 16.6, 16.7 and 16.10 as its main drives for strategic development (the others being Targets 4.4, 4.5, 5.5, 8.3 and 8.9).⁶⁸ The Library in Purchena (Spain) created a “Biblioteca de Acogida” (Shelter Library), aiming to stimulate meetings between young migrants and local youth minors. The initiative was awarded the CCB “Social Library Prize” in 2017.⁶⁹

In the Netherlands, popular events are the Tegenlicht (Backlight) Meetups, organised by VPRO, a Dutch broadcasting association. Many of these meetups focus on sustainable development and are organised in Dutch libraries.

Another important direction of 16.10 is unveiling fake news in the public debate. Populist and undemocratic parties, often encouraged by external states, use online disinformation to manipulate public opinion and amplify their agenda. Freedom of expression is hampered by hidden persuaders, who deliberately spread falsehoods to influence political events, put into discredit social groupings and cause harm to individuals. During the Covid-19 crisis, fake news amplified individual fears and put human beings in disarray. EBLIDA allied with NewsGuard – a company born to combat disinformation

⁶⁵ https://www.bibliothekerverband.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Landesverbaende/Hessen/Bibliothekstage/Ernte_deine_Stadt_Wetzlar_180430.pdf

⁶⁶ <http://green.libsz.org/>.

⁶⁷ Madrid city libraries and 2030 Agenda.

<https://bibliotecas.madrid.es/portales/bibliotecas/es/Noticias/Manual-para-trabajar-la-Agenda-2030-de-Desarrollo-Sostenible-en-las-bibliotecas-municipales/?vgnnextfmt=default&vgnnextoid=f09b8a0a1c1e8610VgnVCM1000001d4a900aRCRD&vgnnextchann el=165a0b6eb5cb3510VgnVCM1000008a4a900aRCRD>

⁶⁸ Barcelona region libraries and 2030 Agenda,

<https://www.diba.cat/documents/16060163/189231108/La+Red+de+Bibliotecas+Municipales+con+los+Objetivos+de+Desarrollo+Sostenible/14837cfa-1019-476a-94b7-293cbdac0c9e>.

⁶⁹ <https://www.ccbiblio.es/wp-content/uploads/Sello-CCB-2018-BP%C3%BABlicas-Purchena.pdf>.

and misinformation – which evaluates websites in the United States and in the following European countries: France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom. NewsGuard’s peculiar feature is that it works on website evaluation and examines the context of news, rather than its text. In line with the library concept of access to information, NewsGuard does not apply filtering systems intended to eliminate information, nor uses lexical or combinatorial systems forcibly based on more or less biased algorithms.⁷⁰

SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals



Several library organisations operate at international level. Halfway between a humanitarian NGO and a social enterprise, Bibliothèques sans Frontières helps local and national governments diffuse knowledge where it is most needed. In spite of being excellent places for personal growth and collective development, libraries are too often absent where they could have the most impact. BsF works in 23 languages and in 50 countries across the globe on issues such as education, health, employment, citizenship, environment and sustainability, disability, and technology.⁷¹

One of the most fascinating programmes implemented in European libraries is very likely the Human Library. The programme originated in Copenhagen, where real people are on loan to readers. The Human Library works to create a safe framework for personal conversations that can help to challenge prejudice, help to get rid of discrimination, prevent conflicts and contribute to greater human cohesion across social, religious and ethnic divisions. The first example took place in the spring of 2000 as a project for Roskilde Festival and is now applied in more than 80 countries.⁷² Under the name of Living Library it is now a European project promoted by the Council of Europe. It works just like a normal library: visitors can browse the catalogue for the available titles, choose the book they want to read, and borrow it for a limited period of time. After reading, they return the book to the library and, if they want, borrow another. The only difference is that in the Living Library, books are people, and reading consists of a conversation.⁷³ The Human Library meets especially Goals 5, 8, 10 and 17.

The Fondation de Luxembourg, which also enables other Sheltered Foundations to be set up under its aegis, distributes funding from different donors in the following areas: Health and Science, Poverty Reduction and Social Cohesion, Universal Education, Biodiversity and Climate Change. One of the projects of the Fondation de Luxembourg, for instance, has been to acquire a “bibliobus” to combat illiteracy in Cambodia (meeting SDGs 4, 10 and 17).⁷⁴

4.3 Library policies and the 2030 Agenda

Sustainable development, in theory and practice, has had incredible success in European libraries. Any initiative focused on the 2030 Agenda raises enthusiasm, expectations and is an occasion for further library engagement. This enthusiasm is partly explained by librarians’ self-awareness that, be it called the 2030 Agenda or not, their tasks are strongly rooted in a sustainable development environment, inherent in all library internal practices and incorporating SDGs at all levels. In other words, libraries are *par excellence* sustainable agencies. After all, isn’t reading at the basis of educational programmes? Aren’t literacy, and digital literacy programmes, a pre-requirement to reducing poverty and all types of inequality?

⁷⁰ <http://www.eblida.org/activities/the-eblida-sdg-european-house/newsguard.html>.

⁷¹ <https://www.bibliosansfrontieres.org/>.

⁷² <https://humanlibrary.org/meet-our-human-books/>.

⁷³ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth/living-library>.

⁷⁴ <https://www.fdlux.lu/de/node/1052>.

IFLA (the International Federation of Library Associations) was involved in the process leading to the final version of the UN 2030 Agenda. In the 2019 version of DA2I, Development and Access to Information, “meaningful access to information” has been explored in its four facets: physical internet connectivity, skills, social and cultural context, and laws. It is also related in particular to five Sustainable Development Goals: SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 10 (Reduce Inequalities), SDG 13 (Climate Action) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions).⁷⁵ But access to information should be understood in a broader sense, into access to data, research and studies.⁷⁶

IFLA paved the way by advocating SDGs in libraries internationally and for making the case for libraries within the 2030 Agenda. IFLA activities aim to increase the participation of library associations and public library representatives in advocacy work at national and regional levels to secure sustainable public access to information through library services and programmes.⁷⁷ Libraries have plenty of stories to tell about sustainability and, for this, IFLA has created an ad hoc webpage: the Library Map of the World.⁷⁸

The lively participation of European libraries in the implementation of SDGs is a sign that libraries can go one step further in advocacy and that, beyond stories, their 2030 Agenda can explore a more advanced narrative of policies and indicators. It is also a way to contrast the four false myths surrounding the implementation of SDGs in cultural institutions, namely the idea that SDG-oriented library projects a) do not fall within the library’s core mission, b) are of an environmental nature, c) concern mainly fiscal and legislative macro-policies and d) fit small-scale, locally based projects of demonstrative nature. A reflection on policies and indicators also corresponds to the library’s quest for new identities; a broader framework is needed, in particular in the aftermath of the Covid 19 crisis.

In a historical perspective, the sustainable development framework seems to be inevitable. Library development was strongly linked with the emergence of the concept of nation state in the 19th century, when public libraries promoted primary literacy and academic libraries were shaping the political and economic élites of the nation. After the 2nd World War, public libraries were identified as agents of democratic change: *“The public library is the product of modern democracy and is a practical demonstration of democracy’s faith in universal education as a life-long process”* (first UNESCO Public Library Manifesto, 1949).⁷⁹ In early 1970’s, this idealistic notion left the floor to a more “utilitarian” attitude: technological applications, consisting of standards and metadata, earned a prominent role and the literacy missionaries of yesterday became the information managers of today. In the last twenty years, however, this neutral approach to information is leaving the floor to the social library, since the proliferation of free of charge access to information provided by information service providers, like Google, have broken the monopoly libraries have enjoyed for years in this field.

Both public and university libraries (the latter, under the “third mission” chapter) are looking for new political and social factors driving library development which can be found in social change and inclusion, democratic participation, cultural diversity and social integration. A new political framework is therefore needed – and this framework is clearly identified in the UN Sustainable Development Goals and, in Europe, in the EU 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development.

⁷⁵ DA2I, Development and Access to Information. <https://da2i.ifla.org/wp-content/uploads/da2i-2019-full-report.pdf>.

⁷⁶ Malgorzata Fedorowicz-Kruszewska. Sustainable libraries – fashion or necessity? JLIS.it, 10, 1 (January 2019), ISSN: 2038-1026 online, <https://www.jlis.it/article/view/12500/11355>.

⁷⁷ <https://www.ifla.org/libraries-development>

⁷⁸ DA2I. Development and Access to Information 2019. <https://da2i.ifla.org/wp-content/uploads/da2i-2019-full-report.pdf>.

⁷⁹ <https://www.ifla.org/files/assets/public-libraries/documents/unesco-public-library-manifesto-1949.pdf>.

There is a clear feeling that SDGs are a policy to pursue, an overall scheme to implement with statistical reporting impacting on sustainability indicators. The missing practical tool is a good theory which gathers all these elements and implement them in the form of an administrative culture of sustainability. From the documents which were made available in the responses to the Questionnaires on Sustainable development and their implementation in European libraries various model policies seem to emerge. More than on abstract considerations, these models are often the result of contingent factors, such as the size of the country, the number of inhabitants, the configuration of the library system and also the influence and the determination of individual library leaders.

A model policy – which we may be called the institutional policy - is visible in Latvia. In this country the National Library of Latvia and the Library Association of Latvia joined forces with a view to making Latvian libraries “organically” functional to the implementation of SDGs. Latvia has developed a unique and ambitious approach to the 2030 SDG Agenda resulting in the inclusion of libraries into national SDG plans at all levels. The first step was to include libraries in the interdisciplinary coalition for implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, a platform common to several governmental, municipal and private institutions in all sectors where information about projects and activities related to each of the 17 Goals is made available. The Library Association of Latvia actively cooperate with the Latvian Platform for Development Cooperation (LAPAS)⁸⁰ – the association of Latvian NGOs which are working on strengthening the civil society in Latvia – and built coherent work across all sectors and structures for the implementation of SDGs in planning documents and everyday activities, including evaluation and reporting about the results.⁸¹

As a consequence, the Latvian National Development Plan 2021-2027 – the largest state budget investment plan for the development of Latvia and the improvement of quality of life – also includes libraries as a core concept for development of culture and education. It is expected, therefore, that Latvian libraries will largely benefit from the ESI Funds 2021-2027.⁸²

Most librarians’ movements towards the 2030 Agenda witness the spontaneous organisation of activities, exhibitions and events linked with SD Goals. From special collections to ad hoc fairs and representations, libraries multiply their efforts. This impetuous development, however, remains uncoordinated and loose. Hence, the emergence of another possible, bottom-up model of implementation of SDGs in European libraries - to be found in France and Germany.⁸³ In Spain, the case for the 2030 Agenda finds a systemisation in a strategic proposal which is jointly elaborated by CCB, the body where meaningful organisations acting as catalysts for library change are represented.⁸⁴ The Strategic Proposal axes the Spanish 2030 Agenda for libraries on six SD Goals: 3 (Good Health and Well-being), 4 (Quality Education), 5 (Gender equality), 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), 10 (Reducing Inequality), 11 (Sustainable cities and communities) and 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions).

Even more interesting is the proposal to re-think the whole of the Spanish library system as an institutional engine designed to attain SDG 5: Gender equality. Library collections, activity planning and service organisation are centred around the concept of citizenship and applied in relation to professionals, equipment, marketing and digital literacy. The gender perspective is linked to the

⁸⁰ <https://lapas.lv/lv/musu-darbi/aktualie-projekti/iam-projekts/>.

⁸¹ <https://lapas.lv/lv/globalie-merki/iam-koalicija>

⁸² <https://www.pkc.gov.lv/lv/attistibas-planosana-latvija/nacionalais-attistibas-plans/nap2027>

⁸³ In France: Agenda 2030 et bibliothèques, <https://agenda2030bibfr.wixsite.com/agenda2030bib>; in Germany: Netzwerk Grüne Bibliothek, <https://www.netzwerk-gruene-bibliothek.de/>.

⁸⁴ Ministerio de Cultura y Deporte. Estrategia nacional de información y bibliotecas como agentes para la consecución de los objetivos de la Agenda 2030, Propuesta inicial Febrero 2019, https://www.ccbiblio.es/wp-content/uploads/propuesta_estrategia_Bcas-y-Agenda-2030_02.19_rev2.pdf

concept of the library as safe space, designed to combat any form of discrimination against women, a place where anti-LGTB views are not tolerated. Libraries would be a space where gender equality is not only fully practiced but also promoted.

Another model is to be found in regional/local library policies towards the 2030 Agenda. In Europe, it is a widespread model since from 50 to 100% of public library funding is generated from local resources. Local library policies are also a natural trend for countries having a federal form of governments and responsibility for libraries and cultural matters is almost exclusively confined to Laender or Comunidades autónomas. In practice, a library or a local library system elects several SDGs as preferred areas of development and adjusts its operational plans accordingly. This is the rule in almost all European countries; in Spain, for instance, the City of Madrid library system is particularly focused on SDGs 1, 4, 9, 10, 11, 16,⁸⁵ whereas the library network of Barcelona identified SDG Targets 4.4 and 4.5; 5.5, 8.3 and 8.9; 16.6, 16.7 and 16.10 as main drives for strategic development.⁸⁶

The 2018 *Guide* released by UCLG strongly emphasise how cities can use cultural objectives and institutions to attain each of the SDGs for local action.⁸⁷ Access to culture, with local provisions establishing a minimal number of libraries and books per inhabitant, is an obvious means to fight poverty (SDG 1) and to foster access to information (SDG 16). A cultural approach in education can help recognise languages and cultures of different social stakeholders in compliance with human rights (SDG 4) and elaborate narratives that address gender discrimination where the role of women and girls in the society is adequately represented (SDG 5). Many relevant sites and elements of tangible and intangible cultural heritage are found in cities and play a role in local sustainable development (SDG 11).

Sustainable development at city level is strongly emphasised in Europe, and in particular in the Dutch public library system. The big four cities – Amsterdam, The Hague Rotterdam and Utrecht – have strongly invested in sustainable development in local metropolitan areas.⁸⁸ The Netherlands are nodes of important European initiatives, such as “The Human Library”, “Meetups”, and are hubs for local initiatives, as in the case of the “Plastic Troop Challenge” in Tilburg.

Another issue worth being analysed is the use that is made of an SDG-oriented library policy. A possible use is the one that is inspiring the current Report. Since SDG-oriented policies are broadening library use and practices, these activities can be funded with sources of funding that are alternative to national funding - ESI Funds to begin with.

⁸⁵ Madrid city libraries and 2030 Agenda.

<https://bibliotecas.madrid.es/portales/bibliotecas/es/Noticias/Manual-para-trabajar-la-Agenda-2030-de-Desarrollo-Sostenible-en-las-bibliotecas-municipales/?vgnnextfmt=default&vgnnextoid=f09b8a0a1c1e8610VgnVCM1000001d4a900aRCRD&vgnnextchann el=165a0b6eb5cb3510VgnVCM1000008a4a900aRCRD>.

⁸⁶Barcelona region libraries and 2030 Agenda,

<https://www.diba.cat/documents/16060163/189231108/La+Red+de+Bibliotecas+Municipales+con+los+Objetivos+de+Desarrollo+Sostenible/14837cfa-1019-476a-94b7-293cbdac0c9e>

⁸⁷ United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG). Culture in the Sustainable Development Goals: a Guide for local action (May 2018), https://www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/culture_in_the_sdgs.pdf.

⁸⁸ See, for instance, <https://www.local2030.org/library/447/Localising-the-SDGs-in-Utrecht-.pdf> <https://www.local2030.org/library/234/ICLEI-SDGs-Briefing-Sheets-04-The-importance-of-all-Sustainable-Development-Goals-SDGs-for-cities-and-communities.pdf>; <https://www.socialchallenges.eu/en-GB/city/19/Challenges/1077>.

Another possible use of SDG orientated library policy is at European level. A number of European programmes are now coming to an end and are being renewed. Some of them are well known by the library community and will certainly be re-oriented towards the European Commission new priorities: Erasmus+, Horizon 2020, COSME. In this and in the previous paragraphs we have seen how library policies are in line with the development of the 2030 Agenda and how projects can reflect different objectives, some of which are usually distant from the core missions of traditional libraries. SDGs are an excellent opportunity to break away from traditional library precincts and to open new perspectives. The EBLIDA Matrix⁸⁹ can be used by libraries and librarians to implement most advanced and more productive development strategies.

4.4 Library indicators and the 2030 Agenda

The seventeen Sustainable Development Goals come together with an admirable texture of 169 Targets, themselves measured through 232 Indicators. The ways in which the implementation of SDG projects in libraries are evaluated and, more generally, the measurement of the library's contribution to the attainment of SDGs is a thorny issue, not easily solved.

European Union countries started to collect library statistics in a more systematic and intensive manner around 1990-2000, thanks to funding provided by the European Commission.⁹⁰ Apart from quality, the scope of library statistics leaves much to be desired. The focus is mainly on quantitative output (numbers of materials, loans, visits, etc.) and not much light is shed on the intrinsic value of the library to its users, nor the impact on his or her daily life (Huysmans-Oomes 2013). A number of studies have examined the socio-economic impact of libraries using different methodologies with a view to evaluating both direct and indirect library outcomes.

An important indicator resulting from impact studies is the Return on Investment (RoI), normally defined as "the relationship between the total economic benefit of the library and the total re-sources invested in the library" (ISO 16439:2014).⁹¹ This indicator has been applied in connection with contingent valuation – the value a person places on a good. This combined methodology has been applied in a variety of cases both at national and at local level.

In Denmark, the value placed by Danes on libraries corresponds to a total level of willingness to pay up to DKK 4bn a year (€ 553 M), significantly more than the DKK 2.5bn (€ 334 M) they currently pay for libraries via taxes.⁹² The contingent valuation method has also been used to assess the public library system in Latvia. The annual average total profit created by public libraries in Latvia over 2008- 2010 was almost 23.8 million lats (€ 16.6 M) while the annual cost of the library system was just over 17 million lats (€ 11.9 M).⁹³

⁸⁹ <http://www.eblida.org/activities/the-eblida-matrix.html>.

⁹⁰ Ramsdale, Phillip; Fuegi, David; Sumsion, John (2001). The Libecon Project: Library statistics for international benchmarking and advocacy. Proceedings of the Northumbria International Conference on Performance Measurement in Libraries and Information Services: Meaningful Measures for Emerging Realities" (4th, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, August 12-16, 2001), Stein, Joan, Ed.; Kyrillidou, Martha, Ed.; Davis, Denise, Ed., pp. 171-177. <https://www.libqual.org/documents/admin/ramsdalefuegi.pdf>.

⁹¹ ISO 16439:2014. Information and documentation — Methods and procedures for assessing the impact of libraries (Last Reviewed and confirmed in 2019). <https://www.iso.org/obp/ui/#iso:std:iso:16439:ed-1:v1:en>.

⁹² Fremtidens Biblioteker (2015). The economic value of public libraries, Prepared by Copenhagen Economics for the Danish Think Tank Libraries of the Future, <http://www.fremtidensbiblioteker.dk/upl/website/pdf-engelsk/SamlefinalopslagUK1.pdf>.

⁹³ Latvia (2012). Economic value and impact of public libraries in Latvia Study report, 2012 <http://www.kis.gov.lv/download/Economic%20value%20and%20impact%20of%20public%20libraries%20in%20Latvia.pdf>.

Similar results have been achieved in Spain where the estimated ROI for libraries is around between €2.80 and €3.83 per euro invested.⁹⁴ In the UK, a recent study suggests that every £1 invested in libraries returns between £5 and £7; the ROI for public libraries in Australia, New Zealand and USA is estimated to be, respectively, £4.30, £4 £1, £3.89 - £5.48.⁹⁵

On the basis of a number of studies carried out in North America and Europe, Aabø concludes that “for each dollar of taxpayers’ money invested in public libraries, libraries – on average – return a value to the citizens of 4 to 5 times more. [...] This is a strong message with policy implications”.⁹⁶

But libraries are not economic agents and should be evaluated differently in order to enable a more rounded and complete picture of the impact of libraries. Impact should be measured on individuals - in terms of abilities, competencies, representations and behaviours -, on society - in terms of social inclusion, education and lifelong learning, cultural heritage, public health and reinforcement of democracy -, and on the economy, in terms of Return on Investment (ROI) and the commercial life of a city or a region.⁹⁷ It may be possible to evaluate other possible forms of impact – a French study lists no less than 13 indicators.⁹⁸ So, how can impact be evaluated, not only in terms of outputs, but also of outcomes (“the intrinsic value of the library to the user and the impact on his or her daily life”),⁹⁹ especially in an SDG perspective?

The debate around output vs. outcome is not easily solved. Statistics about collection turnover and circulation, library expenditure etc. are data that can easily be collected with a good deal of precision, whereas outcomes cannot be detected easily. Unsurprisingly, an overwhelming majority of respondents claim that there are many ways of assessing libraries and library projects and, however, SDG indicators are not applied, not the least Eurostat or UN indicators, for the very reason that they are difficult to apply and not connected to library activities.

Moreover, comparing library performance indicators identified by impact studies with SDG indicators poses a problem of pragmatism. However hard libraries are working to meet the 2030 Agenda, how determinant can they be to contribute to goals’ attainment? What realistically can they do to reduce

⁹⁴ FESABID (2014). The economic and social value of information services: Libraries Report. Report of Findings Co-ordinated by: José Antonio Gómez Yáñez Estudio de Sociología Consultores, 2014, http://www.fesabid.org/documentos/economic_social_value_information_service_libraries.pdf.

⁹⁵ CILIP, the library and information association (2019). Public libraries. The case for support, August 2019. <https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/librariesdeliver/pages/77/attachments/original/1571131644/library-report-WEB.pdf?1571131644>.

⁹⁶ Aabø, Svanhild (2009). Libraries and return on investment (ROI): A meta-analysis. In *New Library World*, 110 (7/8), July 2009, pp. 311-324, quotation on p. 12, free text <https://oda.hioa.no/en/libraries-and-return-on-investment-roi-a-meta-analysis/asset/dspace:942/475260.pdf>.

⁹⁷ Koop, Ulrike (2017). Wertzumessung für Öffentliche Bibliotheken. Einwohner und Politiker monetarisieren den Wert der Stadtbibliothek Melle. - 10.18452/18125, pp. 25-26, <https://edoc.hu-berlin.de/handle/18452/18795>.

⁹⁸ Direction générale des médias et des industries culturelles – Ministère de la Culture (2018). Comment apprécier les effets de l’action des bibliothèques publiques?, par Pierre Le Quéau, Olivier Zerbib, avec la collaboration d’Élise Butel et Cécile Martin, Rapport d’étude – 2018. Grenoble: Observatoire des politiques culturelles, 2019, <http://www.culture.gouv.fr/Thematiques/Livre-et-Lecture/Documentation/Publications/Etudes-et-rapport-Lecture-et-bibliotheques/Publication-du-rapport-comment-apprecier-les-effets-de-l-action-des-bibliotheques-publiques>.

⁹⁹ Huysmans, Frank and Oomes, Marjolein (2013). Measuring the public library's societal value: A methodological research program. *IFLA Journal*, Volume 39, 2013, Pages 168-177, <https://dare.uva.nl/personal/search?identifier=5a41dfa3-1a0c-4bfe-b68e-0d463844725b>.

pollution, offer more access to clean fuel and integrate renewable energy into end-use applications in buildings, transport and industry (UN SDG 7: Affordable and clean energy)? Only courageous, ambitious and coherent governmental measures can create the conditions when the tipping point is reached and a society is steadily nestled into sustainable growth, and it would be an illusory and self-congratulatory exercise to link massive campaigns on clean energy promoted by libraries to successful policies promoted at international, national and local level.

A negative example, for instance, is the evaluation of library impact in relation to SDG 4. This SDG is central in library activities; nevertheless, measurement is not always an easy task. It is relatively straightforward to report about the number of people having participated in vocational training in libraries and the level of their qualifications. Less easy to evaluate is the impact of the received training on individuals and on their lives.

The contribution of impact studies to sustainability applied in libraries has to be found elsewhere, namely in libraries' ability to incorporate evaluative methods and practices promoted by impact studies with a view to creating an adequate advocacy narrative for elected Members, administrators and granters. A good example is SDG 16.10 Access to information.

In its paper drafted in collaboration with TASCHA, IFLA rightly points out that access to information is central to library strategies to attain SDG 16.10, and more. It also lists the two indicators strictly linked with the measurement of this particular Target: Indicator 16.10.1 - "Number of verified cases of killing, kidnapping, enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention and torture of journalists, associated media personnel, trade unionists and human rights advocates in the previous 12 months" - and Indicator 16.10.2 - "Number of countries that adopt and implement constitutional, statutory and/or policy guarantees for public access to information."¹⁰⁰ In the IFLA Report, they are rightly associated to two Indices: 1. Freedom in the World 2. Freedom on the Net Indices.¹⁰¹

These two indicators are used by UNESCO (SDG-IPDC programme) to report to the UN High Level Political Forum about SDG 16.10.¹⁰² However important these two indicators are, they *cannot* be used to assess the impact of access to information in European libraries. The first indicator is strictly related to media activities, the second measures how transparent and effective national/local administrations are in delivering the information they produce through websites and portals.¹⁰³

Hence, the need for ad hoc, more library-tailored targets and indicators. There is no doubt that a specific target for SDG 16.10 is the fight against fake news in political advertising and social media manipulation. The ability to manage fake news in libraries is normally dealt with in terms of individual competences in information literacy and implemented in users' education schemes. A positive policy on fake news in libraries also entails website evaluation and tools enabling the filtering of fake news.

¹⁰⁰ The two indicators are monitored by UNESCO, the custodian agency for 16.10; see UNESCO. Global indicator framework for the Sustainable Development Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, A/RES/71/313 E/CN.3/2018/2 E/CN.3/2019/2, https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/Global%20Indicator%20Framework%20after%202019%20refinement_Eng.pdf.

¹⁰¹ DA2I Report, p. 20.

¹⁰² UNESCO. Powering sustainable development with access to information: highlights from the 2019 UNESCO monitoring and reporting of SDG indicator 16.10.2, CI-19/IPDC/1Rev, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000369160?posInSet=2&queryId=b6537e96-cd72-44e1-9171-26436342a0fc>.

¹⁰³ UNESCO. Powering sustainable development with access to information: highlights from the 2019 UNESCO monitoring and reporting of SDG indicator 16.10.2, CI-19/IPDC/1Rev, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000369160?posInSet=2&queryId=b6537e96-cd72-44e1-9171-26436342a0fc>

A possible indicator to measure fair access to information and democratic participation in libraries, can be the number of people having received information literacy education and having accessed specific tools detecting fake news in libraries.

The claim for “data, data, data” brought up by the Spanish Strategic Proposal is more than justified.¹⁰⁴ Perhaps a first concrete step may be to shift from the global evaluation of the impact of libraries on the attainment of each SDG to the need to proceed the evaluation of library SDG-oriented library projects. The SDG 16.10 example, for instance, shows the importance of departing from evaluating websites and disinformation / misinformation diffused on the Web through information literacy programmes in libraries or the implementation of specific tools detecting fake news. The production of these autonomous library indicators should be in line with UN and Eurostat orientations.

More in general, rather than in the intensity of use of library resources, library practices should be seen in terms of modalities of use. The identification of library performance indicators of social impact may include, for instance, the number of voluntary and community groups normally linked to the library service, the proportion of hours when libraries are used for organized activities apart from traditional library services, the staff time percentage dedicated to contact with the public, and formal connections with schools and colleges as well as with local businesses.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Estrategia nacional, cit., p. 11, https://www.ccbiblio.es/wp-content/uploads/propuesta_estrategia_Bcas-y-Agenda-2030_02.19_rev2.pdf

¹⁰⁵ François Matarazzo. Beyond book issues. The social potential of library projects. Comedia, 1998.

5. What are European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) 2021-2027

The ESI Funds are embedded in a normative framework and follow an implementation process resulting from a negotiation between the European Commission and each Member State. The final product is a partnership agreement between EC and Member States, which also involves stakeholders at the local and/or regional levels.

At the time of writing this report, the European Commission, Member States and regional and local stakeholders are in the process of signing a Partnership Agreement for ESIF 2021-2027. ESI Funds take the lion's share of the EU: the two main funds – ERDF and CF – manage almost one third of the total EU budget. Regional development investments will strongly focus on objectives 1 (“Supporting development in the less prosperous regions”) and 2 (“Transition regions”); 65% to 85% of ERDF and Cohesion Fund resources will be allocated to these priorities, depending on Member States’ relative wealth. This issue will be dealt with in detail in Chapter 5.

5.1 Seven Funds and Five Main Objectives¹⁰⁶

To enable consistency with other EU policies, the rules on delivery and implementation of ERDF and the Cohesion Fund are governed as far as possible by the Common Provisions Regulation. ESI Funds 2021-2027 set out common provisions for seven shared management funds at the EU level:

- CF: Cohesion Fund
- EMFF: European Maritime and Fisheries Fund
- ERDF: European Regional Development Fund
- ESF+: European Social Fund Plus
- AMIF: Asylum and Migration Fund
- ISF: Internal Security Fund
- BMVI: Border Management and Visa Instrument

EARDF (European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development), a Fund included in ESIF 2014-2020, will be part of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) which draws its funding also from the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF). Still to be adopted, the majority of ERDF funding (65 % to 85 %) will focus on smart growth and the green economy, but also support other activities such as connectivity, social issues and local development; the CF will continue to focus predominantly on environmental and transport infrastructure.¹⁰⁷

Being part of the EU's budget from 2021-2027, the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) will be the main financial instrument to strengthen Europe's social dimension.¹⁰⁸ ESF+ is the result of a merging of the existing European Social Fund, the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI), the Fund for Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD), the EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) and the EU Health programme. ESF+ will be more coherent with and complementary to other Funds that provide support

¹⁰⁶ What follows summarizes the content of the document: European Commission. Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Regional Development Fund and on the Cohesion Fund Strasbourg, 29.5.2018 COM(2018) 372 final 2018/0197(COD), <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52018PC0375&from=EN>

¹⁰⁷ Agnieszka Widuto. European Regional Development Fund and Cohesion Fund 2021-2027. Briefing EU Legislation in Progress 2021-2027, PE 625.141 Members' Research Service PE 625.141 – January 2020, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2018/625141/EPRS_BRI\(2018\)625141_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2018/625141/EPRS_BRI(2018)625141_EN.pdf)

¹⁰⁸ <https://ec.europa.eu/esf/main.jsp?catId=62&langId=en>

to people, such as Erasmus, the Asylum and Migration Fund, the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund and the Reform Support Programme.

Three Funds - AMIF (the Asylum and Migration Fund), ISF (Internal Security Fund), BMVI (Border Management and Visa Instrument) – will strengthen and develop a Common European Asylum System, promote legal migration to EU States and improve solidarity among EU Member States.¹⁰⁹

Five main objectives (also designated as PO, Policy Objectives) will determine the development of ESI Funds in 2021-2027:

1. **A Smarter Europe**, through innovation, digitisation, economic transformation and support to small and medium-sized businesses (PO 1);
2. **A Greener, carbon free Europe**, implementing the Paris Agreement and investing in energy transition, renewables and the fight against climate change (PO 2);
3. **A more Connected Europe**, with strategic transport and digital networks (PO 3);
4. **A more Social Europe**, delivering on the European Pillar of Social Rights and supporting quality employment, education, skills, social inclusion and equal access to healthcare (PO 4);
5. **A Europe closer to citizens**, by supporting locally-led development strategies and sustainable urban development across the EU (PO 5).

The Cohesion Policy keeps on investing in all European regions on the basis of three objectives (less-developed, transition, more-developed regions). The allocation method for the funds is still largely based on GDP per capita. New criteria are added (youth unemployment, low education level, climate change, and the reception and integration of migrants) to better reflect the reality on the ground.

Cohesion Policy further supports locally-led development strategies and empowers local authorities in the management of the funds. The urban dimension of Cohesion Policy is strengthened, with 6% of the ERDF dedicated to sustainable urban development, and a new networking and capacity-building programme for urban authorities, the European Urban Initiative. Interregional Innovative Investments will be made on regions with matching ‘smart specialisation’ assets in priority sectors such as big data, circular economy, advanced manufacturing or cybersecurity.

In relation to ESIF 2014-2020, these are the main changes of ESIF 2021-2027:

Criteria for allocation	ESIF Budget share (2014-2020)	ESIF Budget share (2021-2027)
GDP	86 %	81%
Labour market, education, demographics	14%	15%
Climate		1%
Migration		3%
Total	100%	100%

Such criteria are based on the following indicators:

- a) Labour market: unemployment rate, youth unemployment rate, employment rate;
- b) Education: early school leavers, tertiary level of education, low level of education;
- c) Demographics: population of regions, low density of population;
- d) Climate: Greenhouse gas emissions in the non-ESD sectors;
- e) Migration: Net migration of non-EU citizens.

¹⁰⁹ https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/financing/fundings/migration-asylum-borders/asylum-migration-integration-fund_en

To enable consistency with Horizon Europe, this latter will focus on "European excellence" - the generation and exploitation of new knowledge - while ERDF will focus on "regional relevance" - diffusion of existing knowledge and technology to places that need it, embedding it locally via smart specialisation strategies.

What follows is a series of reasons why action at EU level adds value to action at national level:

- In many countries, the ERDF and the Cohesion Fund represent at least 50% of public investment – these Member States would not otherwise have the financial capacity to make such investments;
- There are significant potential spillovers across national and regional boundaries and the EU level has an important role in delivering these spillovers and preventing underinvestment;
- In most regions, including more developed ones, “smart specialize” strategies represent a consistent strategic framework for investments and bring about high added value. The benefits of such strategies tend to be highest in the most developed regions (particularly in the Nordic countries, Austria, Germany, Benelux and France);
- They promote EU priorities, including structural reforms of labour market, transport, environment, climate change adaptation and mitigation, energy, education and social policies and programmes, as well as administrative modernisation;
- The ERDF and the Cohesion Fund deliver tangible results in areas which matter to European citizens. Helping regions adapt to the challenge of globalisation, creating 420,000 jobs and supporting 1.1 million SMEs, tackling urban poverty – all these are priorities for Europeans.

5.2 Specific ESIF 2021-2027 objectives (ERDF and ESF)

There is practically no sector nor geographic area which is not covered by ESIF 2021-2027. Exclusions from the scope of the ERDF and the Cohesion Fund are specifically mentioned in Article 6 of the Common Provisions and concern various sectors going from nuclear to tobacco and tobacco products, from investment in facilities for the treatment of residual waste to fossil fuels, and broadband infrastructure in areas, rail transport. Projects in overseas countries and territories are not eligible for support from the ERDF or the Cohesion Fund, but may participate in Interreg programmes.

According to Article 4 the scope of support from ERDF regards: (a) infrastructure; (b) access to services; (c) productive investments in SMEs; (d) equipment, software and intangible assets; (e) information, communication, studies, networking, cooperation, exchange of experience and activities involving clusters; (f) technical assistance.¹¹⁰

General Policy Objectives (PO) of ERDF support twenty-one specific objectives listed in Article 2 of the proposed Regulation on the European Regional Development Fund and on the Cohesion Fund.¹¹¹ These specific objectives are:

PO 1 “A smarter Europe by promoting innovative and smart economic transformation” ('PO 1') unfolds into the following specific objectives:

- I. enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies;
- II. reaping the benefits of digitisation for citizens, companies and governments;
- III. enhancing growth and competitiveness of SMEs;
- IV. developing skills for smart specialisation, industrial transition and entrepreneurship.

¹¹⁰ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52018PC0372&from=EN>

¹¹¹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52018PC0372>.

PO 2 “A greener, low-carbon Europe by promoting clean and fair energy transition, green and blue investment, the circular economy, climate adaptation and risk prevention and management” ('PO 1') unfolds into the following specific objectives:

- I. promoting energy efficiency measures;
- II. promoting renewable energy;
- III. developing smart energy systems, grids and storage at local level;
- IV. promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and disaster resilience;
- V. promoting sustainable water management;
- VI. promoting the transition to a circular economy;
- VII. enhancing biodiversity, green infrastructure in the urban environment, and reducing pollution.

PO 3 “A more connected Europe by enhancing mobility and regional ICT connectivity” includes the following specific objectives:

- I. enhancing digital connectivity;
- II. developing a sustainable, climate resilient, intelligent, secure and intermodal TEN-T (Trans-European Network - Transport);
- III. developing sustainable, climate resilient, intelligent and intermodal national, regional and local mobility, including improved access to TEN-T and cross-border mobility;
- IV. promoting sustainable multimodal urban mobility.

PO 4 “A more social Europe implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights” includes the following specific objectives:

- I. enhancing the effectiveness of labour markets and access to quality employment through developing social innovation and infrastructure;
- II. improving access to inclusive and quality services in education, training and life long learning through developing infrastructure;
- III. increasing the socioeconomic integration of marginalised communities, migrants and disadvantaged groups, through integrated measures including housing and social services;
- IV. ensuring equal access to health care through developing infrastructure, including primary care.

PO 5 “A Europe closer to citizens by fostering the sustainable and integrated development of urban, rural and coastal areas and local initiatives” includes the following specific objectives:

- I. fostering the integrated social, economic and environmental development, cultural heritage and security in urban areas;
- II. fostering the integrated social, economic and environmental local development, cultural heritage and security, including for rural and coastal areas also through community-led local development.

The Cohesion Fund supports investments in the environment, including investments related to sustainable development, and in Trans-European Network – Transport, but can also be used for PO 2 and specific objectives under PO 3 set out in points (ii), (iii) and (iv), as well as to support activities aiming at jobs and growth goal.

The ESF is Europe’s main instrument for supporting jobs, helping people get better jobs and ensuring fairer job opportunities for all EU citizens. It works by investing in Europe’s human capital. Article 4 of

the Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Social Fund Plus¹¹² lists the specific objectives for this Fund, which contributes to the Implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights:

- (i) improving access to employment of all jobseekers, in particular youth and long term unemployed, and of inactive people, promoting self-employment and the social economy;
- (ii) modernising labour market institutions and services to assess and anticipate skills needs and ensure timely and tailor-made assistance and support to labour market matching, transitions and mobility;
- (iii) promoting women’s labour market participation, a better work/life balance including access to childcare, a healthy and well-adapted working environment addressing health risks, adaptation of workers, enterprises and entrepreneurs to change, and active and healthy ageing;
- (iv) improving the quality, effectiveness and labour market relevance of education and training systems, to support acquisition of key competences including digital skills;
- (v) promoting equal access to and completion of, quality and inclusive education and training, in particular for disadvantaged groups, from early childhood education and care through general and vocational education and training, and to tertiary level, as well as adult education and learning, including facilitating learning mobility for all;
- (vi) promoting lifelong learning, notably flexible upskilling and reskilling opportunities for all taking into account digital skills, better anticipating change and new skills requirements based on labour market needs, facilitating career transitions and promoting professional mobility;
- (vii) fostering active inclusion with a view to promoting equal opportunities and active participation, and improving employability;
- (viii) promoting socio-economic integration of third country nationals and of marginalised communities such as the Roma;
- (ix) enhancing the equal and timely access to quality, sustainable and affordable services; modernising social protection systems, including promoting access to social protection; improving accessibility, effectiveness and resilience of healthcare systems and long-term care services;
- (x) promoting social integration of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion, including the most deprived and children;
- (xi) addressing material deprivation through food and/or basic material assistance to the most deprived, including accompanying measures.

The understanding of ESI Funds is further complicated by the presence of several constraints and limitations in their assignment to Member States which exclude/include regions on the basis of several criteria.

The first of these criteria is GDP. A well-established political aim of the European Union is convergence among regions and its attainment is hampered by huge differences in GDP existing among the regions. The “Convergence objective” covers regions whose GDP per capita is below 75% of the EU average and aims at accelerating their economic development. The Convergence objective is financed by the ERDF, the ESF and the Cohesion Fund so that a large part of EU grants are allocated in the least favoured regions of the Member States. Eligible regions under the convergence objectives are the totality of Eastern European countries (except some regions) as well as several regions in Italy, Portugal and Spain.

¹¹² Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+), COM/2018/382 final, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52018PC0382>

The second regional objective pursued by ESI Funds concerns regional competitiveness, i.e. the ability of a region to offer an attractive and sustainable environment for firms and residents to live and work. A Regional Competitiveness Index¹¹³ measures where regions stand on aspects such as governance, infrastructure (including digital networks), health, human capital and labour market and innovation. The "Regional Competitiveness and Employment" objective covers all regions of the EU territory, except those already covered by the Convergence objective. It aims at reinforcing competitiveness, employment and attractiveness of these regions.

The "European Territorial Cooperation" (ETC) is an objective of the European Union's Cohesion Policy, serving its ultimate goal to strengthen the economic and social cohesion of the Union. Better known as Interreg, ETC provides a framework for the implementation of joint actions and policy exchanges between national, regional and local actors from different Member States. The overarching objective of European Territorial Cooperation is to promote a harmonious economic, social and territorial development of the Union as a whole. Interreg is built around three strands of cooperation: cross-border (Interreg A), transnational (Interreg B) and interregional (Interreg C).

The three regional objectives - the Convergence Objective, the Regional Competitiveness and Employment Objective as well as the European Territorial Cooperation - aim at contributing to reduce regional disparities across Union's territory.

5.3 The normative framework

In order to understand how public libraries can implement ESIF, an appreciation of the status of culture within the legal ESIF framework must be made.¹¹⁴ Article 167 Title XIII of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union is on Culture; it states that the Union shall contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the Member States, while respecting their national and regional diversity. As a result, action envisaged by the Union consists of encouraging cooperation between Member States in cultural matters such as improving the knowledge and dissemination of the culture and history of the European peoples, conserving cultural heritage of European significance and non-commercial cultural exchanges and fostering cooperation with third world countries and international organisations, in particular the Council of Europe. Any harmonisation of the laws and regulations of the Member States on cultural matters is excluded.

At the level of the ESIF Regulations, the Common Provisions Regulation¹¹⁵ regulating ESIF 2014-2020 makes a single reference to culture in the form of an ex-ante conditionality with a view to pursuing the ERDF investment priority 'Strengthening ICT applications for e-government, e-learning, e-inclusion, e-culture and e-health'. In other words, in these special areas, the Member State authorities might envisage using e-culture as a vehicle for engaging businesses and citizens as part of a strategy to develop access to, and use of ICT.

Other references to culture are to be found in the separate ERDF and ESF Regulations. In the ERDF Regulation, reference is made to the creative and cultural industries and to sustainable tourism.¹¹⁶

¹¹³ <https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/stories/s/Regional-Competitiveness-Index-2019/363v-4uq6/>

¹¹⁴ A full Guide (the Blue Guide) to ESIF is in European Structural and Investment Funds 2014-2020: Official Texts and Commentaries. European Union, 2015, https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/guides/blue_book/blueguide_en.pdf

¹¹⁵ Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013, regulating laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund

¹¹⁶ Respectively, Recital 8 and Recital 11.

A more social role is suggested in Recital 15: *“in order to promote social inclusion and combat poverty, particularly among marginalised communities, it is necessary to improve access to social, cultural and recreational services, through the provision of small-scale infrastructure, taking account of the specific needs of persons with disabilities and the elderly.”*

5.4 The implementation process

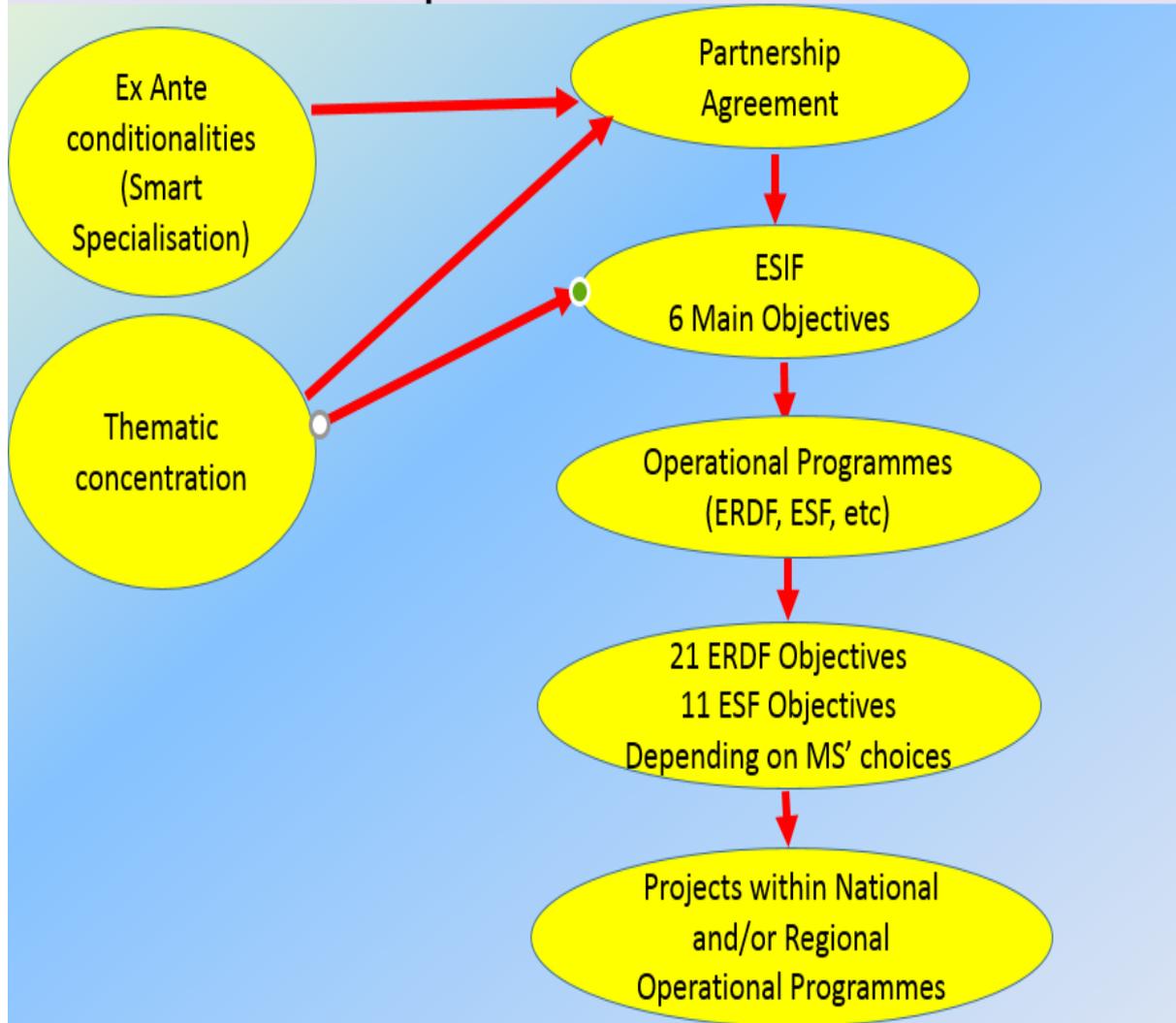
Direct attention and funding to culture in ESIF operate at different levels and the interaction between these levels is an important factor in determining what happens in practice. There are important differences in the way ESIF is able in principle to support culture. These differences arise in the way Member States have shaped the Partnership Agreements and the formulation of Operational Programmes at national and regional levels.

For a better understanding of ESIF 2014-2020, two important concepts have to be introduced: ex-ante conditionality and thematic concentration, both working as pre-requirements for ESIF assignment. An ex-ante conditionality is one or more conditions which are regarded as necessary for the effective and efficient use of ESI funds. Member States need to show that they have policies in place that can give rise to the intended processes envisaged as contributing to the achievement of specific Objectives. The choice of the key sectors has to be based on perceived competitive advantages of the countries and regions concerned following what is designated as “Smart Specialisation Process”. A smart specialisation is a place-based approach, where Member States build on the assets and resources available to regions and address specific socio-economic challenges in order to identify unique opportunities for development and growth. On this basis, Member States make choices for investment and support a limited number of well-identified priorities for knowledge-based investments and/or clusters.

Thematic concentration means that the majority of resources must be concentrated on a maximum of few thematic objectives in order to reach a "critical mass" of real impact. It is up to Member States to choose the thematic objectives for which the largest part of the Funds will be allocated.

No ESIF specific objective explicitly addresses culture, although culture is a suitable vehicle for delivering other key objectives of the Funds. The “value chain” of the EU regional cohesion policy 2014-2020 can be described in Table Below:

European Structural and Investment Funds: The Implementation Process



On the basis of the two or more specific objectives chosen by Member States (thematic concentration) and of the national or local smart specialisation strategies, the next stage to consider is when the Operational Programmes for each of the Funds are established. These can take the form of national or regional Operational Programmes (OPs) in the larger Member States or just national OPs in smaller Member States, although as in the case of Denmark and Sweden, national OPs can be implemented with regional variations. Some of the national OPs are dedicated to particular policy areas and a small number have been specifically or partially dedicated to culture.

However organised, it is with the OPs that we begin to find the real detail of how the ESI Funds are implemented on the ground in specific countries or regions. ESIF 'beneficiaries' cover a broad public, ranging from small and medium size enterprises to large enterprises, and from public bodies to non-governmental and civil society organisations. These beneficiaries can also be universities, students, researchers, community and civic organisations, farmers or fishermen. They are intermediary organisations, which may then provide services for free or at a subsidised rate to businesses or other final beneficiaries. These organisations seek to expand cluster membership and, above all, provide services to cluster members. This might be in terms of building the competences of member firms and

project-holders, arranging match-making or networking events, establishing relationships with knowledge institutions or assisting with international marketing.

This aspect of the development of the ESIF is quite important for the process of accessing funds. It is less and less a matter of individual enterprises seeking to access funds and needing to know if they are eligible or not. It is more a matter of sectoral organisations being able to design, propose and, if successful, administer projects that meet the terms of the relevant OP. Libraries may promote their policies and get funding for projects falling within the national and/or regional programmes selected by the country where they are based which meet ESIF specific objectives.

Question 29 of the above mentioned Questionnaire on Library legislation and Policy in Europe, launched by EBLIDA in January 2020, asked whether libraries in the respondent's country normally resorted to Structural Funds of the European Union (European Social Fund, Social Cohesion, etc.). The following Table summarizes responses provided to Question n. 29.

Number of countries resorting to ESI Funds

Yes	33.33%
No	39.39%
Do not know	24.24%
Not applicable (NON-EU Country)	3.03%

Countries responding positively to the Questionnaire were: Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Poland, Romania, Slovak Republic, Spain.

This table is an apparent demonstration of how ESI Funds are allocated to library projects in a “hidden” way. ESIF beneficiaries may not even be cultural actors and very often they are alien to library work. Libraries themselves may be the second, or third recipients of EU funding within schemes having been engineered at local level for non-cultural purposes. To give an example, Lithuanian libraries started the production of face masks on request during the Covid-19 crisis. This is an unintended result of fifty-eight 3D printers supplied to all major public libraries in Lithuania “as part of the project “Promoting Smart Use of Refurbished Public Internet Access Infrastructure Among Residents”.¹¹⁷ In Bulgaria, too, “Digital Skills for SME (Small and Medium Enterprises) in Bulgaria”, implemented by the regional libraries of Plovdiv, Smolyan and Stara Zagora districts, offer equal access to information and communication, lifelong learning, collaboration with SME workers and their families. The project is funded by the European Social Fund.¹¹⁸

A random investigation made on the Italian Opencoesione website, the one-stop source for all ESIF projects in Italy, shows for instance that within the ADRION geographic area, a book project has been funded for the preservation of cultural heritage within the Interreg ESI Fund. The project also includes non EU countries.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ The project was financed by the Operational Programme of EU Structural Funds Investments 2014-2020, <https://www.lnb.lt/en/news/5242-lithuanian-libraries-offer-support-to-healthcare-professionals>.

¹¹⁸ <http://www.glbulgaria.bg/en/digisme>.

¹¹⁹ <https://www.adrioninterreg.eu/index.php/2020/03/13/the-goal-of-adrinetbook-project-develop-a-digital-library-to-help-preserve-cultural-heritage-in-the-adriatic-ionic-region/>. ADRION covers eight Partner States, of which four are EU Member States (Croatia, Greece, Italy and Slovenia), three are candidate countries (Albania, Montenegro, Serbia) and one is a potential candidate country (Bosnia and Herzegovina).

These three examples, of totally different nature and scope, bring two elements up for consideration:

- a) For a library to be actively involved in ESI Funds, a knowledge of both the general/EU programme and the local context is needed;
- b) The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is the ideal framework in which ESI Funds can usefully be applied.

5.5 ESIF's administrative burden and case studies in Bulgaria, Germany and The Netherlands

ESIF may be essential for R&D departments working now on library projects which are likely to become mainstream activities in the long term. They spark innovation and are very often associated with new library developments. Managing and implementing ESIF programmes, however, may be a highly complex and demanding task in terms of staff, overhead, and external costs for beneficiaries to comply with obligations imposed by the ESIF regulations. In some cases, national regulations add complexity and raise the administrative costs of a project. This is particularly true for small-scale library projects which tend to be relatively more costly than financially larger programmes. The opposite is also true. Since ESIF beneficiaries have contacts only with local or regional authorities, they get a better understanding of local procedures and needs; therefore, the ESIF administrative burden may be less complex than in the case of projects directly funded by the European Commission.

Part of ESIF administrative complexity lies in its decentralised delivery system. ESIF is implemented through shared management and multi-level governance. This means that programmes are managed at member state, regional and local level and, usually, there are a large number of relevant stakeholders involved in the implementation of ESIF programmes. Member states and regions are also responsible for setting up appropriate management and control systems to ensure that funds are used appropriately.

The administrative burden has been made lighter for ESIF 2021-2027. The process of accessing funding for the potential beneficiaries of the EU financial support was simplified through some eighty simplification measures and procedures, such as single reimbursement rates, flat rates for indirect costs, a 90-day payment deadline for beneficiaries, electronic exchange of data between beneficiaries. All this may help reduce the ESIF administrative burden.

The management of significant financial allocations to cultural projects – in Italy, almost half a billion Euro has been allocated for cultural heritage projects – and the complexity of reporting procedures have suggested solutions which may prove to be useful in implementing ESI-funded SDG projects in libraries. These solutions largely depend on the kind of partnership agreements made by the European Commission with each Member State. In some cases, it may be useful to resort to commercial companies to manage the administrative parts of the project. In some Eastern European countries the administration of ESI Funds is taken on by national authorities (ministries of culture or social affairs, for instance), which act as ESIF beneficiaries and have management responsibilities. In other cases, a regional stakeholder sub-contracts the administration of the project to a local beneficiary managing a wide range of local projects, including library projects. What follows is a non-exhaustive collection of case studies in Bulgaria, Germany and the Netherlands. Information refers to ESIF 2007-2013 and 2014-2020 applied in libraries.

Bulgaria. In Bulgaria, the governance of ESI Funds in libraries has followed different directions. Bulgarian libraries have used the “Science and Education for Smart Growth” Operational Programme to implement library projects. The Operational Programme is administered by the Executive Agency, Science and Education for Smart Growth, one of the nine ESIF managing authorities in Bulgaria. Also

important have been the Interreg programmes for Cross-Border Cooperation, managed by the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works, aimed to foster cooperation between Bulgaria and EU Member States on the one hand, and between Bulgaria and candidate/potential candidates for accession to the European Union, on the other hand. Library projects have been triggered with Romania, Turkey, Republic of North Macedonia and Serbia.¹²⁰

Within the ERDF Operational Programme “Science and Education for Smart Growth” the “St. Cyril and Methodius” National Library of Bulgaria has been established as a Centre of Excellence for the Bulgarian Heritage (Priority Axis 1 “Research and Technological Development”, “Construction and Development of Centers of Excellence”, “New Technologies in the Creative and Recreational Industries”). The main objective of this initiative is to build a modern infrastructure for research and innovation in the creative and recreational industries involving integrated teams for interdisciplinary research, policies and practices. The expected result is creating conditions for developing advanced technologies and developing market-oriented research. A distributed research system is envisaged with network connectivity between project modules, alternative communication channels, state-of-the-art research and development, economic, social and environmental contributions through dissemination and knowledge transfer. The overall budget for the twelve institutions amounts to € 15,206,856.¹²¹

Similarly, the Library at the Medical University – Plovdiv received funding for subscription access, including remote, to information resources in support of the research activities of scientific teams from the Medical University as a “Competence Center Personalized Innovative Medicine”.

Interreg Funds have been used for the following library projects:

- Written treasures of the Lower Danube common to libraries, museums and archives. The overall goal of the project is to promote the joint preservation, protection, promotion and development of the written intangible cultural heritage in cross-border cooperation by diversifying tourist services and the development of literary tourism as a major factor in using and exploiting common advantages and potential and overcoming of discrepancies. The leading organisation is “Global Libraries Foundation – Bulgaria” and partner libraries are Biblioteca Județeană “Alexandru și Aristia Aman (in Craiova, Romania) and „Lyuben Karavelov“ Regional Library (Ruse, in Bulgaria). This project is implemented with the support of the cross-border cooperation program ERDF INTERREG Romania - Bulgaria program V-A. The project value is worth EUR 95,701 and ERDF budget amounts to EUR 81,345.¹²²
- Regional Library “Hristo Botev” – Vratsa: project partner of the Romania-Bulgaria Cross-Border Cooperation Program. Together with Dolj district - lead partner, “Alexander and Aristia Amman” district library in Craiova and Vratsa district administration, Romanian-Bulgarian cultural and information centres in the cities of Vratsa and Craiova were developed. A common web portal between the two largest public libraries in the two border areas - Vratsa and Dolj, was developed to provide free access to the population of Bulgaria and Romania to the valuable digital wealth of the collections of the two libraries. Regional library “Hristo Botev” digitised 5 collections from the fund of the local history department. The project

¹²⁰ Information about ESIF investments in libraries in Bulgaria was kindly forwarded by Ms Marina Encheva, member of the EBLIDA Executive Committee, and Ms Spaska Tarandova, Director of Global Libraries - Bulgaria Foundation.

¹²¹ Project „Building and development of Center of Excellence “Heritage BG”, <http://www.bas.bg/en/2018/03/26/project-building-and-dvelopment-of-center-of-excellence-heritage-bg/>.

¹²² Written treasures of the Lower Danube, <https://twtd.com/web/partners/> and The Written Treasures of Lower Danube, Programme 2014 - 2020 INTERREG V-A Romania - Bulgaria <https://keep.eu/projects/19903/>.

started in March 2013 and its duration was 30 months. The total value is EUR 3,280,442, of which EUR 206,698 was provided for the activities in the regional library “Hristo Botev”.¹²³

- Regional library “Hristo Smirnenski”(Edirne) – Haskovo (<https://project-haskovo-edirne.eu/>) is a leading partner in the implementation of the project “Haskovo and - cultural and historical destinations” funded by the INTERREG IPA Program for CBC Bulgaria Turkey 2014-2020. The aim of the project is to promote intercultural dialogue and improve access to cultural heritage through the wider use of digital technologies. One of the most important activities in the framework of the project were the digitisation of postcards, photographs, unique local periodicals and books from the two border areas from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Scanners and digital cameras for the partners were purchased as the main tools for digitalisation. The project is worth EUR 93,460 and European Union’s funding amounts to EUR 79,441.¹²⁴

Another set of library projects in Bulgaria are funded through ESF+. The "Digital Skills for Small and Medium Sized Enterprises in Bulgaria" project is implemented by Global Libraries - Bulgaria Foundation (GLBF), whose board associates both library and non-library organisations.¹²⁵ Partners of the GLBF project are the Bulgarian Union of Small and Medium Business Association and the Latvian Information and Communication Technology Association (LIKTA). Its aim is to develop an innovative educational model and establish regional libraries in Plovdiv, Smolyan and Stara Zagora as a centre for acquiring modern digital skills by owners and employees of SMEs.¹²⁶ The project, implemented in close cooperation with the regional libraries of Plovdiv, Smolyan and Stara Zagora districts, is funded under the "Transnational and Danube Partnerships for Employment and Growth" procedure of the "Human Resources Development" 2014-2020 Operational Programme, co-financed by the European Union through the European Social Fund. The total value of the project amounts to EUR 86,162 of which the European financing is € 81,673.

The library at the University of Economics – Varna participated in a project: “Support for the development of doctoral students, postdoctoral students, graduates and young scientists” - phase 1 (02.06. 2017 - 31.12. 2018). In the framework of the project the library provided access to scientific databases and scientific information and paid a subscription for a platform verifying the originality of scientific works and publications.

The Global Libraries Foundation and University of Library Studies and Information Technologies also run several projects within the Erasmus+ framework related to the improvement of the digital skills of the librarians (BIBLIO project) and the enhancement of the information literacy competences of the library users (NAVIGATE project). Erasmus+ also aims to contribute to the Europe 2020 strategy for growth, jobs, social equity and inclusion but project requirements are different.¹²⁷

Germany. At federal level, the decision-making authority for ERDF is the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy (BMWi). Each of the 16 German Bundesländer (Federal States), however, determines the guidelines for financial assistance and sets up the funding programmes in the

¹²³ About the project: <http://iportal.libvratsa.org/wp/en/about-the-project/>.

¹²⁴ Haskovo and Edirne - cultural and historical destinations, <https://keep.eu/projects/21064/>.

¹²⁵ They are: Bulgarian Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Transport, Information Technology and Communications, National Association of Municipalities, “13 Centuries Bulgaria” National Endowment Fund, National Chitalishte Union and the Bulgarian Library and Information Association.

¹²⁶ Digital skills for small and medium enterprises in Bulgaria, <http://www.glbulgaria.bg/en/digisme>.

¹²⁷ Information on GLBF Erasmus+ projects is available at <http://www.glbulgaria.bg/bg/node/29178>.

recognition that regional policy works most effectively where people know precisely what the need is.

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Altogether, there are 24 ESIF managing authorities in Germany, more than the number of the Länder, for the very reason that eight authorities also deal with Interreg programmes developed by several institutions with neighbouring countries: with Poland (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and Brandenburg), Austria-Switzerland-Liechtenstein (Alpenrhein-Bodensee-Hochrhein), Denmark (Investitionsbank Schleswig-Holstein), Netherlands (Rhein-Waal), Czech Republic (Bavaria and Saxony), Baltic Sea (Investitionsbank Schleswig-Holstein).

In spite of this fully-oriented regional approach, one exception applies to the ESF, where a programme of federal nature worth 2.7 billion Euro has been jointly developed by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs on the one hand, and the Federal Ministries of Economic Affairs, Education, Environment, and Family Affairs, on the other. ESF regional programmes in individual Länder may vary from one Land (a German federal State) to another, but all of them align to the ESF federal programme in terms of content and policy orientation ("operational programmes"). All programmes, however, follow the rules established in the "Partnership Agreement", which decides on eligibility for financial support in Germany.

All ESI Funds in Germany are co-financed with national sources. The individual Land makes its own investment through a national contribution that ranges from 15% in less-developed regions to 50% in more strongly-developed regions.

Within ERDF 2007-2014, two projects were funded in Oranienburg - a city of 40,000 inhabitants in the region of Brandenburg - and Waltershausen - 13,000 inhabitants, in Thuringia. Oranienburg identified two strong points in its urban planning: the Baroque-style city centre and the water landscape on the banks of the Havel river. Therefore, the region decided to restore the library with a tourist information and a Galerie after having requalified the Old Castle, the Castle Park and the Havel promenade. The library project, worth €4,762,869, benefited from EFRD support in the reason of €3,432,750.

Building restoration was also the objective of the reconstruction of the Stadtbibliothek Waltershausen in 16th century premises. In an historical complex which also includes the town hall (1441), the requalification of the Stadtbibliothek includes the re-discovery of historical paper walls and of the inner courtyard, which was converted into an inner atrium. ERDF support was in the order of €1,111,538; the sum allocated for the whole project amounted to €1,398,100.

The city of Berlin supported an ERDF library project of a totally different nature. A sub-programme of the Zukunftsinitiative Stadtteil (ZIS, Future Initiative in City areas), the library-related programme was called BIST (Bibliotheken im Stadtteil, "Libraries in the City area"). BIST I benefited from an ambitious ERDF investment equal to €6.67m, which was combined with Land support worth € 13.17m with a view to increasing the number of readers well beyond the 100,000 current users.¹²⁹

¹²⁸ Apart from the brochure published by the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy and the European Union (The European Structural and Investment Funds in Germany, March 2017, https://www.bmwi.de/Redaktion/EN/Publikationen/european-structural-and-investment-funds-in-germany.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=4), information for this paragraph was kindly forwarded by Ms Hella Klauser, Member of the EBLIDA Executive Committee.

¹²⁹ Stellungnahme für die Europäische Kommission zum Bedarf einer Förderung für Öffentliche Bibliotheken im ZIS-Teilprogramm „Bibliotheken im Stadtteil II (BIST II)“, 10.9.2014, <file:///fs-srv-p100/users/gvi010/Desktop/bedarfsnachweis.pdf>.

This implied a fully-fledged library initiative structured in three clusters:

- a) improvement and adaptation of the social infrastructure (construction or renovation and modernisation of libraries);
- b) social development of library services in disadvantaged neighbourhoods (intercultural library work, welcome culture, family library);
- c) Further development of library services (active services, collection development, new services).

The BIST II programme (2014-2020) aims to improve social integration in disadvantaged neighbourhoods and to ensure opportunities for participation targeted at all population groups. The library space is offered for partnerships with schools, kindergartens, after-school care centres, neighbourhood centres, businesses and other actors in neighbourhood. These partnerships also address socio-economic problems such as the digital divide and the media competence deficit. In Spandau (a Berlin district), a daycare facility for children (Kita, Kindertageseinrichtung) has been provided to disadvantaged families with a view to fostering children's language skills. The project ran from 2016 to 2018 successfully and is now pursued further with the implementation of 10 day-care centres in the years from 2019 to 2021.¹³⁰ There are 21 library projects running in various Berlin districts, which are supported by ERDF from 2017 to 2023 for an overall budget of € 6 m.¹³¹

The Netherlands. In the Netherlands, ESIF implementation follows quite simplified rules both in terms of content and number of managing authorities.¹³² ERDF support has focused on two purposes only: innovation and a low-carbon economy, with strong points on renewable energy or more efficient energy use. Financial support is generally allocated to small and medium-sized businesses. When resorting to ESIF, programmes of a social nature in the Netherlands are mainly funded through the European Social Fund with social inclusion and higher employment being at the core of the Dutch strategy. ESF investment offers disadvantaged people the chance to acquire skills and to improve their employability with two main objectives: increasing the overall employment level to 80% of the working age population, and reducing the number of workless households by 100,000 by 2020. A second major ESF theme involves older workers. Against a background of an ageing population, the Netherlands wants to give people opportunities to work for longer. ESF projects are helping older workers resolve their "work vs health" dilemma by offering training opportunities in new skills and improve their job prospects.¹³³

The Netherlands is also providing extra ESF help in its four largest cities – Rotterdam, Amsterdam, The Hague and Utrecht – to help improve job opportunities for young people and non-European immigrants through coaching and training programmes.

There are five ESIF managing authorities in the Netherlands and one of them, the Province of Limburg, is dealing with Interreg programmes with Belgium and Germany also focused on education and training.

¹³⁰Bibliotheken im Stadtteil II (BIST II), <https://www.berlin.de/sen/kultur/foerderung/eu-foerderung/efre/foerderperiode-2014-2020/artikel.570056.php>.

¹³¹ Stellungnahme für die Europäische Kommission, [file://fs-srv-p100/users\\$/gvi010/Desktop/bedarfsnachweis.pdf](file://fs-srv-p100/users$/gvi010/Desktop/bedarfsnachweis.pdf).

¹³² Information for this paragraph has been kindly forwarded by Mr Ton van Vlimmeren, President EBLIDA and Member of the EBLIDA Executive Committee.

¹³³ <https://ec.europa.eu/esf/main.jsp?catId=392&langId=en>

Dutch libraries have created Stichting Bibliotheekwerk (SBW), an independent library foundation dedicated to employment, work and training issues in libraries and governed by representatives of the labour unions on behalf of the employees and the libraries as employers.¹³⁴ With the exception of a collective agreement for library workers, SBW mission is to promote a well-functioning labour market in the public library sector with several projects in the areas of labour flows and (further) competence development of employers and employees. SBW intends to stimulate innovative activities; when applicant libraries submit their proposals, SBW budget can be matched with EU funding, mainly in staff training.

In the four biggest cities of the Netherlands, an ambitious project focussed on vulnerable elderly citizens is funded by the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD, included in ESF+ 2021-2027) which supports EU countries' actions in providing food and/or basic material assistance to the most deprived. Material assistance needs to go hand in hand with social inclusion measures, such as guidance and support to lift people out of poverty; therefore, national authorities may also support non-material assistance to the most deprived people in order to help them integrate better into society.¹³⁵ Library projects in the Netherlands aim to improve the skills, social networking and information level of elderly citizens so they can live in an autonomous way for a longer period of time.

¹³⁴ <https://www.bibliotheekwerk.nl/>.

¹³⁵ <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1089>.

6. How to use ESIF 2021-2027 to implement Sustainable Development Goals in library projects

Evidence for this Chapter has been found in two fundamental pieces of EU legislation. The first is the “Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Regional Development Fund and on the Cohesion Fund”, which has been submitted to the European Parliament and expects to be approved in an EP Plenary session before adoption. The proposal concerns the next multi-annual financial ERDF framework for the period 2021-2027 and provides for a date of application as of 1 January 2021.¹³⁶ The second is the “Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+)”, a fund whose aim is essentially job improvement in Europe.¹³⁷ Among the seven funds, the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the Cohesion Fund (CF) and the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) are those where libraries can find the most attractive funding opportunities.

ESIF managing authorities, which are different in every Member State,¹³⁸ are now making fundamental choices concerning the directions to be given to the policy objectives and the future allocation of funds. In order to ensure consistent monitoring of progress towards performance, the regulation also maintains a common set of output and results indicators.

In the following pages, seven tables corresponding to the specific ESI Funds 2021-2027 objectives and sub-objectives are combined with library projects for which information has been included in the answers to the “Survey on Sustainable Development Goals and their implementation in European libraries” - a Questionnaire sent to EBLIDA Members last March. For each ESIF objective, Column 1 designates the ERDF or ESF+ specific objective. Column 2 and 3 set, respectively, the related outputs and results indicated by ESIF official documents. It can be easily inferred that European Commission criteria for evaluation are quite general and do not get into the detail of the programmes. It is up to Member States to set additional criteria for evaluation.

Finally, Column 4 lists examples of library projects set up to pursue ESIF objectives or to attain specific Sustainable Development Goals. ESIF-funded and SDG-oriented library projects are therefore matched with specific ESIF 2021-2027 objectives and sub-objectives. *What is shown in the table is therefore a simulation*: under which presumed ESIF specific objective could SDG-oriented library projects have been funded, if they were to be presented within the ESIF 2021-2027 framework?

For each specific objective, one or more relevant EC programmes have also been indicated. This indication may provide for additional sources of funding opportunities or can be used as reference purpose for ESIF implementers.

¹³⁶ Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Regional Development Fund and on the Cohesion Fund, Strasbourg, 29.5.2018, COM(2018) 372 final 2018/0197(COD) <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52018PC0372&from=EN>.

¹³⁷ Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) Brussels, 30.5.2018 COM(2018) 382 final 2018/0206 (COD), <https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regdoc/rep/1/2018/EN/COM-2018-382-F1-EN-MAIN-PART-1.PDF>

¹³⁸ The list, country after country, and region after region is available at the following link, https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/atlas/managing-authorities/.

6.1 ESIF Objective 1 - ERDF: A smarter Europe from a library perspective

The specific objective (ii) Reaping the benefits of digitisation for citizens, companies and governments, can be of interest to libraries in so far as it supports the development of digital products, services and applications in public institutions. Column 4 lists library projects which have shaped the implementation of the Agenda 2030 in several countries, as reported in the answers to the “Sustainable Development Goals and libraries: First European Report”, which are incoming at the EBLIDA Secretariat.

Horizon Europe and COSME are two of the EC programmes that should be taken into account for ESIF Objective 1. Horizon Europe identifies, among other things, key areas for research and innovation. COSME is the EU programme for Competitiveness of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises.

ESIF Objective 1: Synoptic Table ERDF-SDG

Specific Objective	Outputs	Results	SDG	Library projects
(i) Enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies	CCO 01 - Enterprises supported to innovate CCO 02 - Researchers working in supported research facilities	CCR 01 – (SMEs introducing product, process, marketing or organisational innovation CCR 02 - Additional users of new digital products, services and applications developed by enterprises and public institutions	8 9	
(ii) Reaping the benefits of digitisation for citizens, companies and governments	CCO 03 - Enterprises and public institutions supported to develop digital products, services and applications		10 4 16	National Library established as a technological Centre of Excellence (Bulgaria) Digital literacy (Spain and many other countries) Fight to fake news (France, Germany, Italy)
(iii) Enhancing growth and competitiveness of SMEs	CCO 04 - SMEs supported to create jobs and growth	CCR 03 - Jobs created in SMEs supported	8 10	
(iv) Developing skills for smart specialisation, industrial transition and entrepreneurship	CCO 05 - SMEs investing in skills development	CCR 04 - SMEs staff benefiting from training for skills development	9	Digital Skills for SME (Bulgaria)

6.2 ESIF Objective 2 - ERDF: A greener, low-carbon Europe

ESIF Objective 2 largely covers the environmental pillar of the European Union 2030 Agenda.

For reference purposes, the EC programme LIFE is dedicated to the environment and climate action.

ESIF Objective 2: Synoptic Table ERDF-SDG

Specific objective	Outputs	Results	SDG	Library projects
(i) Promoting energy efficiency measures	CCO 06 – Investments in measures to improve energy efficiency	CCR 05 – Beneficiaries with improved energy classification	6 7	Green libraries (France, Germany, Netherlands, etc) Citizen Science projects
(ii) Promoting renewable energy	CCO 07 - Additional renewable energy production capacity	CCR 06 – Volume of additional renewable energy produced	7	
(iii) Developing smart energy systems, grids and storage at local level	CCO 08 - Digital management systems developed for smart grids	CCR 07 - Additional users connected to smart grids	7	
(iv) Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and disaster resilience	CCO 09 - New or upgraded disaster monitoring, warning and response systems	CCR 08 - Additional population benefiting from protection measures against floods, forest fires, and other climate related natural disasters	13 14 15	
(v) Promoting sustainable water management	CCO 10 - New or upgraded capacity for waste water treatment	CCR 09 - Additional population connected to at least secondary waste water treatment	6	
(vi) Promoting the transition to a circular economy	CCO 11 – New or upgraded capacity for waste recycling	CCR 10 - Additional waste recycled	12	Library projects concerning circular economy (Bulgaria)
(vii) Enhancing biodiversity, green infrastructure in the urban environment, and reducing pollution	CCO 12 - Surface area of green infrastructure in urban areas	CCR 11 - Population benefiting from measures for air quality	11 14 15	Air seekers (Belgium) Restructuring Libraries and Libraries and urban gardens (Germany)

6.3 ESIF Objective 3 - ERDF: A more connected Europe

ESIF Objective 3 mainly deals with mobility and enhanced and high-speed transporting systems. Therefore, it is of little relevance for library projects. Nevertheless, the enhancement of digital connectivity - Specific Objective (i) - cannot be realized without what IFLA defines as “meaningful” access to the Internet in its four facets: physical internet connectivity, skills, social and cultural context, and laws.

ESIF Objective 3: Synoptic Table ERDF-SDG

Specific objective	Outputs	Results	SDG	Library projects
(i) Enhancing digital connectivity	CCO 13 - Additional households and enterprises with coverage by very high capacity broadband networks	CCR 12 - Additional households and enterprises with broadband subscriptions to a very high capacity networks	9	Digital literacy (Spain and many other countries)
(ii) Developing a sustainable, climate resilient, intelligent, secure and intermodal TEN-T	CCO 14 – Road TEN-T: New and upgraded roads	CCR 13 - Time savings due to improved road infrastructure	9 11	
(iii) Developing sustainable, climate resilient, intelligent and intermodal national, regional and local mobility, including improved access to TEN-T and cross-border mobility	CCO 15 – Rail TEN-T: New and upgraded railways	CCR 14 - Annual number of passengers served by improved rail transport	11	
(iv) Promoting sustainable multimodal urban mobility	CCO 16 - Extension and modernisation of tram and metro lines	CCR 15 - Annual users served by new and modernised tram and metro lines	11	

6.4 ESIF Objective 4 - ERDF and ESF+: A more social Europe

The European Social Pillar of Social Rights is structured in three chapters - equal opportunities and access to the labour market, fair working conditions and social protection and inclusion - and twenty principles - going from education, training and life-long learning and gender equality to equal opportunities and access to essential services.¹³⁹ The European Social Pillar of Social Rights largely overlaps with the Social and Economic Pillars of the Agenda 2030. The reference EC programme for social rights is Erasmus +.

ESIF Objective 4: Synoptic Table ERDF-SDG

Specific objective	Outputs	Results	SDG	Library projects
(i) Enhancing the effectiveness of labour markets and access to quality employment through developing social innovation and infrastructure	CCO 17 - Annual unemployed persons served by enhanced facilities for employment services	CCR 16 - Job seekers using annually enhanced facilities for employment services	1 10	BIST (Bibliotheken im Stadtteil) I and II (Germany) Ecrivain public in French public libraries
(ii) Improving access to inclusive and quality services in education, training and lifelong learning through developing infrastructure	CCO 18 - New or upgraded capacity for childcare and education infrastructure	CCR 17 - Annual users served by new or upgraded childcare and education infrastructure	4 5	Many education, training and lifelong learning projects all over Europe (also to be matched with Erasmus+) Digital literacy (Spain) Gender Equality (Spain)
(iii) Increasing the socio-economic integration of marginalised communities, migrants and disadvantaged groups, through integrated measures including housing and social services;	CCO 19 - Additional capacity of reception infrastructures created or upgraded	CCR 18 - Annual users served by new and improved reception and housing facilities	1 5	BIST (Bibliotheken im Stadtteil) I and II (Germany) FEAD projects (Netherlands) Ecrivain public (France) Treffpunkt Deutsch (Germany)
(iv) Ensuring equal access to health care through developing infrastructure, including primary care	CCO 20 - New or upgraded capacity for health care infrastructure	CCR 19 - Population with access to improved health care services	3	3D printers supplying masks (Lithuania) Book start (Belgium, Netherlands) Born to Read (Italy)

¹³⁹ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/deeper-and-fairer-economic-and-monetary-union/european-pillar-social-rights/european-pillar-social-rights-20-principles_en

The ESF is Europe’s main instrument for supporting jobs, helping people get better jobs and ensuring fairer job opportunities for all EU citizens.¹⁴⁰ Specific objectives (i) to (iv) concern access to employment, labour market, education, training and lifelong learning.¹⁴¹

ESIF Objective 4: Synoptic Table ESF+-SDG (i-iv)

	Specific objective	Output	Results	SDG	Library projects
(i)	improving access to employment of all jobseekers, in particular youth and long term unemployed, and of inactive people, promoting self-employment and the social economy;	* Personal data (Art 4(1) Regulation (EU) 2016/679) * * special category of data (Art 9 Regulation(EU) 2016/679). (1a) Common output indicators for participants – unemployed, including long-term unemployed*, – long-term unemployed*, – inactive*, – employed, including self-employed*, – below 30 years of age *, – above 54 years of age*, – with lower secondary education or less (ISCED 0-2)*, – with upper secondary (ISCED 3) or post-secondary education (ISCED 4)*, – with tertiary education (ISCED 5 to 8)*.	(3) The common immediate result indicators for participants are: – participants engaged in job searching upon leaving*, – participants in education or training upon leaving*, – participants gaining a qualification upon leaving*, – participants in employment, including self-employment, upon leaving*.	1 8 10	Digital literacy (Spain and other countries) FEAD projects (Netherlands)
(ii)	modernising labour market institutions and services to assess and anticipate skills needs and ensure timely and tailor-made assistance and support to labour market matching, transitions and mobility;	(1b) Other common output indicators: – participants with disabilities**, – third country nationals*, – participants with a foreign background*, – minorities (including marginalised communities such as the Roma)**, – homeless or affected by housing exclusion*, (2) Common output indicators for entities are: – number of supported public administrations or public services at national, regional or local level, – number of supported micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (including cooperative enterprises, social enterprises).	(4) Common longer-term result indicators for participants: – participants in employment, including self-employment, six months after leaving*, – participants with an improved labour market situation six months after leaving*.	4 8	Many education, training and lifelong learning projects all over Europe (also to be matched with Erasmus+) Digital Skills for SME (Bulgaria)
(iii)	promoting equal access to and completion of, quality and inclusive education and training, in particular for disadvantaged groups, from early childhood education and care through general and vocational education and training, and to tertiary level, as well as adult education and learning, including facilitating learning mobility for all;				
(iv)	promoting lifelong learning, notably flexible upskilling and reskilling opportunities for all taking into account digital skills, better anticipating change and new skills requirements based on labour market needs, facilitating career transitions and promoting professional mobility;				

¹⁴⁰ Article 4 of the Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) Brussels, 30.5.2018 COM(2018) 382 final 2018/0206 (COD), <https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regdoc/rep/1/2018/EN/COM-2018-382-F1-EN-MAIN-PART-1.PDF>

¹⁴¹ Annexes to the proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Social Fund Plus, <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9573-2018-ADD-2/en/pdf>.

Specific objective (v) to (xi) concern social inclusion and integration as well as equal access to services.

ESIF Objective 4: Synoptic Table ESF+-SDG (v-xi)

	Specific objective	Outputs	Results	SDG	Library projects
(v)	fostering active inclusion with a view to promoting equal opportunities and active participation, and improving employability;	* Personal data (Art 4(1) Regulation (EU) 2016/679) ** special category of data (Art 9 Regulation(EU) 2016/679).	(3) The common immediate result indicators for participants are: – participants engaged in job searching upon leaving*, – participants in education or training upon leaving*, – participants gaining a qualification upon leaving*, – participants in employment, including self-employment, upon leaving*.	1 5 8 10	Gender Equality (Spain) Ecrivain public in French public libraries FEAD projects (Netherlands)
(vi)	promoting socio-economic integration of third country nationals and of marginalised communities such as the Roma;	(1a) Common output indicators for participants – unemployed, including long-term unemployed*, – long-term unemployed*, – inactive*, – employed, including self-employed*, – below 30 years of age *, – above 54 years of age*, – with lower secondary education or less (ISCED 0-2)*, – with upper secondary (ISCED 3) or post-secondary education (ISCED 4)*, – with tertiary education (ISCED 5 to 8)*.	(3) The common immediate result indicators for participants are: – participants engaged in job searching upon leaving*, – participants in education or training upon leaving*, – participants gaining a qualification upon leaving*, – participants in employment, including self-employment, upon leaving*.	1 5 10	Media Literacy for All and E-skills for E-inclusion (Bulgaria) Digital literacy (Spain)
(vii)	enhancing the equal and timely access to quality, sustainable and affordable services; modernising social protection systems, including promoting access to social protection; improving accessibility, effectiveness and resilience of healthcare systems and long-term care services;	(1b) Other common output indicators: – participants with disabilities**, – third country nationals*, – participants with a foreign background*, – minorities (including marginalised communities such as the Roma)**, – homeless or affected by housing exclusion*, (2) Common output indicators for entities are: – number of supported public administrations or public services at national, regional or local level, – number of supported micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (including cooperative enterprises, social enterprises).	(4) Common longer-term result indicators for participants: – participants in employment, including self-employment, six months after leaving*, – participants with an improved labour market situation six months after leaving*.	1 3 8	Book start (Belgium, Netherlands)
(viii)	promoting social integration of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion, including the most deprived and children;	(1b) Other common output indicators: – participants with disabilities**, – third country nationals*, – participants with a foreign background*, – minorities (including marginalised communities such as the Roma)**, – homeless or affected by housing exclusion*, (2) Common output indicators for entities are: – number of supported public administrations or public services at national, regional or local level, – number of supported micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (including cooperative enterprises, social enterprises).	(4) Common longer-term result indicators for participants: – participants in employment, including self-employment, six months after leaving*, – participants with an improved labour market situation six months after leaving*.	1 8 10	FEAD projects (Netherlands) Ecrivain public (France)
(ix)	promoting equal access to and completion of, quality and inclusive education and training, in particular for disadvantaged groups, from early childhood education and care through general and vocational education and training, and to tertiary level, as well as adult education and learning, including facilitating learning mobility for all;	(1b) Other common output indicators: – participants with disabilities**, – third country nationals*, – participants with a foreign background*, – minorities (including marginalised communities such as the Roma)**, – homeless or affected by housing exclusion*, (2) Common output indicators for entities are: – number of supported public administrations or public services at national, regional or local level, – number of supported micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (including cooperative enterprises, social enterprises).	(4) Common longer-term result indicators for participants: – participants in employment, including self-employment, six months after leaving*, – participants with an improved labour market situation six months after leaving*.	4 10	Many education, training and lifelong learning projects all over Europe (also to be matched with Erasmus+)
(x)	promoting social integration of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion, including the most deprived and children;	(1b) Other common output indicators: – participants with disabilities**, – third country nationals*, – participants with a foreign background*, – minorities (including marginalised communities such as the Roma)**, – homeless or affected by housing exclusion*, (2) Common output indicators for entities are: – number of supported public administrations or public services at national, regional or local level, – number of supported micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (including cooperative enterprises, social enterprises).	(4) Common longer-term result indicators for participants: – participants in employment, including self-employment, six months after leaving*, – participants with an improved labour market situation six months after leaving*.	1	Ecrivain public
(xi)	addressing material deprivation through food and/or basic material assistance to the most deprived.	(1b) Other common output indicators: – participants with disabilities**, – third country nationals*, – participants with a foreign background*, – minorities (including marginalised communities such as the Roma)**, – homeless or affected by housing exclusion*, (2) Common output indicators for entities are: – number of supported public administrations or public services at national, regional or local level, – number of supported micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (including cooperative enterprises, social enterprises).	(4) Common longer-term result indicators for participants: – participants in employment, including self-employment, six months after leaving*, – participants with an improved labour market situation six months after leaving*.		

6.5 ESIF Objective 5 - ERDF: a Europe closer to citizens

There are two specific objectives linked with the implementation of ESIF Objective 5: the first is related to urban development and the second to rural and coastal areas in their integrated social, economic and environmental aspects. Only one indicator, however, is applied: the population covered by strategies for integrated urban development.

ESIF Objective 5: Synoptic Table ERDF-SDG

Specific objective	Outputs	Results	SDG	Library projects
(i) Fostering the integrated social, economic and environmental development, cultural heritage and security in urban areas	CCO 21 - Population covered by strategies for integrated urban development		2 11 14 15 16	Agrolib – Ja (Republic of Serbia); Biblionet (Romania) Cultural heritage library projects in many countries (Bulgaria-Romania, Bulgaria-Turkey, States bordering the Adriatic Sea) Library campaigns promoting biodiversity on land and water Libraries promoting democratic participation

7. The role of EBLIDA in the European 2030 Agenda and in ESI Funds applied to library projects

Since 2019, EBLIDA, the European Bureau of Library, Documentation and Information Associations, has integrated all Strands of its Strategic Plan into the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in European libraries. EBLIDA tasks are the following:

- to increase awareness about the European way to Sustainable Development,
- to support European libraries in the attainment of UN SDGs,
- to compare SDG-oriented library indicators and EU sustainability indicators and, finally,
- to help libraries utilise and align their objectives with EU programmes designed to implement SDGs in Europe.

There are three areas in which EBLIDA can support libraries in a useful way: a) Advocacy; b) Studies and Research, and c) Consultancy and Training.

Advocacy. Advocacy for libraries does not only consist of being present in European institutions making the case of the importance of libraries to society. Lobbying is an important aspect of advocacy but Europe is much larger than the institutions confined into the small perimeter of the Brussels region. Advocacy has to be carried out at three levels: European, national and local.

In 2019, advocacy at European level was carried out in collaboration with PL 2030. PL2030 has initiated a dense work of advocacy, in particular with the European Parliament. Generation Code, organised by PL2030, is an interactive exhibition showcasing the top innovative digital exhibits from public libraries across the EU. A good number of MEPs visit the exhibition and have an in-depth understanding of what libraries do and how future technologies are interacting with libraries in Europe.¹⁴² EBLIDA stimulates the involvement of its Members during the exhibition who have the opportunity of advocating for libraries with MEPs.

Even more productive may be advocacy for Sustainable Development Goals at horizontal level, in collaboration with library associations and EBLIDA Members. Advocacy from below consists of empowering library administrators or administrators whose competence extends to libraries with knowledge regarding SDG policies at European level and related indicators. It also consists of spreading an administrative culture of sustainability in relation to national and local policies. Advocacy from below is just as essential as lobbying at European level.

Studies and Research. The EBLIDA SDG European House¹⁴³ opened in October 2019 with a view to delivering services to the EBLIDA communities through tools, studies and researches and training activities. The EBLIDA House is supported by the EBLIDA ELSA Group (European Libraries and Sustainability Assessment), whose aim is to establish proper methodologies for the assessment of library performance in the social and economic field, and advocate for libraries at European level by measuring the impact of libraries on the society as a whole.

- a. So far, the most important output of the SDG European House is the EBLIDA Matrix, a comprehensive toolkit which describes, goal after goal and programme after programme:
 - a) EU programmes pursuing Sustainable Development Goals which are relevant for libraries;

¹⁴² <https://publiclibraries2030.eu/projects/generation-code/>

¹⁴³ <http://www.eblida.org/activities/the-eblida-sdg-european-house.html>

- b) EUROSTAT indicators, and related trends, for each of the Goals;
- c) on-going library policies in Europe contributing to the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals;
- d) library indicators (under construction).

EBLIDA Matrix works for the library sector, but can also be successfully transferred to other cultural institutions, like museums and archives. It can be used in three possible ways:

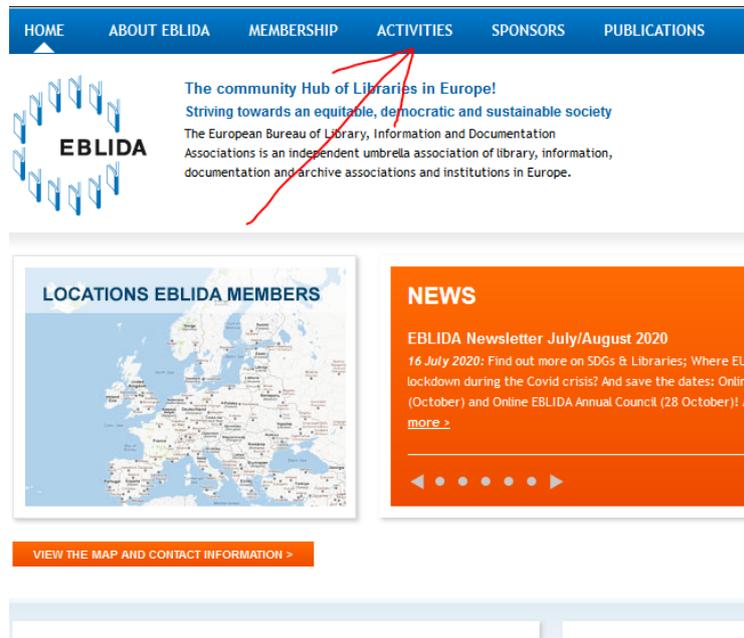
- a) As a compass: to frame national and / or regional library policies into the broader framework of sustainable policies described in European programmes and policies, including ESIF. Libraries can align their policies to those developed by other actors also implementing SDG policies. Partnerships with prominent EU actors help libraries to get out of their isolation; through EU databases they can find local partners and work effectively for the communities they refer to.
- b) As a calculator: to evaluate to what extent library performances align with sustainability indicators in place for each SDG. The impact of library SDG-oriented projects is different depending on whether they consist of one-off events or are long-term policies linked to local communities. Their evaluation through Eurostat sustainable indicators or ad hoc indicators provides for objective terms of assessment and sets SDG activities in libraries into the right socio-economic context.
- c) As a banner: to raise the library's profile and show how an individual library or a library system can contribute to saving the planet and make people happier. When libraries cooperate with external partners, they achieve full integration into qualified and often advanced networks. Section 1 of the EBLIDA Matrix lists relevant EU programmes for which libraries may find appropriate partnerships for sustainable targets. Therefore, the EBLIDA Matrix is also a list of funding opportunities for libraries.

Consultancy and Training. Based on the documentation and studies developed by EBLIDA, training and consultancy activities are being organised in 2020. The first is the joint LIBER-EBLIDA webinar on Citizen Science.

ESI Funds allow for "hard" investment in the library field; so far, libraries have used them in a moderate way. The EBLIDA Secretariat wishes to work in collaboration with its Members on the implementation of SDG projects in libraries and related funding. Tailored consultancy will be offered to EBLIDA Members on the use of ESI Funds in European libraries. Consultancy work will consist of making the best use of the EBLIDA Matrix and in providing suggestions and solutions for possible projects and strategies within ESI Funds.

Appendix 1: The EBLIDA Matrix: how to use it for SDG-oriented library policies and ESI Funds

Step 1: On the EBLIDA Website, please click on the “Activities” Section on the top ribbon:



Step 2: Click on the SDG of interest to you:



Appendix 2: SDG-oriented library policies in several European states (a selection)

Bulgaria. The progress of the Agenda 2030 in Bulgarian libraries is an interesting case study, in particular if connected with the scope and the objective of the current Report. A key role has been played by the Global Libraries - Bulgaria Foundation, which is project manager in some of the SDG-oriented library projects and create awareness activities and expertise for libraries. One of the Bulgarian SDG-oriented projects is “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.¹⁴⁴

An interesting initiative has also been undertaken by the Yavorov Regional Library with the project “The land is cleaner, we are more knowledgeable”: a 3D Printer is made available to every student in return of plastic bottles.¹⁴⁵ The project “Wildlife around us: get to know and protect”, implemented by the Zachary Kniazheski Library, 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.¹⁴⁶ The E-Portal of Memory and Knowledge is dedicated to the 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.¹⁴⁷

Global Libraries - Bulgaria Foundation (FSBB) is 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. The 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 organizations from Northern Ireland, Spain, Italy and Romania and is funded by the European Erasmus + program.¹⁴⁸

Estonia. Estonia has published some nation-wide strategical documents (in working progress).

One of them is the “National Strategy on Sustainable Development “Sustainable Estonia 21”.¹⁴⁹ This strategy is implemented through various sectorial strategies and development plans (one of them is Estonia 2035). While compiling a development plan for each sector, the strategic development plans for the national competitiveness and sustainable development have to always be taken into account.

The other is "Culture 2030", with a national strategy being prepared, based on the goals of sustainable development - vitality of Estonian cultural space, growth of human well-being, socially cohesive society, ecological balance and libraries have actively contributed to this document.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁴ <http://www.glbulgaria.bg/en/digisme>.

¹⁴⁵ <http://3d-burglib.org/bg>

¹⁴⁶ <http://green.libsz.org/>.

¹⁴⁷ Respectively <http://libsilistra.bg/index.php/2018-06-19-13-26-56> and <https://libvratsa.org/tiyneydzhari-testvat-novi-technologichi-chudesa/>

• ¹⁴⁸ Respectively <http://www.glbulgaria.bg/bg/node/35265> and <http://www.glbulgaria.bg/bg/node/31318>.

¹⁴⁹ <https://www.riigikantselei.ee/en/sustainable-development>.

¹⁵⁰ <https://www.kul.ee/et/kultuur2030>.

France. Four organisations - Enssib (École nationale supérieure des sciences de l'information et des bibliothèques), Cfibd (Comité français international pour les bibliothèques et la documentation), BPI (Bibliothèque Publique d'Information) and ABF (Association des bibliothécaires de France) – have set up a Working Group in charge of monitoring the follow up to the UN 2030 Agenda in French libraries. These four organisations play an active role in mobilizing libraries around SDGs and have created a joint website where library experiences are listed in a database and new activities are announced.

French libraries and documentation centres came to grip with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda as early as 2016. The section *Témoignages* of the Agenda 2030 website of French libraries lists no less than 300-350 projects implementing SDGs in the libraries of all French regions (including outermost regions). This showcase clearly illustrates how enthusiastically the 2030 Agenda was received in French libraries.¹⁵¹

With their focus on Green libraries, economic and social actions, and participation in local strategies of development, the library projects listed in the website regard the three pillars of UN SDGs and cover, to a greater or lesser extent, all seventeen SD Goals. More recent activities organised by the Working Group included a mobilization of French libraries in June 2019 (which saw the participation of some 1,600 libraries) and another mobilization Day on 25 September 2019.

Germany. Germany has a long tradition of “Green Libraries” which dates back in the 1970s with their first attempts to link Library architecture to collections. This tradition corresponds very much to the Rio+ environmental pillar of the UN SDGs. In order to implement the UN SDGs social and economic pillars (generated by the Millennium Development Goals), the scope of the “Green Library” seemed to be too narrow; more attention was therefore paid to social and economic issues. As a result, the Green Library concept developed into a network where projects having a more societal nature were set in place; the Green Library platform provides for an extended range of opinions and exchange of best practices.¹⁵²

The Federal nature of the German Constitution does not allow for centralized agencies monitoring the implementation of SDG-oriented library projects; libraries’ involvement in SDGs runs at city level. An important role is played by the Union of German Library Associations which created a focus on UN SDGs and drafted in 2016 a Position Paper where, Goal after Goal, possible orientations for projects are identified.¹⁵³

Two projects deserve the active participation of the German Union of library associations: “Treffpunkt Deutsch” – a cooperative project between a library and the immigrant community, providing access to language training and educational resources, implemented at the Stadtbibliothek Heilbronn (meeting SD Goals 4 and 5).¹⁵⁴ The other project - “Ernte Deine Stadt” (Harvest your city) – clearly illustrates the more advanced concept of Green Library at the Stadtbibliothek Bad Oldesloe, with the library becoming an urban garden and library rooms transformed into spaces for reflection and creativity about Sustainability (meeting SD Goals 4, 11, 12, 15, 17).¹⁵⁵

Latvia. The implementation of SDGs in Latvian libraries is the result of a collaboration between the National Library of Latvia and the Library Association of Latvia. Latvia has developed a unique and

¹⁵¹ <https://airtable.com/shr7YkW20CggiOhP1/tbl4WuWfB7hdaw1UY/viwNeF7J9TNh6gEZE?blocks=hide>

¹⁵² <https://it-it.facebook.com/pg/NetzwerkGrueneBibliothek/about/>

¹⁵³ https://www.bibliotheksverband.de/fileadmin/user_upload/DBV/positionen/2016_07_31_Stellungnahme_Nachhaltigkeit_endg.pdf

¹⁵⁴ <https://www.biblio2030.de/treffpunkt-deutsch-stadtbibliothek-heilbronn/>

¹⁵⁵ https://www.bibliotheksverband.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Landesverbaende/Hessen/Bibliothekstage/Ernte_deine_Stadt_Wetzlar_180430.pdf

ambitious approach to the 2030 SD Agenda resulting in the inclusion of libraries into national SDG plans at all levels. For instance, the Latvian National Development Plan 2021-2027 – the largest state budget investments plan for the development of Latvia and improvement of people's quality of life – also includes libraries as a core concept for development of culture and education. It is expected, therefore, that Latvian libraries may benefit from the European Structural and Investment Funds 2021-2027.¹⁵⁶

The Library Association of Latvia is included in the Interdisciplinary coalition for the implementation of SDGs. The Interdisciplinary coalition is created as an initiative of the Latvian Platform for Development Cooperation (LAPAS) – the association of Latvian NGOs who are working on the strengthening the civil society in Latvia – to build a coherent work across all sectors and structures for the implementation of SDGs in the planning documents and everyday activities, including evaluation and reporting about the results.¹⁵⁷ It is planned within the Interdisciplinary coalition to include the contribution of libraries in implementing the SDGs in the agenda of the Commission for Sustainable Development of the Latvian Saeima (Parliament), as well as in the Mapping Process where SDGs are considered a in the context of policy planning documents and monitored for achievement of performance indicators.¹⁵⁸

The Library Association of Latvia, the National Library of Latvia and the Latvian National Commission for UNESCO have organised a series of seminars on SDGs in order to create awareness on SDG in Latvian libraries, region after region (the last seminar in December 2019 addressed librarians working in the Kurzeme region).¹⁵⁹ The aim of this ambitious strategy is to make Latvian libraries “organically” functional to the implementation of SDGs in Latvia.

Luxembourg. In Luxembourg, Sustainable Development Goals are implemented thanks to the Fondation de Luxembourg. The Fondation de Luxembourg, which also enables other Sheltered Foundation to be set up under its aegis, distributes funding from different donors in the following areas: Health and Science, Poverty Reduction and Social Cohesion, Universal Education, Biodiversity and Climate Change. One of the projects of the Fondation de Luxembourg, for instance, has been to acquire a “bibliobus” to combat illiteracy in Cambodia (meeting SDGs 4, 10 and 17).

Spain. In 2017, the Consejo de Cooperación Bibliotecaria (CCB) – including representatives from the Regions (Comunidades autónomas), the Ministry of Culture and FESABID - set up a Working Group in charge of elaborating a library policy for Spain in relation to the Agenda 2030. First steps included a permanent collaboration with the High Commissioner for the 2030 Agenda in Spain and the organisation of awareness activities in various Comunidades. Best practices were selected with a special eye on: a) the social function of libraries and b) the collection of data which may support the implementation of SDGs in Spanish libraries.¹⁶⁰

A first review, region after region, showed how uneven the involvement of libraries in the 2030 Agenda was. CCB ascertained that SDG attainment was pursued in different ways according to the overall policies followed by each Comunidad autónoma. For instance, the Rioja and the Castilla y León regions focus was on library heritage and awareness on sustainable development (respectively, SD Goals 11.4

¹⁵⁶ <https://www.pkc.gov.lv/lv/attistibas-planosana-latvija/nacionalais-attistibas-plans/nap2027>

¹⁵⁷ <https://lapas.lv/lv/globalie-merki/iam-koalicija>

¹⁵⁸ <https://www.pkc.gov.lv/lv/valsts-attistibas-planosana/ano-ilgtspejigas-attistibas-merki/iam-kartejums>

¹⁵⁹ <http://www.bibliotekari.lv/?p=7752>

¹⁶⁰ The Working Group has published two *Informes* for activities carried out in 2017 and 2018, https://www.ccbiblio.es/wp-content/uploads/GE-Biblioteca-y-Agenda-2030_-Informe2017-1.pdf and https://www.ccbiblio.es/wp-content/uploads/GEBibliotecas-y-Agenda-2030-informe_2018.pdf and la Propuesta de Etrategia nacional https://www.ccbiblio.es/wp-content/uploads/propuesta_estrategia_Bcas-y-Agenda-2030_02.19_rev2.pdf.

and 4.7), the Navarra region axed on Access to information (SD Goal 16.10); Cataluña, Castilla-La Mancha and Castilla y León, as well as the cities of Higuera and Salamanca concentrated on Goal 10 “Reducing inequality”. Still different were the orientations pursued in cities: Huesca dealt with digital literacy (Goal 4), the “Women Writers Day” called on Gender Equality (SDG 5), the Green Library (Goal 15) was the aim of the Bibliotecas Municipales de La Coruña; with its initiative «Como en casa» SDG 16.10 was at the core of the Biblioteca of Sant Joan de Vilatorrada’s concerns.. And the Diputación de Barcelona was taking an even more holistic approach for its Library System. The conclusion was that Spanish libraries were strongly involved in the 2030 Agenda, but they were acting in a spontaneous and uncoordinated way, with little impact at strategic level. Moreover, SDG-oriented library projects were not evaluated, with little guess on how they could meet UN SDG indicators. CCB’s Call for “Data, data, data!” was more than justified.

Hence, the need for a more accurate and broad strategy which would wrap loosely coordinated initiatives and also lend to more accurate measurement. This strategy, elaborated by CCB,¹⁶¹ selected five strategic areas for development:

1. Increase library visibility and their contribution to personal development, social well-being and sustainable development. Six SDGs were identified as being more profitable for library development: Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-being), 4 (Quality Education), 5 (Gender equality), 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), 10 (Reducing Inequality), 11 (Sustainable cities and communities) and 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions).
2. Guarantee access to information, culture and knowledge to all. Through Library mapping and indicators, CCB wished to offer a solution to the uneven development of the Spanish Library System and the lack of appropriate reporting systems.
3. Design, plan and provide new services having in mind the perspective of the 2030 Agenda, in terms of library development, collections, reference products and service organisation.
4. Re-modeling, generating and exploiting data for a proper evaluation of SDG-oriented library projects through more accurate and re-usable data. Impact studies should analyse the effect of library projects on the society, institutions and individuals.

As by-products of the overall Strategy, in 2020 CCB launched two broad frameworks for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Spanish libraries. The first is oriented at rural areas and wishes to promote access to reading and information, the conservation of local memory and its promotion in the digital environment.¹⁶²

The second framework is to re-think the whole of the Spanish library system as an institutional engine designed to attain SDG 5: Gender equality. In this way, library results may be aggregated and indicators re-assessed and aligned with UN-SDG and Eurostat indicators. The proposal is part of the 3rd CCB Strategic Plan 2019-2023¹⁶³ through 5 action lines targeted at:

1. users and the public as a whole. By putting citizenship at the centre of library services the gender perspective is applied in relation to collections, activity planning and service organisation.
2. Professionals and equipment. Library mapping should promote a re-definition of professional profiles and the development of training schemes.
3. Library visibility. The gender perspective is applied through service design, the communication of library’s added value and alliances made with the Third sector.

¹⁶¹ https://www.ccbiblio.es/wp-content/uploads/propuesta_estrategia_Bcas-y-Agenda-2030_02.19_rev2.pdf.

¹⁶² <https://www.ccbiblio.es/grupos-de-trabajo/estrategicos/plan-atencion-mundo-rural/>.

¹⁶³ <https://www.ccbiblio.es/wp-content/uploads/III-Plan-Estrat%C3%A9gico-CCB-def.pdf>

4. Digital citizenship through open Access, better access to information and resources and to the library cultural heritage as a common good.
5. Better functioning of the CCP, as a coordination centre and an influential body.

This Strategy, formulated by CCP, has been accepted by the Comunidades autónomas as a broad framework. It is up to them, now, to transform strategy into policies and policies into action.

To complete Spanish policy on the 2030 Agenda mention has also to be made of the Library Plans set up by the City of Madrid and the City of Barcelona. The City of Madrid Plan envisages different axes dealing with several SDGs (but in particular SDGs 1, 4, 9, 10, 11, 16) which implies workshops on literacy for people below the poverty threshold and immigrants innovation, new technologies and democratic development.¹⁶⁴ Similarly, the Library network of Barcelona identified SDG Targets 4.4 and 4.5; 5.5, 8.3 and 8.9; 16.6, 16.7 and 16.10 as main drives for strategic development.¹⁶⁵

Acknowledgement:

Special acknowledgement to Editrice Bibliografica for having authorised the publication of the picture on the cover page

¹⁶⁴ Madrid city libraries and 2030

Agenda. <https://bibliotecas.madrid.es/portales/bibliotecas/es/Noticias/Manual-para-trabajar-la-Agenda-2030-de-Desarrollo-Sostenible-en-las-bibliotecas-municipales/?vgnextfmt=default&vgnextoid=f09b8a0a1c1e8610VgnVCM1000001d4a900aRCRD&vgnnextchannel=165a0b6eb5cb3510VgnVCM1000008a4a900aRCRD>.

¹⁶⁵Barcelona region libraries and 2030 Agenda, <https://www.diba.cat/documents/16060163/189231108/La+Red+de+Bibliotecas+Municipales+con+los+Objetivos+de+Desarrollo+Sostenible/14837cfa-1019-476a-94b7-293cbdac0c9e>