



Sustainable Development Goals and Libraries First European report

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Foreword

“Sustainable Development Goals and Libraries – First European Report” is an attempt to map SDG projects in European libraries not only as stories to be told to administrators and policy-makers for advocacy purposes, but also as a fully-fledged concept apt to frame library work into the broader and far-reaching scope of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. A new agenda is desperately needed for two reasons: on the one hand, because the traditional library sphere (free of charge services based on books and other media) has been challenged in the last two decades by private information service providers and, on the other hand, because many of the traditional assumptions in the world of libraries are being re-questioned or reshuffled in the post-Covid 19 age.

High-tech giants, like Google, Amazon, Facebook and Apple are breaking the monopoly libraries have enjoyed for years in providing free access to information. In the current “attention economy”, where a wealth of information creates a poverty of attention, many private information providers *distribute free and universal access to content based on advertising revenues*. Filling gaps in reading literacy and access to information are missions that are still valid in a library context. New political and social factors, however, are driving library development. Social change, social inclusion and democratic participation are notions that correspond to complex societies characterized by cultural diversity and social integration. Currently, new metaphors – libraries as “conversations” and “movements” (David Lankes) - are describing the new roles of libraries in a way that is more appropriate to their current needs.

A new political framework is therefore needed – and this framework can be clearly identified in the UN Sustainable Development Goals, approved in 2015, and in its European equivalent, the European 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development. UN SDGs are important because for the first time, the United Nations depart from the traditional rich-poor dichotomy, where “donor” states support developing countries. Within the UN SDG framework, all countries have equal level and dignity, no matter their level of development and their ability to attain SDGs.

There are at least two advantages in linking library action to the Sustainability Agenda developed by the United Nations and, in Europe, by the EU 2030 Agenda.

The first is political. Libraries’ cultural and educational objectives are not developed in an abstract manner, but are closely linked to the aspirations of the communities they intend to serve. In an SDG broader political architecture, the concept of the “social” library can thrive and develop in the specific policies assigned to each goal.

The second advantage is economic. Sustainable development is now the drive for new investments both in the private and public sector. A society which is sustainable and where nobody is left behind is much more prosperous in the long term. Future investments on libraries should be oriented towards activities with migrants, minorities, socially excluded citizens or those with special needs, in collaboration with organisations working in the third sector. A new battery of indicators is therefore needed, where libraries can demonstrate their positive influence on society as a whole.

The “First Report on Sustainable Development Goals” covers seventeen countries. We would like to thank the following EBLIDA Members for having taken time to respond to an EBLIDA Questionnaire and for having delivered extensive information on how the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is being applied in their country through library policies and projects. These Members are:

Bulgaria: Българска библиотечно-информационна асоциация (The Bulgarian Library and Information Association);
Cyprus: Κυπριακή Ένωση Βιβλιοθηκονόμων - Επιστημόνων Πληροφόρησης (Cyprus Association of Librarians - Information Scientists, CALIS)
Denmark: Danske Fag-, Forsknings- og Uddannelsesbibliotheker (Danish Research Library Association);
Estonia: Eesti Raamatukoguhoidjate Ühing (Estonian Librarians Association);
France: ENSSIB - École nationale supérieure des sciences de l'information et des bibliothèques (National Higher School of Library and Information Science);
Germany: Deutscher Bibliotheksverband e.V. (German Library Association);
Italy: Associazione Italiana Biblioteche (Italian Library Association);
Latvia: Latvijas Bibliotekāru Biedrība/Latvijas Nacionālā bibliotēka (Library Association of Latvia/National Library);
Lithuania: Lietuvos nacionalinė Martyno Mažvydo Biblioteka (The Martyno Mažvydo National Library of Lithuania);
Luxembourg: Associatioun vun de Lëtzebuurger Bibliothekären, Archisten an Dokumentalisten (Luxembourgish librarians, archivists and documentalists association);
Netherlands: The Koninklijke Bibliotheek (Royal Library) and The Alignment House;
Norway: Nasjonalbiblioteket (National Library of Norway);
Poland: Biblioteka Narodowa (National Library);
Portugal: BAD - Associação de Bibliotecários, Arquivistas e Documentalistas (Portuguese Librarians, Archivists and Documentalists Association);
Romania: Asociația Bibliotecarilor din România (Romania Library Association);
Slovenia: ZBDS - Zveze bibliotekarskih društev Slovenije (Slovenian Library Association)
Spain: FESABID - Federación Española de Sociedades de Archivística, Biblioteconomía, Documentación y Museística (Spanish Federation of Archives, Libraries and Museum Association).

This report is about library projects, policies and indicators. It is not pure research, however. With its link with the European Structural and Investment Funds 2021-2027¹, it is a concrete opportunity for libraries all over Europe to embark upon the new prototypes of library vehicles which are ready to circulate in the post-Covid 19 age.

Ton van Vlimmeren
President EBLIDA

¹ EBLIDA. The European Structural and Investment Funds 2021-2027: Funding Opportunities in Libraries, <http://www.eblida.org/publications.html>.

0. Executive summary

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. Fully committed to the implementation of SDGs, the European Union approach has distinctive features which can be summarised as follows : a) goals are interpreted in relation to the EU context, which is prosperous if compared to some areas of the world; b) Eurostat has set up its own series of indicators which mirror in most cases those present in the UN SDG scheme, but depart from them partially and evaluate EU country specific sub-targets; c) a large amount of funding opportunities are 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.

European libraries are setting up SDG projects with a view to meeting SDG objectives and enlarging their scope of action. But first, they have to get rid of four false myths surrounding the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development when applied to libraries, 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.

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". Examples of models / best practices in libraries are summarised in the following Table.

| SDG | Goal description | Library Project / Best Practice |
|-----|----------------------------|---|
| 1 | No poverty | Guidance and support to lift people out of poverty and integrate most deprived people better into society (4 cities in the Netherlands). An écrivain public regularly attends libraries to facilitates people with literacy problems in their administrative tasks, helping them fulfil their civil rights (France). |
| 2 | Zero Hunger | Agrolib project helps farmers with subsidies and incentives for agricultural development (Serbia and Romania). |
| 3 | Good Health and Well-Being | Production of 3D printed face masks during the Covid 19 crisis (Lithuania and to a lesser extent, also Portugal and France). Free book packages to babies aged six months and older (Belgium). Born to read, in collaboration with paediatric associations (Italy). Active Living Area, Citizen Science project transforming 80 ha of farmland and woods surrounding the SD University in a community driven outdoor living lab (Denmark). |
| 4 | Quality education | "Treffpunkt Deutsch" access to language training and educational resources to the immigrant community (Germany). Many more library projects in the following fields: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Extended general support to students; - Young students having special needs (dyslexia, etc.), - Relapse into illiteracy; - Digital illiteracy; |

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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. |
| 5 | Gender Equality | Re-thinking the whole library system as an institutional engine designed to attain SDG 5 (Spain); IHLIA in the Public Library of Amsterdam, ATRIA Institute, Centrum Schwule Geschichte (Cologne) and networks of women's library. |
| 6 | Clean Water and Sanitation | Implementation of the Green Library, green building certificate (in various countries). |
| 7 | Affordable and Clean Energy | Implementation of the Green Library through: a) reduction of energy consumption; b) efficient use of the energy supply; c) 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 (IFLA Checklist) Air seekers project (Belgium). |
| 8 | Decent Work and Economic Growth | Link between quality education and sustainable economic growth (Spain) and children-oriented activities (Spain). "Get Your Facts Straight! Media Literacy for All", "E-skills for E-inclusion", Mini Technology Centre in Vratsa (Bulgaria). |
| 9 | Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure | Educational projects in the regional libraries of Plovdiv, Smolyan and Stara Zagora districts (Bulgaria); 3D applications in libraries (Lithuania, France,, Portugal and other countries). |

| | | |
|----|---|---|
| 10 | Reducing Inequality | BIST (Bibliotheken im Stadtteil, "Libraries in the City area") consisting of: improvement and adaptation of the social infrastructure; b) social development of library services in disadvantaged neighbourhoods; c) Further development of library services (Germany). Ideas Box: fully-fledged mobile library in a container (Bibliothèques Sans Frontières, international). Access to computers for immigrants from Albania, Russia, Ukraine and Bulgaria (Greece). |
| 11 | Sustainable Cities and Communities | Libraries as factors of urban regeneration (Aarhus, Helsinki, Paris, and many more cities). Book heritage projects (in many European cities), in particular: "St. Cyril and Methodius" National Library of Bulgaria established as a Centre of Excellence for the Bulgarian Heritage, "Written treasures of the Lower Danube" (Bulgaria-Romania) and "Cultural and historical destinations" (Bulgaria.Turkey) Building renovation in Oranienburg and Waltershausen (Germany). |
| 12 | Responsible Consumption and Production | "The land is cleaner, we are more knowledgeable": a 3D Printer is made available to every student in return of plastic bottles (Bulgaria); BYOD (Bring Your Own Device), a Citizen Science aimed to engage citizens in research regarding electronic waste (Denmark); "Plastic Troop Challenge", LoCHal Library (Tilburg, NL). |
| 13 | Climate Action | ISO standard 14001:2004: Environmental management systems – Requirements with guidance for use (Spain). |
| 14 | Life below water | Regional book prize for environment (France). |
| 15 | Life On Land | "Harvest your city" a local library becomes a urban garden (Germany); "Wildlife around us", make people aware of the wildlife around them (Bulgaria). |
| 16 | Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions | Public debate around environmental sustainability and democracy, and "Human Library" (Spain) ; VPRO Tegenlicht (Backlight) Meetups in libraries (Netherlands); Combat against fake news (In Europe: France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom; EBLIDA is promoting NewsGuard). |
| 17 | Partnerships for the Goals | Bibliothèques sans Frontières in 50 countries (international) ; Human Library – People on Loan (Denmark + ca 80 countries); Financial support in the following areas: Health and Science, Poverty Reduction and Social Cohesion, Universal Education, Biodiversity and Climate Change (Fondation de Luxembourg). |

Beyond SDG stories, libraries can go one step further in advocacy and explore a more advanced narrative of policies and indicators. Several model policies have been detected. In Latvia, SDGs are applied according to an "institutional" policy, where Latvian libraries are considered "organically" functional to the implementation of SDGs. In some other countries, for instance in France and Germany, the librarians' movements towards the 2030 Agenda result from a multitude of activities, exhibitions and events linked with SDGs. In Spain, the case for the 2030 Agenda has found a systemisation in a strategic proposal jointly elaborated by CCB - the body where meaningful organisations acting as catalysts for library change are represented – axed 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). SDG policies can also be detected in the way the 2030 Agenda is used in various European countries, for instance if SDG-oriented library activities are funded through the European Structural and Investment Funds or other EC programmes.

A thorny issue, not easily solved, concerns indicators applied in libraries. Libraries are not economic agents and a more rounded and complete picture should measure the impact of libraries on: a) individual abilities, competencies, representations and behaviours; b) society - in terms of social inclusion, education, lifelong learning, cultural heritage, public health and reinforcement of democracy, and c) the economy, in terms of Return on Investment (RoI) and the commercial life of a city or a region. Since these measurements are difficult and costly, comparing library performance indicators with SDG indicators poses a problem of pragmatism. How determinant can libraries be in contributing to the attainment of goals? The answer may be found in the need for having more ad hoc, library-tailored targets and indicators, which may be used to evaluate SDG-oriented library projects.

This “Sustainable Development Goals and Libraries. First European Report” is the third of a series of reports released by the EBLIDA European Sustainability House. The relationship with two previous EBLIDA reports - “A European Library Agenda for the Post-Covid 19 Age” and “The European Structural and Investment Funds 2021-2027: Funding opportunities for Libraries” - can be explained with an easy metaphor. The three reports are like the manufacturing of a car, where the post-Covid 19 library agenda is the engine, sustainable development goals are the chassis and ESI Funds, the fuel. The metaphor goes on with the three reports offering a series of prototypes for a future post-Covid 19 library agenda, which have to be adapted to the needs of the library or the (local, regional, national) library system. And of course, the driver is the city or national administrator or library policy-maker who wishes to use these vehicles to reach the destinations which are looming on the joint Agenda 2030/ESIF/Library horizon.

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.²

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.

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

² https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/international-strategies/sustainable-development-goals/multi-stakeholder-platform-sdgs_en.

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).³ 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.

³ 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).

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.⁴ 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.

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.

⁴ 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/>.

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.⁵

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.⁶

⁵ See EBLIDA. The European Structural and Investment Funds 2021-2027: Funding Opportunities in Libraries, <http://www.eblida.org/publications.html>.

⁶ 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).

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.⁷

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.⁸

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

⁷ 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

⁸ IFLA Library Map of the World, <https://librarymap.ifla.org/stories/Romania/PUBLIC-LIBRARIES-IN-ROMANIA-FACILITATE-ACCESS-TO-AGRICULTURAL-SUBSIDIES/21>

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.⁹

"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.¹⁰

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.¹¹

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.¹² 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.¹³ An impressive number of projects, often funded by the Erasmus+ programme, are being implemented for children as well for adults engaged in digital literacy.¹⁴

The French *Agenda 2030 et bibliothèques* website lists some 100 activities taking place in French libraries and covering SDG 4.¹⁵ The "IFLA Library Map of the world" lists SDG stories in at least five European countries (Belgium, the Czech Republic, Germany, the Netherlands, Romania).¹⁶ "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).¹⁷

⁹ <https://www.lnb.lt/en/news/5242-lithuanian-libraries-offer-support-to-healthcare-professionals>.

¹⁰ <https://www.euread.com/projects/projects-programmes/baby/boekstart/>

¹¹ <http://www.natiperleggere.it/>

¹² <https://insights.uksg.org/articles/10.1629/uksg.431/>.

¹³ <https://www.euread.com/>

¹⁴ <https://publiclibraries2030.eu/2020/02/embarking-on-the-digital-travellers-journey/>.

¹⁵ <https://airtable.com/shr7YkW20CqgjOhP1/tbl4WuWfB7hdaw1UY/viwNef7J9TNh6gEZE/recqXbTf4Ai5femw9?blocks=hide>

¹⁶ <https://librarymap.ifla.org/stories/sdg/4>

¹⁷ <https://www.biblio2030.de/treffpunkt-deutsch-stadtbibliothek-heilbronn/>.

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),¹⁸

“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)¹⁹

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.

¹⁸ <https://www.ifla.org/publications/iflaunesco-public-library-manifesto-1994>.

¹⁹ <http://www.eblida.org/Documents/Council-of-Europe-EBLIDA-Guidelines-on-Library-Legislation-and-Policy-in-Europe.pdf>

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 incest could talk about their experiences without judgement, and where LTGB communities feel confident - here are a few policy objectives for a positive policy.²⁰

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.”²¹

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.²²

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



projects.

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

²⁰ 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.

²¹ 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>.

²² 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).

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.²³

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.)."²⁴

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.²⁵

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.

²³ <https://www.ifla.org/publications/node/12621>

²⁴ https://products.abc-clio.com/ODLIS/odlis_s.aspx#sustainablelib

²⁵ 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>.

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 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.²⁶

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.²⁷ 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.²⁸

²⁶ Madrid city libraries and 2030 Agenda,

<https://bibliotecas.madrid.es/UnidadesDescentralizadas/Bibliotecas/BibliotecasPublicas/Noticias/ficheros/ManualAgenda2030.pdf#page=82>

• ²⁷ Respectively <http://www.glibulgaria.bg/bg/node/35265> and <http://www.glibulgaria.bg/bg/node/31318>.

²⁸ Respectively <http://libsilistra.bg/index.php/2018-06-19-13-26-56> and <https://libvratsa.org/tiynedzhari-testvat-novi-technologichi-chudesa/>

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;²⁹ 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.³⁰

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 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

²⁹ <https://www.nb.no/hva-skjer/ai-conference/>.

³⁰ <http://www.glbulgaria.bg/en/digisme>.

and members within the community it applies to. In Europe, BsF operates in Belgium, France, Germany, Greece and Italy.³¹

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.³²

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 provides access to millions of books, music, artworks and more – with sophisticated search and filter tools.³³

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.³⁴

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

³¹ <https://www.librarieswithoutborders.org/ideasbox/>.

³² 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>

³³ <https://www.europeana.eu/en/about-us>.

³⁴ See EBLIDA. The European Structural and Investment Funds 2021-2027: Funding Opportunities in Libraries, <http://www.eblida.org/publications.html>.

promenade. The Stadtbibliothek Waltershausen was re-qualified in an historical complex, which also includes the town hall (1441).³⁵

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.³⁶

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.³⁷

Another library project aiming to substantially reduce waste generation through prevention and recycling was implemented by the Future Lab in the Lochal 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.³⁸

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.



³⁵ Ibidem.

³⁶ <http://3d-burglib.org/bg>

³⁷ 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>.

³⁸ The Lochal 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>.

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.³⁹ 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.⁴⁰

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.⁴¹

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).⁴²

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 garden and library rooms transformed into spaces for reflection and creativity about Sustainability (meeting SD Goals 4, 11, 12, 15, 17).⁴³

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

³⁹ 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>.

⁴⁰ Marta García (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>.

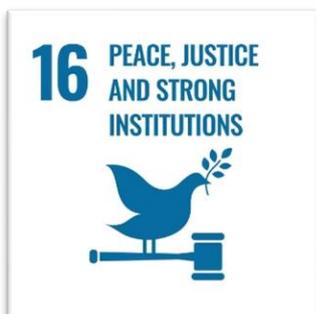
⁴¹ <https://www.bm-lyon.fr/16-bibliotheques-et-un-bibliobus/bibliotheque-du-6e/zoom-sur/article/le-prix-regional-du-livre-environnement-a-la-bibliotheque-du-6e>.

⁴² <https://www.ledepartement66.fr/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Rapport-DD-2019.pdf>.

⁴³ https://www.bibliotheksverband.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Landesverbaende/Hessen/Bibliothekstage/Ernte_deine_Stadt_Wetzlar_180430.pdf

and the public as a whole with a view to creating awareness about the benefits of living together with our wild friends.⁴⁴

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.⁴⁵ 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).⁴⁶ 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 2017.⁴⁷

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 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

⁴⁴ <http://green.libsz.org/>.

⁴⁵ 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&vgnextchannel=165a0b6eb5cb3510VgnVCM1000008a4a900aRCRD>

⁴⁶ 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>.

⁴⁷ <https://www.ccbiblio.es/wp-content/uploads/Sello-CCB-2018-BP%C3%BAblicas-Purchena.pdf>.

library concept of access to information, NewsGuard does not apply filtering systems intended to eliminate information, nor uses lexical or combinatory systems forcibly based on more or less biased algorithms.⁴⁸

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.⁴⁹

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.⁵⁰ 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.⁵¹ 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).⁵²

⁴⁸ <http://www.eblida.org/activities/the-eblida-sdg-european-house/newsguard.html>.

⁴⁹ <https://www.bibliosansfrontieres.org/>.

⁵⁰ <https://humanlibrary.org/meet-our-human-books/>.

⁵¹ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth/living-library>.

⁵² <https://www.fdlux.lu/de/node/1052>.

3. Model library policies in implementing 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?

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).⁵³ But access to information should be understood in a broader sense, into access to data, research and studies.⁵⁴

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.⁵⁵ 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.⁵⁶

The enthusiastic 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 April 2020, EBLIDA launched a questionnaire among its Members and asked which services emerged during the Covid-19 crisis. Responses were summarised in the Report "A European Agenda for the Post-Covid 19 Age".⁵⁷ During the Covid-19 crisis, access to library digital platforms boomed. The public library of Tallinn probably had the most spectacular rise, with accesses going from 373 in 2019 (March-

⁵³ DA2I, Development and Access to Information. <https://da2i.ifla.org/wp-content/uploads/da2i-2019-full-report.pdf>.

⁵⁴ Malgorzata Fedorowicz-Kruszewska. Sustainable libraries – fashion or necessity? J LIS.it, 10, 1 (January 2019), ISSN: 2038-1026 online, <https://www.jlis.it/article/view/12500/11355>.

⁵⁵ <https://www.ifla.org/libraries-development>

⁵⁶ DA2I. Development and Access to Information 2019. <https://da2i.ifla.org/wp-content/uploads/da2i-2019-full-report.pdf>.

⁵⁷ EBLIDA Report "A European Agenda for the post-Covid 19 age", <http://www.eblida.org/Documents/EBLIDA-Preparing-a-European-library-agenda-for-the-post-Covid-19-age.pdf>

April 2019) to almost 10,000 (same period, 2020). In all countries, however, access has doubled and tripled in number. The demand for digital resources has increased both in quantity and quality, with an offer including self-training, video on demand, music, press, e-books.⁵⁸

The report points to the new services related to the Covid emergence, which included:

- centralised access to Covid-19 related health information produced by governmental authorities;
- Covid-19 support service - 'Community Call' delivered via phone, text, email and through platforms;
- Use of social media to offer story time, through Facebook groups and YouTube profiles, or also for library exchange and (re-)use of digital products;
- advanced social services for the elderly and vulnerable on lockdown, such as phone calls, storytelling, also food delivery where necessary;
- the provision of face masks for healthcare workers through 3D printers.⁵⁹

These services are typically SDG-oriented library projects and many of them are large-scale initiatives involving the whole of the library system of a country. Some of these new services will hopefully not replicate, once the crisis is over. Most of them, however, are likely to be converted in a blended way – some with technologies, some physical – so that people may be together in compliance with social distancing rules.

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).⁶⁰ 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.

There is a clear feeling that SDGs are a policy to pursue, an overall scheme to implement with statistical reporting impacting on sustainability indicators. What is missing is a theory which gathers all these elements into an administrative culture on 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,

⁵⁸ Ibidem, p. 14-15.

⁵⁹ Ibidem, passim.

⁶⁰ <https://www.ifla.org/files/assets/public-libraries/documents/unesco-public-library-manifesto-1949.pdf>.

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)⁶¹ – 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.⁶²

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 2021-2027.⁶³

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.⁶⁴ 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.⁶⁵ 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 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

⁶¹ <https://lapas.lv/lv/musu-darbi/aktualie-projekti/iam-projekts/>.

⁶² <https://lapas.lv/lv/globalie-merki/iam-koalicija>

⁶³ <https://www.pkc.gov.lv/lv/attistibas-planosana-latvija/nacionalais-attistibas-plans/nap2027>

⁶⁴ In France: Agenda 2030 et bibliothèques, <https://agenda2030bibfr.wixsite.com/agenda2030bib>; in Germany: Netzwerk Grüne Bibliothek, <https://www.netzwerk-gruene-bibliothek.de/>.

⁶⁵ 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

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, 16,⁶⁶ 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.⁶⁷

The development of the local cultural dimension in a solid SDG policy has been strongly emphasised by UCLG, a global network of cities and local, regional, and metropolitan governments and their associations representing the voices of local and regional governments. 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.”⁶⁸

In 2018, UCLG released a *Guide* on how cities can use cultural objectives and institutions to attain each of the SDGs for local action.⁶⁹ 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.⁷⁰ 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

⁶⁶ 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&vgnnextchannel=165a0b6eb5cb3510VgnVCM1000008a4a900aRCRD>.

⁶⁷Barcelona 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>

⁶⁸ https://www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/uclg_theurbanpoliticaldeclaration_en_rv.pdf

⁶⁹ 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.

⁷⁰ 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>.

use and practices, these activities can be funded with sources of funding that are alternative to national funding - ESI Funds to begin with.

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 Matrix⁷¹ can be used by libraries and librarians to implement most advanced and more productive development strategies.

⁷¹ <http://www.eblida.org/activities/the-eblida-matrix.html>.

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.⁷² 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).⁷³ 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.⁷⁴ 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).⁷⁵

Similar results have been achieved in Spain where the estimated ROI for libraries is around between €2.80 and €3.83 per euro invested.⁷⁶ In the UK, a recent study suggests that every £1 invested in

⁷² 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.; Kyriellidou, Martha, Ed.; Davis, Denise, Ed., pp. 171-177. <https://www.libqual.org/documents/admin/ramsdalefuegi.pdf>.

⁷³ 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>.

⁷⁴ 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>.

⁷⁵ 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>.

⁷⁶ 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.

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 - £5.48.⁷⁷

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”.⁷⁸

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.⁷⁹ It may be possible to evaluate other possible forms of impact – a French study lists no less than 13 indicators.⁸⁰ 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”),⁸¹ 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 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.

⁷⁷ 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>.

⁷⁸ 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>.

⁷⁹ 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>.

⁸⁰ 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>.

⁸¹ 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?identificator=5a41dfa3-1a0c-4bfe-b68e-0d463844725b>.

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."⁸² In the IFLA Report, they are rightly associated to two Indices: 1. Freedom in the World 2. Freedom on the Net Indices.⁸³

These two indicators are used by UNESCO (SDG-IPDC programme) to report to the UN High Level Political Forum about SDG 16.10.⁸⁴ 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.⁸⁵

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 automated filtering of fake news. 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.

⁸² 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.

⁸³ DA2I Report, p. 20.

⁸⁴ 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>.

⁸⁵ 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>

The claim for “data, data, data” brought up by the Spanish Strategic Proposal is more than justified.⁸⁶ 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 production of autonomous library indicators should be in line with UN and Eurostat orientations.

⁸⁶ Estrategia nacional, cit., p. 11, https://www.ccbiblio.es/wp-content/uploads/propuesta_estrategia_Bcas-y-Agenda-2030_02.19_rev2.pdf

5. National library systems and the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals

Bulgaria. The progress of the Agenda 2030 in Bulgarian libraries is an interesting case study. 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.⁸⁷

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.⁸⁸ 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.⁸⁹ 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.⁹⁰

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.⁹¹

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””.⁹² 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.⁹³

⁸⁷ <http://www.glibulgaria.bg/en/digisme>.

⁸⁸ <http://3d-burglib.org/bg>

⁸⁹ <http://green.libsz.org/>.

⁹⁰ Respectively <http://libsilistra.bg/index.php/2018-06-19-13-26-56> and <https://libvratsa.org/tiynedzhari-testvat-novi-technologichi-chudesa/>

• ⁹¹ Respectively <http://www.glibulgaria.bg/bg/node/35265> and <http://www.glibulgaria.bg/bg/node/31318>.

⁹² <https://www.riigikantselei.ee/en/sustainable-development>.

⁹³ <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.⁹⁴

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.⁹⁵

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.⁹⁶

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).⁹⁷ 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).⁹⁸

⁹⁴ <https://airtable.com/shr7YkW20CqgiOhP1/tbl4WuWfB7hdaw1UY/viwNeF7J9TNh6gEZE?blocks=hide>

⁹⁵ <https://it-it.facebook.com/pg/NetzwerkGrueeneBibliothek/about/>

⁹⁶ https://www.bibliothekerverband.de/fileadmin/user_upload/DBV/positionen/2016_07_31_Stellungnahme_Nachhaltigkeit_endg.pdf.

⁹⁷ <https://www.biblio2030.de/treffpunkt-deutsch-stadtbibliothek-heilbronn/>.

⁹⁸ https://www.bibliothekerverband.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Landesverbaende/Hessen/Bibliothekstage/Ernte_deine_Stadt_Wetzlar_180430.pdf

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 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 2021-2027.⁹⁹

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.¹⁰⁰ 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.¹⁰¹

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).¹⁰² 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.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ <https://www.pkc.gov.lv/lv/attistibas-planosana-latvija/nacionalais-attistibas-plans/nap2027>

¹⁰⁰ <https://lapas.lv/lv/globalie-merki/iam-koalicija>

¹⁰¹ <https://www.pkc.gov.lv/lv/valsts-attistibas-planosana/ano-ilgtspejigas-attistibas-merki/iam-kartejums>

¹⁰² <http://www.bibliotekari.lv/?p=7752>

¹⁰³ 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.

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 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,¹⁰⁴ 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.¹⁰⁵

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.

¹⁰⁴ https://www.ccbiblio.es/wp-content/uploads/propuesta_estrategia_Bcas-y-Agenda-2030_02.19_rev2.pdf.

¹⁰⁵ <https://www.ccbiblio.es/grupos-de-trabajo/estrategicos/plan-atencion-mundo-rural/> .

The proposal is part of the 3rd CCB Strategic Plan 2019-2023¹⁰⁶ 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.
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.¹⁰⁷ 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.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ <https://www.ccbiblio.es/wp-content/uploads/III-Plan-Estrat%C3%A9gico-CCB-def.pdf>

¹⁰⁷ 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&vgnnextchannel=165a0b6eb5cb3510VgnVCM1000008a4a900aRCRD>.

¹⁰⁸Barcelona 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>.

6. Conclusion: Library prototypes in the post-Covid 19 Agenda

“Sustainable Development Goals and Libraries – First European Report” is the third of a series of reports released by the EBLIDA European Sustainability House. In May 2020, EBLIDA released the Report “A European Library Agenda for the Post-Covid 19 Age”. One week later, a document reviewing funding opportunities for libraries - “The European Structural and Investment Funds 2021-2027” - was published.¹⁰⁹

The three reports are closely related. The report “A European Library Agenda for the Post-Covid 19 Age” outlines library priorities after the tragic pandemic that has shaken the whole planet. It shows how these priorities have shifted and the need for libraries to link to a social context and an economic background which are not, and cannot be, the same as before the Covid-19 crisis. The report also aims to detect the legacy left by library policies and trends during the Covid-19 and to keep separate library activities based on contingent factors – which hopefully will not replicate – from library activities and trends that may become permanent in the post-Covid 19 age.

A compilation based on several key EU documents, the Report on European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) 2021-2027 outlines the characteristics of a European financial instrument which may be successfully applied in the world of libraries. There is little doubt that libraries will have to face financial hardships in the near future; resorting to diverse sources of income is also a way to test their ability to reach the various communities they refer to. In order to access ESI Funds, in fact, they have to look into the mirror of social opportunities and reckon how “structurally” essential they are for the social and economic development of a country in the post-Covid 19 age.

The broader framework, the mirror in which libraries can prove how essential they are, is the European 2030 Agenda on sustainable development. The “First Report on Sustainable Development Goals and Their Implementation in European libraries” summarises the responses provided by EBLIDA Members to the EBLIDA Questionnaire with the same title. Responses will feed and update the EBLIDA Matrix now available on the EBLIDA website which outlines, for each goal, EU policies and programmes, library policies, EU indicators and, still in a working stage, library indicators.¹¹⁰

With an easy metaphor we can describe the relationship between the three reports as the manufacturing of a car, where the post-Covid 19 library agenda is the engine, sustainable development goals are the chassis and ESI Funds may be the fuel. The metaphor goes on with the three reports offering a series of prototypes for a future post-Covid 19 library agenda, which have to be adapted to the needs of the library or the (local, regional, national) library system. And of course, the driver is the city or national administrator or library policy-maker who wishes to use this vehicle to reach the destinations which are looming on the joint Agenda 2030/ESIF/Library horizon.

It is very likely that the resilience and eventual survival of European libraries after the Covid-19 storm 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.

¹⁰⁹ <http://www.eblida.org/publications.html>.

¹¹⁰ EBLIDA Matrix, <http://www.eblida.org/activities/the-eblida-matrix.html>.