



A GUIDE FOR LIBRARY APPLICANTS

**EUROPEAN
STRUCTURAL AND
INVESTMENT FUNDS
2021-2027**

**A "THINK THE UNTHINKABLE" (TTU)
RESOURCE,
PREPARED BY TTU COORDINATORS AND THE
ELSIA EXPERT GROUP**

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Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	4
2. Methodology	5
3. General Objectives of ESI Funds 2021-2027 with an eye to the specific objectives of European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund	6
3.1 ESI Funds 2021-2027: State of the art	8
3.2 Why ESI Funds? EBLIDA's rationale and two case studies in France and Germany	8
3.3 Libraries in local contexts: smart specialisation strategies and library needs.....	10
3.4 First steps in ESIF implementation in libraries: contacts with authorities managing ESIF	11
3.5 The administrative burden: case studies and 80 simplification measures in ESIF 2021-2027	12
4. SDGs and libraries	15
4.1 How do I translate library operations into SDGs?	15
4.2 How do I go from SDG-oriented library projects to an SDG-oriented library policy?	19
4.3 Why are SDG official documents (national voluntary reports, national roadmaps) important for libraries?	20
5. How can European libraries join the EBLIDA Think The Unthinkable programme ?	22
5.1 National Think The Unthinkable Workshops	22
5.2 Make use of ESI Funds in eight steps.....	23
5.3 EBLIDA role in the TTU strategy	31
6. The evaluation of SDG-oriented, ESI-funded projects	33
6.1 Methodological issues: how consistent are library data and statistical series?	33
6.2. What indicators are to be used in libraries to measure the attainment of SDGs?	34
6.3 Practical suggestions in setting library indicators	37
7. Think The Unthinkable strategies in Europe	39
7.1 Bulgaria	39
7.2 France.....	41
7.3 Greece	41
7.4 Italy	43
7.5 Latvia.....	45
7.6 The Netherlands.....	47



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1. Introduction

On 21st September 2020 the EBLIDA Executive Committee approved the creation of the [ELSIA \(European Libraries and Sustainable Development Implementation and Assessment\) Expert Group](#), chaired by Alicia Sellés Carot.

Among other tasks, the ELSIA Group is assisting in implementing the EBLIDA Think The Unthinkable programme: a post-Covid library agenda meeting sustainable development goals to be funded through European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) 2021-2027. In the library scenario, two directions seem to be reinforced after the Covid-19 crisis: the socially inclusive library and the digital library. Both directions meet SDGs and may be funded through ESIF 2021-2027.

The “European Structural and Investment Funds 2021-2027 – A Guide for Library Applicants” has been devised with a view to helping library applicants to better focus the TTU programme. It has the following objectives:

- To assist EBLIDA Members in making the most out of European policies and financial opportunities linked with the implementation of ESIF 2021-2027;
- To be used by EBLIDA Members as background documents for the organisation of national Think The Unthinkable workshops where practical implementations of ESIF projects are discussed.

This Guide is useful to librarians willing to join the TTU programme, whether in countries where a TTU programme is already in place, or in countries where there is no TTU action. The TTU co-coordinator in France, Raphaëlle Bats (University of Bordeaux), drafted Chapter 4 “SDGs and Libraries”. The rest of the Guide has been drafted by the EBLIDA Secretariat with the support of, and in collaboration with, actors being part of the EBLIDA TTU Community and the ELSIA Expert Group (the full list of people involved in the Guide is provided in Chapter 2: Methodology).

TTU coordinators in six countries have accepted to draft short descriptions of TTU strategies. Fruitful conversations have also been held with Christophe Evans and Ulla Wimmer in relation to Chapter 6: Evaluation. The presentation of case studies in France and Germany (Chapter 3) were made possible through talks with officials of the Montreuil Libraries and the Berlin Senate, Department for Culture and Europe. The list of people is also included in Chapter 2: Methodology.

I hope that the Guide will increase the status of libraries throughout Europe and help them to set up a library focus within ESI Funds 2021-2027, so that they become “structurally” important in Europe and for Europe.

Ton van Vlimmeren, EBLIDA President

2. Methodology

Many of the reflections included in this Guide are the result of conversations and exchanges of opinions taking place within the ELSIA Expert Group, chaired by Alicia Selles Carot, which includes the following members: Nadezhda Grueva (*Bulgaria*), Eliška Bartošová (*Czech Republic*), Steffen Nissen (*Denmark*), Christophe Evans (*France*), Raphaëlle Bats (*France*), Ulla Wimmer (*Germany*), Antonios Mourikis (*Greece*), Iro Tzorbatzaki (*Greece*), Rossana Morriello (*Italy*), Chiara Faggiolani (*Italy*), Kristine Deksne (*Latvia*), Marjolein Oomes (*Netherlands*), Agnes Erich (*Romania*), Karoline Andersdotter (*Sweden*).

Think The Unthinkable coordinators have also be instrumental in drafting this Guide. They are - in *Bulgaria*: Marina Encheva and Spaska Tarnadova (Bulgarian Library Association), *France*: Eléonore Clavreul (Bibliothèque Publique d'Information) and Raphaëlle Bats (University of Bordeaux), *Greece*: Antonios Mourikis (University Library Athens and Iro Tzorbatzaki (Greek Library Association), *Italy*: Valentina Bondesan (Rete delle Reti and Italian Library Association), *Latvia*: Māra Jēkabsons (Library Association of Latvia) and Katrina Kukaine (National Library of Latvia), *Netherlands*: Ton van Vlimmeren and Maarten Crump (The Alignment House).

The following sources have also been exploited for this Guide:

- a) Information and recommendations included in the EBLIDA “Think the Unthinkable” report and in particular, the [The European Structural and Investment Funds 2021-2027: Funding Opportunities for Libraries](#) and the [Sustainable Development Goals and Libraries - First European Report](#), both released in May 2020;
- b) Examples extracted from the EBLIDA report “Towards the implementation of SDG indicators in European libraries”, published in November 2020;
- c) Interviews carried with Mr Fabrice Chambon (director, Montreuil Libraries), Mr Guillaume Gast (on behalf of the Montreuil libraries) and Ms Juliette Limouzin (Est Ensemble) in relation to the French ESIF experience, and with Mr Reiner Schmock-Bathe in relation to the German ESIF experience;
- d) Extracts from the EBLIDA Newsletter issues (February 2021, March, April and May 2021).

3. General Objectives of ESI Funds 2021-2027 with an eye to the specific objectives of European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund

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

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

According to Article 4 of the Common Provisions,¹ the scope of ERDF regards: (a) infrastructure; (b) access to services; (c) productive investments in SMEs; (d) equipment, software and intangible assets; (e) information, communication, studies, networking, cooperation, exchange of experience and activities involving clusters; (f) technical assistance.²

General Policy Objectives (PO) of ERDF support twenty-one specific objectives listed in Article 2 of the proposed Regulation on the European Regional Development Fund and on the Cohesion Fund.³ These specific objectives are:

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

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

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

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

¹ Proposal for a REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund Plus, the Cohesion Fund, and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and financial rules for those and for the Asylum and Migration Fund, the Internal Security Fund and the Border Management and Visa Instrument, COM/2018/375 final - 2018/0196 (COD), <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2018%3A375%3AFIN>.

² <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52018PC0372&from=EN>

³ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52018PC0372>.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The ESF is Europe’s main instrument for supporting jobs, helping people to get better jobs and ensuring fairer job opportunities for all EU citizens. It works by investing in Europe’s human capital. Article 4 of the Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Social Fund Plus⁴ lists the specific objectives for this Fund, which contributes to the Implementation of the

European Pillar of Social Rights:

- (i) improving access to employment of all jobseekers, in particular youth and long term unemployed, and of inactive people, promoting self-employment and the social economy;
- (ii) modernising labour market institutions and services to assess and anticipate skills needs and ensure timely and tailor-made assistance and support to labour market matching, transitions and mobility;
- (iii) promoting women’s labour market participation, a better work/life balance including access to childcare, a healthy and well-adapted working environment addressing health risks, adaptation of workers, enterprises and entrepreneurs to change, and active and healthy ageing;
- (iv) improving the quality, effectiveness and labour market relevance of education and training systems, to support acquisition of key competences including digital skills;
- (v) promoting equal access to and completion of, quality and inclusive education and training, in particular for disadvantaged groups, from early childhood education and care through

⁴ Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+), COM/2018/382 final, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52018PC0382>

- general and vocational education and training, and to tertiary level, as well as adult education and learning, including facilitating learning mobility for all;
- (vi) promoting lifelong learning, notably flexible upskilling and reskilling opportunities for all taking into account digital skills, better anticipating change and new skills requirements based on labour market needs, facilitating career transitions and promoting professional mobility;
 - (vii) fostering active inclusion with a view to promoting equal opportunities and active participation, and improving employability;
 - (viii) promoting socio-economic integration of third country nationals and of marginalised communities such as the Roma;
 - (ix) enhancing the equal and timely access to quality, sustainable and affordable services; modernising social protection systems, including promoting access to social protection; improving accessibility, effectiveness and resilience of healthcare systems and long-term care services;
 - (x) promoting social integration of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion, including the most deprived and children;
 - (xi) addressing material deprivation through food and/or basic material assistance to the most deprived, including accompanying measures.

3.1 ESI Funds 2021-2027: State of the art

ESI Funds 2021-2027 are now in the early stages of their implementation, with managing authorities monitoring ESIF implementation and distributing resources already in place. In Italy, for instance, the four unifying themes for ESI Funds have been defined as follows:

- a) quality work;
- b) territory and natural resources for future generations;
- c) homogeneous and quality services for citizens;
- d) culture as a vehicle of economic and social cohesion.⁵

In France a partnership agreement has been signed between the States and the Regions (CPER, Contrat de Plan Etat- Régions). For all regions, the priority is to combat unemployment through a) research, innovation, higher education through digital transformation; b) social and territorial cohesion. In two specific regions – Ile de France and Normandie – sub-priorities are, respectively, to combat to any sort of divides and to support to the book chain; this new priority emerged after the Covid crisis in support to all forms of culture and cultural heritage.⁶

All countries are now preparing documents at national level; there will probably be some continuities with ESIF 2014-2020 or perhaps totally different priorities. Smart specialisation strategies in specific countries and all European regions are described in the interactive map present in the European Smart specialisation platform.⁷

3.2 Why ESI Funds? EBLIDA's rationale and two case studies in France and Germany

European programmes open up plenty of opportunities for libraries and EBLIDA is not alone in being active at European level. For instance, LIBER (Association of European Research Libraries) is highly involved in the EU Horizon programme; PL 2030 is tooling up to provide support for the European

⁵ https://opencoesione.gov.it/it/lavori_preparatori_2021_2027/.

⁶ <https://regions-france.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Accord-de-partenariat-sign%C3%A9.pdf>.

⁷ <https://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/map>.

Democracy Action Plan. EBLIDA, instead, decided to focus on European Structural and Investment Funds. This choice needs to be explained.

The first reason is economic. ESIF accounts for more than one third of the EU budget. A large part of this budget is spent on hard infrastructure: railway corridors, motor highways, broadband wirelines and subsidies to farmers to name but a few. Nonetheless, ESIF investment in culture is significant, as a few reports clearly illustrate.⁸ A large amount of money is devoted to the improvement of the human capital in culture and cultural infrastructure, and this money is normally spent in a wise and effective way. Libraries should be in the first place to use this money as they improve social cohesion and reduce gaps in social layers.

The second reason is political. As early as January 2020, the European Commission delivered its work programme, articulated in six headline ambitions: 1. A European Green Deal, 2. A Europe fit for the digital age, 3. An economy that works for people, 4. A stronger Europe in the world, 5. Promoting our European way of life, 6. A new push for European democracy.⁹ ESIF describes the way the European work programme is interpreted and implemented by local actors; it is Europe in its most immediate “affordance”, the way it is perceived and used by Europe citizens. Libraries can do a lot to diffuse a friendly and empathic idea of Europe, which is close to people’s needs.

The third is institutional. ESIF are normally administered and managed at regional and local level and libraries, especially public libraries, are normally embedded into local administrative frameworks. It is easier for a librarian to report and interact with local municipalities than to negotiate with European officials sitting in European capitals.

The fourth is policy-orientation. Normally, programmes funded by the European Commission have a strong R&D component; they are aimed at making strides in the specific fields in which they operate and to open new avenues. In the library field, EC programmes are normally implemented by big and well-equipped libraries, able to develop R&D activities. Small libraries are excluded from the European bonanza; this is not the case with ESIF which may address both small and big libraries.

EBLIDA represents libraries as a whole – big and small, academic and public, operating at national or a local level, library associations and library institutions. ESIF as a preferred field of intervention also serves all EBLIDA members in their ordinary businesses, and not only in the advanced services they may provide.

*Two case studies: the Montreuil City Library (France) and the BIST project in Berlin (Germany)*¹⁰

⁸ European Parliament. Directorate General for Internal Policies. Policy Department B: Structural and Cohesion Policies. *Culture and Education. Use of Structural Funds for Cultural Projects*. KEA European Affairs: María Iglesias, Philippe Kern, Valentina Montalto, Brussels, © European Union, 2012,

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=IPOL-CULT_ET\(2012\)474563](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=IPOL-CULT_ET(2012)474563);
European Parliament. Research for CULT Committee - ESIF and culture, education, youth & sport. *The use of European Structural and Investment Funds in policy areas of the Committee on Culture & Education*. Author: The Centre for Strategy & Evaluation Services LLP (CSES), Mike Coyne, Malin Carlberg, Caroline Chandler, Eugénie Lale-Demoz. Bruxelles, 2018,

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=IPOL_STU\(2018\)617475](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=IPOL_STU(2018)617475)

⁹ https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar%3A7ae642ea-4340-11ea-b81b-01aa75ed71a1.0002.02/DOC_1&format=PDF.

¹⁰ Information about ERDF implemented in the City Library of Montreuil has been extracted from the French workshop *Bibliothèques: l’Europe peut subventionner vos projets* (24.11.2020)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-9l4wPqpbo8>. Information about BIST is extracted from the BIST website (<https://www.berlin.de/sen/kultur/foerderung/eu-foerderung/efre/foerderperiode-2007-2013/artikel.81732.php>) and *Stellungnahme für die Europäische Kommission zum Bedarf einer Förderung für*

City Library of Montreuil.

The Montreuil City Library resorted to ESIF because it needed additional support for its manyfold activities in addition to ordinary funding provided by the City, the Ministry of Culture and the National Book Centre. At the beginning, we wished to focus our ESIF action on the Writers-in-residence programme, one of our cultural and educational programmes. We soon found out that this programme was not eligible for ESIF, because administrative rules (like, for instance, the three-offer bid) hardly adapts to artists' selection. We also intended to resort to the EC-funded Socrates Programme in collaboration with the city of Bologna (Italy), but its setting up was too complex. As a result, we focused on ESIF.

A project suitable within the ESIF scope seemed to be an activity aiming to combat school drop-out and re-integrate school children. To this purpose, we requested some € 100,000 over two years with the proviso that additional investment would be needed, should the project be successful.

BIST (Bibliotheken in Stadtteilen, Public libraries in the neighbourhood) – Berlin.

With their core offer (printed and digital media on site together with professional advice), the Berlin public library system is the cornerstone of the Berlin education system. Public libraries support individual and informal learning, act as a place for the urban society to expand and revitalise. They have partnerships with schools, kinder gardens, family centres, businesses and they address important socio-economic problems (like the "digital divide" and media literacy deficits). In order to carry out these activities we requested € 6.67 million of ERDF funding with a further €13.17 million of Berlin state funding within ESIF 2007-2013. This was requested within the framework of the sub-programme "Future Initiative for Urban Districts (ZIS)" (Berlin Senate Department for Urban Development and Housing). Thanks to ESIF 2014-2020, we are enjoying a further € 4 million provided by ERDF. All projects will come to an end in 2023.

From 2007 until today, more than 45 projects have been funded in Berlin public libraries covering several city areas. Projects concern Makers (Berlin Mitte), Media literacy (Berlin Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg), reading activities (Berlin Mitte), language skills and abilities (Berlin Spandau), integration and family libraries (Berlin Marzahn-Hellersdorf). Support is also given to structural adaptations and projects that renew the equipment and furnishing of libraries to improve the quality of library visits (e.g. Berlin Central Library - America Memorial Library and Berlin Marzahn-Hellersdorf).

3.3 Libraries in local contexts: smart specialisation strategies and library needs

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

For a better understanding of ESIF, and in particular ERDF, an important concept has to be introduced: smart specialisation strategy. A regional smart specialisation strategy is a place-based approach, where Member States build on the assets and resources available to regions and address specific socio-economic challenges in order to identify unique opportunities for development and growth. On this basis, Member States make choices for investment and support a limited number of well-identified priorities for knowledge-based investments and/or clusters. In other words, the majority of resources must be concentrated on a maximum of few thematic objectives in order to reach a "critical

Öffentliche Bibliotheken im ZIS-Teilprogramm „Bibliotheken im Stadtteil II (BIST II)“, 10.9.2014 ([file:///fs-srvp100/users\\$/gvi010/Desktop/bedarfsnachweis.pdf](file:///fs-srvp100/users$/gvi010/Desktop/bedarfsnachweis.pdf)).

mass" of real impact. It is up to Member States to choose the thematic objectives for which the largest part of the Funds are allocated.

The next stage to consider is when the Operational Programmes for each of the Funds are established. These can take the form of national or regional Operational Programmes (OPs) in the larger Member States or national OPs in smaller Member States; in the case of Denmark and Sweden, national OPs can be implemented with regional variations. Some of the national OPs are dedicated to particular policy areas and a small number have been specifically or partially dedicated to culture.

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

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

City library of Montreuil.

After having excluded the Writers-in residence programme, we looked at Montreuil's territory. Montreuil is a highly layered society, with large inequalities in income and a strong component of immigrants. Young immigrants are only partly integrated into schools.

BIST (Bibliotheken in Stadtteilen) – Berlin.

In Germany, Berlin is the federal state with the highest rate of school drop outs. This concerns in particular the so-called "digital divide", which is essentially determined by socio-economic conditions and the age of the population. BIST improves social integration in disadvantaged neighbourhoods and ensures opportunities for all population groups.

These are the measures that were implemented:

- *Structural improvement and adaptation of the social infrastructure (construction or renovation and modernisation of libraries)*
- *Projects for social development of library services in disadvantaged neighbourhoods (intercultural library work, welcome culture, family library);*
- *Library relations with bookshops and publishing houses.*

3.4 First steps in ESIF implementation in libraries: contacts with authorities managing ESIF

If libraries wish to implement ESIF projects, who should they call first?

Before libraries are able to implement ESIF projects, it is crucial that the relevant funding programmes are enforced by local authorities. In the first place, it's crucial that libraries constantly claim with the authorities to negotiate programmes that are suitable for them. Therefore, the first telephone call may be made to a colleague working in the same administration.

ESI Funds are allocated on the basis of a partnership agreement stipulated between the EC and Member States. A partnership agreement consists of setting up national and/or regional Operational Programmes (OPs) on the priorities identified by each Member States. Librarians willing to access ESIF should contact the designated managing authority, which provides information on the programme, selects projects and monitors implementation. The whole list, country after country, is available at the following link: https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/atlas/managing-authorities/).

The European Social Fund+ is the main instrument designed to invest in Europe's human capital – its workers, its young people and all those seeking a job. Information about ESF+ managing authorities in each country is available at the following link:

<https://ec.europa.eu/esf/main.jsp?catId=45&langId=en>.

Partnership agreements between the European Commission and Member States have been signed in the second half of 2020. Managers willing to use ESI Funds should make the case for libraries now and check to what extent SDG-oriented projects or other library initiatives may be compliant with ESIF's main objectives.

City library of Montreuil.

The responsible region for ESIF 2014-2020 was Ile-de-France et Seine-Saint-Denis, with an ERDF-ESF Operational Programme 2014-2020 focused on education, training, social inclusion of marginalized communities, support for most fragile regions and SMEs, as well as environmental issues. The region of Ile-de-France has received some € 480 million in 2014-2020, of which over one third is allocated to ERDF. The ERDF program aimed to address four issues: harmonious development of local areas targeting vulnerable urban areas, social and professional integration, strengthening the competitive position of the region, and responses adapted to the environmental challenges.¹¹

The first ERDF axe promoted social inclusion and fight against poverty and all forms of discrimination. It is within this framework that The Montreuil Library ERDF initiative was embedded. We also discovered that all French regions have created ad hoc structures to assist project implementers. The city of Montreuil is part of the agglomeration community Est Ensemble. The Montreuil city library was assisted by the European Affairs Officer of Est-Ensemble. She helped us elaborate the project and co-managed it in its different stages.

BIST (Bibliotheken in Stadtteilen) – Berlin.

Responsible for the umbrella administration of ESI Funds of the city of Berlin is the Senate Department for Economics, Energy and Public Enterprises. The Senate Department for Culture and Europe is responsible for BIST; it is part of the funding sub-programme "Future Initiative for Urban Districts (ZIS)" (Berlin Senate Department for Urban Development and Housing) aimed at Berlin's deprived neighbourhoods to improve social integration and provide good opportunities for all population groups.

3.5 The administrative burden: case studies and 80 simplification measures in ESIF 2021-2027

Managing and implementing ESIF programmes may be a complex task in terms of staff, overhead, and external costs for beneficiaries to comply with obligations imposed by the ESIF regulations. In some cases, national regulations add complexity and raise the administrative costs of a project. This is particularly true for small-scale library projects which tend to be relatively more costly than financially larger programmes. The opposite is also true. Since ESIF beneficiaries report to local or regional authorities, they get a better understanding of local procedures and needs; therefore, the ESIF

¹¹ https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/atlas/programmes/2014-2020/france/2014fr05m0op001

administrative burden may be less complex than in the case of projects directly funded by the European Commission.

Moreover, the administrative burden has been made lighter for ESIF 2021-2027. The process of accessing funding for the potential beneficiaries of the EU financial support was simplified through eighty simplification measures and procedures.¹² Beneficiaries of ESI Funds 2014-2020 will easily acknowledge the impact of these measures: speeding up procedures are facilitated and there are single reimbursement rates, flat rates for indirect costs, a 90-day payment deadline for beneficiaries, electronic exchange of data between beneficiaries. All this may help reduce the ESIF administrative burden.

Simplification measures concern the legal framework: only one regulation for ERDF, ESF and other Funds. Previous autonomous funds, such as the Fund of European Aid to the most Deprived and the Youth Employment Initiative have been merged in order to increase visibility and readability of EU action in the employment and social areas. There are also fewer strategic requirements: with conditions set from the beginning of the programming period and the focus on implementation rather than reporting, the administrative burden is decreased.

In addition, since the focus is on the achievement of objectives, information is required only one time in practical context and indicators only concern specific objectives. 6 per cent of the budget is allocated to the European Urban Initiative:¹³ This instrument replaces several different instruments and initiatives in the area of urban policy.

Project implementation is further simplified by a set of instruments, such as no Commission approval for major projects, flat-rate reimbursement, unit costs or lump sums. The simplified cost options ("SCOs") is encouraged and applies for all operations encompassing small amounts of money. SCOs not only reduce bureaucracy linked to verifications, they also reduce the risk of errors. There is full VAT eligibility for all projects below EUR 5 million. ESIF centrally managed instruments can also support Horizon Europe, LIFE+ or ERASMUS+ projects without organising another call for proposals or a selection process ("Seal of excellence").

The principle of one-Audit control prior to completion is applied to ERDF and Cohesion Fund projects below EUR 400.000 eligible cost and ESF projects below EUR 300.000. Other projects are audited only once per accounting year. The administrative burden linked to monitoring and reporting is radically reduced.

Concerning Interreg project, a single integrated regulatory framework is set and actors implementing small projects (not exceeding EUR 20 million or 15% of the programme) are "final recipients" and not beneficiaries, thus reducing their administrative burden, with obligatory use of SCO. A single set of standards/rules is used for projects - The European Cross-Border Mechanism - implemented in more than one Member State (i.e. rules of one Member State may be applied in the other related to the joint project).

¹² European Commission. Regional and urban policy. *Simplification Handbook. 80 simplification measures in cohesion policy 2021-2027*,

https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/factsheet/new_cp/simplification_handbook_en.pdf.

¹³ European Commission. Explanatory Memo: European Urban Initiative- post 2020 article 104(5) cpr proposal and article 10 ERDF/CF proposal,

https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/brochure/explanatory_memo_eui_post_2020_en.pdf

City library of Montreuil.

Support from European funds is provided within a local envelope which also includes institutions other than libraries. Therefore, targeting, evaluation and adjustments should be defined in relation to this envelope.

As a result, there are both positive and negative aspects: positive, because targets are defined in collaboration with local actors - in our case, they were defined in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and focused on three classes in the general French higher education syllabus. The negative aspect is that, being so much focused on targeted public, partnerships with other libraries operating in other regions may be somewhat difficult.

The administrative burden is not intolerable and can be compared with any evaluation taking place in French administration. We found out that the bulk of the money was allocated to personnel. If needed, a staff position can be exclusively dedicated to the European project: this position can be easily financed with ESI Funds.

4. SDGs and libraries

4.1 How do I translate library operations into SDGs?

The UN Agenda 2030¹⁴ was voted on at the UN in 2015 by more than 200 countries. It is a follow up to the UN Agenda 21 and its Millennium Goals - a complex programme with 8 Goals and 23 principles - whose complexity did not allow for an easy appropriation by states, local governments and citizens.

The 2030 Agenda is presented through a simplified grid of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



The Agenda 2030 has many key factors enabling their full realisation. Both of them are linked to libraries: information and culture. IFLA, EBLIDA and many national associations are advocating the role of information and culture as key factors and the role of libraries as key actors of the success of the implementation of the Agenda 2030.¹⁵

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals have been so designed to be easily communicated through a grid of 17 easily memorisable logos. Each SDG is composed of a short title, an icon, a number, and a colour. To exemplify, here is the SDG 1 logo:



¹⁴ To read the Agenda 2030 : <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>

¹⁵ IFLA provided some documents for this advocacy: the poster IFLA "[Information for Development...](#)", the [Lyon Declaration](#), the report "[Culture in the Implementation of the Agenda 2030](#)".

Graphic simplification, however, does not hide the in-depth observation of the 2030 Agenda, details of which can be found on the website (available in many languages). For each SDG, the long title is more explicit. For SDG 1 it is: «End poverty in all its forms everywhere». In addition to the SDG's contextualisation, the UN lists a range of targets to be associated with the SDG, each goal to be evaluated through one or more indicators. In relation to SDG 1, targets to be reached are as follows...

SDG 1 Targets:

1.1 By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than \$1.25 a day
1.2 By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions
1.3 Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable
1.4 By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance
1.5 By 2030, build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters
<i>1.A Ensure significant mobilization of resources from a variety of sources, including through enhanced development cooperation, in order to provide adequate and predictable means for developing countries, in particular least developed countries, to implement programmes and policies to end poverty in all its dimensions</i>
<i>1.B Create sound policy frameworks at the national, regional and international levels, based on pro-poor and gender-sensitive development strategies, to support accelerated investment in poverty eradication actions</i>

The 2030 Agenda focuses on all aspects of society, as is demonstrated by the 17 SDGs to be organised as follows¹⁶:

SDGs related to primary goods and services : SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5



SDGs related to socio-economic questions: SDGs 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12

¹⁶ This paragraph expresses Raphaëlle Bats' own view (University of Bordeaux, France). The UN proposes a reading of the SDGs within the 5 P framework: People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, Partnership, but without specifying with SDGs goes in which P.



SDGs related to ecology : SDGs 6, 7, 13, 14, 15



SDGs relative to political issues: SDGs 16 and 17.



There are other ways of looking at the structure of the 2030 Agenda, but in any case, the 17 SDGs cover the ecological, social, economic and political issues that we need to address. While this distribution of SDGs shows the extent of coverage of the 2030 Agenda, it should be remembered that the SDGs are in fact interconnected.

For example, a single target can be found in two SDGs: thus climate change education is present in SDG 4 (education) and in SDG 13 (climate change) :

4.7 By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development

13.3 Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning

Moreover, to achieve a target, it is often necessary to have a policy that addresses several SDGs. Thus, improving people's health against pollution-related diseases will require action in SDG 3 (health), SDG 7 (energy) and SDG 12 (responsible consumption and production) and certainly others:

3.9 By 2030, substantially reduce the number of deaths and illnesses from hazardous chemicals and air, water and soil pollution and contamination.

7.A By 2030, enhance international cooperation to facilitate access to clean energy research and technology, including renewable energy, energy efficiency and advanced and cleaner fossil-fuel technology, and promote investment in energy infrastructure and clean energy technology

12.4 By 2020, achieve the environmentally sound management of chemicals and all wastes throughout their life cycle, in accordance with agreed international frameworks, and significantly reduce their release to air, water and soil in order to minimize their adverse impacts on human health and the environment

Through these SDGs and their targets, the 2030 Agenda is intended to be a guiding tool aiming, if not to solve all the problems of our societies, at least to enable each country to define the most important axes of its action for the next 15 years, and thus until 2030 (see below the point 4.3).

It may seem difficult to practice the 2030 Agenda, but libraries benefit from a number of awareness and support tools. We recommend that you refer to two IFLA tools translated into multiple languages. The first is a fairly general leaflet that gives examples of how libraries engage with each SDG.



<https://www.ifla.org/publications/node/10546>

For SDG 1 : «Libraries support this goal by providing [...] public access to information and resources that give people, opportunities to improve their lives, Training in new skills needed for education and employment, Information to support decision-making for governments, civil society, and businesses to combat poverty.»

The second tool is the brochure “Access and opportunities for all” which gives examples of SDG actions in different countries of the world. Several countries have released the same document with examples from their own libraries, you can find some of these publications on the IFLA website: <https://www.ifla.org/publications/node/91709?og=28>. We advise you to contact your national associations to find out if they have published this document or their equivalent.



<http://www.ifla.org/publications/node/10546>

To be mentioned is also the *IFLA Library Map of the World* (<https://librarymap.ifla.org/>).

In relation to the IFLA approach, EBLIDA strategy on the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development is truly European and is based on best practices in European libraries, but also on library policies and their related assessment. National library policies and activities at national level are expressed in the EBLIDA SDG-KIC (<http://www.eblida.org/activities/sdg-kic/>). Another tool which may inspire SDG practitioners in the library field is the EBLIDA Matrix



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

which is divided into five sections, as follows:

- **Section One:** A selection of EU programmes for SDGs;
- **Section Two:** Library policies covering each SDG;
- **Section Three:** Funding opportunities for Libraries
- **Section Four:** Main Eurostat SDG indicators;
- **Section Five:** Library Indicators enabling the evaluation of library performances and how they can match SDG indicators.

For French-speaking partners the site «Bibliothèques françaises et Agenda 2030» is a database of actions carried out by French libraries, to be searchable SDG after SDG:

<https://agenda2030bibfr.wixsite.com/agenda2030bib/temoignages>. The same site offers a playful way to address SDGs with a board game

(<https://agenda2030bibfr.wixsite.com/agenda2030bib/jeu>), available in French and English, which consists of playing collaboratively to become a sustainable library.

Finally, an easy way to diffuse the SDG philosophy is to use SDG logos to report on collections, to complete activity reports, to make reading recommendations, etc.

4.2 How do I go from SDG-oriented library projects to an SDG-oriented library policy?

Through the above mentioned tools, it is not difficult to search for activities that show how a library is particularly active in one or several SDGs. Activities «naturally» performed by libraries in relation to SDGs are: access to information, digital training, open access, free internet consultation, presence of

libraries in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. By looking closely at each SDG, you may find out that your library has been practicing the 2030 Agenda without realising it.

However, a spontaneous level of involvement cannot fulfil the criteria for the development of the 2030 Agenda and a more voluntary approach to SDGs may need to be put in place. This can be done in 2 steps:

- First: by asking yourself what you are already doing for each SDG, which allows you to point to the SDGs for which you do little or no action. From there, you can define actions to put in place to be effectively active in each SDG.
- Then: by asking for each of your projects, which priority or secondary SDGs this project responds to, so as to always have the 2030 Agenda in your project management.

This will allow your library to carry out SDG-oriented projects.

However, you can go much further and build more complex SDG strategies for your libraries. The question you may start asking is how your library may pursue a particular SDG over the next 4 years. What do you intend to do to fight poverty (SDG 1)? What do you intend to do to facilitate the health and well-being of your fellow citizens (SDG 3)? What do you plan to do to participate in a just, fair and transparent society (SDG 16)? Intentional action on sustainable development will also mean defining the corollaries of any SDG-oriented strategy: promoting SDGs in school projects by displaying logos and other materials, defining a budget, training teams, etc., in addition to the activities chosen to attain SDGs. This will also be accompanied by a set of indicators to justify that the performed action is in line with SD objectives - which means that there must be an interest in indicators measuring the success of operations, their results, their aims and impact.

In building an SDG strategy for your institution, you may soon discover that you are not working only from your library's perspective if an action is carried out to fight poverty, to enhance local welfare or to reinforce justice. You will be asked to embed library activities in a territorial framework where there are already actors (governmental agents or the civil society) committed to fight poverty, establish health systems accessible to all, contrast corruption, etc. By defining the frameworks of your engagement in SD, your library will find it easier to defend its place in the local fabric of public policies for sustainable development and will in fact do much more than just undertaking SDG-oriented projects. Your library is already engaged in SDG-oriented public policies.

4.3 Why are SDG official documents (national voluntary reports, national roadmaps) important for libraries?

As mentioned earlier, each country must find out what it needs to achieve and set itself appropriate and realistic targets for 2030. The construction of these policies of sustainable development is an opportunity for libraries to act as information advocates so that libraries in the first place are included in the official documents reporting about the progress of sustainable development in your country. You can seek to intervene at two levels: when drafting VNRs (Voluntary National Reports), or when engaging in a national roadmap.

VNRs are documents written by national governmental agencies which show the progress of their action in the attainment of the 2030 Agenda. This document, presented to the UN, should normally be drafted by the State, but *in partnership with civil society*. You have there an opportunity to contact those people responsible for writing the VNR in order to discuss the role of libraries. The tools mentioned in point 4.1 will be useful to you to buttress your lobbying, but do not hesitate to reinforce your examples with key statistics, which will convince your interlocutors of the indispensable role of

libraries. In 2020, European countries having drafted VNRs were Armenia, Finland, Estonia, Georgia, Slovenia. If your country has already gone through the exercise, it is not impossible that it will be repeated in the coming years to demonstrate its strong commitment to sustainable development. In 2021, the following European countries will present their VNRs to the UN: Azerbaijan, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Norway, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden (<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/vnrs/>).

To support you in this lobbying/advocacy action, IFLA has published guides that will be very useful to you: <https://www.ifla.org/files/assets/hq/topics/libraries-development/documents/vnr-guide-2020.pdf> and : <https://www.ifla.org/publications/node/92681>



In parallel with VNRs, several countries have adopted national policies/roadmaps to implement the 2030 Agenda. Here again, these documents are generally done in collaboration with the civil society, but do not wait for library associations to be convened on this subject. You have to indicate your presence and your interest and justify it, because for many the role of libraries is not self-obvious.

To see examples of the lobbying done by library associations in several countries, convincing the drafters of national roadmaps or VNRs to include access to information or libraries in their reports/roadmaps, we recommend watching the videos of two meetings that took place in 2020:

- The American Library Association ALA and its “Sustainable Development Goals Task Force” hosted a meeting on June 9, 2020 with representatives from different countries (Australia, France, Germany) to demonstrate their lobbying efforts to recognize the role of libraries with decision-makers. Info: <https://agenda2030bibfr.wixsite.com/agenda2030bib/single-post/2020/07/07/alajuin2020>). Record: https://ala-events.zoom.us/rec/play/NhaP1L0McZ-HFjOF4cItCMB3M9ZQ9H535rB6ndhG-4dz1ykxjsPpisKwe-9ijwkiFsfk9KeEyORXwJe0.cjQqBl_1Tdph6ueb?startTime=1591707708000& x_zm_rtai d=VkbF83s4TJS2iUn6sJlKLw.1615275031068.0e3e03bab9a59ee3abd7ce8cd289e4c2& x_zm_rhtai d=713
- During the European Sustainable Development Week, the German Librarians Association organised a webinar on the role of libraries in implementing the 17 SDGs and raising librarians' awareness of this agenda. The meeting took place on 24 September, with representatives from Germany, France, USA and Australia. Info : <https://www.edudip.market/w/375092>

5. How can European libraries join the EBLIDA Think The Unthinkable programme ?

5.1 National Think The Unthinkable Workshops

Some European programmes are reserved for special networks; some others provide funding only under special conditions. Some programmes of a scientific nature have a strong research component. The most comprehensive overview of European programmes and funds which may be relevant for libraries is to be found in the EBLIDA Matrix.¹⁷

EBLIDA, however, selected ESIF 2021-2027 as a main area of intervention for European libraries for the following reasons:

- Unlike many of the programmes directly managed by the European Commission, the R&D requirement in ESIF projects is not essential; therefore, projects can encompass small and poorly equipped libraries as well as big and technologically advanced libraries;
- programmes are administered at national level; therefore there is no need to resort to the construction of complex networks at European level;
- libraries, and in particular public libraries, are strongly connected with local communities; ESI Funds operate at regional or local level and are therefore an ideal framework for their development;
- ESIF normally accounts for one third of the whole EU budget.

With a report published in September 2020, EBLIDA launched the “Think The Unthinkable” strategy, which consists of setting up a post-Covid library agenda meeting sustainable development goals to be funded through European Structural and Investment Funds 2021-2027. The first step of this strategy was the organisation of nine workshops: three of them were Europe-oriented, and the others were organised by various organisations in six countries, as follows:

13-14 and 16 October 2020 : TUT Workshops (Europe)

24 November 2020 : TTU conference – France, organised by ABF and Bpi;

25 January 2021: TTU conference – Netherlands, organised by VOB and TAH;

8 February 2021 : TUT Expert meeting in Greece, organised by AGLIS;

22 February 2021: TTU conference – Latvia, organised by LLA;

9 March 2021: TTU Bulgaria, organised by BLIA;

28 April 2021: TTU Italy, organised by RDR and AIB:

All national workshops took a different approach, meeting the needs of the libraries in which they took place and the implementation of ESI Funds and SDGs in each country. The aim of the 11th June EBLIDA Conference is to cross-fertilise experiences of, and approaches to TTU and offer the results of this approach to EBLIDA Members.

The EBLIDA Conference has the following objectives:

- To inform EBLIDA Members and friends of the TTU strategy and the activities that have been ignited by EBLIDA’s work;
- To share ESIF-based best practices and SDG-oriented implementation in libraries;
- To inspire similar projects and practices in European libraries, both at national and local levels, and connecting them to EU level;

¹⁷ <http://www.eblida.org/activities/the-eblida-matrix.html>.

- To raise the status of libraries and make them structurally relevant within the 2030 European agenda on sustainable development.

5.2 Make use of ESI Funds in eight steps

TTU is about setting up a post-Covid library agenda meeting sustainable development goals to be funded through European Structural and Investment Funds 2021-2027. How can this programme be implemented? Here are the eight steps any library association / institution may follow in order to collect preliminary information about ESI Funds and prepare SDG-compliant library projects.

1st Step. Consult the tools EBLIDA has made available within the Sustainable Development House

EBLIDA has set up a Sustainable Development House (<http://www.eblida.org/activities/the-eblida-sdg-european-house.html>)



which is articulated into four major areas of interest:

- The EBLIDA Community, which includes Full and Associate Members of EBLIDA, represented by the [EBLIDA Executive Committee](#), as well as the focus community of [ELSIA](#) (European Libraries and Sustainable development Implementation and Assessment), the specialised group of experts in charge of advising the Executive Committee on issues related to the implementation of the Agenda 2030 in libraries;
- A set of EBLIDA tools, among which the most important is the [EBLIDA Matrix](#), including library policies and indicators related to the Agenda 2030, SD policies and ESIF projects in libraries;
- EBLIDA services, consisting of didactic material, [policy documents](#) reports and charts (SDG-KIC, for instance), which EBLIDA or other organisations have prepared or are preparing;
- EBLIDA training, that is offered in a series of meetings or ad hoc opportunities, like the EBLIDA 11th June Conference. These workshops are designed to encourage libraries to participate in the European structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) 2021-2027.

These tools are periodically updated.

2nd step. Consult the tools set up by partner organisations at national level

EBLIDA partners' organisations have set up resources normally available on their websites which may be of support to libraries willing to join the TTU strategy and to be more acquainted on SDG-oriented projects at national level. Some of these resources are maintained by TTU partners; some others by specialised or ad hoc agencies created with a view to implementing SDGs in libraries. The list below is

purely indicative and is reported as an incentive for library applicants to also investigate into opportunities at national level.

Czech Republic. In 2019 an informal workgroup “Sustainability in Libraries” was founded (within the Masaryk University project [Social Innovation in Libraries](#), 2017-2020), supported by SKIP (the Association of Library and Information Professionals of the Czech Republic), with the Information Officer of UN Information Centre Prague as one of the founding members.

Denmark. The [Danish Library Association](#) has created the National DB2030 Network to promote a 2030-focus at local level; more than half of Danish Public Libraries are involved in 2030 Activities according to official statistics.

France. Five organisations are collaborating in the implementation of the Agenda 2030 in libraries : [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). The common French website is one of the most complete in Europe: <https://agenda2030bibfr.wixsite.com/agenda2030bib>.

Germany. A position paper from 2016 outlines the implementation strategy of the Agenda 2030 in Germany

(https://www.bibliotheksverband.de/fileadmin/user_upload/DBV/positionen/2016_07_31_Stellungnahme_Nachhaltigkeit_endg.pdf); the reference website is the following:
<https://www.bibliotheksverband.de/dbv/themen/agenda-2030.html>

Greece. Two main institutions are collaborating in informing and implementing SDGs for libraries: the National Library of Greece (<https://www.nlg.gr/>) and the Association of Greek Librarians and Information Scientists (AGLIS - <http://www.eebep.gr/>). Both have been developing activities in order to inform the Greek society of the importance of the Agenda 2030, along with the Greek State which encourages and supports the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development.

Latvia. The implementation of SDGs and the Agenda 2030 in libraries of Latvia is realised through close collaboration between the National Library of Latvia (<https://lnb.lv/>) and the Library Association of Latvia (<http://www.bibliotekari.lv/>). Both institutions have created a strong partnership in SDGs implementation by also working with the Latvian National Commission for UNESCO and the Latvian Platform for Development Cooperation (LAPAS, <https://lapas.lv/lv/globalie-merki/>). Information and documents related to SDGs issues in libraries are available within the website of the Library Association of Latvia (www.bibliotekari.lv) and the Latvian Library Portal (www.biblioteka.lv).

Italy. Two organisations are collaborating in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Italian libraries: Rete delle Reti (<https://retedellereti.dgline.it/>) and AIB (<https://www.aib.it/struttura/osservatori/obiss/>).

The Netherlands. The Alignment House/Bredebief has set up a plan for public libraries with a view to searching for additional funding opportunities for Dutch libraries and prepare library projects meeting SDGs; their website is called Expeditie.nl and tools are available only to Expeditie members: <https://exp-pl.eu/>.

Romania. Romania has adopted the 2030 Agenda on sustainable development and its 17 Goals, as defined by the [Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy 2030](#) . The National Association of Librarians and Public libraries in Romania initiated the translation of IFLA materials on the UN Agenda 2030 (<http://anbpr.org.ro/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/AgendaONUset-de-instrumente->

[IFLA_final.pdf](#) and was involved in activating librarians from Romanian public libraries in support of the objectives of the United Nations 2030 Agenda together with the Association of Librarians from Moldova and with the support of the IFLA through the International Advocacy Program (a workshop in Chisinau: Promoting the role of libraries in implementing the United Nations 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals).

Spain. In 2017, the [Consejo de Cooperación Bibliotecaria \(CCB\)](#) – including representatives from the Regions (Comunidades autónomas), the Ministry of Culture and [FESABID](#), Spanish Federation of Archives, Libraries, Documentation and Museum Associations) - set up a Working Group in charge of elaborating a library policy for Spain in relation to the Agenda 2030. Documents related to the Spanish library strategy for SD are available on the following website: <https://www.ccbiblio.es/estructura-del-consejo/grupos-de-trabajo/estrategicos-grupos-trabajo-ccb/bibliotecas-agenda-2030/>.

3rd Step. Keep in mind the objectives of the EU Work programme

When filing your applications, always keep in mind that the European Union has set out an ambitious agenda to drive Europe’s biggest transformation in more than a generation and a vision of building a fairer, healthier, greener and more digital society. In its Communication “A Union of vitality in a world of fragility”, dated 19.10.2020, the European Commission’s work programme is axed on six headline ambitions:

1. The European Green Deal,
2. A Europe fit for the digital age,
3. An economy that works for people,
4. A stronger Europe in the world,
5. Promoting our European way of life,
6. A new push for European democracy.

https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/2021-commission-work-programme-key-documents_en

4th Step. Constantly monitoring ESIF webpages

Key resources for ESIF library applicants are, quite obviously, the European Commission websites garnering information about the European Regional policy, in particular about ERDF (European Regional Development Fund) and European Social Fund (ESF). Maps and boxes in, respectively, the Regional policy website - https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/atlas/managing-authorities/ - and the European Social Funds - <https://ec.europa.eu/esf/main.jsp?catId=45&langId=en> – illustrate the designated managing authorities in each country, with project selection and monitoring implementation.

Currently, ERDF and ESF are still completing ESIF 2014-2020 Funds. It should not come as a surprise if pages related to the 2021-2027 Work programme do not include any content (last visited: May 2021). They will be filled as long as partnership agreements are signed and projects will start. The 2014-2020 work programme, however, may already give a hint of what the future content may be of both ERDF and FSE.

A key aspect of ERDF are smart specialisation strategies (see 3.3 of this Guide). The most complete overview of smart specialisation strategies at European level is in the Smart specialisation platform, which includes priorities set by practically all regions in Europe.¹⁸

¹⁸ [Eye@RIS3 - Smart Specialisation Platform \(europa.eu\)](#)

5th Step. Look at the national webpage of ESIF Funds

National authorities maintain ESIF webpages and ensure transparency about the funds that are provided. ESIF 2021-2027 are still in its initial phase; therefore, there are very few pages related to next calls for proposals, although some of them, like the Italian *Opencoesione*, report about negotiations with the European Commission

(<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/xxie7cq4dk77qht/AAA2uRxSv-cf5J2XHwMBPFNDa?dl=0>).

Searches by country in the European specific websites for ERDF

https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/atlas/managing-authorities/ - and ESF -

<https://ec.europa.eu/esf/main.jsp?catId=45&langId=en> – will lead the reader to the specific national web pages.

6th Step. Create a TTU table for each library project

Once you have collected information about Europe, SDGs, national ESIF and SDG-oriented library policy in your country, how can you move ahead?

A basic tool which may help you have a clearer picture on what you wish to achieve, how you can meet SDGs and which money you can use to finance your project is to draft a table where all data are inserted. The following table is based on the Greek SDG-ESIF policy, where data concerning library activities, their related SDGs and the specific ESIF objectives are summarised.

ESIF Objective 1: Synoptic Table ERDF-SDG

Specific objective	Output	Results	SDG	Library projects
(ii) Reaping the benefits of digitisation for citizens, companies and governments	CCO 03 - Enterprises and public institutions supported to develop digital products, services and applications		4	Digital Services & Skills/Digitalization Connectivity Growth Empower Employment/Continuing Education Programs and Material for Distance Learning Providing Hardware

ESIF Objective 2: Synoptic Table ERDF-SDG

Specific objective	Output	Results	SDG	Library projects
(vii) Enhancing biodiversity, green infrastructure in the urban environment, and reducing pollution	CCO 12 - Surface area of green infrastructure in urban areas	CCR 11 - Population benefiting from measures for air quality	2	Free access to Research in new Agricultural Methods & Cultivations Mediterranean Nutrition Programmes

ESIF Objective 4 - ERDF and SDG

Specific objective	Output	Results	SDG	Library projects
(i) Enhancing the effectiveness of labour markets and access to quality employment through developing social innovation and infrastructure	CCO 17 - Annual unemployed persons served by enhanced facilities for employment services	CCR 16 - Job seekers using annually enhanced facilities for employment services	1	Free Access to information & resources Opportunity to New Skills Second Chance Schools (Audience wish to reach) Gap Between Secondary to Higher Education
(ii) Improving access to inclusive and quality services in education, training and lifelong learning through developing infrastructure	CCO 18 - New or upgraded capacity for childcare and education infrastructure	CCR 17 - Annual users served by new or upgraded childcare and education infrastructure	4 5	Digital Services & Skills/Digitalization Connectivity Growth Empower Employment/Continuing Education Programs and Material for Distance Learning Providing Hardware
(iii) Increasing the socio-economic integration of marginalised communities, migrants and disadvantaged groups, through integrated measures including housing and social services;	CCO 19 - Additional capacity of reception infrastructures created or upgraded	CCR 18 - Annual users served by new and improved reception and housing facilities	1 5	Free Access to information & resources Opportunity to New Skills Second Chance Schools (Audience wish to reach) Gap Between Secondary to Higher Education
(iv) Ensuring equal access to health care through developing infrastructure, including primary care	CCO 20 - New or upgraded capacity for health care infrastructure	CCR 19 - Population with access to improved health care services	3	Inclusive education for all special needs Health Policies, Hospital Libraries

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

	Specific objective	Output	Results	SDG	Library projects
(i)	improving access to employment for all jobseekers, in particular the youth and long term unemployed, and of inactive people, promoting self-employment and the social economy;	* Personal data (Art 4(1) Regulation (EU) 2016/679) * * special category of data (Art 9 Regulation(EU) 2016/679).	(3) The common immediate result indicators for participants are: – participants engaged in job searching upon leaving*, – participants in education or training upon leaving*, – participants gaining a qualification upon leaving*, – participants in employment, including self-employment, upon leaving*.	1	Free Access to information & resources Opportunity to New Skills Second Chance Schools (Audience wish to reach) Gap Between Secondary to Higher Education
(ii)	modernising labour market institutions and services to assess and anticipate skills needs and ensure timely and tailor-made assistance and support to labour market matching, transitions and mobility;	(1a) Common output indicators for participants – unemployed, including long-term unemployed*, – long-term unemployed*, – inactive*, – employed, including self-employed*, – below 30 years of age *, – above 54 years of age*, – with lower secondary education or less (ISCED 0-2)*, – with upper secondary (ISCED 3) or post-secondary education (ISCED 4)*, – with tertiary education (ISCED 5 to 8)*.			
(iii)	promoting equal access to and completion of, quality and inclusive education and training, in particular for disadvantaged groups, from early childhood education and care through general and vocational education and training, and to tertiary level, as well as adult education and learning, including facilitating learning mobility for all;	(1b) Other common output indicators: – participants with disabilities**, – third country nationals*, – participants with a foreign background*, – minorities (including marginalised communities such as the Roma)**, – homeless or affected by housing exclusion*,	(4) Common longer-term result indicators for participants: – participants in employment, including self-employment, six months after leaving*, – participants with an improved labour market situation six months after leaving*.	4 8	Digital Services & Skills/Digitalization Connectivity Growth Empower Employment/C ontinuing Education Programs and Material for Distance Learning Providing Hardware
(iv)	promoting lifelong learning, notably flexible upskilling and reskilling opportunities for all taking into account digital skills, better anticipating change and new skills requirements based on labour market needs, facilitating career transitions and promoting professional mobility;	(2) Common output indicators for entities are: – number of supported public administrations or public services at national, regional or local level, – number of supported micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (including cooperative enterprises, social enterprises).			

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

	Specific objective	Output	Results	SDG	Library projects
(v)	fostering active inclusion with a view to promoting equal opportunities and active participation, and improving employability;	<p>* Personal data (Art 4(1) Regulation (EU) 2016/679)</p> <p>** special category of data (Art 9 Regulation(EU) 2016/679).</p> <p>(1a) Common output indicators for participants – unemployed, including long-term unemployed*, – long-term unemployed*, – inactive*, – employed, including self-employed*, – below 30 years of age *, – above 54 years of age*, – with lower secondary education or less (ISCED 0-2)*, – with upper secondary (ISCED 3) or post-secondary education (ISCED 4)*, – with tertiary education (ISCED 5 to 8)*.</p> <p>(1b) Other common output indicators: – participants with disabilities**, – third country nationals*, – participants with a foreign background*, – minorities (including marginalised communities such as the Roma)**, – homeless or affected by housing exclusion*,</p> <p>(2) Common output indicators for entities are: – number of supported public administrations or public services at national, regional or local level, – number of supported micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (including cooperative enterprises, social enterprises).</p>	<p>(3) The common immediate result indicators for participants are: – participants engaged in job searching upon leaving*, – participants in education or training upon leaving*, – participants gaining a qualification upon leaving*, – participants in employment, including self-employment, upon leaving*.</p> <p>(4) Common longer-term result indicators for participants: – participants in employment, including self-employment, six months after leaving*, – participants with an improved labour market situation six months after leaving*.</p>	1 5	<p>Free Access to information & resources</p> <p>Opportunity to New Skills</p> <p>Second Chance Schools (Audience wish to reach) Gap Between Secondary to Higher Education</p> <p>Gender Equality= Ισότητα των φύλων</p> <p>Empower research for women’s rights & health</p> <p>Access to Information Systems</p> <p>Providing Education and Knowledge in Finding Decent Job</p> <p>Safe & Hospitable meeting points</p>
(vi)	promoting socio-economic integration of third country nationals and of marginalised communities such as the Roma;	<p>(2) Common output indicators for entities are: – number of supported public administrations or public services at national, regional or local level, – number of supported micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (including cooperative enterprises, social enterprises).</p>	<p>(4) Common longer-term result indicators for participants: – participants in employment, including self-employment, six months after leaving*, – participants with an improved labour market situation six months after leaving*.</p>	1 5 10	<p>Free Access to information & resources</p> <p>Opportunity to New Skills</p> <p>Second Chance Schools (Audience wish to reach) Gap Between Secondary to Higher Education</p> <p>Reduced Inequalities= Λιγότερες ανισότητες</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Minorities ● Immigrants ● Participation <p>Gender Equality= Ισότητα των φύλων</p>

					Empower research for women's rights & health Access to Information Systems Providing Education and Knowledge in Finding Decent Job Safe & Hospitable meeting points
(vii)	enhancing the equal and timely access to quality, sustainable and affordable services; modernising social protection systems, including promoting access to social protection; improving accessibility, effectiveness and resilience of healthcare systems and long-term care services;			1 3 8	Free Access to information & resources Opportunity to New Skills Second Chance Schools (Audience wish to reach) Gap Between Secondary to Higher Education Inclusive education for all special needs Health Policies, Hospital Libraries
(viii)	promoting social integration of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion, including the most deprived and children;			1 8	Free Access to information & resources Opportunity to New Skills Second Chance Schools (Audience wish to reach) Gap Between Secondary to Higher Education
(ix)	promoting equal access to and completion of, quality and inclusive education and training, in particular for disadvantaged groups, from early childhood education and care through general and vocational education and training, and to tertiary level, as well as adult education and learning, including facilitating learning mobility for all;			4	Digital Services & Skills/Digitalization Connectivity Growth Empower Employment/Continuing Education Programs and Material for Distance Learning Providing Hardware

(x)	promoting social integration of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion, including the most deprived and children;			1	Free Access to information & resources Opportunity to New Skills Second Chance Schools (Audience wish to reach) Gap Between Secondary to Higher Education
(xi)	addressing material deprivation through food and/or basic material assistance to the most deprived.				

7th Step. In countries where there is an on-going TTU action, get in touch with your national coordinator(s) when preparing your ESI-funded library project

If you wish to have support you can address national TTU coordinators in your country. So far, seven countries are involved in the TTU strategy; their national coordinators are listed as follows:

Bulgaria: Marina Encheva and Spaska Tarnadova (Bulgarian Library Association)

France: Eléonore Clavreul (Bibliothèque Publique d’Information) and Raphaëlle Bats (University of Bordeaux)

Greece: Antonios Mourikis (University Library Athens and Greek Library Association) and Iro Tzorbatzaki (University of Macedonia)

Italy: Valentina Bondesan (Rete delle Reti and Italian Library Association)

Latvia: Māra Jēkabsons (Library Association of Latvia) and Katrina Kukaine (National Library of Latvia)

Netherlands. Ton van Vlimmeren and Maarten Crump (The Alignment House)

Spain: Alicia Sellés Carot (FESABID).

8th Step. In countries where there is no on-going TTU action, contact EBLIDA when preparing your ESI-funded library project

More countries may wish to join the TTU strategy. In this case, direct contact with EBLIDA can be the best option: ebldata@ebldata.org

The next paragraph will explain how EBLIDA can assist library applicants.

5.3 EBLIDA role in the TTU strategy

EBLIDA may play a role in the TTU strategy at different levels. The [ELISA](#) Expert Group do not only assist in implementing the [Think The Unthinkable](#) in their country, but also provide expert advice on SDG-oriented policies for libraries and on the assessment of SDG activities in libraries. A first [report](#) on evaluation was published in November 2020, further details are provided in Chapter 6 of this Guide. If you wish to enter the EBLIDA community, the fee for Full members depends on the library association’s turnover; the fee for EBLIDA Associate Membership amounts to € 590 / year.

EBLIDA Tools are designed to support EBLIDA members in devising their strategies and acquiring as much information as possible on the European Agenda. The often mentioned [EBLIDA Matrix](#) lists SDG-oriented EU programmes, indicators and policies. Goal after Goal, the EBLIDA Matrix is divided into five sections:

a) A selection of EU programmes for SDGs;

- b) Library policies covering each SDG;
- c) Funding opportunities for Libraries;
- d) Main Eurostat SDG indicators;
- e) Library Indicators assessing the societal impact of libraries and how this impact can match SDG indicators.

Training and consultancy services are offered by EBLIDA through workshops and publications, which have been, or are being, translated into some ten languages. A look at the [Publication](#) section of the EBLIDA website will orient readers towards documents in their national language.

We hope that this Guide will incentivise the elaboration of ESIF projects in the years to come. The role of EBLIDA will also increase once library applicants file projects under the ESIF schemes. Not only can EBLIDA assist in drafting; it will also be instrumental in internationalising the work done at community level.

6. The evaluation of SDG-oriented, ESI-funded projects

6.1 Methodological issues: how consistent are library data and statistical series?

Evaluation – the systematic and objective assessment of what a project, an initiative, a policy has produced in terms of planned (and sometimes, also unplanned) results or desired change - is a process which should be inherent in any planning decision. A fundamental step in the decision-making process and in lessons learned exercises, project assessment is normally a compulsory requirement linked to any grant delivered by a donor, a national institution, or a funding organisation.

Evaluation is based on raw data and factual evidence gathered from various sources with various methods and wrapped into a meaningful narrative. Methodologies imply simple arithmetic operations or complex calculations but there is much more than a mathematical exercise in evaluation. Take data, for instance. Apparently, our ordinary life is full of data that are recorded on the web, on computer, smart phones, and it should be easy to extract relevant data and organise them into a meaningful series. This assumption is only theoretical, as the following examples are going to demonstrate.

For advocacy purposes and financial monitoring, it would be extremely useful to calculate the European Union investment on libraries and its impact, when compared with governmental and local investment on libraries. In the second half of the 1990's, when the European Commission made a substantial and well-focused investment on library development, data related to European investment were available in a series of statistical studies. From 1991 to 1998, it has been possible to calculate the average annual European Commission expenditure on libraries,¹⁹ as well as library expenditure at national level in the EU/15.²⁰ Both data are available in the first two columns in Table 1; at that time, the average *ratio* Community expenditure / national expenditure was 1:2,438 meaning that, in the years 1991-1998, for every euro spent by the European Commission on libraries, member countries as a whole were spending €2,438.

Table 1: Ratio Community / national expenditure on libraries in average (1991-1998)

EC Library expenditure / year+	Member Countries library expenditure / year	Total expenditure / year	Percentage EC on total expenditure	Percentage MCs on total expenditure	Ratio EU/MCs
€5.6 Mil	€13,607 Mil	€13,612 Mil	0.041	99.959	1:2,438

It would be interesting to see whether these statistics conform to data recorded in the cultural sector as a whole. Official EU documents provide statistics concerning both the Creative Europe programme (the EC programme for culture) and national expenditure on culture. Figures reported in Table 2 refer to the year 2017.²¹ In the cultural sector the *ratio* EC expenditure / national expenditure was 1:334.5

¹⁹ European Commission. Impact of the Telematics for Libraries Programme under the 4th Framework Programme, 1992, <http://aei.pitt.edu/41423/1/A5469.pdf>, p. 16.

²⁰ Ramsdale, P – Fuegi, D – Sumsion, J. The Libecon Project: Library statistics for international benchmarking and advocacy. <https://www.libqual.org/documents/admin/ramsdalefuegi.pdf>.

²¹ Expenditure on the Creative Europe programme is in: European Commission. *2017 annual work programme for the implementation of the Creative Europe Programme*, C(2016)5822 of 16 September 2016, <https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/file_import/Annual_work_programme_2017_Implementation_of_the_creative_Europe_programme_C%282016%295822_en_0.pdf>; national expenditure on culture is recorded in: European Union. *Culture statistics – 2019 edition*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2019, <<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3217494/10177894/KS-01-19-712-EN-N.pdf/915f828b-daae-1cca-ba54-a87e90d6b68b?t=1571393532000>>.

euros; in other words, for every euro spent by the European Union on culture, member countries as a whole were spending €334.5. Figures are summarised in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Ratio Community / national expenditure on culture (2017)

Creative Europe budget / 2017	MCs' expenditure on culture / 2017	2017 total expenditure	EC percentage over total	MCs' percentage over total	Ratio
€ 201 Mil	€67,256 M	€ 67,457 M	0.298	99.702	1:334.5

It could be easy to infer that libraries are underfinanced if compared with other cultural sectors. Unfortunately, these figures cannot be organised in a meaningful sequence because they are not synchronous and steady in time: the statistical series for libraries is complete from 1991 to 1998 and was discontinued since then. Since data are missing, evidence that libraries are underfinanced in relation to other cultural sectors is also missing.

Another example may illustrate the need for creating consistency between data and statistical series. Direct expenses of a library, and around a library, may change the local economy. A multiplier is normally associated with users' expenditure – what they spend in the area where a library (or a museum, a concert room, etc.) is located. Users' expenditure *plus* long-term growth *plus* short-term expenditure within a region *minus* library costs is equal to the net economic impact of a cultural institution (Nicolas 2017). There are also indirect library outcomes, consisting of the changes that involve all other production activities as a result of the relations between direct suppliers and their subcontractors in the local economy. For instance, a study exploring the impact of libraries in the Val d'Oise Department (North-East of Paris, ca 1,2 million inhabitants and 128 libraries) showed the spill-over effects of Val d'Oise libraries on the local economy, in particular on local suppliers: 50% of library expenditure was spent in the Val d'Oise department; this expenditure together with visitors' spending greatly benefited local trade (bookshops, small shops, etc.).

The economic impact of a library on the territory where it is located may be a good argument to be used with local administrators - with some caveats, though. The role of the library is not to stimulate the local catering industry and the businesses of restaurants and bars. According to Gertrude Stein, a rose is a rose is a rose, and also a library is a library is a library... and its impact cannot be compared with that of commercial establishments such as malls or a football stadium.²² The impact of the library has to be evaluated in terms of social inclusion and educational achievements of library users in schools and universities. The Val d'Oise study also tried to evaluate this kind of investment, but no real figures emerged.

6.2. What indicators are to be used in libraries to measure the attainment of SDGs?

On the internet, you can easily find ready-made counters which measure CO2 emissions per country,²³ or the carbon footprint of household emission and of air travel, cars or train.²⁴ Is it possible to set up devices of similar nature measuring the progress of SDG attainment in libraries? Are there UN or

²² Cicerchia, A. *Che cosa muove la cultura. Impatti, misure e racconti tra economia e immaginario*. Bibliografica, 2021, p. 76 reports on large benefits realized by the construction industry for conservation and restoration of the architectural cultural heritage. This is not, however, the main impact expected from conservation activities in museums.

²³ <https://www.worldometers.info/co2-emissions/>.

²⁴ <https://www.carbonfootprint.com/calculator.aspx>.

Eurostat indicators which can be applied to libraries and align their experience to that resulting from other sectors?

The UN SDG Programme lists 232 indicators; not all countries, however, maintain all of them. SDG indicators supported by Eurostat, for instance, are no more than 100, and *pour cause!* Europe is a relatively prosperous continent and many of the indicators set as targets at UN level have been attained in Europe. For instance, indicators monitoring the progress of SDG 2 in Europe do not concern the number of people in starvation, but the spread of obesity, with a view to an increase in the quantity of organic and healthy food on European tables.

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UNESCO has set up a variety of indicators which support culture within a conceptual framework of four transversal thematic dimensions: (i) Environment & Resilience (SDGs 2, 6, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16); (ii) Prosperity & Livelihoods (SDGs 9, 10, 11, 12); (iii) Knowledge & Skills (SDGs 4, 8, 9, 12, 13) and (iv) Inclusion & Participation (SDGs 9, 10, 11, 16).²⁵ Each dimension combines several SDGs and related Targets to capture the multifaceted and transversal contribution of culture to sustainable development. UNESCO indicators seek to bring together a variety of data sources, including from different ministries, observatories and public agencies, information systems for culture, specific barometers, specific national and regional surveys, and professional volunteer organisations.

The evaluation of SDGs in libraries can be done in several ways depending on the selected approach and the Goal that is implemented. Ecological criteria can apply to library premises (SDGs 6, 7, 12) in order to make them SDG-compliant in terms of energy consumption, water dispersion rate, renewable energy and circular economy of in-house consumed goods. As library buildings are normally managed by governmental agencies, libraries will follow normative schemes and environmental and technical criteria set up at local or national level.

In fulfilling criteria set up for the attainment of SD Goals/Targets, four scenarios can be identified in libraries:

- A. SDG-compliant and measurable;
- B. SDG-compliant, hardly measurable;
- C. Hardly SDG-compliant, but measurable;
- D. Hardly SDG-compliant, hardly measurable.

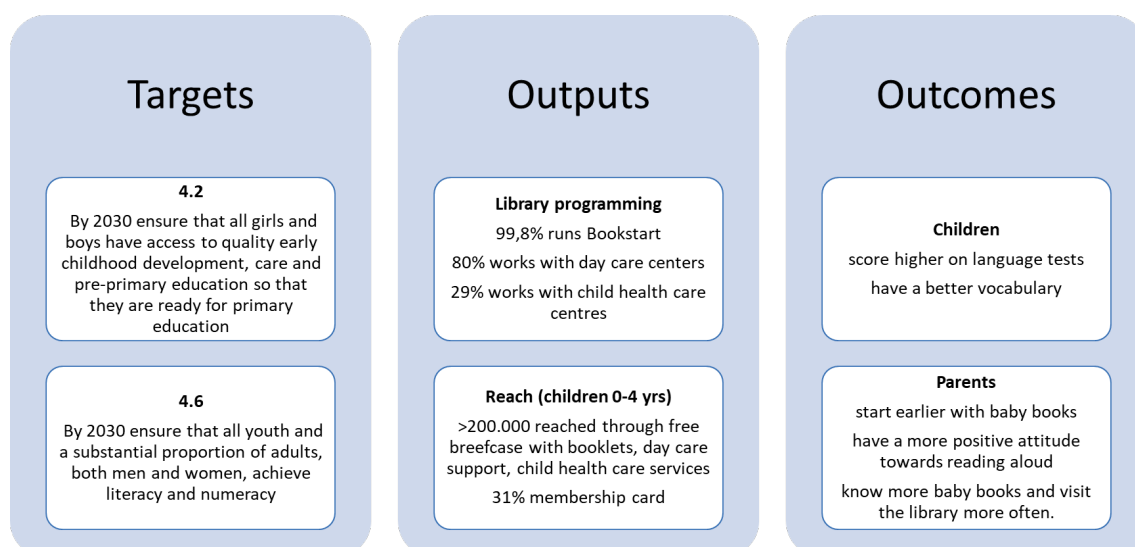
Scenario A applies to the safeguard of historical library buildings and premises as part of cultural heritage, or their restructuring through the adoption of careful and compatible new designs rooted in local materials and contexts which enhance the urban space and reinforce cultural identity.

The case for libraries providing education and promoting reading is undisputed. In the Netherlands, the Boekstart (Bookstart) programme has been analysed in relation to SDG 4 - *ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all*.²⁶ Bookstart addresses young children (0-4 years) and their parents and consists of creating a stimulating reading environment through access to books, training and coaching. In Table 3 below, SDG 4 targets have been associated to outputs (column 2); column 3 shows the outcome of this action with the positive changes that are recorded both for children and parents.

²⁵ <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000371562>.

²⁶ <http://www.eblida.org/Documents/ELSA-WG-implementation-SDG-Indicators-in-EU-Libraries.pdf>.

Table 3. Connection between SDG targets and library output and outcomes.



In this case, library activities are SDG-4 compliant and their results can be measured both in terms of output and outcomes. Output is assessed by processing simple administrative information (the number of Bookstart facilities and products made available in a country). The assessment of library outcome - monitoring children's score in language test – cannot be measured in the short term, but only when children get older and attend schools.

In a more general perspective, library activities meeting SDG 4 may help reduce the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion or targeted action on materially deprived people may be envisaged. Similarly, the way gender issues are taken into account in policy considerations and the gender ratio of board members and senior directors is determinant in establishing whether libraries can be considered “safe harbours” for genders that are discriminated against or are not provided with adequate legal and economic protection, thus improving social cohesion in a society.

Examples of scenario B may be easily found in libraries implementing the environmental pillar of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development. BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) was a Citizen Science project taking place in 2018 on the island Funen in Denmark with the support of the University of Southern Denmark (USD), Life Cycle Studies, and its library.²⁷ The project aimed to engage citizens in research regarding electronic waste (mobile devices, Television sets, vacuum cleaners etc.) in order to establish whether decommissioned products were recyclable. A secondary objective was also to engage 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. This project fits well SDG 12 *Responsible Consumption and Production*; Target 5: *Substantially reduce waste generation through prevention, reduction, recycling and reuse*. Its compliance with SDG 12 is undisputable, just as its echo through mass media; what is harder to measure is the impact of this one-off event organised by the USD library as part of the general SDG evaluation in Denmark measured by Indicator 12.41: *Measuring the circular material use rate - in percentage, the share of material recycled and fed back into the economy*.

²⁷ 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>.

An example of scenario C – hardly SDG compliant but highly measurable – can be found in library activities aiming to contrast fake news. Normally, these activities consist of organising information literacy courses and installing electronic devices in libraries which evaluate websites or filter false information. It is not hard to count the number of people having attended information literacy courses in libraries or being users of electronic devices contrasting fake news. Nevertheless, no indicator or target within the 2030 Agenda is designed to evaluate contrast to fake news globally. Target 16.10 dealing with access to information – an obvious SD target for libraries – aims to *ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements*. Nevertheless, none of the indicators corresponding to the SDG 16.10 target address the issue of accurate information and contrast to fake news. Indicator 16.10.1 measures the *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*; indicator 16.10.2 measures the *Number of countries that adopt and implement constitutional, statutory and/or policy guarantees for public access to information*” (United Nations 2018).

6.3 Practical suggestions in setting library indicators

The evaluation of SDGs implemented in libraries is a thorny issue. We have seen that the evaluation process may be encompassed over a period of time which goes well beyond the end of a project or an initiative. In the Dutch example, for instance, experiences occurring in young children (0-4 years) are going to be measured only a few years later, when children attend a regular school-cycle. Evaluation can also be a costly exercise, since resources are needed to collect, monitor and process data.

For years, visits to library premises have been the most common indicator concerning library usage. The reason why this statistical series still remains central in library statistics is perhaps due to the fact that information of this kind covers various decades and allows for cross-reference and comparisons over time. The indicator “Number of visitors accessing library premises”, however, reflects a pre-digital vision of libraries. With collections being digitised and accessible online, library usage should be monitored in a multi-fold way, taking into account the number of visits and sessions opened when using digital products and services made available by libraries. Moreover, the concept of the library as a “third” place attracts people who come to libraries to meet other people, to participate in events and practice their rights to democratic access to education and culture in all forms. Library usage for democratic practices is not ordinarily covered by statistics, just as remote library services. During the Covid crisis, libraries stayed open through their digital products and socially inclusive services; how much of these activities were recorded in statistics? Data, data, data: the first practical suggestion is therefore to collect as much data as possible on library activities.

Another practical suggestion in evaluation is to look at data from a different perspective, with a view to identifying the indicator that best fits the library’s evolution. In France, Bpi attendance dropped by 30% from 2000 to 2018 in terms of number of physical visits. An attendance curve is a difficult result to communicate for auditing purposes with French administrative watchdogs: The Ministry of Culture, Cour des Comptes, etc. To reverse this uncomfortable situation, the Bpi now tries to highlight alternative indicators to show the type of impact that goes well beyond physical visits: for instance duration of visit, occupancy rate, and visiting experience. Visits are down but the average length of visit increased by one hour from 2000 to 2018; occupancy rate is consequently high because visits last longer; and visiting experience remains generally good despite the decline in attendance. When the total annual number of entries is crossed with visit duration, the overall hourly visit volume in 2018 is relatively close to 2000.²⁸

²⁸ <http://www.eblida.org/Documents/ELSA-WG-implementation-SDG-Indicators-in-EU-Libraries.pdf>.

Combining visit duration and frequency is not an “expedient” used by statisticians to present libraries in a more favourable way. This indicator is reflecting a library identity and an individual experience in libraries which is different from that which is normally practiced by Googling on the web. It is at the same time a quantitative and qualitative assessment, since it shows the difference between a visit to a public library and short-term searches in Google - and we know that in the eyes of many people Google is considered the new digital and universal public library.

Opening up libraries to society means partnerships with civil society organisations and associations. In this case, data provided by these organisations should be integrated into library data within an assessment framework which measures the library’s role in society not so much in terms of intensity of use of library resources, but rather in terms of modalities of use of the library itself. Alternative indicators, therefore, would keep track of performances having a social impact and including, for instance, the number of voluntary and community groups normally linked to the library service, the proportion of hours when libraries are used for organised activities apart from traditional library services, the time spent by staff to connect with the public, and formal connections with schools and colleges as well as with local businesses.²⁹

For librarians filing applications with ESI Funds 2021-2027, the usage of ESIF’s own indicators offers a practical solution for the evaluation of library activities. ESIF indicators offer common concepts for output (CCO) and common concepts for results (CCR) where output measures the specific deliverables of the intervention and results measure the (short term) effects of the intervention (with particular reference to the direct addressees, population targeted or users of infrastructure). In a programme like Bookstart, for instance CCO 18: “New or upgraded capacity for childcare and education infrastructure”³⁰ and CCR 17 “Annual users served by new or upgraded childcare and education infrastructure” would measure, respectively, the results of Bookstart in terms of output and results. The list of CCOs and CCRs for ESIF specific objectives which are relevant for libraries can be found in the EBLIDA document “ “European Structural and Investment Funds 2021-2027””.³¹

²⁹ François Matarazzo. *Beyond book issues. The social potential of library projects*. Comedia, 1998.

³⁰ https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/2014/working/guidance_monitoring_eval_en.pdf.

³¹ http://www.eblida.org/Documents/The-European-Structural-and-Investment-Funds_%202021-2027.pdf.

7. Think The Unthinkable strategies in Europe

7.1 Bulgaria

With regard to the implementation of sustainable development goals, the National Development Program 2030 was approved in January 2020 (https://www.minfin.bg/upload/43546/Bulgaria+2030_EN.pdf). Access to information and libraries are included in the national development plan. Libraries are also specifically included in Development Axis 5. Spiritual and vital Bulgaria, in Priority 13. Culture, heritage and tourism, as an interaction is declared with the measures under priority “Local development” and priority “Social inclusion”.

In order to promote The Think The Unthinkable (TTU) strategy among the different types of Bulgarian libraries, the Library and Information Association of Bulgaria translated the EBLIDA TTU Report into Bulgarian and published it in the first 2021 issue of the library journal BBIA online. The library community in Bulgaria showed a huge interest in the strategy, which generated many questions about the opportunities for financing library projects through the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF). This in turn, led to the TTU webinar on 17 March co-organised by the Bulgarian Library and Information Association, the “Global Libraries - Bulgaria” Foundation and EBLIDA. The event involved 76 librarians and other professionals from different libraries and teaching institutions: the National Library “St. St. Cyril and Methodius”, big and small (at the typical Bulgarian institutions chitalishta) public libraries, academic libraries and the University of Library Studies and Information Technologies in Bulgaria and saw the participation of Ton van Vlimmeren, President of EBLIDA and Giuseppe Vitiello, Director of EBLIDA. The TTU webinar was dedicated to the funding opportunities for libraries in the new programming period of ESIF (2021-2027) with regard to the European Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals till 2030.

At the TTU webinar in Bulgaria the National Library “St. St. Cyril and Methodius”, the Library of the Medical University - Plovdiv and the Regional National Library “P. R. Slaveykov” - Veliko Tarnovo informed participants of their experience in the implementation of projects funded by the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) during the past programming period. Special attention was paid to several large projects, such as “Building and developing a centre of excellence - Heritage BG” (a modern infrastructure for research and innovation in the creative and recreational industries involving integrated teams for interdisciplinary research, policies and practices), Competence centre “Personalized Innovative Medicine (PERIMED)” (funding for subscription access, incl. remote, to information resources in support of the research activities of scientific teams from the Medical University), Digital cultural treasury “North +” (documentation and preservation of cultural heritage, creation of Digital Center “Culture and History” and a network for providing intellectual access to it in cultural institutions and organisations), etc.

It is worth noting the fact that in Bulgaria, there has been an extensive and savvy use of ESI Funds in 2014-2020, with a massive involvement of the library sector in the projects. Bulgarian libraries have used the “Science and Education for Smart Growth” Operational Programme to implement library projects. The Operational Programme is administered by the Executive Agency “Science and Education for Smart Growth”. Also important have been the INTERREG programmes for Cross-Border Cooperation, managed by the Ministry for Regional Development and Public Works and aimed to foster cooperation between Bulgaria and EU Member States as well as between Bulgaria and candidate/potential candidates for accession to the European Union. Library projects have been triggered with Turkey, Republic of North Macedonia and Serbia. INTERREG Funds have been used for the following library projects: “Written treasures of the Lower Danube common to libraries, museums and archives”, “Haskovo and Edirne - cultural and historical destinations”, “Cross-border center for information and communication Dolj – Vratsa”, etc. Another set of library projects in Bulgaria are

funded through the other ESIF of relevance for libraries – the European Social Fund Plus. The "Digital Skills for Small and Medium Sized Enterprises in Bulgaria" project is implemented by Global Libraries - Bulgaria Foundation (GLBF) and aims to develop an innovative educational model and establish regional libraries in Plovdiv, Smolyan and Stara Zagora as a centre for acquiring modern digital skills by owners and employees of SMEs. Another interesting fact is that in the period 2017-2021, the Global Libraries – Bulgaria Foundation and the University of Library Studies and Information Technologies have also run or participated in a number of projects within the Erasmus+ framework related to the improvement of the digital skills of the librarians (BIBLIO project) and the enhancement of the information literacy competences and financial literacy skills of the library users (NAVIGATE project, Financial Literacy through Public Libraries project, Teach for Future project for adult learning), etc. Although the project requirements in Erasmus+ are different, the programme contributes to the Europe 2020 strategy for growth, jobs, social equity and inclusion and to the European Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals till 2030. For that reason, the participation in Erasmus+ projects, is also a precious experience for the involved Bulgarian libraries complementing their experience with projects funded by ESIF.

During the event in Bulgaria, the Director of EBLIDA Giuseppe Vitiello presented the EBLIDA report "Think the Unthinkable: A post Covid-19 European Library Agenda meeting the Sustainable Development Goals to be funded through the European Structural and Investment Funds (2021-2027)". The report contains an analysis of the risks and challenges libraries are facing in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, how ESIF specific objectives can be used to meet SDGs and practical recommendations on how to prepare projects. By committing themselves to this broader framework, libraries can prove to be "structurally" important for the social and economic development of European countries, in particular in a post Covid-19 age which requires good management of financial resources.

The Webinar also included a presentation of the EBLIDA Matrix and how libraries can implement activities in the European 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and file applications within the ESIF framework. The EBLIDA Matrix includes five different sections: 1. A selection of EU programmes likely to be relevant for libraries; 2. Library policies; 3. Opportunities for library funding; 4. Basic indicators and 5. Library indicators. A Q&A session at the end of the TTU webinar provided useful input and a rich exchange of experience.

Concerning ESIF 2021-2027 in Bulgaria, the Partnership Agreement of the Republic of Bulgaria with the European Commission was being negotiated till November 2020. After the approval of the operational programme and advertisement of the tendering process in 2021, the submission of project applications is expected to take place in 2022. With regard to the implementation of sustainable development goals, the National Development Program 2030 was approved in January 2020. Access to information and libraries are included in the national development plan. This is an opportunity that Bulgarian libraries should use. They must continue to show their usefulness as "Local cultural centres" and by accelerating the process of modernisation to consolidate their transformation into a factor for regional development. Libraries are also specifically included in Development Axis 5. Spiritual and vital Bulgaria, in Priority 13. Culture, heritage and tourism, as an interaction is declared with the measures under priority "Local development" and priority "Social inclusion".

Libraries in Bulgaria will step on the positive experience from the past programming period of ESIF and will continue to be active in applying for funding support by ESIF in 2021-2027 contributing to the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals. As a next step in the implementation of TTU strategy in Bulgarian libraries, a second TTU webinar will be planned and implemented by the end of 2021 with the participation of EBLIDA and ministries and agencies responsible for the different operational programmes in Bulgaria.

7.2 France

A series of professional meetings on European funds will be offered to libraries in each region of France during the year 2022.

7.3 Greece

Since October 2020, the newly elected governing board of the Association of Greek Librarians and Information Scientists (AGLIS) and EBLIDA have been cooperating together, in order to establish a strong and fruitful cooperation aiming at spreading TTU activities led by EBLIDA within the Greek librarian community.

A number of preparatory meetings between AGLIS and EBLIDA took place between 2020 and 2021 resulting in a special meeting on February 8th bringing together Greek public libraries funded both by private initiatives and by the Greek state. The purpose of this meeting was twofold: on the one hand, to communicate previous experiences of funding to libraries and the projects that were generated from them, and, on the other hand, to point to possible future activities meeting the needs of users' communities.

The meeting confirmed that a number of Greek libraries have developed special projects mainly aiming at preserving and digitising cultural heritage (public libraries and state archives), while some other libraries implemented social projects targeted at the communities they refer to. It also demonstrated that the Greek state, realising the importance of the UN initiative, has not only fully adopted SDGs in its ordinary and special programmes, but has also set out a plan to make sure that Greece follows the international community, acts in a coordinated manner and in cooperation with the public and private sectors, the research and technological institutions of the country, the academic and scientific community and the civil society. During the meeting, the Ministry for Digital Strategy gave an overview of running projects and the others that have already been approved. These projects come to meet all UN SDGs and cover every single sector of the economy.

In the final session of the meeting, the draft plan below was presented, which illustrates how Greek libraries could benefit from the implementation of projects covering both SDGs activities and communities' needs. This table is only a basis for future discussions and developments. It was agreed that an extended national meeting should now take place in Greece.

SDGs (recommended by the Greek Association)	Possible library projects	Possible outcomes	ESF
<i>Goal 1 : No poverty</i>	Free Access to information & resources, Opportunity to New Skills, Second Chance Schools (Audience wish to reach),	Enhancing the effectiveness of labour markets and access to quality employment through developing social innovation and infrastructure Increasing the socio-economic integration of marginalised	annex 1/goal 1 (003, 005, 006, 009, 010, 011, 012, 021, 022)

	Closing the gap Between Secondary to Higher Education	communities, migrants and disadvantaged groups, through integrated measures including housing and social services;	
<i>Goal 2: No hunger</i>	Free access to research in new agricultural methods, Mediterranean nutrition programs	Enhancing biodiversity, green infrastructure in the urban environment, and reducing pollution	annex 1/goal 5 (130, 131,
<i>Goal 3: Good Health & Well Being</i>	Inclusive education for all special needs, Health Policies, Hospital Libraries	Ensuring equal access to health care through developing infrastructure, including primary care	annex 1/goal 4 (092, 093, 094, 095) annex 1/goal 1 (013)
<i>Goal 4: Quality Education</i>	Digital Services & Skills/Digitalization Connectivity, Growth Empower Employment/Continuing Education Programs and Material for Distance Learning, Providing Hardware	Reaping the benefits of digitisation for citizens, companies and governments Improving access to inclusive and quality services in education, training and lifelong learning through developing infrastructure	annex 1/goal 1 (003, 005, 006, 009, 011, 012, 021, 022)
<i>Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities</i>	Minorities, Immigrants, Participation	promoting socio-economic integration of third country nationals and of marginalised communities such as the Roma	annex 1/goal 4 (085, 086, 087, 088, 091, 096, 097, 098, 099, 101, 108, 109, 111, 112, 113, 114, 117, 119,
<i>Goal 16: Peace Justice & Strong Institutions</i>	Fighting Fake news Media Literacy	Improving access to inclusive and quality services in education, training and lifelong learning through	annex 1/goal 1 (011, 012) annex 1/goal 4 (085, 086, 087, 088, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115)

		developing infrastructure	
<i>Goal 17: Partnerships for the Goals</i>	Synergies Between Libraries - Interregional activities, Possible synergies with neighbouring countries	Modernizing labour market institutions and services to assess and anticipate skills needs and ensure timely and tailor-made assistance and support to labour market matching, transitions and mobility;	annex 1/goal 3 (051, 053, 054, 133)

AGLIS and EBLIDA in close cooperation will continue to seek ways and methods for Greek public libraries to be funded through the European Social Fund + for the period 2021 – 2027. In that sense AGLIS set out a plan aiming to inform Greek librarians of this opportunity, which is articulated in:

- A national meeting where all types of libraries are invited;
- Meetings with national, regional and local authorities;
- Special workshops covering specialised topics.

This plan may be subject to changes and adjustments depending on the progress and on future developments, also on the basis of the needs arising by the Greek colleagues. We are also seeking cooperation with colleagues from neighbouring countries, in order to discuss matters as well as to exchange ideas and good practices.

7.4 Italy

The Think The Unthinkable (TTU) strategy in Italian libraries started with the translation of two EBLIDA documents: “The European Structural and Investment Funds 2021-2027: Funding Opportunities for Libraries” (August 2020) and of “Think The Unthinkable. A post Covid-19 European Library Agenda meeting Sustainable Development Goals and funded through the European Structural and Investment Funds (2021-2027) - Short version” (September 2020). These translations were followed by the organisation of a national TTU conference (September, 15-16th), focused on libraries actions, strategies, indicators and impacts towards the 2030 SGDs.

Currently, AIB (Italian Library Association), RdR (Rete delle Reti) and EBLIDA are developing a three-step program focused on: 1) training of librarians aimed at a better understanding of the European Structural and Investment Funds 2021-2027; 2) cultural design, project management and prototyping; 3) political advocacy, an approach aiming to promote greater awareness among Italian decision-makers. This strategy is being developed for the 2nd half of 2021.

While the role of the Italian Library Association does not need any further explanation, it may be worth introducing RdR (Network of Networks), a public library Consortium in Italy created with the objective of:

- developing new solutions for libraries to better serve their patrons;
- finding common solutions formalised in distinctive instruments (guidelines, recommendations, etc);
- tooling up Italian libraries to assist them in dealing with future challenges.

The Italian situation is different from that of the other State Members. In Italy, libraries and cultural institutions suffer from the absence of a central authority managing standards and innovation. Development policies are delegated to regional governments with quite uneven results in terms of levels of public services throughout the country.

AIB and RdR allied to cope with this situation. The title of the first in a series of events was “Ask and You shall receive” – we wished to engage librarians in meeting the Agenda goals and the opportunities opened by European Structural and Investment Funds. More than 250 librarians and system coordinators participated in this event.

In the second step, we shall embark on a series of 10 virtual labs devising project design around six lighthouse themes matching the Agenda 2030 SGDs (June-October 2021). These are the issues we are planning:

1. Green libraries, with two foci: 1.1 Restructuring libraries and libraries and urban gardens, sustainable territorial and urban regeneration 1.2 Green literacy;
2. Digital preservation and digitalisation, and two foci: 2.1 Cooperative web archiving of cultural heritage digital resources 2.2 New information ecosystem dealing with heterogeneous problems of access management to silos containing digital images, also in respect to copyright issues, response times and users’ transactions;
3. Digital services and skills, and two foci: 3.1 Digital literacy, inclusive and quality services in education, training and lifelong learning 3.2 Citizen Science (coding, digital modelling and fabrication, makers spaces)
4. Wiki based repositories, i.e.: access to scientific databases and information helping libraries to find an appropriate policy-making related to the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development, and legislative / policy measures designed to advance the cause of libraries;
5. Social inclusion and territorial cohesion; i.e: promoting reading and social integration of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion, including the most deprived, children and marginalised communities
6. Economic growth and employment, with two foci: 6.1 Improving access to employment for all jobseekers; promoting self-employment and the social economy, and 6.2 Developing the local economy and converting libraries into business incubators.

We will ensure that all Virtual labs will follow the “Design Thinking” methodology encompassing processes such as context analysis, problem finding and framing, ideation and solution generation, creative thinking, sketching and drawing, modelling, testing and evaluating.

The last step in our three-fold strategy will create awareness among Italian decision-makers and the achievement of a strong political legitimacy of the library projects attaining Sustainable Development Goals. The work group is now planning a series of conferences to inform and engage politicians on our activities. Finally a reflection on our communication plan. We shall inaugurate new forms of

storytelling by reaching out to librarians and policy-makers through video-teasers, podcasts, platforms, library social networks. We will ensure translation into English so as to make available these materials on our platform.

Only if Italian libraries tackle European societal challenges together, will they have the opportunity to orient structural and investment funds towards more promising opportunities.

7.5 Latvia

The Think The Unthinkable (TTU) strategy in Latvian libraries started with the translation of the EBLIDA TTU Report into Latvian in February 2021, followed by the organisation of a webinar on 22nd February targeted at Latvian libraries at the presence of European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) funding agencies. The webinar, co-organised by the National Library of Latvia, the Library Association of Latvia, EBLIDA and the Latvian Ministry of Culture, saw the participation of 148 librarians and interested people. Its theme was: 2021-2027 ESI funding opportunities for libraries. As a result, Latvian libraries began preparation for the new ESIF planning period, examined options in setting sustainable development goals and evaluated their past achievements, in particular in relation to ESIF 2014-2020.

Latvian libraries can take pride in having managed ESI funding in various programmes and initiatives. The implementation of library projects resorted to various financial instruments – the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), the Latvian Rural Development Programme or the ERASMUS programme; some individual libraries managed funding generated from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and European Social Fund, incl. the National Library of Latvia.

Project themes and results clearly show the contribution of Latvian public libraries in the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). An assessment of projects in 2014-2020 show the following statistics:

- 28% of all projects were socially responsible events (events for elderly people, social integration of children coming from dysfunctional families, promotion of volunteer work and public health etc.);
- 24% of all projects focused on practical results – improvements to libraries as social infrastructure (construction of new library buildings and/or purchase of equipment).
- the same percentage (24%) involved educational activities in libraries and skill development (informal education programmes, professional development, skills acquisition and in particular digital skills);
- 18% of projects implemented innovative services (interactive formats for events, digital activity centres, etc.);
- 8% of libraries were involved in the improvement of local public space (environmental and natural tourism, creation of public spaces near libraries etc.).

ESI-funded projects at the National Library of Latvia can also be seen as further contribution to the public library system and concerned the digitalisation of cultural heritage and professional development.

Regarding ESIF 2021-2027 in Latvia, the partnership agreement with the European Commission is now being negotiated with crucial steps being undertaken in May 2021. The approval of the operational programme is scheduled in the second half of 2021; the tendering process will be advertised at the end of the year; preparation and submission of project applications is expected to take place in 2022.

In this respect, the February 2021 webinar started requirements for the creation of a platform including representatives from various Latvian ministries responsible for culture, education and science, as well as for regional development. These agencies were able to outline their vision and priorities for the library sector in general. The Director of European Union Funds Department at the Ministry of Culture, Zanda Saulīte, presented various policy planning documents. The “preservation, interaction and enrichment of cultural space” is enshrined in the Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia until 2030 (Latvija 2030); people are invited “to preserve and develop the cultural capital of Latvia and to promote a sense of belonging to the cultural space by developing a competitive national identity based on a creative society and a quality cultural environment in Latvia”. The “Contribution of culture and sport to sustainable society” is itemised in the 2021-2027 National Development Plan of Latvia. The main objective of the National Cultural Policy Guidelines 2021-2027, still in a drafting stage, is the sustainability of Latvian culture, its accessibility and the involvement of society in cultural processes.

Speaking more specifically about ESIF 2021-2027 objectives – A smarter Europe (PO1), A greener Europe (PO2), A more connected Europe (PO3), A more social Europe (PO4) and A Europe closer to citizens (PO5) – investments will focus on the first and second objectives in the order of 65–85 % ERDF and Cohesion Fund resources, depending on the relative prosperity of EU member states. The potential in the cultural sector, incl. libraries, is linked with the objectives “A more social Europe (PO4)” and “A Europe closer to citizens (PO5)”. One of the tasks of ESIF 2021-2027 will focus on social inclusion and social innovation and the promotion of social integration in society, by decreasing social inequalities through cultural experiences and services. Current social themes are going to be integrated in the provision of culture and broader digitisation will be supported.

The Ministry for Culture also intends to develop social education, social integration processes and services promoting employment (life-long learning and skills, especially for children and youth, seniors and people with special needs), cultural skills and development of services which further knowledge and improve quality of life in local communities. Still another policy objective is the professional development of employees in the cultural sector based on current needs, adult education and social integration, including digital skills. Capacity building will be strengthened by encouraging the development of new cultural products and services (for example, museum exhibitions and educational activities in museums, library events, events in cultural centres).

Uģis Bisenieks, Director of the Public Administration Services Development Department at the Ministry for Environmental Protection and Regional Development, outlined the role of Latvian libraries within the framework of the joint provision of services. The principle of a “One stop agency” (OSA) in the provision of services – both face-to-face and digital – has been set as a Latvian governmental priority. This principle provides community members with the opportunity to receive government and municipal council services in one place and public libraries in Latvia will serve as the basis for the development of the customer service system. The inevitable expansion of the digital environment may create a divide in small, less favoured communities; hence, the need for providing local community members with the opportunity to access the most frequently used government services also in libraries. Training is therefore needed; in 2018-2020, 1,444 librarians were trained to become digital agents and the improvement scheme will be continued in the 2021-2027 planning period.

Liene Kupča, senior expert at the Structural Funds Department at the Ministry for Education and Science, highlighted the role of libraries in the digital transformation of the education sector. Library services in schools will have to be enhanced with funding programmes concerning shared services, information literacy for school students and teachers, improved curricula and renewed school governance. Another important theme is libraries and higher education, and especially the shared use

of resources in higher education, development of new digital services for university students, researchers and teaching staff.

The importance of libraries will grow in the coming years, just as their opportunities to apply for funding support and to contribute to the attainment of sustainable development goals. The theme of the annual Latvian Libraries Festival and Library Week in April 2021 paraphrased EBLIDA's programme; its title was: "Let's do the unthinkable!". 800 people – libraries, their partners and other interested persons in the country - took part in this two-day, fully online event (a Conference the first day, a market for ideas in the second day), and the Festival was followed by a Library Week with a huge number of online events from all type of libraries all over the country.

TTU strategy in Latvian libraries will continue with an ambitious, high-level Baltic conference for museums and libraries on SDGs to be organised in September 2021. A Report on libraries in Latvia, prepared by the National Library of Latvia, will be presented at the Baltic museums and libraries conference. This conference will mark a shift in the Latvian strategy on the 2030 Agenda – from information and awareness to strategic action and evaluation. A special SDG section on the Latvian Library Portal (www.biblioteka.lv) will also be created as a one-stop access point for libraries.

We plan to draw especially upon the experience of Scandinavian libraries and to include issues such as gender equality, social inclusion and civic activity, for example, public discussions and debates in libraries, voluntary work, support for NGOs in our future TTU strategic planning.

7.6 The Netherlands

In the Netherlands, 'Expeditie NL' (Expedition Netherlands) was launched in December 2020, a cooperation between public libraries from the Netherlands, EBLIDA and The Alignment House.

The Alignment House is a company that focuses on the strategic positioning of organisations and has been active in the world of public libraries since 2013. Our main focus is to create public value by aligning needs of society (public interest) with the needs of the individual: a human centered approach. Our transversal goal present in all library activities is to ensure that public libraries relate to society, their playing field and the public interest in such a way that they can realise public value in a powerful, credible and sustainable way.

As a partner of public libraries, The Alignment House develops a route ahead and responds to central library issues of today and tomorrow. At the core of Expedition NL there is a team with knowledge of both public sector (knowledge of government from local to international level) and business - and the world of public libraries in particular -, international experience and a relevant international network. A team that is motivated to get the best out of the public library.

This team gives each library only the support it needs and makes it possible for small libraries to increase their strength in external funding. In a network society that is in rapid transition due to the Covid19 pandemic and in which answers must be found to challenges that affect us all, joining forces combined with a responsible attitude towards environment is a must.

In the Netherlands, society is expected to undergo an enormous transition in the next 10 to 15 years. A transition which already started and was accelerated by covid19. A society with new agreements, new connections and a new way of working. The social contract of our society will take on a new form. At the same time, it is clear that the social impact of the pandemic will only manifest in about

five years' time. We are facing years in which we will have to tackle fundamental issues in a new way in a changing playing field. Years that will be accompanied by cutbacks.

In this context, it is important for every social organisation to consider which financing strategy is appropriate. For public libraries, public funding is the foundation. Often, external funding is seen as a kind of bonus. The level of public funding determines the strength of the public library.

We believe that external funding should not be seen as a bonus next to the primary process. It is important to always act from within and to be selective with external funding. So don't apply for grants because they quickly and easily lead to temporary projects. It is important to identify the essence of the course for the medium and long term of the library.

If the core of your course is clear, you can apply focus. From this focus it is possible to make a financing strategy that is sustainable and not only depends on the primary cash flow. In such a financing strategy, external financing must continuously reinforce the core of your course. In this way, government cutbacks in the library sector can be absorbed in a way other than simply reducing the size of the organisation and reducing services.

We saw that this is not the standard way of working. External funding mainly leads to temporary impulses. In addition, many public libraries lack the strength to take on large projects, for example, financed by EU funds. All this takes place in a context in which the EU is at the beginning of its 7-year budget cycle and is designing it from a new global ordering principle: Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

With Expedition NL we have created, in cooperation with EBLIDA, a movement that every public library can join and that we want to develop into Expedition Public Libraries EU. The strength of the concept is to build a bottom-up community-of-purpose.

We started with 9 public libraries that have also become members of EBLIDA. With EBLIDA we share all knowledge on policy and funding at EU level. With the libraries, we first mapped out their positioning and course and we translated them into the SDGs. From there on, libraries get an insight into which SDGs they embrace and on which target groups and subthemes the focus is. The core of the positioning also becomes clear: those elements that form the heart of the library and are the foundations on which to build a library strategy.

We link the course to social trends, policies at EU, national, regional and local level and the public, private and public-private money flows that can reinforce it. From there, we develop an investment strategy per library and the libraries know who can be a possible partner. This means that we do not start with the funds and programmes of the EU, but take the course and positioning as a starting point and from there we look at the possibilities of external funding and how to carefully link this to the regular money flows.

Subsequently, it is important for the public library to increasingly think about, act and cooperate on the basis of the new framework that SDGs offer us. We share the insights, experiences and profits with EBLIDA. At the same time we use the overall strategy of EBLIDA and its tools towards the libraries.

With the first nine Dutch libraries, our ambition is to further activate the network of public libraries in the EU in cooperation with EBLIDA. Our dream is to develop a working method and strategy for all public libraries, where it is clear to everyone which partner library in other member states is interesting for Expedition NL libraries and what EU funding could strengthen their course.