



The multifaceted role of public libraries

A SYNERGY INFO PACK
BY CORDIS

Editorial

Public libraries are an essential thread in Europe's social fabric.

In an era defined by digital breakthroughs and shifting societal needs, libraries have transcended their traditional role as mere repositories of books. Once seen as quiet sanctuaries for reading, they have been reinventing themselves as dynamic, multifaceted institutions playing multiple important roles in our societies.

Today's libraries are not just about books – they are about people, communities and innovation. They are open to everyone. While they remain steadfast champions of literacy, preserving and disseminating knowledge, they have transformed into vibrant hubs offering a wide range of services and resources, as well as spaces for learning, creativity and social interaction. They also foster democratic ideals and citizen involvement, cherish culture, preserve heritage and enrich local community life.

Although public libraries continue to serve as the cultural and social bedrock of our communities, they face challenges due to lack of funding and resources and often limited capacity to meet the changing needs of an increasingly digital world. Yet, their resilience lies in their ability to evolve. If libraries are to continue to play their new role, they must have the resources, technology and support they need to attract new users and offer new services. These elements are crucial for their survival.

This Synergy Info Pack introduces 14 EU-funded projects that highlight the novel and multifaceted role of public libraries. Whether funded by Creative Europe, Horizon Europe, ERASMUS+ or the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), each of the featured projects strengthens the role of the modern library in Europe today.

Chapter 1 presents projects which transform libraries into inclusive spaces, welcoming people from diverse backgrounds and cultures, people speaking different languages, having different needs and abilities.

Chapter 2 showcases three projects which bolster libraries' position as bastions of democratic ideals and citizen engagement, contributing to third-country nationals' integration into local communities, empowering Europe's citizen science community and nurturing cross-cultural conversations.

Chapter 3 turns towards the future, exploring how libraries can maintain their mission of fostering a love of reading and learning, while also evolving to better engage with the people, organisations and communities they serve. The six projects featured in this section provide an answer.

Together, the projects featured in this Synergy Info Pack provide an insight to the next chapter of Europe's public libraries – a chapter that will see these institutions transition into places where everybody can access technology, engage in educational programmes, celebrate culture and learn with each other.

Libraries are more than buildings; they are living, breathing institutions. Their story is not one of decline, but of reinvention – a testament to the enduring human need for connection, learning and shared spaces.

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Chapter 1

Libraries and people

Beyond the book

The modern library contains more than just books. It is a vibrant community hub – a place where people can go to read, access technology, engage in educational programmes, celebrate culture and interact with one another.

Look between the bookshelves and you will get a glimpse of what libraries are really about – people.

Everyone is welcome

Libraries do not ask whether you are a citizen or an immigrant. Everyone is equally welcome, young or old, and regardless of sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, gender, religion and disabilities. Public libraries are open and largely free spaces where everyone can come to read, learn, create and engage. The project **HERUN** works to make libraries even more inclusive. It designs a uniquely inclusive, sensory-based reading programme for *all* children – including those with autism and other learning disabilities. Meanwhile, the **G-BOOK 3** project collaborates with libraries to raise awareness about gender-related topics.

As public spaces, libraries also serve as important community centres, facilitating societal inclusion, cohesion and resilience. **Ulysses' Shelter** organises writing retreats to foster transnational cultural exchange and produces resources for libraries on how to host public meetings and workshops in a participatory format. And the **make-a-thek** project is even going so far as to reimagine libraries as makerspaces, a place for exploring creativity, craft and community, all with a focus on sustainability.

At the crossroads of culture

While libraries operate as transmitters of European values, they also promote diversity, whether that be by hosting cultural events or by offering books in different languages.

This role continues today. For instance, by translating graphic novels into Slovenian and working together with local libraries, the **VVK NextGen** project encourages teenagers to read while also conveying powerful social messages.

Leveraging libraries to support people

Whether by making reading more inclusive, supporting sustainability through creativity or celebrating different cultures, the projects highlighted in this chapter support people by leveraging libraries, language and learning.



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Sharing the joy of reading with everyone

Leveraging the power of sensory-rich storytelling, the HERUN project is creating a uniquely inclusive reading experience.

With the goal of making libraries more inclusive, the HERUN project designs a comprehensive sensory reading programme for *all* children – including those with autism and other learning disabilities. Bringing together libraries, librarians, writers and illustrators from across Lithuania, Portugal, Slovenia and Ukraine, the project provides the training, skills and knowledge needed to create an enriching literary experience for everyone. The project will deliver 160 interactive sensory reading sessions, giving nearly 1 280 children of all abilities and backgrounds a chance to share in the joy of reading.

HERUN

Project name

Heroes Unleashed: Implementing a Sensory Reading Program in European Public Libraries

Funded under

Creative Europe Programme (CREA)

Coordinated by

Šiauliai county Povilas Višinskis public library, Lithuania

Duration

15 January 2025 – 14 January 2027

Find out more

europa.eu/!gnjtkycf

Ink and imagination, translated together

Not only are graphic novels popular with adolescents and young adults, but their use of both visual and textual elements makes them a powerful tool for encouraging reading.

VVK NextGen set out to publish high-quality graphic novels with excellent literary, aesthetic and societal value, translated into Slovenian. The result is the publication and promotion of five engaging Slovenian language graphic novels every year, each containing a powerful social message. The project has been building synergies with libraries by training librarians about comic books as a literary genre and how to engage the younger public.



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VVK NextGen

Project name

VigeVageKnjige - The Next Generation: development of the graphic novel translation, production and market potential

Funded under

Creative Europe Programme (CREA)

Coordinated by

VigeVageKnjige Institute for Literary Publishing and Other Freedoms, Slovenia

Duration

1 January 2023 – 30 June 2024

Find out more

europa.eu/!vtmvnnmb

Rewriting the book on gender equality

When it comes to developing a child's understanding of gender, along with their mental health and emotional well-being, nothing beats a good book.

How gender is portrayed in literature can have a deep impact on young readers, in some cases even restricting their freedom to express themselves. That's why the G-BOOK 3 project promotes gender-positive literature for teenagers. In its third edition, the G-BOOK project aims to use literature – along with digital technologies and social media – to raise awareness about gender-related topics amongst readers aged 15–18 years old. The project works closely with several libraries, expanding their offer of gender-positive books and providing them with brand new volumes for their teen literature sections.

G-BOOK 3

Project name

Audience engagement activities for the social and emotional education of EU teens through gender-positive literature and digital technology

Funded under

Creative Europe Programme (CREA)

Coordinated by

University of Bologna, Italy

Duration

1 October 2024 – 30 September 2027

Find out more

europa.eu/!fdydtmtb





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Fashioning a new purpose for libraries

In a world defined by fast fashion and throwaway things, make-a-thek aims to bring creativity, craftsmanship and community back into vogue.

The project is reimagining libraries as makerspaces – a place for exploring circular fashion and heritage crafts. Working with select European and international libraries, the project is providing the tools, courses and resources needed to foster innovation, circularity and collaboration, while also supporting local businesses and community initiatives. Inspired by the New European Bauhaus' values of sustainability, inclusivity and beauty, make-a-thek plans to launch its pilot makerspaces in early 2026.

make-a-thek

Project name

Modular Library Makerspaces for Heritage Crafts Innovation and Digitization

Funded under

Horizon Europe (Culture, creativity and inclusive society)

Coordinated by

Centre for Social Innovation, Austria

Duration

1 February 2025 – 31 January 2028

Find out more

makeathek.eu

A transnational cultural exchange

A network of residencies spanning Europe benefits local communities and participating writers.

Ulysses' Shelter is a literary residency network, initiated in 2017 by the independent Croatian publisher Sandorf. Now in its third phase, the network includes partners across seven countries, offering placements to emerging writers, screenwriters and literary translators in which they can work, perform and present themselves in different social and cultural contexts. In addition to fostering transnational mobility and cultural exchange, Ulysses' Shelter produces resources for libraries on how to host public meetings and workshops in a participatory format and illustrates how reading spaces can become vibrant platforms for creation and exchange.



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Ulysses' Shelter 3

Project name

The Ulysses' Shelter: Building literary residencies network 3

Funded under

Creative Europe Programme (CREA)

Coordinated by

Sandorf Publishing and Literary Agency, Croatia

Duration

1 June 2022 – 31 May 2025

Find out more

europa.eu/!hymyfgmf

Chapter 2

Libraries for democracy and engagement

A pillar of democracy

Libraries are at the heart of a healthy democracy, offering free and equitable access to resources and services that support an informed public, and serving as a safe space for civic engagement.

As a place where knowledge and culture meet, the Nobel Prize-winning writer Doris Lessing described libraries as being “the most democratic thing in the world”.

Offering access to books, technology and a wide range of services, libraries also enable individuals to stay informed about news, current events and important public issues. Furthermore, by promoting digital literacy, they help citizens safely navigate information landscapes and fend off disinformation.

Libraries are champions of intellectual freedom, a democratic ideal they support by ensuring individuals can engage with a wide range of ideas and access diverse points of view. By providing spaces for public discussions and debate and community action, libraries are at the frontlines of civic engagement.

Bastions of democratic ideals and citizen engagement

This chapter features three projects working to further bolster libraries' position as bastions of democratic ideals and citizen engagement. This includes **LIBRI**, a project active in France, Italy, Latvia, Poland and Romania that uses the local libraries as places for implementing strategies designed to integrate third-country nationals into local communities.

The **ECS** project partners with libraries to strengthen Europe's citizen science community, equipping citizens with the skills needed to engage the public and foster fact-based dialogue on complex issues.

The **LOE for GOOD** project uses a groundbreaking approach called bibliotherapy to help libraries nurture conversations, forge communities, contribute to social well-being and ultimately attract new users.

Welcome to your library

Integrating third-country nationals into communities is crucial to social cohesion and inclusion. A good place to start is the local library.

LIBRI works with libraries to develop and implement strategies for integrating third-country nationals at the local and regional levels. Active in France, Italy, Latvia, Poland and Romania, the project develops specific content to help librarians design and implement relevant intercultural activities. It is also conducting a comprehensive study of existing initiatives and implementing local partnerships. At the end of the project, LIBRI will deliver an innovative digital platform to help libraries across Europe welcome new community members.

LIBRI

Project name

Library BRIdges: Promoting the Integration and Inclusion of Third Country Nationals in Europe Through Libraries and Local Partnerships

Funded under

Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF)

Coordinated by

Bibliothèques Sans Frontières Association, France

Duration

1 May 2024 – 30 April 2026

Find out more

europa.eu/!hmbdnmfx





© ECSA | European Citizen Science Association

From citizen scientist to democracy advocate

A globally connected, inclusive and strong citizen science community for societal change in Europe.

Citizen engagement is essential to a healthy democracy. While voting is the most obvious way citizens participate in their democracy, science can also play an important role – helping the public better understand complex issues, facilitating fact-based discourse and building trust. ECS strengthens this connection by advancing citizen science across Europe. Leveraging community resources such as libraries, the project has launched the European Citizen Science Academy, built a network of 28 active ECS ambassadors, and is working to position Europe as a global leader in citizen science.

ECS

Project name

European Citizen Science

Funded under

Horizon Europe (Reforming and enhancing the European R&I System)

Coordinated by

ECSA | European Citizen Science Association, Germany

Duration

1 August 2022 – 31 July 2026

Find out more

citizenscience.eu

The heart and soul of reading

Reading isn't just good for the brain, it's good for the soul – and the heart of democracy.

The project LOE for GOOD collaborates with a network of libraries to explore the benefits of bibliotherapy – a groundbreaking methodology that places emotions at the centre of the reading experience, as a way to improve inclusion, mental health and societal resilience. The project helps libraries nurture conversations, forge communities, gain new users and contribute to social well-being, particularly for their younger audience. The project will also enhance the role of public libraries as spaces where cultural goods are considered common goods and are used to connect people, artists and ideas.

LOE for GOOD

Project name

Libraries of Emotions for Good: empower a pioneer network of libraries to harness the impact of bibliotherapy on inclusion, mental health and societal resilience

Funded under

Creative Europe Programme (CREA)

Coordinated by

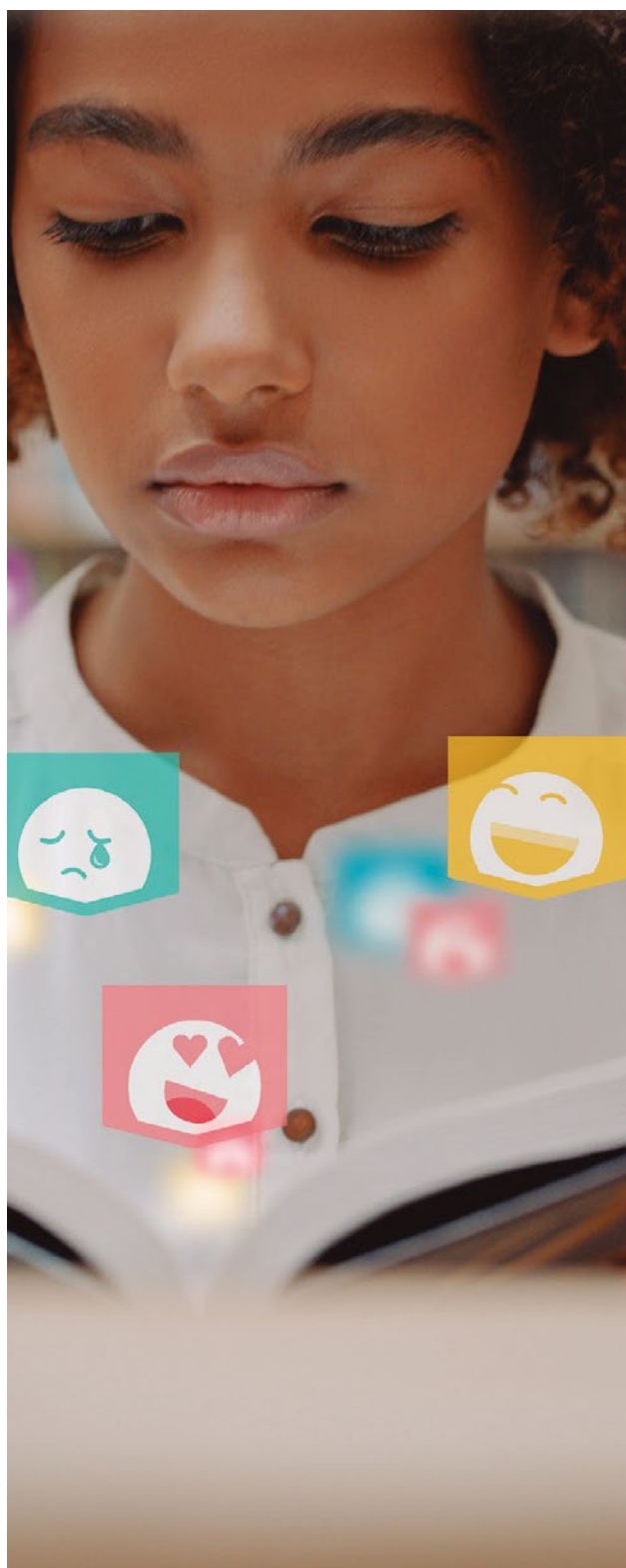
Love for Livres, France

Duration

2 January 2025 – 1 January 2027

Find out more

europa.eu/rbpmrbnv



Chapter 3

Libraries and the economy

Fit for the future

Libraries today are at a crossroads. While maintaining their traditional mission to instil a love of reading and learning, they are required to transform and expand their functions and services, such as adapting to a digital environment, which requires new resources, innovation and skills.

The projects highlighted in this chapter work on new resources and new skills. For example, **LibrarIN** is a project that leverages the process of value co-creation to provide libraries with new metrics, best practices and recommendations to move towards a real transformation and a demand-driven service model. Then there's the **ELAN** project, which works directly with library associations to ensure that European libraries are equipped to serve the evolving needs of their communities.

Navigating today's digital world

Of those evolving community needs, perhaps none is more pressing than equipping citizens with the skills needed to navigate an increasingly digital world.

This is where projects such as **TELL**, **LIBRA.I.** and **DigLib** come into play, each of which trains librarians to better serve the digital needs of library users.

Whereas TELL aims to deliver tailored adult learning opportunities to around 1 500 library professionals, LIBRA.I. develops AI-related training for librarians also covering the ethical implications of using this game-changing technology.

Meanwhile, DigLib intends to map the digital skills required by both librarians and adult users. Based on this work, the project will deliver a capacity-building programme designed to transform libraries into vibrant digital hubs.

This way to resources and funding

Of course, delivering new services and learning opportunities requires resources and funding, which many public libraries lack. However, the EU offers numerous support and funding programmes specifically earmarked for adult education initiatives.

Working to connect the two is **RL:EU**. In addition to raising awareness about these EU initiatives, it developed a platform to help libraries develop European projects and access funding.

Futureproofing our libraries – and citizens

By providing Europe's libraries and librarians with the resources and training they need to drive their own social and digital transformations, the projects featured in this chapter ensure that both libraries – and citizens – are fit for the future.

Creating a new generation of European libraries

Public libraries may be the cultural bedrock of our communities, but that bedrock is starting to show signs of cracks.

To maintain their position as major cultural institutions, libraries need to find new ways to engage with individuals, organisations and communities. That means moving away from the traditional book borrowing model and towards demand-driven library services. Leveraging the power of value co-creation and social innovation, the LibrarIN project seeks to provide a new generation of European public libraries with the tools, strategies and recommendations they need to reposition themselves as the cultural and social bedrock of the neighbourhoods, cities and regions they serve.



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LibrarIN

Project name

Value co-creation and social innovation for a new generation of European libraries

Funded under

Horizon Europe (Culture, creativity and inclusive society)

Coordinated by

Athens Technology Center, Greece

Duration

1 November 2022 – 31 October 2025

Find out more

LibrarIn.eu

Europe's library associations ready to level up

Europe's 70 000 public libraries have long been the keepers of culture, community and citizenship.

Gathering networks that represent the voice of libraries in Europe, ELAN aims to strengthen the capacities of Europe's library associations and harmonise the rules that govern them. ELAN focuses on four key areas: democracy, green and digital transitions and cultural diplomacy – including rebuilding Ukraine's libraries. The project works with library associations to address their diverse needs, promote best practices, develop sustainable models and act as a hub for knowledge sharing, and capacity building – ensuring that European libraries are fit for the future.

ELAN

Project name

European Library Associations Network

Funded under

Creative Europe Programme (CREA)

Coordinated by

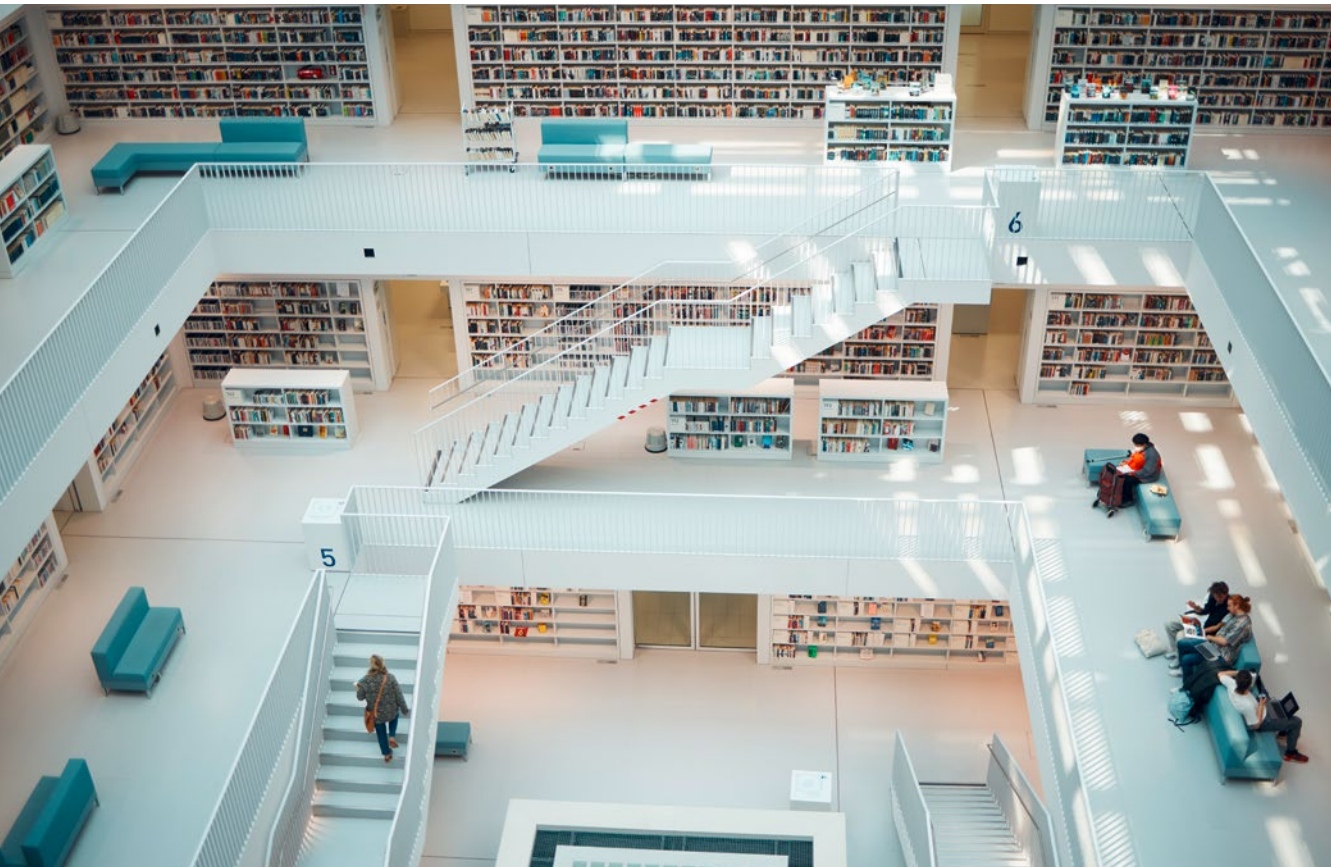
European Bureau of Library, Information and Documentation Associations, Netherlands

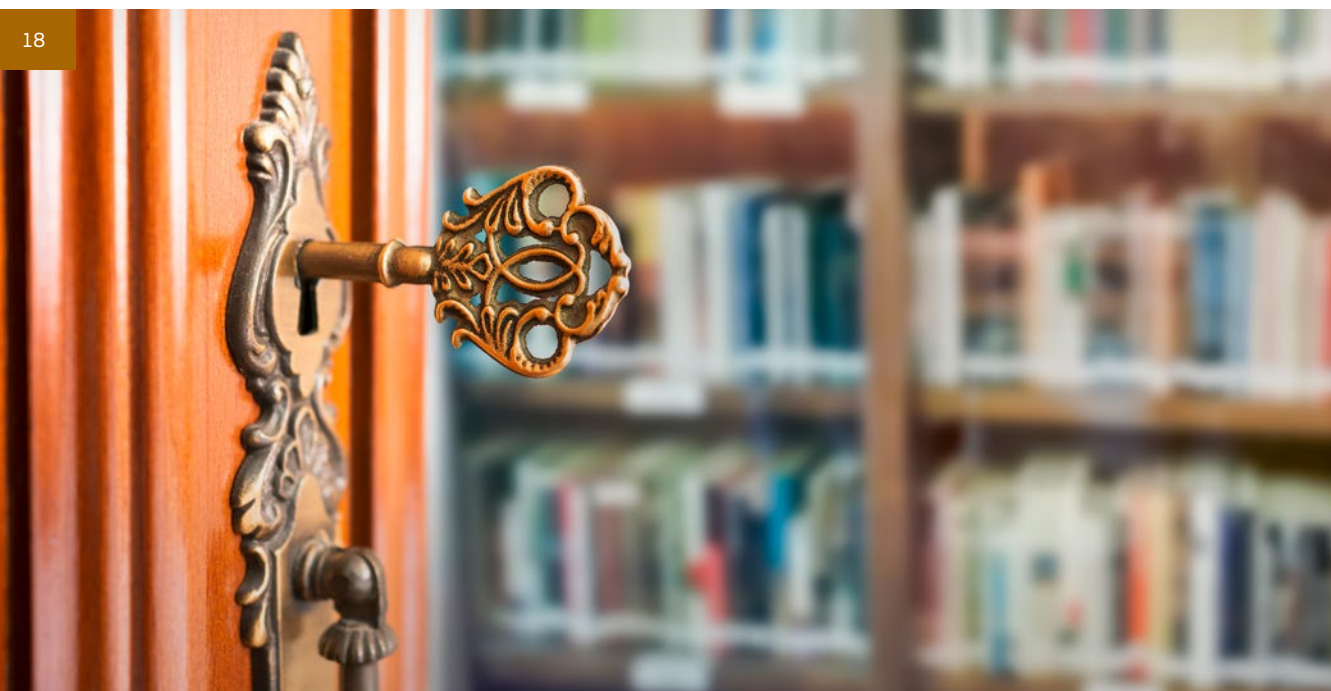
Duration

1 January 2025 – 31 December 2028

Find out more

europa.eu/!mngjhrkf





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Helping libraries unlock EU funding

Empowering Europe's public libraries to harness EU resources for enhanced adult education programmes and strategies.

Public libraries are often the first port of call for adult learners. But providing a forward-looking adult education programme requires resources, which many libraries are short of. To help fill this gap, the RL:EU project raised awareness among libraries and librarians about EU initiatives, programmes and funding opportunities. In addition to providing direct training, the project created a platform to help users develop European projects and find partners, along with a workbook showing how adult learning activities can receive EU funds. It also delivered several policy recommendations on EU funding for public libraries.

RL:EU

Project name

Resourcing Libraries: connecting libraries to EU resources

Funded under

Erasmus+

Coordinated by

Public Libraries 2030, Belgium

Duration

1 September 2022 – 30 November 2024

Find out more

resourcing-libraries.eu

Redefining the role of libraries

The TELL project paves the way for a profound transformation of libraries, positioning them as essential centres of community resilience and local governance.

Using European Structural Funds, the TELL project looks to align libraries with such policy initiatives as sustainable development and the responsible use of artificial intelligence. This will be done by providing tailored learning opportunities to librarians. In addition to training around 1 500 professionals, the project seeks to improve the local governance of libraries by raising awareness amongst decision-makers about the crucial role libraries play in fostering democratic, cohesive, inclusive and equitable societies.



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TELL

Project name

Trans-European Learning Libraries

Funded under

Erasmus+

Coordinated by

ANBPR – The National Association of Public Librarians and Libraries, Romania

Duration

1 November 2024 – 31 October 2026

Find out more

europa.eu/!vGYNKTXC

Librarians at the forefront of AI literacy

Libraries play a key role in equipping citizens with the skills they need to navigate a tech-driven world.

One of those skills is artificial intelligence, which is the focus of LIBRA.I. The project provides AI-related training to librarians, preparing them for guiding the public on not only using AI in everyday life but also understanding its ethical implications. The project will further develop a framework that education providers can use to integrate AI into media literacy training. By positioning public libraries at the forefront of AI, media and learning literacy, the project will ensure citizens have the necessary critical thinking and digital skills to thrive in an unpredictable world.

LIBRA.I.

Project name

Libraries for A.I. literacy

Funded under

Erasmus+

Coordinated by

Goethe-Institut Brussels, Belgium

Duration

1 November 2024 – 31 October 2026

Find out more

goethe.de/prj/lib/en





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Librarians as navigators of the digital divide

It has been said that in the age of information, librarians are navigators, not gatekeepers.

The project DigLib ensures that librarians are equipped with the necessary skills to perform this critical role. By mapping the digital skills required by both librarians and adult users, the project will design a capacity-building programme. The programme will then be delivered via an immersive digital learning environment, implemented and tested at 20 public libraries located across four European countries. Once trained, librarians will bridge the digital divide, transforming libraries into not only vibrant digital hubs, but also hubs of inclusivity, education and social cohesion.

DigLib

Project name

Digital Libraries

Funded under

Erasmus+

Coordinated by

Public Libraries 2030, Belgium

Duration

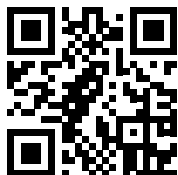
31 December 2024 – 30 December 2027

Find out more

publiclibraries2030.eu/project/diglib

CORDIS Synergy Info Pack

Available online: europa.eu/!V6vhCq



Published

on behalf of the European Commission by CORDIS at the
Publications Office of the European Union
L-2985 Luxembourg
LUXEMBOURG

cordis@publications.europa.eu

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This Synergy Info Pack is a collaboration between CORDIS, the European Education and Culture Executive Agency and the European Research Executive Agency.



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Print ISBN 978-92-78-45002-1 doi:10.2830/2897165 OA-01-25-114-EN-C

PDF ISBN 978-92-78-45001-4 doi:10.2830/2138857 OA-01-25-114-EN-N

Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2025

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Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF)

The AMIF aims to boost national capacities and improve procedures for migration management, as well as to enhance solidarity and responsibility-sharing between Member States. Actions funded through AMIF include enhancing support and services, promoting legal migration and supporting integration measures.

europa.eu/!xcfgpjxv

Creative Europe

Since 2014, Creative Europe has been supporting projects to foster cultural diversity, promote artistic expression and boost the economic potential of the creative and cultural industries and sectors. The programme is divided into two main strands, Culture and MEDIA, complemented by a third cross-sectoral strand.

europa.eu/!nnrvhdvd

Erasmus+

Erasmus+ is the EU's programme for supporting education, training, youth and sport in Europe. The programme empowers individuals and organisations to grow, connect and shape their futures across Europe and beyond, with a focus on social inclusion, the green and digital transitions, and promoting young people's participation in democratic life.

erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu

Horizon Europe

Horizon Europe is the EU's flagship funding programme for research and innovation. Projects supported through Horizon are helping to tackle climate change, deliver the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and boost the EU's competitiveness and growth.

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