



**LATVIAN LIBRARIES
AND SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

The UN Sustainable Development Goals were adopted by all UN Member States in 2015 and are a shared blueprint for global peace and prosperity, now and in the future. The resolution “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Agenda2030” sets out 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Their implementation is a prerequisite for a world that reduces poverty and inequalities, and for a world that is sustainable both for people, and nature. To achieve this Agenda, not only governments, but also civil society – each one of us – should get involved in the implementing of SDGs in our region, our town, our community.

In Latvia the progress towards SDGs is enshrined in national planning documents, which also outline the role of libraries in the implementation of SDGs. The main national planning document is the [National Development Plan 2021–2027 \(NDP2027\)](#), which sets strategic goals, priorities and objectives for sustainable and balanced development of Latvia over the next seven-year planning period. Based on NDP2027, current sectoral and regional strategic planning documents have been developed: Regional Policy Guidelines, Digital Transformation Guidelines, etc.



Education and public awareness raising are important contributors to the progress of SDGs, where libraries can make a significant contribution. Libraries support and contribute to the achievement of SDGs through their services, by creating a safe and inclusive environment for everyone, by providing access to information resources of all types and content, as well as information and communication technologies (incl. computers and the Internet), by contributing to public education, by identifying, collecting and preserving cultural heritage, by transferring knowledge, by promoting

literacy, etc. However, for libraries to be able to work effectively and purposefully with their communities, within the SDG framework, librarians must first be able to identify themselves within the context of sustainable development and envisage the role of their library in educating the community and contributing to the advancement of SDGs.

Awareness-raising and capacity building of librarians in Latvia

The Latvian library community has been talking more about SDGs since 2017, when the first two lectures-workshops on the topic were held for leading experts in this sector. Over 100 participants participated in the sessions. The lecture concluded with a practical session discussing what libraries in Latvia are already doing, and what more could be done to achieve SDGs. Discussions on SDGs continued at library sector events in the following years. To encourage librarians to look more in-depth and help libraries to see their role in the sustainable development of their communities, the [Latvian Library Report](#) (prepared by the Library Development Centre at the National Library of Latvia) includes a section on SDGs, that summarises and analyses the experiences of Latvian libraries in the area of SDG implementation.

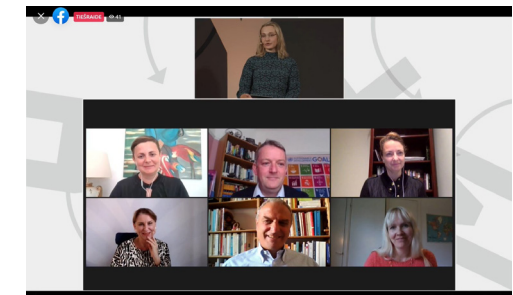
In 2019 the National Library of Latvia, the Latvian National Commission for UNESCO and the Library Association of Latvia launched a seminar series “Libraries and Sustainable Development: we build this world ourselves”, which aimed to highlight the role and involvement of libraries in achieving SDGs, discuss the opportunities for libraries to improve the lives of their communities, and share stories of activities that have already been implemented. The seminar series commenced with an [introductory seminar](#) on 4 April 2019 at the National Library of Latvia. The introductory seminar provided an

overview of SDGs and shared experiences on the activities implemented by libraries. The seminar provided an opportunity to gain both theoretical and practical knowledge, and to draw inspiration for joint projects.

In order to facilitate the inclusion of as many librarians as possible in the exchange of information and experience regarding SDGs, four regional seminars were run after the introductory seminar – in Zemgale, Kurzeme, Latgale and Vidzeme. Two regional seminars were held in 2019: the [Zemgale regional seminar](#) on 2 October in Jelgava and the [Kurzeme regional seminar](#) on 12 December in Ventspils. The Latgale and Vidzeme regional seminars were held in 2020: the [Vidzeme regional seminar](#) was held online on 23 September and the [Latgale regional seminar](#) was held online on 9 October. With the financial assistance of the Nordic Council of Ministers’ Office in Latvia, the Embassy of Sweden in Latvia, the Embassy of Finland in Latvia and the Embassy of Norway in Latvia, alongside stories from local libraries, guest lecturers from Sweden, Finland and Norway spoke at the regional seminars.

The seminar series was rounded off by a major conference for Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian museums and libraries “Localising the Sustainable Development Goals through Baltic museums and libraries” which was watched online by over

1000 participants on 23–24 September 2021. The conference offered presentations by local and international sector experts and practical workshops to gain knowledge, try out useful tools and network with colleagues from the Baltics. The [conference website](#) provides useful resources ([conference conclusions](#), [a conference video](#), etc.)



Latvian libraries and SDGs: an international perspective

Since 2015, the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), the largest international organisation in the library sector, and since 2019 the Bureau of Library, Information and Documentation Associations (EBLIDA) have been raising awareness and supporting librarians in their work on SDGs, Latvian librarians are regularly informed about the various activities organised by these organisations, incl. current information materials and publications. On the initiative of the Library Association of Latvia and the Library Development Centre at the National Library of Latvia, several important publications have been translated and made available in Latvian, for example, such as the IFLA publication [“Libraries and the Sustainable Development Goals: A Storytelling Manual”](#), the EBLIDA report [“Think the Unthinkable. A post Covid-19 European Library Agenda meeting Sustainable Development Goals and funded through the European Structural and Investment Funds \(2021–2027\)”](#) and others.

The activity of the Library Association of Latvia and the National Library of Latvia in previous years has resulted in a number of significant achievements in 2021, including the previously mentioned conference of museums and libraries from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

As the European Union Structural and Investment Funds 2021–2027 (European Regional Development Fund, European Social Fund,

Cohesion Fund, etc.) have been reoriented based on the sustainable development priorities set by the European Commission and the Latvian library projects are one of the instruments to advance the SDGs, providing the opportunity to attract additional funding, in February 2021 the EBLIDA, the Library Association of Latvia and National Library of Latvia, in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Latvia, [organised a webinar](#) on European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) funding opportunities for libraries in 2021–2027. The seminar looked at the experience of Latvian libraries in previous years, in terms of the absorption of ESIF funding in various programmes. Representatives of several Latvian ministries responsible for culture, education and science, as well as regional policy and development gave their views on the priorities of the new planning period and the opportunities for libraries. [The seminar concluded](#) that the role of libraries in ensuring the quality of people’s lives will increase in the coming years not only in Latvia, but in Europe as a whole and will enable libraries to qualify for funding from various financial instruments to improve their services and contribute to the common efforts to achieve the SDGs.

Also in 2021, representatives of the Latvian library sector have started to participate in IFLA and EBLIDA Special Interest Groups which are involved with sustainable development.

The [IFLA Environment, Sustainability and Libraries Section \(ENSULIB\)](#) was established in 2009 at the IFLA World Library and Information Congress in Milan, Italy, as a Special Interest Group. The situation changed at the beginning of 2021 when ENSULIB gained section status, and now has a full standing committee of 20 members. The standing committee began its work with the IFLA World Library and Information Congress in August 2021, and it is evident that in the future, ENSULIB will be stronger and more proactive on environmental issues in the library field globally. The aim of the Section is to encourage librarians to inspire their communities to a more environmentally sustainable lifestyle by providing materials on green librarianship, giving voice to green librarians and library projects worldwide, leading by example, and offering a discussion forum.

The [EBLIDA European Libraries and Sustainable Development Implementation and Assessment \(ELSIA\)](#) Expert Group was established in late 2020 and is working on the implementation of Agenda 2030 in European libraries, focusing more on the European policy on SDGs, and the development and implementation of an appropriate methodology for the evaluation of SDG projects in libraries, as well as the linking of ESIF funding to the library sector.

The contribution of Latvian libraries to the progress of SDGs: examples

Because the National Library of Latvia is among the most active EBLIDA partners in the area of SDGs, both in the ELSIA Expert Group and in the “Think the Unthinkable” programme, which addresses SDGs in libraries through possible financing under the European Structural and Investment Funds, the EBLIDA has invited the National Library of Latvia to join forces and work together on preparation of the publication “Second European Report on Sustainable Development and Libraries” and dissemination of the report results.

Participation in international sectoral organisations provides an opportunity to participate in library policy-making and decision-making by actively influencing these processes, and also to learn from the experience of other countries and to promote the performance of Latvian libraries at an international level.

In order to find out the level of awareness of Latvian librarians and their view of the role and place of their library in the sustainable development of their community, Latvia’s public libraries were asked to describe the work of libraries with regard to SDGs in their annual reports on their work in 2019 and 2020. Libraries contributed to the achievement of the SDGs primarily by providing free access to quality information and technologies, documenting and preserving cultural heritage, organising lifelong learning activities (courses, lectures and other events), promoting literacy among children and youth, facilitating social inclusion of different social groups (seniors, people at social risk), actively working to improve media and information literacy among citizens. The majority of academic and special libraries (83 % – data from findings of a survey of academic and special libraries conducted by the Library Development Centre at the National Library of Latvia in early 2020) also see themselves to be implementing SDGs – library activities mentioned to be most related to SDGs are: promoting open science, informing and educating students, faculty and researchers about SDGs, promoting ecological and environmentally-friendly habits of staff and visitors (waste sorting, bike racks, etc.). School libraries are also involved in SDG implementation, especially from schools participating in the Eco-Schools programme, however most school librarians in Latvia do not associate their activities with SDGs.

The work of Latvian libraries in the field of SDGs is mainly carried out in three main directions: raising public awareness of SDGs and sustainable development in general (seminars, lectures, exhibitions, discussions and other events explaining the concept of sustainable development and the meaning of SDGs); organising thematic activities to promote the progress of one or more SDGs (activities for the unemployed, health-related activities, media and information literacy events, etc.); focusing on SDG compliance of libraries themselves (services, environment, buildings and premises).

The majority of SDG activities are carried out within the daily library workflows and budgets. Projects are written and funding is sought from international, national and regional funds to finance larger and more ambitious activities. The thematic coverage of projects is very broad, and many of them directly or indirectly contribute to progress towards the SDGs.



The first SDG states that everyone, especially those living in poverty and the most vulnerable, have an equal right to access basic services and economic resources. Libraries contribute to this goal by providing job seeking advice, training for the unemployed, assistance with CV writing, preparation for job interviews, etc.

The Riga Central Library operates an outreach service at the Riga Shelter Day Centre providing support and library and information services to the homeless and other disadvantaged persons.

Several libraries in Latvia (National Library of Latvia, Rēzekne Central Library, etc.) are involved in the European Social Fund (ESF) project "Support for education of the unemployed", providing training in librarianship skills.



A number of libraries in Latvia have seed libraries. Since 2019, the Jelgava City Library has a flower and vegetable seed library where library visitors can share the seeds of their home-grown flowers and vegetables. Participation in the seed library is an excellent way to, on the one hand, not let the seeds go to waste and to distribute them, and on the other hand, get the seeds for free, increasing the opportunity to grow your own vegetables and flowers.

Zemīte Parish Library is involved in the Kandava County Opportunities Fund and Boris and Inara Teterov Foundation project programme "Do it yourself for your family table". The aim of the programme is to give people in need the opportunity to do their own gardening and produce their own vegetables for their household table.



Library activities to promote a healthy lifestyle and provide health promotion services are widespread in Latvia's public libraries. Educational events on a healthy lifestyle, health promotion and the competent use of health services are organised, libraries offer fitness, Nordic walking, meditation classes, organise hikes, cycling trips, etc.

In conjunction with the National Health Service, libraries regularly run educational lectures on the use of the "E-veselība" (E-health) portal and available health sector e-services (Riga Central Library, Salaspils County Library, Jelgava City Library, Smiltene County Library, Latgale Central Library, etc.).

Riga Central Library has set up an external service point, titled "Sunny Days Library" at the Children's Clinical University Hospital to ensure the time spent there by the young patients and their parents is quality time.

A cancer peer support group has been set up in the Nīcgale Parish Community Library which also includes healthy family members to receive scientifically-validated, objective information on a healthy lifestyle, psychological support and to share experiences.



The fourth SDG is one of the goals where libraries most clearly see their role and potential to contribute to progress. Libraries of all kinds are working in this direction – school, academic, public, special libraries – supporting teaching and learning, promoting media literacy, information literacy and lifelong learning.

Public and school libraries in Latvia run local reading promotion activities and are actively involved in various regional and national reading promotion programmes. The largest reading promotion programme in Latvia which has been running since 2001 is called “The Children’s, Youth and Parents’ Jury”. It is an initiative of the Children’s Literature Centre of the National Library of Latvia and funded by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Latvia and the National Library of Latvia and is characterised by the widest coverage. The programme is implemented in every region of Latvia and since 2007 it has also been available abroad. Books recommended for each age group are read and rated by children, youth and – since 2012 – adults as well. In this way, leading by example, many parents, grandparents and teachers have become jury experts. Since its inception, when 100 participants took part in the programme, it has attracted thousands of readers – in recent years between 17 to 20 thousand participants took part. The aim of the programme is to promote reading and an interest in books, to encourage the dissemination of high-quality literature.

Libraries organise lectures, training sessions, informal education programmes on various topics. Regional learning centres have been established in a number of libraries, which have developed learning programmes. For example, the Gulbene County Library Regional Training Centre offers five free licensed learning programmes, that are available at the Gulbene County Library: “Local history research”, “Computer and internet skills”, “E-services and E-commerce opportunities”, “Electronic resources and information retrieval”, “Media literacy”.

In 2019 the Gulbene County Library was involved in the Gulbene County Municipal project “Global goals in the local community”, and set up a collection of global resource materials titled [“Globālā bibliotēka”](#) (Global Library), creating a collection of materials on sustainable living, methodological materials for educators, green guidelines for families, school students’ scientific research projects, games, etc.



Although the fifth SDG is not a strand that libraries are primarily involved with, in the past few years gender equality questions have become more salient – mainly organising educational and informative activities.

In 2020 one of the most successful activities at the Latgale Central Library was a seminar on gender equality for teachers and librarians, titled “The role of the individual in today’s world: stereotypes and perspectives”, with the participation of lecturers from Sweden and Latvia. Swedish speaker, Johanna Lundin (founder and CEO “Equalate AB”) presented on Sweden’s policy on gender equality and shared her experience on how equal rights, responsibilities and access to resources are discussed in schools in Sweden. Participants at a workshop “What is gender equality and how to act within?” held by Madara Mazjāne, programme leader from the Latvian Women’s Rights Protection Centre “Marta”, had the opportunity to get ideas on how to talk to children and youth about gender equality to help them build respectful and equal relationships with themselves and others.

To get girls involved in IT and promote gender equality in the areas of IT and programming, Ogre Central Library, in conjunction with the association “For the development of education, culture and sport”, as part of the initiative “Meet and Code 2020” offered a learning programme for 8–14 years old girls without prior programming knowledge titled “Girls and programming”. The aim of the programme was to introduce girls to programming opportunities, promote self-awareness, help choose a future profession that could be associated with IT.

To strengthen the tradition of celebrating Father’s Day and promote fathers spending time with their children, a Father’s Day orienteering rally titled “Dad in the library jungle” was held in the Latgale Central Library.



To highlight the importance of clean water and sanitation, Latvian libraries organise lectures and talks with experts, and also provide information on saving water, its impact on your health, etc.

For example, Researchers' Night events held in the Ventspils Library in 2019 were devoted to water – anyone could attend Vineta Ikauniece-Ozoliņa's presentation "Water – medicine for all ailments", take part in company's "Aspired" creative technical workshops "Water movement, treatment, density, hot ice", as well as participate in other activities and various competitions.



Increasingly, Latvian libraries are analysing their electricity consumption to reduce the level of use, and various solutions are being introduced, for example, lighting systems with motion sensors, individual light control for reading areas, etc. This is gradually changing the perceptions and daily habits of librarians and readers.

Electricity consumption and renewable energy are the most important considerations in the renovation of library buildings or in the construction of new buildings. Latvia can take pride in the new [Ogre Central Library building](#); the building project was found to be the most sustainable in a national competition titled "Sustainability in Architecture, Construction, Design 2020". The library building which opened

on 2 June 2021 is a so-called a passive building or a building with zero energy consumption. The building has intelligently controlled lighting, using up to 80 % natural light. Using available resources and demonstrating energy efficiency, a heat recovery ventilation system is operated to extract the air, conserving its heat. The building has a unique heating system with a sewage heat exchanger, and a green plant wall in the atrium that uses collected rainwater for irrigation. Above the car park, solar panels have been installed on steel structures to generate local electricity.



In recent years, Latvian libraries have become much more active in promoting the economic growth of their region. Libraries are collecting business-related literature, creating exhibitions, organising educational activities, cooperating with entrepreneurs and the self-employed, writing projects aimed at promoting economic growth, etc.

Kuldīga Main Library, Gulbene County Library, Bauska Central Library and other libraries in Latvia organise training for entrepreneurs (with an emphasis on micro-entrepreneurs and the self-employed, as well as youth) on generating business ideas, effective time management, creative entrepreneurship and promoting productivity in the digital environment.

In 2020 Jelgava City Library, together with partners from five other countries commenced involvement in the project "Rural and Regional Libraries as Local Family Entrepreneurship Centres". The main idea of the project is to address people in rural regions through local and regional libraries. A particular focus of the activities is on promoting the creation of family businesses and local entrepreneurship. The aim of the project: developing and implementing innovative practices, teaching entrepreneurship

to people living in rural areas, fostering business initiative, making libraries hubs for rural business development.

In 2019–2020, the Balvi Central Library, together with a partner library from Russia and other partners, implemented the project "Not just books – libraries support entrepreneurship!" to promote libraries as entrepreneurship promoters in the region. The project activities have promoted the involvement of libraries in the development of entrepreneurship skills and entrepreneurial capacity of the local people, as well as the cooperation of libraries with municipalities, entrepreneurs and NGOs: in the form of lectures, seminars, exchange visits, exhibitions, improvement of library premises, equipment and services, including the addition of entrepreneurship literature to the collection, preparation of an online handbook.



One of the sub-goals of the ninth SDG relates to improving scientific research by fostering innovation and research development. Latvia's libraries not only offer fast internet, but also, through various projects and initiatives, introduce and offer new technologies to the public.

Making research results accessible is an excellent way to foster sustainable innovation and research development. Latvian libraries, especially academic libraries, are working to implement the principles and initiatives of Open Science and Open Access. For example, the Library of the University of Latvia invites to participate in International Open Access Week events every year.

The e-course "Open Science" has been created in the joint project "Open Science – the 21st century's benefits for researchers" of the University of Latvia, the National Library of Latvia and Riga Technical University. The aim of the e-learning course is to raise awareness about Open Science and to promote its visibility in the Latvian scientific community.

The Competence Development Centre at the National Library of Latvia offers an educational programme "Open Science and Science Communication", which aims to promote understanding of the concepts and processes of Open Science and science communication, as well as the preservation, accessibility and dissemination of the results of Latvian scientists in the global scientific information space.

The National Library of Latvia maintains "Academia", an academic repository for researchers and institutions, which aims to preserve and make accessible in one place the academic works produced in Latvia. The content of the repository consists of works produced by Latvian universities and scientific institutions: doctoral theses, master's theses, monographs, collections of scientific articles, conference abstracts and other types of scientific work. In order to promote the development of science and the free flow of knowledge, most of the works published in the repository are available in full text.



Latvian libraries pay a lot of attention to working with visually impaired people and people with reading difficulties – from canistherapy classes, to reading aloud of books and newspapers, to improving library websites to make information accessible to everyone. In Latvia, library services for people with visual impairments are mainly provided by the Latvian Library for the Blind with branches in the regions of Latvia, while the National Library of Latvia and major regional libraries also have specially equipped reading rooms for people with visual impairments.

In recent years, the Latvian Library for the Blind has made significant efforts to improve the circulation of adapted literature throughout Latvia – not only for the visually impaired, but also for people with print comprehension difficulties: downloading audiobooks remotely; reading publications from the press and information from e-resources by phone; a series of programmes on the library's YouTube account; purchasing of equipment and starting of reproduction of books in large print, as well as equipment and software to convert textbooks into adapted formats to facilitate the learning process for children with reading difficulties.

The interest of the population in audiobooks is growing and this service is also increasingly offered by parish libraries. However, access to audiobooks is often hampered by a lack of suitable playback equipment. Therefore, in the Alūksne region, on the initiative of the Alūksne City Library in cooperation with the foundation "Alūksne and Ape Foundation", a collection of donations was carried out for the purchase of MP3 players. The Dobeles County Central Library, implementing the project "New opportunities for people with visual impairments and other reading difficulties" supported by the Dobeles County Municipality, purchased CD players, which were distributed to the libraries of the region in order to provide the opportunity to offer audiobooks to those who need them.

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



Libraries have a huge role to play in contributing to Goal 11. Libraries are leading the way in creating inclusive, safe and sustainable environments. Libraries are meeting places to learn and talk about sustainability, they preserve documentary and other cultural heritage for future generations, they offer digital resources and e-services, and they improve the sustainability of library buildings wherever possible.

In cooperation with Valmiera Municipality, Valmiera Library has developed and the Valmiera Education Board has licensed two adult informal education programmes – [“Balanced Life: Environment, People, Society”](#) and [“Balanced Life 2: Environment, People, Society”](#). During the five sessions of the course, participants can learn about the development of environment and society, understand the interrelationships and impact of these processes. The aim of the course is to raise people’s awareness of the challenges and solutions to societal and environmental sustainability and to inspire them to change their daily habits in line with SDGs. Participants can attend individual sessions or the whole course.

In 2018, Zemīte Parish Library organised a meeting of local residents “Be civically active – participate, get involved and be active in Kandava County!”. The meeting brought together more than 40 people from the parish, who actively discussed issues important for the development of the parish and put forward ideas for improving the living environment. Many of the ideas discussed during the meeting were implemented – as a result of their own efforts, by writing projects and approaching the municipality.

Not only in Latvia, but all over the world there is a growing public interest in family roots, in one’s own region, in the cultural history of the region. The demand for local history resources in libraries is increasing, and their usability is growing. Therefore, local history work is one of the strongest directions of work of Latvian public libraries. The local history collections in Latvian libraries contain unique evidence of regions, notable local people, social, economic and cultural achievements, traditions and values preserved over generations. Libraries have become the custodians of the collective memory, uniqueness and uniqueness code of their regions.



Latvian library initiatives that promote an environmentally friendly, zero-waste lifestyle can be divided into two groups. Firstly, there are educational and practical events and activities to raise awareness among community residents and to develop sustainable lifestyles by changing daily habits. For example, events such as “The second life of a book”, “The second life of a newspaper”, where decors are made from old printed materials; various creative activities for children using recycled materials; lectures on Zero Waste or a zero-waste lifestyle, waste sorting, etc. The Madona County Library has created a game about waste sorting.

The Bauska Central Library has implemented several activities in recent years focusing on responsible consumption and environmentally friendly solutions:

- an idea competition “Create eco-friendly packaging yourself!” – wonderful ideas and designs for eco-packaging were created;
- sewing tea bags – a workshop was run for library users and librarians to sew eco-friendly and reusable tea bags;
- sewing cloth bags – library staff sewed bags for library users to carry their books in an eco-friendly and reusable bag.

Ventspils Library and other libraries in Latvia have set up battery collection boxes, libraries are involved in waste paper collection campaigns, etc.

The second area that libraries are focusing on is changing habits in library activities and events: replacing plastic containers with paper or ceramic products, choosing caterers wisely, supporting businesses that offer environmentally-friendly solutions, choosing office supplies and equipment more carefully, etc.



While the first thought might be – what can libraries do about climate change, libraries are well placed to play their part in the fight against climate change and its impact. Libraries not only manage collections related to climate issues, but also create exhibitions and organise educational events (discussions, lectures, talks, etc.) on climate change. Even things like bike racks outside the library and information on how to get to the library by public transport show that the library cares about climate issues.

Together with partners from five other countries, Valmiera Library implemented an international project [“My Green Identity”](#) (2018–2020) supported by the Nordplus programme, which emphasises the role of libraries in initiating and supporting various activities to change public thinking and promote environmentally friendly living habits. The ultimate aim of the “My Green Identity” thematic network project is to fight against climate change and support sustainable development. The aim will be reached by developing a multi-professional transnational network with closely involved partner organizations and participants. This network

ensures that its partners create, produce and implement collaborative cross-border measures that encourage active citizenship in people by sharing information and making it possible to combat climate change. Besides producing a thematic international network, the project aims to increase the competence and knowledge of staff in partner organizations on international cooperation, climate change and SDGs. In addition, the purpose of the project is to expand and emphasise the role of libraries as active initiators in the field of sustainable development and make that role visible to decisionmakers and library customers.



Although Latvia is located on the Baltic Sea, Latvian libraries are not very active in promoting Goal 14. Libraries in port cities (Ventspils, Liepaja, Riga), in universities with specific study programmes and in schools, for example through the “World’s Largest Learning Lesson” campaign, are the most active on this topic. Several Latvian libraries are regularly involved in celebrating World Water Day by organising thematic exhibitions and events. For example, the Smiltene County Library invited pre-school teachers to sign up for a virtual lesson on the theme of “Water” in anticipation of World Water Day 2021.

The Kuldīga Main Library offers an environmental awareness programme – an interactive walk “Water in Kuldīga”. The programme can be “experienced” virtually, using a smart device or a computer, or by going for a walk around Kuldīga. The route of the walk is all related to water – it visits rivers, ponds, springs, water towers, waterfalls, fountains, a water management facility.



Libraries can support Goal 15 by choosing furniture made from sustainable materials, avoiding the use of chemical cleaning products and, of course, providing access to information on topics such as forestry, the terrestrial ecosystem and biodiversity.

Educational activities are those that help to talk about these topics with the local community. For example, the Aizstrautnieki Library from Dobeles County organised a story afternoon “Gardening Stories”, during which a vegetable and flower seed exchange campaign “You share with me – I share with you” took place, which was also a great opportunity to raise interest in sustainability aspects while working in their own backyard gardens.

Ambelji Library is educating the community through hands-on activities. The library has created an agronomic exhibition “A flowerbed on the windowsill from A to Z”, which works in real time, giving the opportunity to see the whole chain of activities – from planting to harvesting and use.



Libraries are important partners in making public services accessible. With the commitment to building smart municipalities in Latvia, as expressed in the Regional Policy Guidelines 2021–2027, the need to ensure broad access to state and municipal services in the regions is becoming more and more pressing. Therefore, in 2015, Latvia launched a network of State and Local Government Single Customer Service

Centres (SLSCSCs) in the regions. Libraries play an important role in the expansion of the network of SLSCSCs, as they have both the technical infrastructure (computers, printers, etc.) and the librarians who can provide support in using the services. In November 2021, SLSCSCs were in operation in 124 locations, incl. 5 libraries.



Latvia's libraries actively cooperate with various organisations and institutions to jointly contribute to progress towards achieving SDGs. Cooperation takes place both within the framework of projects and programmes and on a day-to-day basis, through ongoing partnerships to develop and promote library services.

The Latvian library system as a whole is also characterised by continuous cooperation and partnership, both vertically and horizontally. The vertical line of the library system is marked by the pyramid of the Latvian library system, where the national level is represented by the National Library of Latvia as the development

centre of the library system and other libraries of national importance, the regional level is represented by the main libraries of the regions as the development centres of the library system in the regions and the local level is represented by libraries of local importance – in cities and regions and sectoral institutions. Both vertical and horizontal cooperation has been facilitated by the constraints of the Covid-19 pandemic and the active use of digital solutions that enable collaboration and remote networking.

From opportunity to obligation

As physical and virtual places where people can enrich themselves and help improve their own lives and the lives of their communities through the knowledge they acquire, libraries are centres of sustainable community development – inviting people to explore the interconnectedness of local and global challenges; encouraging the transmission of knowledge and cultural heritage to future generations; discussing climate change and the risk of biodiversity loss; promoting inclusive and equitable societies; integrating cultural and lifelong learning processes; promoting civic participation and sustainable community development.

An in-depth look at the experience Latvian libraries with SDGs shows that most of the activities of Latvian libraries are devoted to SDG No. 3 “Good Health and Well-being”, SDG No. 4 “Quality Education”, SDG No. 11 “Sustainable Cities and Communities”, SDG No. 12 “Responsible Consumption and Production” and SDG No. 16 “Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions”. Various activities are also increasingly emerging in relation to other SDGs, such as SDG No. 2 “Zero Hunger”, SDG No. 5 “Gender Equality” and SDG No. 8 “Decent Work and Economic Growth”.

Overall, it can be concluded that the awareness of librarians in Latvia about sustainable development of society and the link between SDGs and libraries has grown considerably in recent years. Latvian libraries have embraced SDGs and are able to see the

relevance of their work in relation to them. However, a large part of activities and events are not planned with a link to specific SDGs; the link to sustainable development is mostly made later in the analysis. Therefore, the work started in the area of education and capacity building of librarians on SDGs should be continued, transferring the understanding and knowledge on societal sustainability into planned and systematic practical action. It is also important to move from a general level to a deeper level of understanding as we continue to learn about and implement SDGs.

Looking at developments in Europe and globally, the role of SDGs is only expected to grow and sustainability will become increasingly important in the work of libraries. Therefore, the goal we intend to move towards is to mainstream sustainable development into the core business of libraries, seeing SDGs as one of the library’s work streams and responsibilities.

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