RL:EU

Connecting libraries to EU resources

Policy recommendations for supporting Europe's public libraries in accessing EU resources

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ABOUT RL:EU

The '**RL:EU: Connecting libraries to EU resources**' project aims to help Europe's public libraries unlock EU resources. This two-year Erasmus+ cooperation partnership brings together Public Libraries 2030, EBLIDA, and PiNA to develop an approach that helps public libraries and librarians learn about EU initiatives and programmes and access EU funding.

In Europe, there are **over 70,000 public libraries – a powerful network of social infrastructure**! Public libraries provide access to cultural content and skills, and are open spaces for community building and open dialogue between diverse groups. They increasingly reflect current societal challenges by developing programmes and activities around sustainability and climate change, or new digital technologies, among others.

At the same time, it is a challenge for public libraries to take on more tasks with **limited or diminishing budgets**. EU funds and resources have a considerable potential to improve public libraries' fundraising strategies. Public libraries are eligible institutions to benefit from various EU funding programmes for education, culture, research, and mobility initiatives. However, for many, often smaller, organisations, it can be complicated to get involved in EU projects.

The RL:EU project aims to **facilitate public libraries accessing EU resources and connecting at European level**. Concretely, the project has developed a platform with best practices, delivered webinars on EU resources and project design for libraries, hosted local information events on EU programmes and organised a European conference, as well as one-to-one mentoring sessions, and group coachings. All project resources are collected on the RL:EU project website.

RL:EU Policy Recommendations
- Author: **Public Libraries 2030**
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For more:
- Contact **info@pl2030.eu**
- Visit **resourcing-libraries.eu/**

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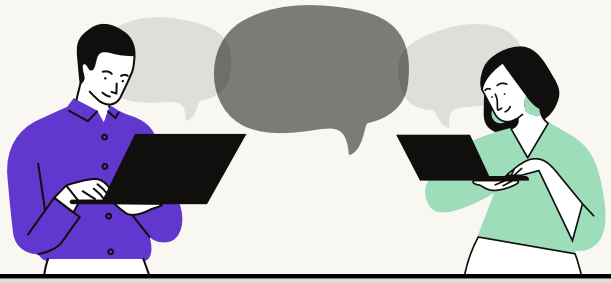
RL:EU SURVEY ON LIBRARY NEEDS IN EUROPE

In order to gain a better understanding of the current library context and the barriers that libraries face in accessing EU funding, the RL:EU project launched an EU-wide survey on library needs among public libraries in Europe.

The insights provided by the 160+ survey respondents across the European library sector were crucial to helping identify the areas where the RL:EU partners can support Europe's public libraries to access EU funding in order to fund their adult education programmes and strategies.



Key takeaways from the survey

- 65.8% of library professionals responding to the survey claim to understand that **libraries need to become more community oriented** and, therefore, have a need for funds and events organised in libraries
- 94.8% of library professionals responding to the survey would like to **build their competences on project management and European projects**
- 61% of library professionals responding to the survey have **never received training in project management**

The survey results were complemented by feedback from participants of RL:EU project activities and partner observations. The research highlights **5 main challenges** for public libraries in accessing EU resources:

1. **Administrative burdens and bureaucracy**
2. **Language barriers**
3. **Lack of skills in project management (including financial management)**
4. **Not enough contacts in other EU member states**
5. **Insufficient time capacity for engaging into EU projects**

The experiences and feedback collected from library participants throughout the various RL:EU project activities confirmed that the application procedure, implementation and management requirements of EU projects are still not within reach for many public libraries. The process for public libraries to start engaging into European wide collaboration requires strategic management decisions, staff time, specific skills and a trusted network for potential partners.

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RL:EU POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Policy initiatives and targeted support at EU level can help public libraries to unlock the potential of European funding and other resources. The RL:EU project developed a set of policy recommendations and suggestions on how to improve the status of public libraries in the EU context and to help them access EU resources around **three main axes**:

Transversal contribution of public libraries to deliver on key EU policy priorities

Facilitation of access for public libraries to EU resources

Support for public libraries to connect and exchange at EU level

I. Transversal contribution of public libraries to deliver on key EU policy priorities

Public libraries offer programmes and activities that are relevant for different policy areas. They deliver in the fields of culture, education, social inclusion and urban development, citizen engagement, and sustainable transition. In the field of non-formal education, public libraries offer inclusive up-skilling for a diversified audience, including digital and media literacy skills. By reflecting and acknowledging these multiple roles in respective policy initiatives (such as the EU Work Plan for Culture, the Digital Education Action Plan, the European Democracy Action Plan, EU Green Deal initiatives, and upcoming new initiatives under the new EU Commission), the status of public libraries will be strengthened at EU level, repositioning them to better access EU funds and resources.

RL:EU recommends to:

- **Acknowledge and reflect the contribution of public libraries to key EU policy priorities in EU policy initiatives in the fields of culture and education, vocational training and lifelong learning, democracy building and citizen engagement, and sustainable transition.**

- **Create dedicated funding lines for libraries in EU programmes.**

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II. Facilitation of access of public libraries to EU resources

Another significant barrier to accessing EU funds is the heavy administrative burden on public libraries and the lack of resources such as time and the staff skills to successfully apply for and implement EU projects. Simplified application procedures such as Erasmus+ small scale cooperation partnerships and effective guidance through national helpdesks can help public libraries to start engaging in EU collaboration.

RL:EU recommends to:

- **Develop more small and easy-access opportunities in European funding programmes for starter libraries.**
- **Strengthen support and guidance infrastructure at local level including competence building for library staff in EU project application and management.**

III. Support for public libraries to connect and exchange at EU level

A strong network and trusted partner organisations are key for successful collaboration at EU level. For many public libraries, the lack of partners across borders can be a considerable barrier to engaging in EU-wide activities. Most public libraries are entirely funded and run at municipal level, which can sometimes hamper outreach and network building at international level. The landscape of library associations varies widely across the EU and levels of support and service vary from country to country. Peer-learning and exchange initiatives are crucial to support the building of a network of like-minded public libraries interested in EU projects.

RL:EU recommends to:

- **Invest in peer-learning and exchange programmes for European public libraries.**
- **Establish an online platform to facilitate sector-wide collaboration and sharing of resources across the EU.**

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