

8 Advocacy at the Intergovernmental Level

Many countries belong to a group of countries in different intergovernmental organisations, as shown in the map below (see Figure 27). While advocating for libraries at intergovernmental level has its challenges, many of the intergovernmental organisations deal with issues such as digitisation and copyright that are relevant to libraries; therefore, it might be worthwhile to develop more library advocacy activities at this level. Sometimes national librarians represent library issues at this level. However, NGOs are not always present to represent library interests at intergovernmental level and many intergovernmental associations have a looser structure, with their decisions not as relevant to the countries as in the EU. However, the EU, while having a complicated structure of policy-making, has many issues relevant to libraries and well-organised library advocates. Library advocacy at the level of the European Union and the African Union is presented here in more detail, as it may serve as a model for library associations in other countries.



Fig. 27: Intergovernmental Organizations. By Lasunncty, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons.
https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/a1/Regional_Organizations_Map.svg

8.1 Library Advocacy at the EU Level

The main associations for advocacy at European level are the European Bureau of Library, Information and Documentation Associations (EBLIDA) and the Association of European Research Libraries (LIBER Europe). Both associations have a clear focus on copyright, as EU law must be transposed into national law, and this is directly relevant to libraries in all EU countries; therefore, the interests of li-

libraries and their users should be well represented when advocating in this area. Other advocacy issues include the digitisation strategy, research data and the UN sustainability goals.

EBLIDA is an umbrella organisation of about 126 library associations and libraries from Europe, representing 65,000 public libraries from 32 countries (EBLIDA 2024), with the aim to “advocate for libraries and their work at a European level and support advocacy at the national and local level” (EBLIDA 2022b, 1). According to the current strategy the mission is “to advocate for equitable access to library collections and resources by pursuing a strategy of sustainable copyright” (EBLIDA 2022b, 1). EBLIDA has three Expert Groups: The Expert Group on Information Law (EGIL), the Expert Group on European Libraries and Sustainable Development Implementation and Assessment (ELSIA) and the Expert Group on Library Legislation and Policy in Europe (LIBLEG). All three expert groups work together and exchange information regularly, as well as collaborating with partner institutions and advocating for common goals.

EGIL, the first expert group, is responsible for reviewing all legal issues in the EU that affect libraries and archives in any way and preparing national library associations in the EU for advocacy. EBLIDA members are empowered to approach the European institutions by making suggestions and reports on laws and changes in laws or policies that would improve the legal position of libraries and archives (EBLIDA 2022b). Elsewhere, EGIL group members prepare policy papers on legal issues, such as on data protection in 2016. For some years now, the main topic has been the right to e-reading and key aspects of eBook policy for libraries in Europe, such as Principles of Access to eBooks by Libraries. The current Strategic Plan 2022–2025 focuses on the action point “Advocating for a copyright regime where e-lending rules are applied at the national level to the advantage of libraries and related institutions. This is what EBLIDA terms sustainable copyright” (EBLIDA 2022b, 4).

LIBLEG is a new EBLIDA expert group tasked with revising the 2000 Council of Europe-EBLIDA Guidelines for library legislation and policy in Europe, with a first draft for the organisation already published. The experts in the organisation evaluate new developments in library legislation in Europe to identify good practices and make new proposals (EBLIDA 2022a, 3).

ELSIA is the expert group focusing on the Sustainable Development Goals and their implementation in European libraries, as the EU 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development differs slightly from the UN in terms of goals, indicators and implementation of the EU project. As the EU applies the UN Sustainable Development Goals by strengthening its funding programme for 2021–2024, an EBLIDA SDG matrix has been developed by matching each goal with European

funding opportunities accordingly (EBLIDA 2020a). EBLIDA advises European libraries on how to apply the goals and integrate them into EU funding applications, and has published a report detailing which European funds can be used for each Sustainable Development Goal, a document that is extremely useful for libraries across Europe (EBLIDA 2020b). It is an important part of European advocacy to influence and interpret EU funding programmes at an early stage so that libraries can benefit from these funds.

An additional point for EBLIDA in advocating for libraries is how to measure the benefits that libraries bring to society and how the Sustainable Development Goals are implemented by European libraries. As many analyses and evaluations in the EU are based on purely statistical figures and monetary assessments, the role of libraries in EU programmes can be strengthened with measurable impact. For this reason, EBLIDA has set up the European Libraries and Sustainable Assessment (ELSA) working group on libraries and the 17 SDGs, with a particular focus on researching the impact of libraries in this context:

This is the scope of the work undertaken by the EBLIDA/ELSA (European Libraries and Sustainable Assessment) Working Group, which started in October 2019 with the following mandate: To establish proper methodologies for the assessment of library performance in the social and economic field, and to current collection-oriented quantitative library measurement, to advocate for libraries at European level by measuring the impact of libraries on society as a whole and link this impact to socio-economic indicators of a more general nature, such as Eurostat-based SDG Indicators, to disseminate Working Group ELSA's results through awareness, evaluation and training activities (ELSA 2020, 4).

The second point is particularly relevant, as the advocacy work for libraries at European level will be supported by aligning the measurement of library impact with the EU's SDG indicators. ELSA hopes that with this change of perspective on the SDGs, individual library projects will become role models and isolated statistical figures will become indicators for the SDGs. This method should help to convince politicians and administrative decision-makers of the relevance of libraries for the Sustainable Development Goals (ELSA 2020, 5). The usefulness of libraries can be measured by what they mean for the lives and concrete development of individuals, but this means telling success stories, which is not convincing for all politicians. It is better to provide additional measurable results: not just statistics, but results that can be compared to other numbers and, if possible, put a monetary value on them, to obtain a real measurement of the impact of libraries. However, the result should be integrated into human success stories. In this way, politicians and administrators could be persuaded to support libraries. The ELSA study cited some examples from European countries related to the SDGs, with an example from Romania showing that information from public libraries saved

116,000 farmers \$1.25 million and 230,000 working days and raised more than \$200 million in grants. In France, public libraries have demonstrated that they attract 33 times more visitors than the most famous football stadium in the region (ELSA 2020, 13–14).

ELSA also states that there are two benefits to libraries linking their activities to the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the EU Agenda 2030. The first is political, with the concept of a social library and as a sustainable organisation. The second is economic, as the library not only presents statistics that measure media use, but also counts their number of groups and activities, as well as the time librarians spend on services for schools or SMEs (ELSA 2020, 11). If libraries use the SDGs and combine them with research on the impact of their activities, then library activities relevant to policy will be highlighted. By doing this in a language that governments at all levels understand, libraries can strengthen their dialogue and advocacy with all decision-makers and show that their strategy is inclusive of government priorities. Statistics can effectively support advocacy if the data are presented clearly and convincingly (ELSA 2020, 11) (see chapter 17.10).

As the voice of research libraries in Europe, LIBER Europe supports and advocates on behalf of university, national and special libraries and their users, representing over 420 research libraries in 40 European countries. LIBER's Copyright Working Group leads the advocacy work with policymakers for improvements in European copyright law, particularly the new European Copyright Directive. Through relationships with key decision-makers, LIBER lobbies in Brussels and regularly responds to proposals from the EU Commission. Under the heading "Advocacy for Copyright Revisions & TDM Exception", a list of resources on their website gives an overview of their regular activities on copyright legislation. They also advocate on open access and open science in Europe and other issues relevant to research libraries in the European Union (LIBER 2020).

IFLA has been involved in advocacy for a new copyright reform in the European Union. Together with EBLIDA and LIBER, IFLA advocated to get library-related positions on the agenda, and now is working with the Parliament and with countries to get a better outcome for libraries in the EU Copyright Directive. The first step is to get the acceptance on the EU stage that something needs to be done, because the first reaction of most politicians is that the last thing they want is a new legislative process, because they know how difficult that is (Wyber 2022); many preferred a non-regulatory solution in copyright, which is quite common, especially in developed countries. In some countries there was a hard process: they froze the copyright legislation, and it was never implemented. So, at the EU level, there have been efforts for years to put it on the agenda and there have been other efforts to sign memoranda of understanding to find non-regulatory

ways of doing things. It was finally accepted that the legislation was needed, and it was put on the EU agenda (Wyber 2022).

Reading about EU lobbying in detail, it is amazing how IFLA, together with the other library and information organisations, is able to survive and even influence something in the EU. In 2015 more than 138.000 lobbyists were counted in Brussels (Levitt, Bryceson and van Mierlo 2017), and library organisations have played the advocacy game that you have to play in the city. As Wyber explains, if you want to be taken seriously, you cannot turn up at the last minute and demand to be heard. There are processes full of people based in Brussels whose job it is to follow what is going on, whose job it is to respond to consultations and go to events to advocate. And in order to be taken seriously as a contributor, if the Commission is following the process, you have to follow the process. There is a good consultative effort that involves IFLA to some extent, with EBLIDA and LIBER revealing what is going on in Brussels. IFLA can thus be active and show that it believes in the system, meaning the EU Commission knows that this is a group that is willing to work within its parameters (Wyber 2022).

The library sector produced examples where copyright was not working well, showing that there was a lack of detail, a lack of modernisation and what kind of regulation was needed. This was an advocacy win, and the library sector benefited from having and building relationships with some people in Parliament; it was important to have friends on the inside, scattered across a few committees. It helps a lot in advocacy when knowing where to go and who to talk to. IFLA and other library advocates knew the ins and outs of Brussels quite well (Wyber 2022).

Because the rights holders were relatively distracted by other parts of the copyright directive in the EU that had to do with Google, a risk for libraries was being aligned with Google, and they had to work hard to avoid that. So, some of the least helpful people, who never supported a balanced copyright, changed because they understood that they had to be nice to libraries to get them on their side against Google. The publishers' hatred of Google was pathological, but sometimes the publishers and the collecting societies were also angry at libraries. Wyber calls it a "Punch & Judy show" because there is a kind of playbook that opponents of copyright exceptions follow; the first is that they are on the side of authors, the second is that they call libraries pirates, or that libraries and pirates are the same thing, the third is that they proclaim the end of the publishing world, as they always do, and the fourth is that they become increasingly hysterical, with the last that they threaten libraries with lawsuits (Wyber 2022).

As Wyber recalls, there was an organisation that talked to publishers and tried to bring libraries and publishers together. So, the library representatives talked to the publishers and the organisation tried to encourage a degree of consensus. Then

there was less resistance because there was no excuse for misinterpreting things or saying that what the libraries were asking for was more than it was. In this way, the two different groups built some relationships and understanding, so that libraries were trusted and IFLA could make it clear that librarians and information professionals were reasonable. They were thus able to assert that libraries do not put everything online for free and do things in a controlled way. There has been some development in EU copyright, but an area where there has been no progress is eBooks in libraries. One reason is that the rights holders opposed the issue, and the other was that the EU Commission had an excuse because there was an ongoing case in the Court of Justice. In the end, the result was reasonable as there were exceptions in the directive and other good aspects, but important areas such as education were still missing (Wyber 2022).

LIBER Europe has been working intensively on European copyright law and has organised a number of activities, while also holding conferences and inviting copyright MEPs to Brussels to give them a platform. Coordinated letters have been drafted together with EBLIDA and supported by as many as possible at national level in order to be effective. Discussions with publishers to find solutions were also part of the advocacy work. The LIBER Strategy 2018–2022 describes a vision for academic libraries in Europe; the cultural heritage of tomorrow is built on today's digital information (LIBER 2017, 6). A new strategy 2023–2027 has been developed “in consultation with international partner organisations and has been discussed with a wide range of LIBER libraries” (LIBER 2022). For research libraries in Europe, LIBER has developed the following five interrelated components:

- Making Research Libraries as Engaged and Trusted Hubs,
- Research Libraries as Providers of State-of-the-art Services,
- Research Libraries as Leaders for Advancing Open Science,
- Upskilling the Library Workforce,
- Upholding Rights and Values (LIBER 2022).

Advocacy is an important tool for LIBER to achieve the goals of university libraries in the areas of copyright, open access and research metrics. They are now also advocating for fair research data, open science policies and open access to educational resources.

Another important collaboration in advocacy at the European level is reflected in the “Library Manifesto for Europe” of 2019, which IFLA, EBLIDA, Public Library 2030, LIBER and SPARC Europe co-sponsored (IFLA 2019). SPARC stands for the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition, a group that is a strong advocate for open access, not only at the EU level.

Key points from the “Library Manifesto for Europe” are listed here as arguments in favour of libraries, which can be used very well in other contexts at all political levels:

Libraries matter for Europe:

- libraries are key venues for learning and civic engagement,
- libraries are windows for all to culture and heritage,
- libraries are drivers of research and innovation,
- libraries guarantee that everyone, at any time in their lives, is able to learn, read, and develop,
- libraries are at the heart of culture, science and innovation,
- libraries deliver the UN Sustainable Development Goals,
- libraries promote access to information,
- libraries support developing digital skills and media and information literacy,
- everyone should be able to access the information they need to improve their lives (IFLA 2019).

With this vision of the role of libraries, the group calls on the EU to ensure that legislation and funding programmes are designed in such a way that libraries can participate and are supported in their role as information literacy providers. The partners also call on Europe to support open science and open access, to promote the digitisation of library collections and to implement copyright rules, orphan works and the Marrakesh Treaty in a way that enables libraries to better fulfil their role. The EU should support the UN SDGs and in particular the goal of “access to information for all” by involving and promoting libraries, and should play a more constructive role in the discussion on exceptions and limitations to copyright at WIPO in order to enable access to information around the world (IFLA 2019). This genuine link between the role of libraries in society and the concrete demands for copyright can be taken as an example for advocacy at EU level. On such a basis, both decision-makers in the relevant EU Commissions and Members of the EU Parliament are addressed. The European associations use their member associations and call on them to address these demands to their national MEPs and to persuade them to support the necessary changes in copyright law for libraries. The arguments and demands on copyright, especially on electronic media and content, on digitised materials and on cross-border access, can be studied in detail in the EBLIDA papers (EBLIDA 2021a, b).

8.2 Library Advocacy at the ASEAN Level

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is an intergovernmental organisation that began with economic and political cooperation but has expanded to include culture. The national libraries of ASEAN are represented in the ASEAN

Committee on Culture and Information (COCI), which is responsible for formulating, implementing and reviewing culture and information projects for funding by the ASEAN Cultural Fund (ACF). “The ASEAN Digital Library is a regional project to aggregate and connect the digitized resources of National Libraries in the ASEAN region, so that these repositories can be accessed through a single search facility” (NLB 2016). As a result of successful advocacy, the ASEAN Digital Library provides access to the digitised collections of ASEAN countries. Books, papers and manuscripts, maps, photographs, paintings and drawings, audio and video recordings, ephemera and newspapers are included in the database to highlight the common culture of these Southeast Asian states.

8.3 Library Advocacy at the Level of the African Union

The African Union is an intergovernmental organisation established in 2002 as the successor to the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). It is active in all fields but has a special focus on telecommunications and ICT, and has its own special library. There are many library advocacy initiatives in Africa at this intergovernmental level. In 2019, at a conference of ministers responsible for library services from 28 African countries, the Accra Declaration was launched with the aim to “scale up advocacy for the inclusion of libraries in our countries’ development planning process” (Accra Declaration 2019). OAU asked that the African Union monitor this decision and invited them to a future meeting. The success story of the Zimbabwe Library Association in later meeting their government at the AU meeting on the Social Development Goals (see chapter 9.4) shows the importance of these intergovernmental organisations now and in the future. The African Library and Information Associations and Institutions (AFLIA) advocate by publishing statements of demands to policymakers and the African Union. One example is AFLIA’s Statement on Freedom of Access to Information and Freedom of Expression:

AFLIA encourages all African governments without the Right to Information Law to take urgent steps to do so in line with Article 16 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Section IV of the African Commission on Human and People’s Rights Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa (AFLIA 2020).

In 2021, AFLIA published a statement in support of the African Union’s Digital Transformation Strategy, advocating for the strengthening of the role of libraries in supporting this transformation by providing their services such as literacy, ICT skills and local knowledge to communities. African Union countries are encouraged to support the inclusion of technology in African libraries, such as ICT facilities and free internet (AFLIA 2021a). AFLIA opposed the concept of a “public

lending right” (PLR), which would require a fee to be paid for material that libraries lend out from their collections, which it sees as a threat to free and equitable access to information. In Africa, PLR is a new concept, and to date, “no country is obliged to introduce PLR under international treaties or conventions” (AfLIA 2021b).

8.4 Summary of Intergovernmental Library Advocacy

With EBLIDA and LIBER, European libraries have strong representations at European level that monitor European legislation affecting libraries and organise excellent advocacy for library-friendly copyright. They mobilise their members to support the European advocacy work in a fast and targeted way by contacting MEPs in their home countries directly. AfLIA advocates at the African Union with a focus on ICT for libraries, akin to other intergovernmental organisations where libraries and library associations advocate for digital library cooperation and library development in their region of the world.