

The Slovenian Public Libraries Development Strategy 2022-2027



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The Slovenian Public Libraries Development Strategy 2022-2027 has been prepared by library and information professionals under the auspices of the Slovenian Public Libraries Association. It is the second strategy document in the last decade, and it updates and broadens the first one (2013-2020). Public libraries are public institutions owned and funded by local communities. However, the strategy document has proved to be a national focal point for growth, followed by all libraries while considering the specifics of their local environments.

Since 2020, when the first strategy period ended, world events and Slovenian society have been influenced by significant changes, and nothing will be the same again. The Slovenian Public Libraries Development Strategy 2022-2027 has been designed in response to this. Hence, libraries are encouraged to be proactive and, at the same time, to adapt quickly to the changing needs of individuals and the state of society. In the period 2022-2027, the strategy will serve as the basis for creating a broad range of development and operational documents for all strategic priorities and actions.

The starting point for organising the implementation of the objectives and actions outlined in strategic priorities is the Slovenian Public Libraries Association, with the support of institutions, organisations and individuals in the field of librarianship, and in cooperation with founders, funders and other stakeholders. The intertwining of all players will be essential for the achievement of the goals. The future image of Slovenian public libraries will result from their ability to respond to changes and seek new opportunities.

Vesna Horžen

President, The Slovenian Public Libraries Association

Strategic Priority 1

IMPROVING OUR OWN ORGANISATION

Description of the strategic priority:

The changed circumstances, in particular the rapid development of information technologies and new services, and the confrontation with the Covid-19 pandemic and its long-term implications, demand from the public libraries' management to rethink their organisation and ability to face the future challenges. Public libraries need to convince their stakeholders of their relevance through a deliberate optimisation of business and work processes, integration, a development orientation and a systematic presentation of cultural, economic and social effects and impact of their activities. The improved public library organisation is based on proactive management, efficient, professional work and a strengthened development role for the regional libraries, with the aim of ensuring a balanced operation of public libraries across the country.

Objective 1

Identification and definition of key competencies and advancement of librarians' professional work

Description of the objective:

The needs of library environments, technology development and the changes in society require library professionals to keep abreast of professional development and to acquire an increasing range of skills and competencies. By identifying and defining the skills and knowledge needed for tasks, public libraries will plan more easily effective development of staffing policies and targeted professional development.

In the Slovenian library sector, there are various training and continuing education providers for specific fields of expertise, but they are not linked to each other. The establishment of a joint group of training and continuing education providers will ensure the monitoring and coordination of training needs in Slovenian public libraries at the national level.

The demands for greater efficiency and optimisation of libraries and their operations dictate the need for competence centres to provide, at the national level, in-depth knowledge, development and optimisation of a specific field or service in the Slovenian public library network.

Actions:

- To develop competency model(s) for different fields of work in public libraries.
- To form a group of training and continuing education providers in the field of librarianship to monitor and coordinate professional development needs at the national level (The Ljubljana City Library Learning Centre, The Institute of Information Science (IZUM), The Slovenian Public Libraries Association, The Slovenian Library Association, The National and University Library, The Faculty of Arts, Department of Library and Information Science and Book Studies, etc.).
- To establish competence centres as specialised knowledge centres and creators of development guidelines in different professional areas.



Objective 2

Strategic Governance

Description of the objective:

Strategic governance of public libraries requires top management to be proactive and goal-oriented and to plan and reassess the objectives. In doing so, library managers need continuous updating of leadership and management skills and, above all, to continue to stay interconnected in the library policies' implementation.

Actions:

- To organize continued training programmes for public library directors and middle management personnel.
- To develop detailed and targeted training to adapt library governance to the new context.
- To promote and facilitate the continued operation of the Slovenian Public Libraries Association as one of the partners in library policy-making.



Objective 3

Business and Work Processes Optimisation

Description of the objective:

Libraries will manage changes more effectively through proactive management by reviewing, analysing and optimising business and work processes, organised according to their missions, available resources and the needs of the external environment. They will follow the Professional Recommendations and Standards for Public Libraries 2018-2028, which introduce library roles as models of the operation aimed at strategic planning and proactive action in connection with the environment.

Actions:

- To conduct research and analysis of business and work processes in libraries at the national and regional levels.
- To foster networking of libraries in business and professional areas.



Objective 4

Measurement and evaluation of public library performance

Description of the objective:

The purpose of measuring and evaluating public library performance is to determine their effectiveness and efficiency in fulfilling their various roles and functions. The developed methodology will be a tool for uniform measurement and evaluation of individual libraries and the network at the national level. The results will provide the basis for planning and acting. Hence, they will improve the quality and efficiency of public library services and inform the public about the importance of libraries for citizens and local communities.

Action:

- To develop a methodology for measuring and evaluating public library performance at the national level for self-evaluation and a better understanding of the public library impact.



Objective 5

Regional libraries as agents of the Slovenian public libraries' growth

Description of the objective:

The reorganised system of regional libraries, based on innovative projects, competence-based content and library networking, provides the basis for the growth of all Slovenian public libraries at the national and regional levels. Coordinated collaboration and involvement of all stakeholders in the library sector will enable a rapid response to changes and implementation of development and strategic documents.

Actions:

- To coordinate regional libraries at the national level.
- To strengthen the development activities and collaboration of regional libraries with other stakeholders in the field of librarianship.
- To monitor the implementation of the Slovenian Public Libraries Development Strategy and other development documents.



Strategic Priority 2

NETWORKING IN THE ENVIRONMENT

Description of the strategic priority:

Contemporary trends and current situations bring new challenges, and libraries must adapt to these changes. Therefore, they establish a dialogue within which stakeholders can express and pursue their interests.

Libraries work with various stakeholders to fulfil their missions and expand their services. They recognize the diversity of values and are committed to common goals. Through networking, libraries strengthen their role and position in the environment. They work with stakeholders from the public, private and civil sectors.

Where libraries need to strengthen their offer or links with the local communities, networking is of crucial importance.

In addition to cooperation in the local environment, it is also important to network around the world. Thus, libraries will put their work in a new perspective and contribute to the competencies development that assists libraries in creating conditions for innovative services.

Objective 1

Liaison with decision-makers

Description of the objective:

In liaising with founders and funders, and based on measuring and evaluating performance, libraries highlight and justify their commitment to delivering and developing library services that are relevant to all citizens and contribute to community goals, in line with the results of the local environment analysis.

Action:

- To engage proactively with decision-makers: constant communication; active participation in the formulation of the local cultural development strategy; presentation of the vision, mission, development and strategy documents, annual plans and reports, etc.



Objective 2

Liaison with other organisations

Description of the objective:

Public libraries are fundamental municipal infrastructure. Their place in local communities is strengthened by their linking role with other institutions: schools, kindergartens, museums, galleries, health institutions, elderly homes, various civil society organisations, tourism institutions, etc. Libraries establish partnerships with other institutions and, by intertwining their missions, create shared services, thus improving their own efficiency and the efficiency of the partner institutions.

Actions:

- To design services based on partnerships with other organisations in the community.
- To strengthen cooperation with other organisations in the community to achieve synergies, integrate missions and develop related services.



Objective 3

Networking among libraries

Description of the objective:

Public libraries fulfil their missions for all target groups, linking up with other types of libraries at local, regional and national levels. Through established and new forms of formal and informal networking, public libraries exchange and share expertise and good practice and address perceived needs in their communities. By bringing together all stakeholders in the Slovenian library environment, libraries jointly collaborate with the international library community, and thus, they open Slovenian libraries to the world and offer good practices of foreign libraries to their users.

Actions:

- To share knowledge and transfer good practices between libraries: professional visits, staff exchanges, training, joint projects, etc.
- To connect public and school libraries through systemic solutions in the field of bibliopedagogic activities for the development of reading culture.
- To strive to strengthen international cooperation in librarianship and transfer collaboration to the Slovenian library environment.



Objective 4

Connecting with users and connecting users with each other

Description of the objective:

Public libraries are open spaces for all individuals and audiences and they encourage active dialogue. In this way, they enable citizens to express and meet their needs, and thus, they build cohesive communities.

Actions:

- To carry out research to identify the needs of different target groups and to bring them together.
- To work with civil society to actively involve local communities.



Strategic Priority 3

INNOVATIVE AND PROACTIVE LIBRARIES IN TIMES OF CHANGE

Description of the strategic priority:

To be successful, socially responsible and sustainable in their missions, libraries should find answers on how to contribute to the knowledge and well-being of the citizens in the face of constantly changing users' demands and needs and in dynamic competitive environments.

The many innovative approaches and responses of libraries during the pandemic set the basis for the times of change that lie ahead. A high level of responsiveness and innovation will need to be maintained to engage in new models of knowledge flow, work, creativity and social inclusion.

Objective 1

Monitoring and proactively adapting to needs and trends in the environment

Description of the objective:

The work of libraries during the strategy period will be shaped by societal shifts driven by digital transformation, environmental and health crises, migration and other circumstances with strong social and economic implications. Libraries will no longer be able to rely solely on past and present experiences. The guiding principle for the way forward is: to anticipate, monitor, verify, and act quickly.

By monitoring, analysing and assessing trends and perceived needs in the environment, libraries can plan their activities and take a proactive role. Therefore, libraries do not only react to changes as they happen but also anticipate them or even promote or initiate them in local communities. An appropriate methodology will be vital for monitoring, assessing and anticipating trends, which may be local or global, and which will perceptibly change user behaviour and expectations.

Actions:

- To establish a system for monitoring the characteristics and needs of the environment through regional libraries and competence centres.
- To raise awareness and provide staff training.
- To create services linked to perceived trends in society.



Objective 2

Public library development in providing and promoting access to reliable information and their educational role in raising information literacy

Description of the objective:

In the Slovenian library sector, e-resources provision is based on different business models and platforms, which are mostly not in the domain of libraries. Hence, they can hardly be influenced. A joint platform for Slovenian public libraries will make access to and use of e-resources more efficient, economical and user-friendly.

With the development of digital technologies and changes in the media landscape, the creation and dissemination of false, misleading and deceptive information becomes a global problem in modern democratic societies. Information literacy and access to reliable and credible information will therefore be vital areas for libraries to develop in the years to come.

Actions:

- To develop a plan to establish a joint platform as a single-entry point for all e-resources of Slovenian public libraries.
- To strengthen the educational role of public libraries in raising information literacy (with the elements of media, digital and meta-literacy).



Strategic Priority 4

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AS A GUIDING PRINCIPLE FOR LIBRARIES

Description of the strategic priority:

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by the United Nations as a strategic document. The Agenda aims to guide the development of humanity worldwide not only in terms of environmental protection but also economic and social development, thus contributing to the quality of life. The SDGs, also summarised in the IFLA Strategy 2019-2024 and the Slovenian Strategy 2030, overlap with the public library mission to be accessible to all citizens. Public libraries are the messengers and carriers of the SDGs by promoting different types of literacy, access to information and information technology, and involvement in local communities. The SDGs are an opportunity for public libraries to showcase their existing services and activities and stimulate the development of innovative services.

Public libraries address all aspects of sustainable development through their operation.

Objective 1

Sustainable development as a guiding principle for libraries

Description of the objective:

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) overlap with the library mission, not only in the fields of education and culture but also in its role in promoting an inclusive society, sustainable behaviour, social cohesion and health. As libraries are a vital social player and a building block of democracy, they raise awareness and promote the objectives of the SDGs.

Libraries work with local, regional and national civil society institutions, governments and private sector organisations to offer community-based programmes and services.

Actions:

- To integrate all aspects of sustainable development - environment, society, culture, education and economy - into the planning, implementation and promotion of library services.
- To integrate SDGs into public libraries' strategies.



Objective 2

Raising public awareness of the contribution of libraries to SDGs

Description of the objective:

Slovenian public libraries support the SDGs through their services and projects. These goals are libraries' tools to demonstrate their impact on society and are also on route to advocacy. With well-crafted stories supported by verified and realistic data, libraries can present their work to all stakeholders, especially decision-makers, funders and local authorities but also potential partners, donors and, last but not least, potential members.

By participating in the Library Map of the World, IFLA's platform for providing access to projects through which libraries successfully implement the SDGs, Slovenian public libraries contribute to the good practice of the global library community.

Actions:

- To include the SDGs in the promotion of events and other activities of Slovenian public libraries.
- To develop library services in support of the SDGs and to include Slovenian public libraries in the IFLA Library Map of the World.



The Slovenian Public Libraries Development Strategy 2022-2027

The strategy has been developed by a working group within Slovenian Public Libraries Association: Matjaž Eržen, Vesna Horžen, Roža Kek, Aleš Klemen, Barbara Kovář, Tatjana Likar, Luana Malec, Urška Orešnik, Breda Podbrežnik Vukmir, Simona Resman, Martina Rozman Salobir, Andreja Videc, Maja Žumer

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