# International Librarianship in Europe (1990-2000)

**Giuseppe Vitiello**
NATO Defense College, Rome, Italy
E-mail address:  g.vitiello@ndc.nato.int

**Abstract:**

The aim of this paper is to outline the objectives and the main features of two initiatives in favour of libraries, developed by the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the last decade of the 20$^{th}$ century. The EU 'Telematics for libraries' programme formally started in 1990 within the Third Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development and was followed by a similar initiative in the Fourth FP. Libraries at that time enjoyed unprecedented attention from the European Commission.

The programme was developed within what was then EU Directorate General XIII, in charge of the development of information technologies and markets in Europe. Never before had libraries in Europe received a comparable level of funding for transnational, technology-based joint projects. National bibliographies, information literacy and –practically- all library services and operations were drawn into the technological revolution.

Different in nature was the project developed by the Council of Europe, mainly addressed to the so-called 'new democracies', i.e. former communist states in Central and Eastern Europe. As these countries were in the process of joining the Council of Europe, they needed to reform their book and library regulations. The initiative culminated in the Council of Europe-EBLIDA Guidelines on library legislations, issued by the Council of Cultural Cooperation in 2000.

The two programmes were totally different in their nature, objectives and, especially, with regard to the level of funding received. It is impossible to summarize in detail the vast array of initiatives and projects funded by the European Commission from 1990 to 1998, after which libraries ceased to be sole and direct beneficiaries of EU funding. The priority of the subsequent Fifth FP was to build up a knowledge-based society: although libraries were, and still are, part of this, they were considered eligible only as partners in joint projects mainly emanating from the private sector and / or research institutions.

My paper is based on official EU and Council of Europe sources, but also drawn from personal experience, as I worked for both the EU 'Telematics for Libraries' programme and the Council of

*Europe. Information on the two initiatives, disseminated on institutional websites, will be reconstructed in a narrative that takes into account the impassioned climate of that period, when the European ideal was triumphant and libraries were seen as harbingers of fundamental European values – democracy, access to knowledge and information literacy for all. I will also outline how democratic values were in conflict with the technological hype and the 'eurocratic' constraints, and what legacy the two projects left to libraries at the start of the new Millennium.*

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**Giuseppe VITIELLO**

**International librarianship in Europe (1990-2000)**

*Towards a European space for libraries*

Witnesses of the political and social changes occurring in Europe at the end of the last century may have well had the impression that history was whirling past them. 'Fresh breeze' is not exactly the kind of metaphor normally applied to European bureaucracies: this was nevertheless the perception I had while working for the European Commission (EC) from 1989 to 1991 and for the Council of Europe (CoE) from 1994 to 2001. The wind of history was blowing through the corridors of the European institutions, sweeping away traditional attitudes and conventional approaches. The façade of the Jean Monnet Building in Luxembourg, where I used to work, reflected, as usual, the fifty shades of grey of the Luxembourg sky. Inside the European institutions, however, the European ideal was triumphant. In the 1980s, the number of European Union Member States grew, with the accession of three countries previously under the strait-jacket of dictatorship: Greece, Spain and Portugal. During the visionary and still unsurpassed leadership of Jacques Delors (1985 to 1994), communism fell, Germany was re-unified and the single market was completed with the signature of the Maastricht Treaty (1992).

The process of European enlargement was set to reach its climax, at all levels, in the following two decades. At the CoE, the oldest European intergovernmental organization (not part of the European Union and not to be confused with the European Council), the debate on deepening *vs.* enlarging the scope of European organizations was soon concluded, underlining the need to extend the space where democracy, human rights and the rule of law apply. With an extensive interpretation of the CoE Statutes, former Soviet Union territories were considered part of Europe and Member States signed and ratified the European Convention of Human Rights in an amazingly short time. From my window, in the B Annex of the CoE premises, I could see the number of Member States' flags increasing regularly, twice a year on average. Even if not all Eastern European countries fulfilled the standards required of Western democracies, the CoE almost doubled in number, from 23 Member States in 1989 to 40 in 1999.[1]

While the CoE was paving the way for European enlargement, the European Union was reluctant to extend its geographic boundaries. The Maastricht criteria, political in nature but economic in substance, were difficult to fulfil for countries that had been bled dry over decades by the communist regime. The financial and industrial assets of Central and Eastern European states had to be converted to the free market. During the nineties, only three countries with a high standard of living –Austria, Finland and Sweden– successfully negotiated their membership with the European Union authorities. After the turn of the millennium, however, almost all Central and Eastern European countries became part of the European integration.

Fundamental assets in the European Union policy are research and innovation. Thanks to the drive of prestigious personalities, such as Altiero Spinelli, Ralf Dahrendorf and Étienne Davignon,

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[1] Wassenberg, Birte. *Histoire du Conseil de l'Europe (1949-2009).* Bruxelles: Peter Lang, 2012.

European research made great strides in the seventies and the eighties. Specific programmes, some of them still in force now, managed to create a European research area and link it with the needs of European industry: Esprit, Fast, Brite, Euram and Eureka are just a few of the acronyms applied to innovation schemes in Europe. In the eighties, the creation of the Framework Programmes (FP) aggregated piecemeal research initiatives into a coherent and consistent policy. Additional stimulus and funding were provided thanks to the FP convergence with other European programmes, such as the Structural Funds, the single market policy and the educational schemes (Erasmus being the most famous of these).[2] Two FPs ran from 1984 to 1991. Starting from 1991, the Third (1990-1994) and Fourth (1994-1998) FPs were each to include a scheme designed to serve the specific needs of libraries: 'Libraries' in the Third FP, and 'Telematics for Libraries' in the Fourth FP. They ushered in a memorable period for the development and cooperation of library services in Europe.

Under FPs, grants normally make up 50% of the total budget of the approved projects, unless they are part of reinforcing / accompanying packages designed to strengthen the impact of European policies. From 1990 to 1998, 520 proposals were presented to the EC 'Libraries' (EC-LP) and the 'Telematics for Libraries' (EC-TL) programmes, coming from 3,023 individual organizations.[3] EC-LP received 333 proposals, with the involvement of 1,590 participants representing a total of 1,381 individual organizations. EC-TL, which attracted 187 proposals (1,433 participants and 1,227 different organizations), had a fewer number of participants.

At the end of five selection processes funding was granted to 104 proposals (87 projects + 3 Concerted Actions + 14 Accompanying Measures) accounting for 653 participants and a total of 451 individual organizations. Twenty-five million ECU were allocated to EC-LP; the budget for EC-TL was significantly increased to 29 million euro.

In Strasbourg, where the Council of Europe has its headquarters, an 'Electronic Publishing, Books and Archives' programme, mainly oriented at Central and Eastern European countries, was running in parallel with EC-LP and EC-TL, albeit with a much lower level of ambition.

The presence of two Europe-wide programmes and the figures shown above clearly indicate a high level of attention to books and libraries. Some twenty years later, can we say that the mobilization of human and financial resources for European projects lived up to the expectations of that period and changed the library landscape in Europe? Every year, thousands of library projects are funded at national, and especially, regional level; the ordinary budget of a city library system may well be hundreds of million euro. To put it blatantly, have these 104 projects, 54 million euro and the small CoE programme been instrumental in advancing the European library system and ensuring its sustainable development?

This article will try to address these questions in a historical perspective. First, we will summarize the objectives and the main activities of the EC-LP and EC-TL programmes with an account of their operations in the broad European context. CoE projects will also be briefly mentioned. The article will examine similarities and differences, both in content and in working methods, between EC-funded activities and CoE initiatives. Results will be appraised by using methods normally applied in comparative librarianship. A more detailed assessment will be provided for the EC-funded initiatives and their impact on the development of national library systems.


### *The EC programmes for libraries*

The historical background to the EC programmes may help explain why EC investment in libraries placed so much emphasis on technologies, instead of addressing the cultural and educational issues that are normally associated with a library's mission. The EC Directorate General managing the programmes was then DG XIII, later renamed DG Information Society

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[2] Guzzetti, Luca. *A Brief History of European Research*. Published by the European Commission, Directorate-General XII Science, Research Development. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 1995. http://www.netaffair.org/documents/1995-a-brief-history-of-european-research.pdf.

[3] These figures are drawn from the Reports of the 'Libraries' and 'Telematics for Libraries' programmes, included in the archived website ftp://ftp.cordis.europa.eu/pub/ist/docs/digicult/impact.pdf.

and now DG-Connect. At least since the first Delors Commission, DG XIII has been the Directorate in charge of harnessing research on innovation and the use of information and communication technologies. It may be easy to understand why technologies are so important for libraries. Less straightforward is the opposite question: why do libraries matter for technologies?

In 1984, the European Parliament had drawn political attention to the importance of libraries for European culture in the Schwencke Resolution. In its preliminary drafts the Schwenke Resolution aimed to create a physical European library as the equivalent, on a European scale, of the Library of Congress of the United States.[4] A proposal of this kind was ultimately unrealistic in financial terms; even more, it was politically too advanced, as the long-cherished conception of a United States of Europe was, and still is, more an ideal than a realistic prospect. The technological twist was therefore the expedient through which the Schwenke Resolution was able to depart from the politically unsustainable brick-and-mortar library concept resulting in a virtual European library.

The EC-LP structure provides a considerable insight into the EC library vision within the Third FP. After input provided during the EC-LP exploratory and preparatory phases,[5] EC-LP was broken down into what I would call 'thematic' action lines:

1) computerised bibliographies;
2) international interconnection of systems and related international standards;
3) provision of new library services using information and communication technologies;
4) stimulation of a European market in telematic products and services.

Action line n. 1 was targeted mainly at national libraries - the main, when not the only, producers of national bibliographies. Action line n. 2 aimed to fund products and services based on existing, or budding, interconnected systems for interlibrary loan and shared acquisitions. Twelve internal studies on the state of the art of library automation, carried out in the preparatory phase (one for each EU country), had ensured that EC-LP also aimed to fulfil the gaps existing between Member States and, within each State, in terms of types of libraries. In general, public libraries were poorly equipped to cope with change, while academic libraries were responsible for the lion's share of library automation. Therefore, academic libraries enjoyed a competitive advantage in responding to the requirements set by action line n. 2. Action line n. 3 had no individual target, its only objective being to trigger any form of library automation in any Europe-wide library service or network. Within the scope of this line, public libraries were to find their way into the vital mainstream of EC projects. And finally, action line n. 4 was especially designed for small and medium enterprises operating in the library market niche.

The 'thematic' approach was no longer pursued during the Fourth FP. It has been said that the 1990s marked a change of metaphor, from the European 'space' to the European 'networks'.[6] In this respect, EC-TL's three-fold structure genuinely expressed the new paradigm:

A. Network-oriented internal library systems;
B. Telematics applications for interconnected library services;
C. Library services for access to networked information resources.

By comparison to its predecessor, EC-TL no longer made the seminal distinction between national, academic, public, school and special libraries. In a series of speeches which had a considerable impact on the European imaginary,[7] Jacques Delors had popularized the idea of a

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[4] Häkli, Esko. *Innovation through Co-operation. The History of LIBER (Ligue des Bibliothèques Européennes de Recherche) 1971–2009*. Museum Tusculanum Press. The Royal Library, 2011, pp. 143 et seq.

[5] Reports of the 'Libraries', cit. ftp://ftp.cordis.europa.eu/pub/ist/docs/digicult/impact.pdf.

[6] Guzzetti, Luca. *A Brief History of European Research*, cit. p. 168.

[7] In a speech to the CoE on 26 September 1989, 'Mr Europe' made clear that his vision for Europe included a series of concentric circles, going from the inner circle of Twelve and extending outwards as far as those countries fulfilling the requirements, and having the political will, join the European Union. See Huber,

concentric Europe. The 'circle' then became another inspiring metaphor for European bureaucrats, and the library space came to be designed as a system structured into three concentric circles: an inner circle of networked internal library systems; a middle circle of library services interacting with each other through the Internet; and an outer circle of library systems accessing external data bases, digital libraries and repositories.

In breaching the conventional distinction between different types of library, EC insiders showed what they meant by libraries and how these were expected to support technological developments. Libraries were seen as one of the many professional networks to be interconnected throughout Europe. They were channels of content distribution, no matter what the content was or and for what purpose it was distributed. Hence the need for 'big' projects and for increase of the budget over the 1994-1998 Calls.

The Fourth FP was also the last in which libraries enjoyed specific attention. In the Fifth FP, library-oriented projects were included in the 'User-friendly society' scheme, one of the four FP themes (the other three being: 'Quality of life and management of living resources', 'Competitive and sustainable growth', and 'Energy, environment and sustainable development'). A sub-topic within the 'User-friendly society' scheme –'Digital heritage and culture content', itself placed under the key action 'Multimedia content and tools' – was the financial source for projects coming from museums, libraries and archives.[8] Facts and figures concerning the Fifth and subsequent FPs go beyond the scope of this investigation. Interested readers may refer to the useful review written by Aslan, who provides a detailed account of EC-funded library projects up to the Seventh FP.[9]

### The CoE 'Electronic Publishing, Books and Archives' programme

In the middle of her term as Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Catherine Lalumière introduced the Seventh Conference of European Ministers responsible for cultural affairs by expressing the need to consolidate a vital, creative and sound book industry in new democracies.[10] Since its inception, the 'Books and Libraries' programme (a section on archives was added a few months later) has had a strong political dimension. The assumption was that Central and Eastern European countries needed technical assistance in the elaboration of their domestic legislations, to comply with democracy, human rights and the rule of law. At that time, the book industry of these countries was striving to re-define its scope and mission, from state-financed publishing to a free market. Therefore, typical activities of the CoE 'Books and Archives' programme focussed on such questions as freedom of expression in book legislation and policies, authors' and translators' rights, copyright and library funding. Technical assistance also focused on matters like the professional training of booksellers, publishers and librarians as well as of professional tools, such as books-in-print catalogues (different from national bibliographies), the use of ISBN and ISSN, the establishment of private bookshops, and the setting up of independent professional associations.[11]

Workshops and conferences for libraries, publishers and booksellers were structured around the 'book chain' concept. This implies a book life-cycle, involving a series of professional actors, where monopoly in book production and distribution should be avoided and state support should be, as far as possible, limited. Small CoE grants allocated to professional associations culminated in 1996 in the

Denis. *The Council of Europe (1989-1999). A decade that made history*,
https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=123021&Site=COE

[8] 110 DigiCult projects were selected and granted funding, amounting to a total of 89.7 million euro. These projects brought together 688 partners from 35 countries, representing 506 different organizations and institutions from both the private and public sectors (40% cultural actors, 30% industry and 30% research. These figures are present on the Cordis website: http://cordis.europa.eu/ist/ka3/digicult/home.html#Why_go_DigiCult

[9] Aslan, Selma Alpai. *Use of technology in Libraries in the European Union towards 2020*. In Ravindra N. Sharma (ed.) *Libraries in the early 21st century*, volume 2: *An international perspective*. In IFLA- Walter De Gruyters, 2012, pp. 77-98.

[10] Council of Europe. *7th Conference of European Ministers responsible for cultural affairs (Paris, 15-16 october 1992)* 'Readings, Books and Publishing in Europe', report. Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 1992, p. 12.

[11] Council of Europe. *Legislation for the book world, Proceeding of the International Conference and workshop*, ed. by Carloline Keane, Warsaw, 13-15 November 1996. p. 2.

organization of the Warsaw Conference 'Legislation for the book world', whose main outcome was a first set of recommendations addressed at Central and Eastern European governments.[12]

Nineteen ninety-six was a decisive year for the CoE programme. An action on electronic publishing was then introduced in the 'Books and archives' programme. This was divided into three main directions. The first aimed to reinforce technical assistance. In the footsteps of the CoE flagship programme on national cultural policy review,[13] a series of national book policy analyses was carried out in collaboration with government officials and book professionals. These book policy reviews encompassed practically all Eastern European countries, from Slovakia to Georgia, from Armenia and the Baltic States to Bulgaria and Moldova. 'Government love books' was the slogan under which technical assistance was enacted in the form of support for the preparation of book legislation and regulations. In addition, at any time government policies attempted to limit freedom of expression or to create distortions to the free book trade, the CoE undertook timely action in suggesting the appropriate regulation or good practice. Worth mentioning is one of the sub-products of the 'Governments love books' initiative: the *Council of Europe / EBLIDA Guidelines on library legislation and policy in Europe*.[14]

The second main focus of the CoE programme was on archives, with technical assistance regarding archival legislation and regulations on archive disclosure in Member States. CoE flagship projects in this domain included the computerization of the Komintern Archives and the reconstruction of the Polish Archives, which were scattered among many European states.

The third area was support for electronic publishing, as a way to channel cultural diversity and multilingualism. The CoE initiative, named New Book Economy, was totally funded by the 1994-1999 ADAPT programme of the European Commission, one of two Human Resource Community Initiatives supported by the European Social Funds (the other being Employment). ADAPT aimed to help employers and workers anticipate industrial change. In this respect, the book industry was an ideal target, as the traditional book chain was being overhauled by the advent of electronic publishing. Some 6,000 book professionals in six EU countries were trained within the New Book Economy initiative. At the end of the project, in 2000, a Conference of the Council of Europe Ministers responsible for Cultural Affairs was organized to adopt the *Council of Europe Guidelines on Legislation and policy measures for book development and electronic publishing*.[15]

Meanwhile a Committee of Wise Persons chaired by Mario Soares, a former President of the Portuguese Republic, had issued a Report recommending the reorganization of CoE intergovernmental cooperation and its implementation under a EU-CoE framework agreement. While CoE work was refocused on the establishment of a new European Court of Human Rights, CoE intergovernmental activities were reviewed and dropped if there was an equivalent EU programme or they were not part of an EU-CoE agreement.[16] The 'Electronic publishing, books and archives' programme came to an end in 2001; a few years later, the whole of the CoE activities linked to the implementation of the 1954 CoE Cultural Convention was terminated or reoriented towards different goals.

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[12] *Ibidem*.

[13] http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/culture/reviews/default_en.asp

[14] Council for Cultural Cooperation. Culture Committee. *Council of Europe / EBLIDA Guidelines on library legislation and policy in Europe*, DECS/CULT/POL/book(2000) 1, Strasbourg, January 2000, http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/culture/resources/DECS_CULT_POL_book(2000)1_EN.pdf; see also Vitiello, Giuseppe. 'Library legislation and policy: a European perspective'. *International Information and Library Review*, 2000, n. 32, pp. 1-38.

[15] Council for Cultural Cooperation. Culture Committee. *Draft Council of Europe Guidelines on Legislation and policy measures for book development and electronic publishing*, September 2000, CC-CULT (2000) 40; see also Vitiello, Giuseppe. 'Policy-making: A European Policy for Electronic Publishing'. *The Journal of Electronic Publishing*, March 2001, vol. 6 (3), http://www.press.umich.edu/jep/06-03/vitiello.html.

[16] Committee of Wise Persons. Final Report to the Committee of Ministers. 103rd Session (Strasbourg, 3-4 November 1998), CM(98)178, https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=859149&Site=CM.

*EC and CoE programmes: similarities and differences*

The EC and CoE programmes in favour of libraries are not easily comparable. Apart from the projects themselves, the nature of the two organizations is different. The EU is often described as a supra-national international organization: laws and bills passed by the European institutions may be immediately enforced in domestic legislations without resorting to Member States' signatures and ratifications. The CoE, instead, is a typical multilateral organization; its inter-governmental work, based on consensus, is enforced only if Member States adhere to the instruments prepared by the CoE Secretariat.[17]

In practical terms things are a little more complicated, for at least three reasons. First, EC action has to comply with the subsidiarity principle, i.e. EC-proposed initiatives should not interfere with what Member States can do at central, regional or local level. In the Third and Fourth FPs, the subsidiarity principle had a pre-normative, pre-competitive aspect that was not easily applicable in library projects.

Second, at FP macro-policy level, the main target is the private sector. Library governance, instead, falls almost entirely within the public sector. Small and medium enterprises involved in EC-LP and EC-TL were imaginative in drafting library proposals, but they were not the leaders of the library space. Hence, the long-lasting 'offset' between, on the one hand, the technological and economic needs expressed by the private sector and, on the other hand, the expectations that libraries as designated public spaces were requested to fulfil. In his influential work on the diffusion of innovation, Rogers explains this dilemma in the following terms:

> The commercialization of a technology is an essential step as long as research and innovation is funded with private money, but its diffusion rests in the hand of gatekeepers, selected groups of people or procedures that, as in the case of medical trials, are determinant in managing the way an innovation is adopted by a society. And its large or small scale adoption will be determinant in assessing how innovation can change a society.[18]

The third reason was institutional. Were FP Committees, which included experts working for ministries of industry and for high-tech companies, entitled to define the scope and the objectives of the technologies that were going to be adopted by the libraries? It seemed only too obvious that 'networked' libraries would actually be playing a marginal role in European networks, as they are by far less economical than expected by standard FP requirements.

If we turn now to CoE activities, the CoE inter-governmental working method seemed to be more straightforward. The 'Books and Archives' programme added to, and reinforced, already existing bilateral and multilateral book policies of the CoE Member States. Many states, not only in Europe, share the general understanding that books have a special role in society, as vehicles for freedom of expression and personal development.

More specifically, democratic requirements in book policies imply little regulation of actors entering the book market and a wide range of incentive-based policies (in particular for libraries), with a view to guaranteeing the diversity of opinions and expressions. An investigation carried out by the CoE 'Books and Archives' programme showed that government measures in the book field can be broadly divided into five categories: a) legal measures (in particular, respect of intellectual property rights); b) fiscal measures (e.g. reduced VAT, tax exemption for book imports); c) mechanisms regulating demand (e.g. library lending rights, support to textbooks, fixed book prices, mass purchasing by libraries); d) support to improve content (e.g. grants for publishing projects and for

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[17] For a short introduction to international organizations, see Zorgbibe, Charles. *Les organisations internationales*. Paris: PUF, 4e, 1997.

[18] Rogers, Everett M. (2003). *Diffusion of Innovations, 5th Edition*. New York; London: Free Press, pp. 168.

translations); e) support to publishing houses and book-selling firms (e.g. reduced postal charges, low-rate loans, training).[19]

There was also a vast difference between the EC and CoE initiatives in economic terms. The financial gap between FP-based programmes and the CoE multilateral initiative was enormous. The average size of the EU contribution to the projects was no less than 520,000 euro. Grants allocated to CoE projects amounted to several thousand French francs (and not euro). Therefore, none of the CoE's proposed initiatives – from 'Governments love books' to archival legislation and training in e-publishing – could be implemented out of the framework of CoE cultural cooperation. On the other hand, the level of ambition of EC-funded projects helped libraries to think 'big' and to look ahead and around them. They realized that the library business is only part of a bigger book and media economy. They started acting in a more efficient way, by using cutting-edge technologies and rigorous reporting schemes and management techniques.

There was very little collaboration between the EC and CoE programmes, partly because their scope was different, partly on the grounds that there was no EC-CoE framework agreement in the cultural sector. Despite this lack of coordination, both programmes (probably by accident), worked together towards a common result: the setting up of a European library forum. To state matters simply, before 1991, the bulk of library cooperation was between the United States and the rest of the world. A journey to the US in the 1930's by Wilhelm Munthe of the Oslo University Library is often credited, in comparative and international librarianship, as having been instrumental in creating the Anglo-Nordic concept of public libraries.[20] London, Stockholm, Paris and, on the other side of the Ocean, Washington DC, Boston or Chicago were the most frequent venues for library meetings and conferences. Since 1991, thanks to the EC and CoE programmes, the agenda has changed and library experts often convene their meetings in the new capitals of European librarianship: Brussels, but also Amsterdam, Barcelona, Berlin, Lisbon and, in Central and Eastern European countries, Budapest and Warsaw. The axis of libraries had eventually found new centres for cooperation.

### *EC programmes for libraries (1991-1998): official evaluation and national participation*

The two EC library programmes (EC-LP and EC-TL) were officially assessed by PricewaterhouseCoopers, a world major in accountancy and financial consultancy. The report was rather flattering for the DG XIII unit managing the EC-LP and EC-LP programmes: projects met real needs and requirements; new technologies, namely those associated with World Wide Web, were well integrated into applications; there was continuity between the results of the first and the second programmes with many activities being further developed from one call for proposals to the other. Project benefits were also remarkable in terms of synergy with other European Union programmes, in building up new human resource skills and in creating new partnerships – for instance, with publishers.[21]

There is no reason to question the accuracy of the PriceWaterhouseCooper assessment, which was mainly carried out on the basis of internal documentation and interviews with library National Focal Points in each of the Member States. The assessment, however, reported strictly on the conformity of the Programme's results with the industrial and technological objectives set in the Third and Fourth FPs. Other indicators, such as those developed in the cultural and educational sectors, were not introduced.[22] Even benchmarking parameters ordinarily used in the library sector, such as

[19] Baruch, Olivier. *The book sector and the state: relationships in change*, revised and updated by Jean Richard. In Council of Europe (2000). *Background documents to the Colloquy of Ministers responsible for cultural affairs 'A time for choices: towards a democratic policy for books and electronic publishing* (Alte Oper, Frankfurt, 16-17 October 2000). Strasbourg: Council of Europe, pp. 3-23;

[20] Munthe, Wilhelm. *American librarianship from a European angle*. Chicago: American Library Association; repr. Hamden (Conn.): Shoe String Press, 1936.

[21] European Commission - DG Information Society. *Impact of the Telematics for libraries programme under the Fourth Framework Programme*, s.d. (but 1999), ftp://ftp.cordis.europa.eu/pub/ist/docs/digicult/impact.pdf

[22] Cultural indicators were at that time being developed within the Council of Europe (The European Task Force on Culture and Development. *In from the margins. A contribution to the debate on culture and*

long-term increase in document transactions and library accessibility, were rarely applied in the evaluations of EC-LP and EC-TL. This does not mean that benchmarking and performance indicators were not taken into account as objects of research in FP-based projects. One of the most ambitious EC-funded projects was focused on library statistics in Europe. It aimed to describe European libraries in figures and to establish shared performance indicators, likely to be applied in national statistics. Three library economy (LIBECON) projects were funded, for data encompassing the periods 1985-1990 and 1991-1995. After that, however, the project was discontinued.[23]

Political scientists often claim that impact studies on European policies and processes are permeated by a 'convergence', or 'harmonization' bias, consisting in the firm belief that a common European policy leads inevitably to a degree of convergence of sectorial public policies.[24] 'Innovation adopters', to use a category described by Rogers, were those library organizations in charge of implementing EC-funded projects.[25] In the eyes of EC bureaucrats, this networked élite should have been able to disseminate innovation and to transform innovative results into permanent library policy.

The implicit model for FP-based programmes (and for many other EC-funded activities) was no less than the grand Euro project. Just as the convergence of monetary and fiscal policies was preparing the ground for the single currency area, the assumption was that EC-funded projects would automatically trigger the convergence of national library policies in Europe and generate what could be called the 'optimal library space'.[26]

Analysis based on description of phenomena as natural events likely to occur under the same circumstances (with discrepancies and variations considered only as different stages in a linear development) is referred to by sociologists as 'nomothetic'.[27] Nomothetism as a form of neo-positivism has been challenged by those who look at European policies as a social construct formed by interacting and feed-back among and between the various levels of European, national and subnational governance.[28] In-depth case-studies and the examination of the interchange between

_development in Europe_. Council of Europe publishing, 1997, http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/culture/resources/Publications/InFromTheMargins_EN.pdf); more on cultural indicators on the Council of Europe website: http://www.culturalpolicies.net/web/comparisons-tables.php. Educational indicators were then developed by OECD (see Bottini, Norberto. OECD International education indicators. _International Journal of Educational research_, Volume 25, Number 3, 1996, pp. 279-288(10). More on educational indicators on the OECD website: http://www.oecd.org/edu/skills-beyond-school/educationindicatorsinfocus.htm.

[23] European Communities – Commission. _A study of library economics in the European Communities_, ed. by Ph. Ramsdale. Luxembourg: Office for official publications of the European Union, 1988 (EUR 11546); European Commission. _Library economics in Europe_, ed. by Phillip Ramsdale. Luxembourg: Directorate General XIII – Telecommunications, Information market and exploitation of research, 1995 (EUR 15903 EN); Sumsion, J.; Ramsdale, P.; Fuegi,D. et al. (2001) _Library Economics in Europe. Millennium Study_. Final Report. LibEcon2000; Croydon, England : Institute of Public Finance, 2003.

[24] For a review of the literature, see Bennett, Colin J. 'What is policy convergence and what causes it? _British Journal of Political Science_, 21, pp. 215-233.

[25] Rogers, Everett M. (2003). _Diffusion of Innovations_, pp. 23-24; and pp. 297 et seq. Criticisms to Rogers' model are reviewed by Lor, Peter. Understanding innovation, policy transfer and policy borrowing: implications for LIS in Africa, 7th Annual Public Lecture on African Librarianship in the 21st Century UNISA, Pretoria (22 May 2014), in press.

[26] This approach has been typical in literature in comparative librarianship, especially in the studies published in the 1970's and 1980's (e.g. Simsova, Silva and Mac Kee, Michael. _A Handbook of Comparative Librarianship,_ 2nd rev. ed., London, Bingley, 1975, or Krzys, Richard and Litton, Gaston _World Librarianship: a Comparative Study_. New York: Marcel Dekker, 1983). A critical review of these studies in Loar, Peter Johan. _International and Comparative Librarianship_. In _Encyclopedia of Library and Information Sciences_, Third Edition, Taylor and Francis, 2010, pp. 2847-2855.

[27] An example of 'nomothetic' approach in natural sciences is water, whose boiling point is constant unless the surrounding environmental pressure changes. For the application of nomothetism in social sciences, see Neil J. Smelser. _Comparative methods in the Social Sciences_. Englewood Cliffs (NJ) Prentice Hall, 1976. I have applied the nomothetic vs. idiographic approach to comparativism in library science in my book: Vitiello, Giuseppe. _Le Biblioteche europee nella prospettiva comparata_. Ravenna: Longo, 1996, pp. 11-34.

[28] For instance, Knill, Christoph. Introduction: cross national policy convergence. _Journal of European Public Policy_, vol. 12, 5 (2005), pp. 764-774, or Börzel, Tanja A. and Risse, Thomas. _When Europe Hits Home:_

elements of European and national library policy may offer the key to understanding the impact of FP-based library programmes from a different perspective.

Key statistical data in this neo-institutional approach are the figures included in EC reports which describe the level of participation by national organizations. The following tables, included in the PriceWaterhouseCooper assessment, show the geographic breakdown of EC-LP and EC-TL projects.

**Table 1: Geographic breakdown of projects under the Third FP**

| C alls | K | T | L | S | R | E | R | K | RL | T | E | O | E | T | H | I |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| C all 91 | 7 |  | 7 |  | 5 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | - | - | - | - |
| C all 92 | 6 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 8 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | - | - | - |
| C all 93 | 7 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 7 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| T OTAL | 0 | 2 | 1 | 5 | 0 | 8 | 8 | 7 | 5 | 0 | 0 |  |  |  |  |  |

The bottom row in Table 1 shows the breakdown per country by number of organizations involved in the three calls as a whole, with the highest national tallies on the left and the lowest on the right: the UK scored highest, followed by Italy. Two of the biggest library economies in the European Union - France and Germany – showed a remarkably low level of participation. Nations with medium-sized economies, such as the Netherlands, Spain, Greece, Denmark, Ireland, Portugal, Belgium, scored relatively well. Interestingly, the level of participation showed no appreciable difference along a north-south divide, or according to how long the states had been part of the EU or its precursors: thus, the Netherlands, Denmark and Ireland, Spain, Greece and Portugal, all scored well.

The UK's very high level of national participation should come as no surprise. British libraries and library-focused organizations were used to responding to UK-wide calls for proposals in the same way as to the EC-based programmes. The LIBECON study on library statistics had provided evidence (if evidence was ever needed) of the level of excellence of UK libraries. In addition, the use of English as international language gave UK librarians a considerable linguistic advantage, favouring their frequent involvement as project leaders. The level of participation of Dutch, Spanish and Danish libraries was in line with national library statistics present in the LIBECON study, while Greek, Portuguese and especially Italian libraries performed above expectations in this respect.

Levels of national participation were partially re-balanced under the Fourth FP (with the various national totals again shown here in decreasing order of magnitude, from left to right):

**Table 2: Geographic breakdown of projects under the Fourth FP**

| C alls | K | E | L | R | I | K | RL | T | S | E | T | T | R | O | E | H | U |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| C all 95 | 5 | 0 | 5 | 1 | 8 | 2 | 5 | 9 | 9 | 8 | 9 | 4 | 8 | 3 | 6 | - | 1 |
| C all 96 | 8 | 2 | 1 | 5 | 4 | 0 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 8 | 0 | 5 | 7 | 3 | 3 | - |
| T OTAL | 3 | 2 | 6 | 6 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 7 | 4 | 3 | 10 | 9 | 3 | 1 |

Here, French and German libraries and related organizations were far better represented. Netherlands and Denmark confirmed their strong interest in EC-funded projects. Unsurprisingly, the three States that had joined the European Union in 1995 (Austria, Finland and Sweden) were involved in numerous approved projects. Funding mechanisms explain this high level of participation. Under the Third FP, these three countries took part as EFTA states, which meant no grants from the EC and full financial support from national sources. With EU membership in 1995, Austrian, Finnish and Swedish libraries could benefit from EC funding up to fifty per cent of their project budget. In relation to the number of inhabitants and to national library statistics, the level of Irish participation was also very good. By contrast, the countries of southern Europe seemed to show a sort of fatigue following their intense involvement in previous calls, though their level of participation was still fairly high. Remarkably, without EC funding, Norwegian libraries showed renewed interest in calls linked to the European library space.

Table 3 shows the cumulative results for EC-LP and EC-TL programmes (again starting from the highest figures on the left hand side):

**Table 3. Cumulative results for Third and Forth FP-based library projects – geographic beìreakdown**

| alls | K | T | L | E | R | S | K | RL | R | T | I | E | E | O | T | H | U |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| FP | 0 | 2 | 1 | 8 | 8 | 5 | 7 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 6 | 2 | 1 | |
| FP | 3 | 9 | 6 | 2 | 6 | 9 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 7 | 2 | 9 | 9 | 0 | 4 | 3 | 1 |
| + 4 FP | 33 | 1 | 7 | 0 | 4 | 4 | 9 | 7 | 3 | 7 | 3 | 2 | 9 | 6 | 6 | 4 | 1 |

These figures have to be weighed against contingent factors that to a certain extent influenced levels of national participation. Of crucial importance, for instance, was the establishment of a National Focal Point (NFP) in each Member State, in charge of creating awareness about the EC library programmes and spreading the skills necessary to draft projects and search for partnerships. DG XIII did its best to encourage participation in the countries designated with the politically incorrect term of Less Favoured Regions (LFRs). Part of the measures accompanying EC-LP and EC-TL implementation was targeted at LFR-NFPs; this may explain why Italian, Greek, Portuguese, Spanish and Irish participation was reasonably high in both EC-LP and EC-TL.

The establishment of NFPs also accounts for the low participation of France and Germany, at least in the EC-LP figures. Both countries had institutional impediments in creating a strong NFP, but for opposite reasons. In Germany, the federal structure of the state made it difficult to create an inter-regional (*Bundesebene*) National Focal Point for matters like education and culture, which normally fall within the purview of the *Länder*. In France, the centralistic nature of the administration made it difficult to create an inter-ministerial NFP able to bring together libraries enjoying State support (the *Bibliothèque Nationale* later renamed *Bibliothèque Nationale de France* and the so-called *Bibliothèques municipales classées*) and libraries funded by the Ministry of Education.

An influential Italian NFP, probably part of the élite in charge of disseminating innovation in libraries, was also instrumental in the surprisingly high level of participation by Italian libraries. But NFPs were not the only agents of change. A quick glance at the library-oriented organizations involved in Southern Europe shows the high level of participation of the private sector. Projects like AIDA, ARCA, BAMBI, CANDLE and CASA, to mention just a few, were prepared and realized through the initiative of private firms, ensuring not only the technological impetus, but also the management skills and the qualified resources needed to complete projects.

*Final remarks*

These considerations clearly indicate that the EC action was successful in the short term. The evaluation of European library cooperation, however, should not be limited to EC-LP and EC-TL programmes, but should look beyond the programmes' time span. FP-based programmes and other European initiatives impact national library policies in the long run, well after the termination of EC-funded projects.

Unfortunately, such evaluation is no easy exercise. The discontinuation of LIBECON studies has already been mentioned above. Library statistics throughout Europe are today gathered in a piecemeal way and on a voluntary basis;[29] therefore, they are far from reliable.

More importantly, the exercise itself seems to have lost its relevance or, at least, to be more vague in its scope. What is the point in collecting statistics on the number of registered accesses to library catalogues and loans, when users today consult bibliographic records from a variety of Internet sources and access library or library-like services through different websites? And are transactions linked to book and journal dissemination still the foundation of library operations, when new missions seem to be central today for libraries (e.g. the implementation and management of knowledge systems, open access publications and e-learning platforms)? The essence of today's library work is less 'solid' than in the past (when the representation of a library was very much associated with brick and mortar), making for a more fluid configuration (the hegemony of the virtual library concept). This has laid the foundations for different themes and new directions in library cooperation.

Lor has said: 'for at least three decades, the European Union (EU) has been the scene of significant international influence in LIS.'[30] This is certainly true in terms of technological advances. The old debate on culture *vs* technology, however, has not lost its significance since the Fourth FP, when EC-specific activities for libraries petered out. Library-focused projects are now disseminated in various EC programmes, with national and research libraries featuring as the the main players in the Seventh FP's Challenge 4: 'Technologies for digital content and languages'.[31] The 'offset' between libraries as vehicles of new technologies and technologies as a library tool has not been resolved, it has simply disappeared from view. None of the reports issued by ISTAG – the Information Society and Technologies Advisory Group, in charge of advising the EC on thematic priorities in terms of technological support for the information society and technologies – mentions libraries as a key strategic component.[32] The last of the ISTAG reports recommends that 'a strategic agenda for Software Technologies in Europe […] be created in cooperation with Industry, Academia and Public sector.'[33] Similarly, some of the actions listed in the report may be associated with library activities – for instance, open access technologies in libraries, to be matched with developments in open source software repositories. For the sake of clarity, however, a software agenda is no library agenda.

The lack of an EC catalyst has lessened the case for a 'Europeanization' of libraries in Europe. Of course, there were not only positive aspects in EC-based projects, especially when they were geared to competition, rather than cooperation, and to promoting European against US standards.[34] In hindsight, we may wonder whether the much encouraged promotion of UNIMARC as a European standard for national bibliographies (and related conversions form national standards) was an appropriate choice. Today, major national bibliographies produced in Western Europe are moving towards US-born cataloguing standards and this seems to be beneficial for libraries all over the world.

Nowadays, a European forum for libraries should be established in different contexts and under so many frameworks that it would be hard to define a single strategy valid for the European library

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[29] Incomplete statistics are available on the EBLIDA website: http://www.eblida.org/

[30] Lor, Peter Johan (in prep.) *International and comparative librarianship: a comparative approach*. Available http://peterlor.com/the-book/; quoted from 7th Chapter, p. 31, http://pjlor.files.wordpress.com/2013/08/chapter-07-diffusion-2013-08-14.pdf.

[31] http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/ict/programme/home_en.html.

[32] http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/ict/istag/reports_en.html

[33] European Commission. *Software Technologies. The Missing Key Enabling Technology. Toward a Strategic Agenda for Software Technologies in Europe*, ISTAG, July 2012, http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/ict/docs/istag-soft-tech-wgreport2012.pdf

[34] Guzzetti, Luca. *A Brief History of European Research*. Op.cit, pp. 89-93.

space. To be fair, some associations and networks are de facto providing European libraries with this forum. Such is the case of LIBER, the European Association of Research Libraries founded in 1971 under the auspices of the Council of Europe;[35] of EBLIDA, the European Bureau of Library, Information and Documentation Associations;[36] and of CENL, the Foundation of European national libraries,[37] originally a group within the International Federation of Library Associations - National Library Section. The three organizations are, technically, EC-based spinoffs, either because they enlarged the scope of their action as initiators and managers of EC-funded projects, or because they were established to pursue the interests of the library and information science profession within European institutions (in particular, on copyright and licensing issues). Nevertheless, in spite of the efforts made by the Secretariat of these organizations, the lack of a dedicated EC programme hinders the formation and the development of a European library space.

In conclusion, EC programmes for libraries may not have changed the state of health of European libraries, which is largely dependent on national cultural and educational policies. They have left a core legacy, though: the case for networking, the advantage of cooperating rather than competing, and the emphasis on values pertinent to the library profession and distinct from those of other European networks.

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[35] http://libereurope.eu/
[36] http://www.eblida.org/
[37] http://www.cenl.org/