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9 October 2009

Europe's New libraries Together In Transversal Learning Environments

ENTITLE Recommendations

1

To policy makers and funders

Governments should utilise more actively, within their Lifelong Learning strategies, the potential contributions which public libraries can provide to support learners in formal and non-formal learning including: widespread and flexible access; a strong community-base; ICT and spatial infrastructure; human resources and skills, building on the growing evidence of good practice across Europe.

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Policy makers and professional bodies responsible for public libraries at national, regional and local level should commit to a future in which the delivery of learning opportunities for people at all stages of life becomes a core role for public library services, where appropriate replacing more 'traditional' services for which demand is in decline.

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The establishment of agencies in member states responsible for professional and strategic advocacy and support to public libraries appears to have a generally beneficial effect on their ability to focus on Lifelong learning and should be pursued.

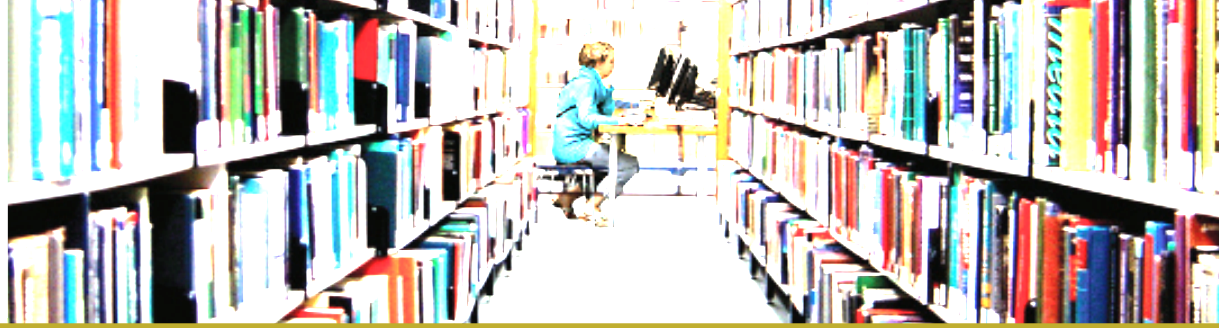
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There is a clear requirement for decision-makers to have access to reliable evidence as to why to support public libraries as an important component of the wider picture for delivery of Lifelong Learning. Decisions on service provision should be based on sound evidence of the outcomes for learners including their progression from one situation to another (e.g. skills, life satisfaction, employment, educational credits etc).

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Work is therefore needed towards a widely implemented and sustainable framework for measuring the progress of public libraries in delivering services for learners. Tools and approaches such as the ENTITLE Impact Assessment Framework should be implemented to this end. The identification of a small number of key performance indicators which can be readily implemented and used as a basis for comparative benchmarking is also needed. In order to achieve these goals, a further phase of follow-up work is required, possibly in the form of a successor project, in order to allow further cross-border analysis and comparison of successful interventions.

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The European Commission should continue to support trans-national co-operation, collaborative projects and regular information exchange involving public libraries and their associations, to enable the sharing of experiences, innovations and good practices in emerging areas of interest such as the role of libraries in Lifelong Learning. The potential benefits for Europe, national governments and public libraries are considerable.

7

European associations such as European Schoolnet, European Association for the Education of Adults and ministries of education should continue to work with counterpart library associations such as Eblida and NAPLE in the field of lifelong learning and seek opportunities to strengthen the links between learning institutions and libraries at all levels, exemplifying replicable and scalable good practices and playing particular attention to the contribution of ICT in opening up new ways of learning and increasing access to learning for people of all ages.

To public library managers and advocates

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Public libraries should continue to develop beyond their traditional way of thinking with regard to learning services in order to demonstrate their case for full integration in the wider mainstream of Lifelong Learning policy and strategies and to secure funding.

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Public library services should be 'reengineered' to a significant extent as a supplier of learning opportunities, providing attractive Learning Environments and making full use of the opportunities provided by developments in the digital world such as e-learning, distance learning, social networking/Web 2.0 technologies and access to digital content, in order to optimise the opportunities available to learners.

10

Public libraries should identify, market and promote those areas where they have a specific expertise or advantage in providing service to learners, for example in areas such as basic skills (reading and use of ICT), information literacy, digital literacy and in 'reengaging' those who have dropped out of formal learning.

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Public libraries should work together with stakeholders in Lifelong Learning, including schools and adult learning centres, to agree what roles public libraries need to develop in the delivery of services to learners, given the different starting points and institutions involved in national and local 'learning landscapes'.

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Public library staffing complements should reflect the more complex range of skills needed to deliver Lifelong Learning, including an appropriate range of technical, organisational, educational/pedagogical, marketing, communication and presentation skills.

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To this end, managers of public library services should work together with training providers and recruitment services to ensure a flow of appropriately skilled staff who are qualified and able to support and mentor learners in public library settings.