

International
online conference:
Localising the Sustainable
Development Goals
through Museums and
Libraries II

AskYour^{LV} museum!
AskYour^{MD} library!^{EE}
^{LT} ^{GE}

MESSAGES FROM THE CONFERENCE

An online conference -

Localising the Sustainable Development Goals through museums and libraries II - was held on 27 September 2023.

The conference aimed to share good practice, and mobilise the multiple roles of museums and libraries as resources and actors in support of positive social, environmental and economic outcomes.

The conference was organised by the Latvian Museum Association, the Library Association of Latvia and the Latvian National Commission for UNESCO, with the support of UNESCO Participation Programme and the British Council Latvia.

The conference drew on experiences gained during a five-country co-operation project involving the three Baltic states, Georgia and Moldova, titled 'Museums, libraries and the Sustainable Development Goals: tailoring common approaches to local settings', jointly implemented by the Latvian National Commission for UNESCO, the Latvian Museum Association and the Library Association of Latvia. This project aimed to share existing good practice, build partnerships, and develop a scalable methodology for localising the Sustainable Development Goals.

Project participants presented their activities through the lens of the Sustainable Development Goals, alongside presentations from government representatives working with the cultural dimension of sustainable development. A workshop to conclude the project was held at the British Embassy involving the project partners.

1 Museums, libraries and their associations have been increasingly adopting the SDGs as a framework for activity, supported by sharing good practices and through training events. However, much remains to be done to fully unlock the potential of museums and libraries to support sustainable development, at local and global levels. We are now half way through the period of the SDGs, and greatly accelerated action is needed. We also need to continue to work with governments and authorities, to understand the challenges, and to ensure that the contributions of cultural institutions and participation in cultural life are recognised in local and national monitoring and reporting for the SDGs. We look forward to working together, and with authorities, to mainstream sustainable development into the cultural sector, and culture into sustainable development.

2 Since the earlier conference in 2021, new problems and challenges have emerged. The war in Ukraine and its wider impacts, consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, social tensions in many countries, and the ongoing decline of biodiversity and worsening climate change, have set back action for the SDGs in many countries. We must redouble our efforts to get back on track, and to stay on track to a sustainable future, with peace, justice and dignity on a healthy planet. We are committed to fostering peaceful societies and communities.

3 Museums and libraries have many experiences to share with one another, in terms of how they are already contributing to the SDGs, and what else they want to do. We need to keep lifting up this work, to make sure that we learn from one another, and we learn fast. The SDGs provide us with a framework, but it has to be tailored to local contexts, challenges and opportunities, to translate the global framework. Museums and libraries, and their associations, are ideally placed to support this translation, and to ensure that there are clear goals, clear actions, and clear monitoring, evaluation and communication, of both successes and remaining challenges to meet the seventeen SDGs. We commit to sharing our experiences, and ask that we are provided with opportunities to contribute them towards local and national reporting for the SDGs.

4 Partnership and co-operation are essential to building an effective movement that brings individual museums, libraries, associations and workers together in the common endeavour to understand and unlock the potential of museums, libraries and their resources. Empowering ourselves is essential to empower others. Partnership and co-operation help to build confidence, make effective use of resources and opportunities, and to empower professionals to understand how to tailor the global goals to local contexts, challenges and opportunities. We remain committed to acting as part of local, regional, national and international alliances and partnerships, with the aim of understanding and unlocking the potential of cultural institutions as actors in sustainable development.