



# Shelter from the Storm: Libraries as Spaces for Dialogue, Inclusion and Transformation

**Andrew Cranfield, Director EBLIDA**





# EBLIDA'S VISION

Democratic, equitable, and sustainable European Societies, where libraries ensure free and unhindered access to information, knowledge and culture.





# EBLIDA'S MISSION

EBLIDA lobbies and advocates for libraries on the European stage, while also facilitating and supporting the transition of libraries to institutions representing broader societal needs and challenges.

## How EBLIDA fulfills its mission (excerpts):



**Advocacy and Lobbying** : Lobbying EU bodies and institutions and inspiring members by sharing knowledge about advocacy work at this level.



**Sustainable Development and Digital Transformation**: Helping associations in supporting libraries to develop, implement, and assess their digital strategies and to integrate new technologies in library services (AI, Metaverse etc).



**Capacity Building & literacy promotion**: Promoting reading, literature, lifelong learning, and media and information (MIL) literacy as essential pillars of democratic participation, as well as personal and cultural development.



**EU and International Engagement**: Participating in EU funded projects which includes or helps libraries expand and improve services or best practice and raising visibility and awareness.





## The OMC group has been studying the multiple roles of libraries, recognising that they :



Support democracy, citizen engagement, and participation, even in rural and remote regions.



Welcome diverse groups and provide access to reliable information and cultural content in safe, inclusive spaces.



Serve as gateways to local knowledge, culture, and creativity.

## To strengthen co-creation, we need three things:



**1. Skills development** – librarians trained in facilitation, participatory design, and community engagement.



**2. Support from funders and local authorities** – resources to experiment and take risks.



**3. Active participation from users** because co-creation only works when communities are genuine partners.

## To help libraries reach their full potential, we need three things:



**1. Recognition** – libraries must be formally recognised as essential services, embedded in policy, and supported as civic infrastructure.



**2. Resources** – recognition is not enough; libraries need sustainable funding and professional support



**3. Engagement** – we need collaboration among staff, communities, and policymakers to keep libraries vibrant, relevant, and inclusive.



# THANK YOU!

---

[andrew.cranfield@eblida.org](mailto:andrew.cranfield@eblida.org)

