

Bijlage

On the occasion of the Netherlands presidency of the Council of Europe

Conference ‘Creating Public Paradise’, Building public libraries in the 21st century, The Hague, 18-19 March 2004

Recommendations to the Council of Europe as established at the conference on March 18th 2004.

On 18 and 19 March 2004 representatives from governments - all experts in the field - together with professionals from the library field from all over Europe gathered in The Hague for the conference ‘Creating Public Paradise’, to discuss the conditions of public library building in Europe. The aim was twofold: 1) to exchange views on the opportunities for creating sustainable public library buildings, which meet the changing needs of citizens in the 21st century; and 2) to promote international co-operation in finding solutions for building public libraries throughout Europe.

In preparation of the meeting, participants submitted national data on the state of the art in public library building in their respective countries.

Based on these data and on the exchange of views during the conference, the conference participants agreed at the end of their meeting on the following principles:

1. Public libraries are valuable and indispensable institutions for providing democratic access to information for everyone.
2. Public libraries are spaces for all they form an integral part of the community in its full diversity.
3. Public libraries are centres for preserving, activating and enjoying cultural heritage. They are centres for lifelong learning. They provide people of all ages with information, ideas and materials for learning, widening their horizons, enhancing their abilities and skills as citizens, extending their knowledge and cultural taste.
4. Public library buildings serve the needs of the users for a safe, neutral and inspiring environment.
5. Public library buildings are subservient to the need of public libraries for co-operation with other educational, cultural and social institutions and organisations.

In this framework the experts recommend that national and local governments in co-operation with representatives of the library sector work towards a well-founded policy for public library building in Europe, which will be beneficial to all citizens in Europe.

On a national level this can be done by:

- strengthening co-operation and dialogue between government, libraries and architects to create sustainable public library buildings.
- facilitating investment and maintenance of indispensable infrastructure and innovations for public information and library services from adequate buildings.
- supporting the inclusion of librarians and their expertise in conceptualising, building and constructing modern public library buildings;
- in recognition of the increasing demands from their users, reshaping the function of public libraries. In the hybrid library, traditional as well as digital sources should be offered;
- supporting the inclusion of public libraries as important public spaces in new city planning and development;
- supporting the inclusion of citizens' consultation (also by children and young people) in the building process of public libraries;
- promoting that library services are included in basic services in rural areas;
- encouraging mutual co-operation between public libraries and public and other services through creative use of spaces.

On the intergovernmental level this can be done by:

- promoting international standards (such as developed by IFLA and other professional organisations);
- enhancing compatibility and networking to facilitate international exchange and services and in so doing create sustainable public library buildings, which can serve the European population as a whole;
- creating opportunities for architects and designers to include public libraries in their international studies, education and professional development;
- stimulating international co-operation by gathering and distributing examples of best practices.