

Strategic priorities for national libraries & CENL for the next 4 years

Actions required:

- EC are asked to discuss the proposed strategy.

In 2022 it was agreed to extend the current CENL Strategy by one year. The current strategy will therefore be in place until mid-2023. Following the workshops during the AGM in Brussels, a draft of the next CENL Strategy covering a 4-year period starting from mid-2023 – mid-2027 was discussed by the members in three groups:

The results showed, that nothing seems to be missing but that the draft should be tightened up.

The members felt that it is most important to discuss and define the identity of CENL more precisely. It was suggested that CENL focuses more on showing the potential for the members.

To exchange and promote the role of CENL, it was suggested to have a workshop/conference on transnational goals to improve the exchange of cross-country thinking. It was also suggested to create a dialogue platform with the Council of Europe to exchange more and promote our role. Thus, awareness for CENL could be increased.

It became also evident that the objectives of the National Libraries are not necessarily the same like those of CENL. As a consequence, CENL should not do research but rather enable its members to meet and share their experiences and best practices; and support them locally and virtually (e.g. by the funds and grants, by spreading news about its members, by supporting surveys, and by inviting to meetings locally and virtually).

The most important insight is that CENL members want to have more opportunities to meet and network, and that the staff of CENL member libraries would like to get more involved.

CENL Strategic Plan 2023 - 2027

The relevance of national libraries for society

CENL's Vision

Europe's national libraries are world-leading memory institutions, playing important roles in the intellectual, educational, cultural, social and economic development of the continent, countries and communities they serve.

Together we form a strong professional community, promoting our common purposes and shared values of collaboration and partnership.

CENL's Mission

CENL's mission is to advance the cause of Europe's national libraries, working better together and achieving more than we can do alone.

To engage with national library audiences and understand their needs

- CENL will further explore the changing environment for library users and wider audiences, to understand the impact of changing collections, spaces and technologies and to help CENL members embed this knowledge into their own strategies.

To build capacity and professional expertise in CENL members

- CENL will continue to support its members to grow as organisations, to develop innovative and relevant new services and to develop highly skilled staff.
- CENL will lead debate on the changing role of national libraries in a rapidly changing world. We will build a strong network of experts across a wide range of professional areas to share knowledge, experiences and to learn from each other.

To advocate for CENL members and libraries in general

- CENL will be the leading advocate at European level for national libraries.
- CENL will work to promote the interests of CENL member libraries and to support activities at European and national levels which will help all libraries deliver better services to their communities.
- CENL will develop strategic partnerships to promote its members' interests with organisations which share its vision and purposes.

The relevance of national libraries for society

National libraries do not only have relevance on a national level but also for Europe as a whole: National libraries safeguard the European Cultural Heritage in printed and digital form.

The war in Ukraine shows how important it is to give the public access to knowledge and information. National libraries play a crucial role in offering a broad spectrum of information sources which empowers their audiences to understand, compare and evaluate this information.

While digital transformation continues to gather pace and have major impact across all aspects of the work of national libraries, many members now have mature national digital strategies in which they play a leading role.

Many members are fundamentally changing how they operate and deliver value to their audiences. Digital transformation is a cultural change that requires members to continually challenge the status quo, experiment, and get comfortable with failure.

Many members are seeking to develop the role they play in civic society and to engage with wider public audiences beyond traditional researchers and students. This has stimulated a broad interest in the redesign and repurposing of physical spaces, as well as generating ideas for innovation in services and public programmes.

Many members are developing new relationships – formally and informally – with university libraries, with public libraries, with museums and archives, enabling them to take on broader responsibilities and new purposes.

This can only be achieved in networks and cooperation. CENL has been and will be a hub for communication and exchange so that members are enabled and supported in their activities.

The strategic plan for 2023-2027 takes the previous strategy as a valid basis and aims to further strengthen and support CENL members in these priority areas:

- Support national libraries to increase their impact and to be strong networked organisations
- Develop as cultural memory institutions of the past and for the future
- Strengthen CENL as a community

Priority areas for action 2023-2027

1. Supporting national libraries to increase their impact and to be strong networked organisations

- We will continue our grant giving and bursary programmes to enable members to identify and shape their own priority areas for development (e.g. marketing strategies and project creation)
- We will offer relevant and interesting opportunities for discussion and debate on key issues through our annual general conference for members; and other events
- We will develop CENL policy on advocacy and lobbying on behalf of CENL members in relation to wider library and information society issues like national cultural policies

- We will continue to identify and partner, where appropriate, with other relevant organisations working to promote the impact and strength of libraries and cultural organisations such as UNESCO, IFLA, CDNL, Council of Europe, LIBER, Europeana or EBLIDA

2. Developing as cultural memory institutions of the past and for the future

- We will share information, identify best practices and support members to improve professional standards, e.g.
 - for maintenance and management of our collections in all formats,
 - on development of digital collections and access services, in relation to research engagement, innovation, digital library infrastructure and interoperability,
 - in relation to legislative and regulatory changes affecting national library services and collections,
 - in developing innovative services to meet the evolving needs of a wide range of audiences, including the general public, learners, researchers and cultural visitors,
 - by surveying members' service strategies and developing opportunities for CENL members, in supporting the exploration of innovative use and design of physical spaces to facilitate new services and to engage diverse audiences,
 - in development of effective cultural programmes of exhibitions and events, both physical and digital,
 - to improve access to European cultural heritage,
 - in supporting the exploration of ways to protect endangered cultural heritage and share best practices

3. Strengthen CENL as a community organisation

- We will keep our governance models, our programme of work and ways of working under review to ensure CENL works effectively for all its members
- We will ensure CENL subgroups work effectively by reviewing their remit and terms of reference
- We will update and improve member contacts to ensure we communicate effectively with members and also strengthen the peer to peer network
- We will develop an annual communications and consultation plan each year to ensure that all members are able to participate effectively in decision making
- We will continuously develop the CENL website to ensure it is an effective information source for members and anyone seeking information on Europe's national libraries
- We will continuously develop plans to use social media and other media channels in support of CENL collectively and of individual member libraries

CENL: By Members - For Members!