

## Future of Erland Kolding Nielsen Grant

### Action required:

- EC are asked to agree on the future of EKN and answer the following questions:
- Does the EC agree to extend the EKN for a further 4 years (2026-2029)?
- Does the EC still agree to the current criteria?
- Should collaboration with more than one partner be more explicitly encouraged?

In January 2017, CENL introduced a grant to celebrate the valuable contribution Erland Kolding Nielsen (EKN) made to the development of European libraries throughout his long and distinguished career as Director General of the Royal Library in Denmark from 1986-2017.

The annual Erland Kolding Nielsen Grant awards funds of up to 5,000 EUR to national library projects which promote international collaboration and thus strengthen bonds between CENL member libraries. The scheme was intended to run for 5 years initially. In 2022, the Executive Committee agreed that the EKN grant be prolonged for four years (2022-2025). An annual budget of €15,000 has regularly been set aside, i.e., up to three EKN projects could be funded each year.

The grant applications can focus on any aspect of international library collaboration including:

- development of collections (physical and digital)
- improving research
- educational or cultural services including
- exhibitions
- promoting interlibrary staff
- communications
- infrastructure development
- staff development

All collaboration activities must be in partnership with other CENL members and foster international collaboration (= application eligibility criterion).

In the last 8 years, CENL awarded 21 EKN Grants to:

Moldova (3), Bulgaria (3), Estonia (2), Lithuania (2), Hungary (2), Austria (1), Latvia (1), France (1), Romania (1) Bosnia (1), British Library (1), Serbia (1), Georgia (1), Russia (1)

Some example of successful EKN projects include:

EKN 2023, France: Three major libraries, which are carrying out projects to build high-rise, robotic, hypoxic storage facilities (BL, BnF, KB) organized a knowledge-exchange seminar involving the staff of the respective institutions. These exchange days have enabled cooperation to be established between the teams in charge of building similar projects in France, the United Kingdom, Switzerland and the Netherlands, ranging from scientific and technical monitoring, to feedback, sharing best practices and plans.

EKN 2022, Bulgaria: Exhibition "Wealth of color and tradition". In challenging times, we look at what connects us - culture, tradition, customs: The National Libraries of Bulgaria, Croatia, Georgia, Montenegro, Serbia and Romania have an abundance of albums, photographs, sketches and illustrations of traditional costumes and embroidery of the region. Each library contributed 5 digital objects for a common exhibition, illustrating the richness and color of these traditional elements. The exhibition of 30 boards, featuring visuals and short annotations in English, was opened in Sofia in Nov. 2022 with representatives from each country and the respective embassies.

EKN 2021, Estonia: An international seminar, which gathered 338 registered participants from 20 countries, discussed how the changes on the labour market would affect libraries and librarians in the coming years. We are recruiting and training our future staff already today, thus we should be able to anticipate the skills and competencies needed by libraries as well as perceive the changes on the labour market on a larger scale in order to be competitive in recruitment.

EKN 2019, Austria: In two Webinars held in October and November 2020 CENL members from Germany, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Romania, Moldova, and Ukraine shared knowledge on their Danube Collections and collaborated in the creation of the Europeana exhibition “The Danube: connecting Europe”. The exhibition was launched in Spring 2021 and, promoted by CENL, Europeana and the Austrian National Library, attracts visitors across Europe and worldwide.

All EKN reports can be found in the members area of the [website](#).

In 2022, the EC decided to extend the programme until 2025. A decision on the continuation of the programme is now pending and the EC is asked to discuss the future of the EKN grant and to decide whether the grant should be continued or not.

Considering that the EKN is the last remaining funding programme besides the SKE and that no other programme is currently planned, the Secretariat proposes to extend the EKN for a further 4 years until 2029.

**Question: Does the EC agree to extend the EKN for a further 4 years (2026-2029)?**

If the EC agrees to continue the EKN grant, it may wish to adjust the criteria for the grant.

By now, the CENL secretariat evaluates and ranks the applications according to the following criteria before proposing and recommending to the EC the approval or rejection of a grant:

- Planning: Has the application demonstrated a clear plan for project development and implementation?
- Geographical reach: Do the collaborators represent more than one geographical regions?
- Impact: Does the proposed project demonstrate new connections between CENL members?
- Quality of engagement: Will this project generate many forms of engagement?
- Audience reach: To what extent does the project reach audiences beyond those working on the project?
- Inclusion: Does the project involve less established networks or institutions from under-funded regions?
- Scale: Is the scale of the project appropriate to the programme proposed?
- Legacy: is it likely that connections or networks will persist beyond the project’s end date?
- Would it be the first EKN grant for the NL?

**Question: Does the EC still agree to these criteria?**

In recent years, the CENL secretariat observed a trend in applications to focus on bilateral knowledge exchange (“working conference”, “study exchange”, “exchange program”, “professional training workshop”).

**Question: Should collaboration with more than one partner be more explicitly encouraged?**