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*Βιβλιοθήκες και ψηφιακό χάσμα: πρόγραμμα Pulman*  
*Libraries and digital divide: the pulman network*

**PULMAN is Europe's Thematic Network for Public Libraries and cultural institutions operating at local level**

Introduction:

Since its inception in May 2002, the PULMAN Network of Excellence has set out to strengthen the performance and help achieve the potential of public libraries in their emerging new roles and to help them prepare to fulfill their potential in the digital era of an e-Europe.

PULMAN's major work involves:

- consolidating, packaging, disseminating and translating relevant social and technical **standards and guidelines** on innovative new services, for the professional community in an easily usable electronic format.
- providing policy support and stimulating cross-domain constituency development between public libraries and cultural institutions (museums and archives) nationally and at European level
- disseminating information and encouraging the transfer of knowledge about good practice in library policy making, service development, delivery and access for all to practitioners and policy makers
- assisting in the reduction of disparities in provision across member and associate states and identifying the agenda for wider International Co-operation

A key outcome of PULMAN is to encourage integrated activity involving public libraries, museums and archives operating at local level.

Keywords: *public libraries, museums, archives, PULMAN, local services, cultural heritage, cross-domain, cross-sectoral, digital, 1ST, FP6.*

The PULMAN Network is now firmly established with representation from 26 European countries...and a further 10 to follow (see below). The first twelve months of activity have been a very productive period.

### The PULMAN Guidelines

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Work has now been completed on drafting the first edition of the PULMAN Digital Guidelines and they will shortly be available on PULMANWeb. The draft Guidelines were evaluated at a workshop, attended by 69 experts from 35 countries, in Helsinki on 18/19 February. The experts, which included PULMAN's own Virtual Advisory Board, assessed the Guidelines from all perspectives including format, usability and content. The result of the Workshop was to establish a well-defined editorial framework for the finalisation of the Guidelines. They are now ready for publication on PULMANWeb during June 2002. Proposals for their translation into 18 national languages have already been received.

The 122 million registered users of public libraries in 29 countries of Europe attest to the importance and impact of public libraries in society. To realise their full potential in the digital era, public libraries must be prepared to offer new and innovative digital services that empower citizens to successfully achieve their personal goals in a changing society and to contribute to a cohesive society and a successful knowledge-based economy in Europe.

The Guidelines are intended to point public libraries and - more tentatively - their local cultural partner organisations into this era. They include sections on: Policy Issues;

Good Practice; and the Future Agenda - together a very wide range of links to innovative services.

The Guideline contents are as follows:

### Introduction

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#### **Section 1 -Social Policy guidelines**

Social inclusion

Citizen participation in new forms of Civic Governance

Access and services for people with physical and visual impairments

Public library services for children and schools

Public library services supporting education in adult life.

Support for business and the Economy

Access to Diverse cultural content

Access to music and Non-print Material

## **Section 2 - Management guidelines**

Performance Measures and Evaluative Tools

Funding and Financial Opportunities

Management practices and models for co-operation and partnership

The Public Interest in Access to Copyright protected materials

The Handling of Legal Issues

## **Section 3 -Technical guidelines**

### **Digitisation**

Developments in Integrated Library Systems

Multimedia digital service delivery

Delivery channels

Resource description, discovery and renewal.

Tailoring of services and citizen interaction and participation

Technical Responses to Multilingual Issues

We do not expect that the Guidelines will be a perfect instrument in their first edition and for this reason will be inviting comment from all interested parties via a process of Open Review which will lead to a revised edition in time for the Policy Conference in March 2003 (see below).

#### **• National Workshops**

Perhaps the first use of the translated Guidelines will be to provide a basis for discussion at the 26 PULMAN National Workshops scheduled to be held in September and October 2002/ The Workshops will also try to move forward the agenda for cross domain activity and co-operation among public libraries, museums and archives

Feedback from the National Workshops will feed into the planning and agenda of the PULMAN Policy Conference.

In support of this cross-domain agenda, a meeting was organized by EBLIDA on 7 June 2002 in The Hague. This involving participants from a range of European organisations and associations from the museums and archives sector in discussing the terrain for co-operation between public libraries, museums and archives and to further contribute to the Policy Conference agenda.

#### **• Policy Conference**

The PULMAN Policy Conference will be held in Oeiras, Portugal (13-14 March 2003).

Its target audience is policy makers and influential practitioners in public libraries and their partner institutions. EBLIDA is co-ordinating and planning the Policy Conference.

PU LM AN Web <http://www.pulmanweb.org/>

PULMANweb now provides access to a growing variety of resources and information - The Guidelines will be the newest arrival.

- **Country Reports** on the situational environment for public libraries are now available from 17 countries and more will follow
- β The **PULMAN Express**- PULMAN's own electronic newsletter- has been issued twice with a third issue to follow in July. Subscription is available via the website. Each edition provides news and an update on the work of PULMAN as well as a feature article on one European country
- β **A database of distance learning resources** is now 'live' on PULMAN Web. The database currently contains information on some 162 courses of relevance to staff working at all levels in libraries, archives, museums and the broadly-based cultural heritage sector. The database has a public interface for on-line searching and another private interface for data entry. The content of the database will be expanded as more courses are identified through consultation with Network members etc
- © **Training workshops** have now been organised in four European Centres of Excellence: Aarhus (Denmark), Helsinki (Finland), Ljubljana (Slovenia) and Veria (Greece). The one-week workshops are set to take place during the month of September 2002. The training is designed for library managers, future library managers, senior librarians and policy makers from countries where public library policies and practices would benefit from training and exposure to current theory and demonstrations of innovative practice. One of the goals of the training is that the learning will extend beyond the group participating in the training. The training is designed to encourage the trainees to share what they have learned with colleagues and potentially make changes within their own organisations and systems.

The following table summarises applicants and participation in the Training Workshops.

Country	Number of applications	Number of participants
Bulgaria	5	4
Czech Republic	3	3
Estonia	4	3
Greece	1	1
Hungary	3	2
Latvia	1	1
Lithuania	9	5
Poland	3	3
Portugal	8	5
Romania	4	4
Slovak Republic	2	2
Slovenia	2	2
Spain	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>46</b>

### PULMAN-XT

Finally, PULMAN is growing! The proposal to extend the PULMAN Network to countries bordering European Union countries and its candidate states, favourably evaluated under the 8th Call of 1ST FP5, is in the final stage of negotiation at the time of writing and expected to begin in mid-June.

The countries involved include Russia and Turkey (as partners) and a number of other countries represented by Country Co-ordinators (Albania, Belarus, Bosnia Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Yugoslavia and Ukraine).

PULMAN-XT will run for 14 months and will enable the new countries to benefit from the work of PULMAN including translated Guidelines, National Workshops and attendance at the PULMAN Policy Conference. In addition, an ambitious new programme of institutional mentoring and twinning will be established.

MDR Partners (UK, co-ordinator), Eblida, Helsinki City Library (Finland), Oton Zupancic Library, Ljubljana (Slovenia) and Veria (Greece) are the PULMAN partners who will make the 'bridge' with PULMAN-XT.

## What next

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Although this ambitious workprogramme is consuming a great deal of the time of PULMAN Network members, thoughts are already beginning to turn to what comes next.

How can the important resources created by PULMAN, such as the Guidelines, the training resources and the political work be sustained once the EC-funded period is over? How best can the cross-domain agenda for local services in cultural heritage, learning, employment skills etc best be developed under IST in future and how might the PULMAN Network contribute. We are working on it!