



Fostering Knowledge Societies in the Western Balkans through Knowledge Integration: Development of national library information systems and their integration into a common educational, research and cultural area of the EU

(Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), Montenegro and Serbia)

UNESCO Contact:	Indrajit Banerjee, Director, Knowledge Societies Division, Communication and Information Sector Focal point: Bhanu Neupane, Programme Specialist
	BSP/CFS Contact: Tor Margarida, Senior Program Specialist
Office Address:	7 Place Fontenoy, Paris 75007
Geographical scope/benefitting countries:	The Western Balkan States
Duration (in months):	36 Months
Total funding requested:	10 Million Euro
Partner(s) institutions:	IZUM in Maribor, Slovenia, Category II center under the Auspices of UNESCO – Regional centre for the development of library information systems and current research information systems National libraries University of Shkodra, Albania
Project Contact:	Bhanu Neupane (b.neupane@unesco.org), Tomaž Seljak (tomaz.seljak@izum.si)
Document status:	Draft, 23 June 2016

Executive Summary:

The overarching aim of this project is to enable countries in the Western Balkans to establish national library information systems through enhanced automation and integration of libraries as knowledge pool. The project also aims to foster knowledge exchange processes as a tool for reconciliation and reparation.

The project will create necessary conditions to enhance the automation and inclusion of libraries of already participating countries in the national library information systems and in the COBISS.Net network; harmonize cataloguing rules with international recommendations and standards; set up compatible research information systems (E-CRIS) in the participating countries (databases on researchers, research organizations and research projects); enhance capacities for knowledge integration and digitalization and create a condition for mutual learning and collaboration of various stakeholders fostering as well as stimulate innovation processes and economic and social development in the region.

*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence

Brief Description

Introduction and Relevance

Knowledge Networking and Networked Libraries can (i) provide means to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by facilitating cross-boundary access to information; (ii) Build capacities for knowledge integration, including digitalization and ICT applications; (iii) Facilitate Peace Building Efforts, which will be achieved by the integration of knowledge within peoples' lives; (iv) Bring about Economic, Social and Environmental Prosperity by strengthening and enabling countries to make a gradual transition towards knowledge-based economies; and (iv) Improve conditions of good governance and security by improving transparency in the knowledge for knowledge transactions and on local state of affairs.

Beneficiaries:

The Project will primarily benefit researchers, librarians, teachers and students from Western Balkan region. The project will primarily benefit more than 25 million population citizens of (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), Montenegro and Serbia).

Proposed Project

The proposed project will build upon the outcomes of the 2006, which was implemented to Support to Knowledge and Intercultural Dialogue.

Objectives and Outputs

The overarching objective of this project will be to enable countries in the Western Balkans to foster knowledge integration processes, by creating developing capacities, and strengthening national library information systems through enhanced automation and integration of libraries as knowledge pool.

1. Appropriate normative framework for Networked Libraries fostered
 - Co-financing framework for the creation, editing and download of bibliographic records developed
 - Harmonized national databases and catalogues established
 - Language versions of COBISS user interfaces and manuals prepared
 - Equipment requirement assessed and co-financing secured
 - Access to selected international e-resources essential for the verification of the classification of bibliographic units and their evaluation established
 - International COBISS Conferences organized
 - Digitalization capacity of the region strengthened
2. Capacity to implement COBISS.Net strengthened
 - Technical and staff condition assessment tools developed
 - Capacities of leading instructors enhanced for COBISS Shared Cataloguing and other COBISS applications
 - Integrated post graduate study on librarianship initiated
 - Specialized information centers for monitoring the adequacy of classification of researchers' bibliographic units according to the valid typology for bibliographies in the COBISS system organized

COBISS

COBISS (Co-operative Online Bibliographic Systems and Services) is an organizational model, linking libraries into national library information systems and a regional COBISS.Net network with shared cataloguing, shared COBIB bibliographic databases and local databases of participating libraries as well as integrated management of library catalogues and bibliographies. The key features of the shared cataloguing with integrated management of library catalogues and researchers' bibliographies are:

- Substantially lower costs of processing/cataloguing library material,
- Higher quality of bibliographic records and multi-functionality of databases,
- Transparency of research results and other national intellectual production.

The COBISS system was designed in 1987 by IZUM, which since 2012 operates as a Category II center under the auspices of UNESCO.

Number of linked libraries in COBISS.Net (31 December 2015)

SLOVENIA (reference system)				
Libraries	Total	COBISS.SI	Unlinked	Linked / Unlinked
- national	1	1	-	
- public	61	61	-	100 %
- academic	81	81	-	100 %
- special	130	130	-	100 %
	273	273		

SERBIA				
Libraries	Total	COBISS.SR	Unlinked	Linked / Unlinked
- national	2	2	-	
- public	218	77	141	35 %
- academic	204	68	136	33 %
- special	246	24	222	10 %
	670	171	499	

MACEDONIA				
Libraries	Total	COBISS.MK	Unlinked	Linked / Unlinked
- national	1	1	-	
- public	34	26	8	76 %
- academic	49	8	41	16 %
- special	40	7	33	17 %
	124	42	82	

MONTENEGRO				
Libraries	Total	COBISS.CG	Unlinked	Linked / Unlinked
- national	1	1	-	
- public	21	12	9	57 %
- academic	18	10	8	56 %
- special	8	4	4	50 %
	48	27	21	

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA – Federation of BiH				
Libraries	Total	COBISS.BH	Unlinked	Linked / Unlinked
- national	1	1	-	
- public	60	17	43	28 %
- academic	56	28	28	50 %
- special	63	4	59	6 %
	180	50	130	

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA – Republika Srpska				
Libraries	Total	COBISS.RS	Unlinked	Linked / Unlinked
- national	1	1	-	
- public	49	7	42	14 %
- academic	41	6	35	15 %
- special	17	1	16	6 %
	108	15	93	

ALBANIA				
Libraries	Total	COBISS.AL	Unlinked	Linked / Unlinked
- national	1	-	1	
- public	41	8	33	20 %
- academic	31	18	13	58 %
- special	10	3	7	30 %
	83	29	54	

KOSOVO				
Libraries	Total	COBISS.KS	Unlinked	Linked / Unlinked
- national	1		1	
- public	34		34	
- academic	17		17	
- special	9		9	
	61		61	
TOTAL	1274	334	940	

BULGARIA				
Libraries	Total	COBISS.BG	Unlinked	Linked / Unlinked
		2		








Development Assistance to Libraries (2016–2018)

Development assistance instruments	AL	BH	KS	MK	CG	SR
1. Co-financing the creation, editing and download of bibliographic records when establishing bibliographic databases and catalogues (based on the number of new, edited or downloaded/linked records)	X	X	X	X	X	X
<p>Bibliographic databases are the basis of every library information system and a source of metadata for various digital document repositories. In order for national bibliographic databases to be optimally (multi)functional they must include bibliographic records for the complete national intellectual production (retrospectively and current) as well as records for the library material available in participating libraries. For various historical reasons, not all bibliographic records in the local databases of certain libraries are linked to the national COBIB shared database and the irregularities can only be corrected manually by comparing and linking the records. As a rule, libraries are falling behind schedule regarding the creation of bibliographic databases, which can be overcome only if creating, editing, and downloading bibliographic records is intensified (by increasing the productivity of skilled librarians for shared cataloguing and the reinforcement of staff in certain libraries).</p>						
2. Harmonising national databases /catalogues of libraries with the global catalogue WorldCat (OCLC)	X	X	X	X	X	X
<p>The national bibliographic databases must also be linked to the global catalogue WorldCat, which consistently ensures global access to information on the national intellectual production. Software for a periodical synchronisation and linking of the national catalogues with the global catalogue WorldCat must be developed.</p>						
3. Assistance to national COBISS centres in national libraries in providing technical and staff conditions for performing their tasks	X		X			
<p>Appropriate equipment and staff in the national COBISS centres are of key importance for the development of national library information systems. In the existing centres, where in the beginning the basic equipment was provided and the work of staff in some libraries was co-financed by IZUM, must be modernized. Organizing new centres (X) depends on ensuring appropriate premises and equipment. During the duration of this project, financing of at least one extra position of employment must be ensured to all the centres.</p>						
4. Translating COBISS user interfaces and manuals as well as other material into Albanian and Macedonian	X		X	X		
<p>Language equality is one of the fundamental principles of European integration. Costs of translating into Serbian and partially into Bosnian are covered by the national COBISS centres when paying for the use of the COBISS software to IZUM. However, costs of translating into Albanian and Macedonian until 2018 must be covered by the international development assistance to target countries. For the purposes of translating user interfaces and other documents into any of these languages two translators would be needed. Both translators could be employed in IZUM (optimum solution) or one could be employed in IZUM and the other in the national COBISS centre (Albania, Macedonia).</p>						
5. Training of leading instructors for COBISS Shared Cataloguing and other COBISS applications	X		X			
<p>Based on experience, one of the colleagues from the new national COBISS centre should be trained for shared cataloguing in the COBISS system while being employed in IZUM for at least two years. This would enable the new colleague to get to know IZUM employees, which would make it easier to communicate and resolve any issues in the future.</p>						
6. Training of librarians for COBISS Shared Cataloguing	X	X	X	X	X	X
<p>In all the countries, libraries that are located in remote regions are having problems with covering the travelling costs of librarians for their training in the national COBISS centres (transportation, accommodation, daily allowances).</p>						

Development assistance instruments	AL	BH	KS	MK	CG	SR
7. Co-financing purchase of workstations (PCs) and other peripheral equipment in libraries	X	X	X	X	X	X
Intervention is needed where libraries cannot purchase the required equipment themselves.						
8. Part-time postgraduate study of librarianship at the University of Shkoder (AL) following the curriculum of the University of Ljubljana (SI) or the University of Zadar (CR), and preparing the 1 st level study programme to be carried out in Albania.	X		X	X	X	
<p>Because there is no study of librarianship in the target countries (X), the library staff have no formal education in librarianship. Furthermore, the number of librarians in most libraries is critically low, which makes it hard for libraries to function properly. For comparison: in Slovenia, which according to population is roughly the same size as Kosovo, there are more than 600 librarians who have at least a university degree in librarianship, while in Kosovo there are 12. On the basis of an agreement concluded in 2007 between IZUM and the University of Pristina, University of Skopje, University of Zadar, and University of Ljubljana, a part-time postgraduate study of librarianship (once following the curriculum of the University of Zadar and once following the curriculum of the University of Ljubljana) was organized for librarians with a university degree in any field. Without a doubt, this is the fastest way for the reinforcement of library staff. It is planned to organize a part-time postgraduate study in the academic year 2016/2017 at the University of Shkoder, following the curriculum of one of the aforementioned universities. 30 scholarships are planned to be issued for candidates who already have a university degree and are under 35 years of age. The candidates must be guaranteed employment in libraries in advance. In parallel, a 1st level study programme of librarianship according to the Bologna process for accreditation and performance in Albania must be prepared.</p>						
9. Organising specialised information centres for monitoring the adequacy of classification of researchers' bibliographic units according to the valid typology for bibliographies in the COBISS system	X	X	X	X	X	X
<p>In managing researchers' and university lecturers' bibliographies in national library information systems it is necessary to monitor classifications of bibliographic units according to the valid typology for bibliographies in the COBISS system (scientific article, professional article, scientific conference contribution, etc.). In Slovenia, six specialized information centres carry out this task. In other countries, these types of centres, financed by the relevant national agencies and ministries, still need to be established.</p>						
10. Co-financing access to selected international e-resources, when such access is essential also for the verification of the classification of bibliographic units and their evaluation	X	X	X	X	X	
Libraries in some countries do not yet have access to international e-resources (e-journals and other databases).						
11. Co-financing the inclusion of libraries in the national library information system and the conversion of local databases (catalogues) from other systems (if justified)	X	X	X	X	X	X
<p>As a rule, costs of installing and implementing the COBISS software amount to EUR 1,000, which is a big burden for some libraries. In some cases, conversions of local databases (catalogues) from other systems would be necessary.</p>						
12. Annual International COBISS Conferences (organization and covering selected participants' travel expenses)	X	X	X	X	X	X
<p>Participation of librarians, representatives of universities and the relevant ministries at the international COBISS conferences is of great importance for raising the awareness on the importance of a systematic development of national library information systems and an opportunity to exchange experience and get acquainted with global development trends.</p>						

LETTER OF SUPPORT

The participants of the session of the COBISS.Net Council (8 July 2016, Maribor, Slovenia) support the project of UNESCO "Fostering Knowledge Societies in the Western Balkans through Knowledge Integration: Development of national library information systems and their integration into a common educational, research and cultural area of the EU" (Draft, 23 June 2016).

National Library of Serbia Laslo Blašković, Director Serbia	
National and University Library of B&H dr. Ismet Ovčina, Director Bosnia and Herzegovina	
National and University Library of the RS Tatjana Dunović, Deputy Director Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republic of Srpska	
Ministry of Science and Technology Sanela Vuklišević, Head of E-CRIS Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republic of Srpska	
National and University Library Jovica Tasevski, Deputy Director Macedonia	
National Library of Montenegro Jelena Đurović, Director Montenegro	
Agency of Research, Technology and Innovation Geron Kamberi, Director Albania	
University of Shkodra dr. Vinçens Marku, Head of Department Albania	