

What is library legislation, public policy, library policy?

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The foundation of library work

- Publicly funded libraries do not exist in legal vacuum
- but within the context of a body of law often derived from the constitution of a country
- In Europe:
- CHARTER OF FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, Article 11: Freedom of expression and information

“Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers”

→ The publicly supported library is an entity that provides free, equal, and equitable access to information for all people of the community it serves

What is public policy?

- A term used to describe a collection of laws, mandates, or regulations established through a political process.
- The means by which a government maintains order or addresses the needs of its citizens through actions defined by its constitution.
- Here: the possible aggregation of legislation, decrees, regulations, and other normative acts having an impact on library work.

Which areas of public policy are important for libraries?

Examples:

- Access to information
- Capacity Building of People
- Advancement of Public Interest
- Sustainable Development

Library legislation

- Public discussion on the introduction of library legislation often leads to more recognition of up-to-date library services.
- countries with excellent library systems have library laws at national level
- simple laws, which only provide a framework
- complex laws, which regulate many details
- has to fit into the legal and political structures of the respective state

Library legislation: some principles

- The state recognizes the importance of libraries in the context of guaranteeing freedom of information and opinion for its citizens
- The existence of libraries is secured through public funding
- The basic service of a library is free of charge for the citizen
- Libraries are independent in their collection building
- Libraries cooperate within the national library network

Library policies

- Libraries adopt administrative policies and procedures to regulate the organization and use of library materials, services, and facilities. (ALA)
- should include a statement of its mission, goals, and priorities
- a library's policies should address general operation, collection development, behavior, use of electronic resources, and personnel (Howlett)

- The governance of a library system is based on public policies, library legislation and library policies
- The basis requirement is full understanding of the library's role in a democratic society and joint responsibility is assumed at all political levels

 The revised **Council of Europe / EBLIDA Guidelines on library legislation and policy in Europe** can assist to reinforce a Europe-wide effort to strive towards a well-informed, inclusive, and democratic society

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