

ARMENIAN–LATVIAN LIBRARY DIALOGUE
Inclusion, Innovation and International Exchange
through Eu4dialogue*

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In early 2025, Armenia became the regional hub for meaningful professional exchange in the library field, hosting a series of seminars and webinars within the framework of the EU4Dialogue programme.

Organized jointly by the Armenian Library Association and the National Library of Latvia, these events showcased the power of libraries to act as open platforms that foster community engagement and cross-cultural understanding.

A Strong Foundation for Collaboration

Since its launch in 2021, the EU-funded initiative “EU4Dialogue: Improving exchanges across the divide through education and culture” has promoted intercultural dialogue and professional development across the South Caucasus and Moldova. Armenia has been a highly active participant, with its librarians engaging in diverse training and mobility programmes in Latvia.

A key highlight of this cooperation was the participation of 10 Armenian library and cultural professionals in the international summer

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school “Library as a Cultural Platform for the Community”, held in August 2024 across five Latvian cities. The programme featured:

- Field visits to libraries, museums, and cultural institutions
- Thematic workshops on community engagement,
- Youth reading programmes
- Local history and heritage preservation
- Innovation in public libraries and participatory programming

Armenian participants represented a wide range of institutions, including:



- National Library of Armenia
- Khnko Aper National Children's Library
- Fundamental Scientific Library of NAS RA

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- Av. Isahakyan Central Library
- Matenadaran – Mesrop Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts
- Vache and Tamar Manoukian Matenadaran (Etchmiadzin)
- Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute
- Shirak Regional Library

Beyond participation, Armenian delegates actively contributed to the learning process through presentations and case study sessions, sharing innovative practices and challenges from their institutions. These contributions not only enriched the summer school experience but also highlighted Armenia’s evolving role as a proactive voice in regional library development.

The experience deepened institutional connections and reinforced the value of **mutual learning and cultural exchange** in driving sustainable progress in the library field across borders.

Armenian–Latvian Library Conference (February 19–20, 2025 | Yerevan)

The flagship event of the year, the “EU4Dialogue: Armenian–Latvian Dialogue for Library Development” conference, brought together library professionals, educators, and cultural actors for two days of intensive and inspiring exchange. Held at the Khnko Aper National Children’s Library and the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute, the event served as a meaningful milestone in strengthening cooperation between Armenian and Latvian library communities.

In her opening address, Ruzan Tonoyan, President of the Armenian Library Association, emphasized the rapidly evolving role of libraries in addressing societal challenges—from promoting inclusive services to leading the way in digital transformation. She underlined the vi-

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tal importance of sustained international partnerships in empowering librarians to meet these challenges with professionalism and innovation.

The conference offered a diverse and dynamic programme of presentations delivered by both Armenian and Latvian experts. Key themes included:

- Inclusive library services for people with disabilities
- Accessible literature and assistive technologies
- Strategies for promoting reading among children, youth, and adults
- Innovative public library programming and community engagement initiatives

The seminar became a true and direct platform for experience exchange, encouraging open dialogue, mutual learning, and collaborative reflection on common goals.

Beyond the formal programme, the Latvian delegation was invited to participate in curated cultural visits to some of Armenia's most esteemed institutions, including the National Library of Armenia, the Matenadaran – Mesrop Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts, the Vache and Tamar Manoukian Matenadaran in Etchmiadzin, and local municipal libraries. These visits deepened the delegation's understanding of Armenia's rich literary and cultural heritage, while also opening new avenues for institutional partnership.

The conference concluded with a certificate ceremony, symbolizing not just participation but a renewed commitment to cross-border cooperation in the library field. The atmosphere throughout the event reflected a shared belief: that libraries, through collaboration and innovation, can become powerful engines of inclusion, learning, and cultural dialogue in our societies.

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Library for All – Latvia’s Inclusive Programmes (15 April 2025 | Webinar within National Library Week in Armenia)

As part of National Library Week celebrations in Armenia, the Armenian Library Association organized an inspiring international webinar titled “Library for All: Inclusive Programmes of the National Library of Latvia.” This online event served as a powerful demonstration of how libraries can become truly welcoming, equitable, and empowering spaces for all members of society.

The webinar brought together over 60 library professionals and cultural workers from across Armenia, including participants from Ye-



revan, Artashat, and Etchmiadzin, and was hosted at the Khnko Aper National Children’s Library. It provided a unique opportunity for Armenian librarians to explore and learn from Latvia’s well-established inclusive practices.

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The session was led by two distinguished specialists from the National Library of Latvia, Kristine Kazakāne and Liene Mukanene, who are central figures in Latvia’s inclusion-focused library programming. They introduced participants to the country’s flagship initiative, “Library for All,” and shared the values that underpin it: accessibility, equity, and active participation.

Through detailed presentations and real-life examples, the speakers showcased:

- The strategic vision behind inclusive library development in Latvia
 - Tailored services for people with disabilities, seniors, and other underrepresented groups
 - The use of assistive technologies, barrier-free physical design, and inclusive content curation
 - Staff training and institutional commitment to building empathy-driven services
 - Community partnerships and user engagement models that ensure no one is left behind

Armenian participants engaged actively in the Q&A portion of the webinar, exchanging perspectives on local challenges and exploring how similar models could be adapted to the Armenian context. The session sparked reflection and motivation, especially among librarians working in regional settings who are eager to expand the scope of inclusive services in their own institutions.

This event not only reinforced the spirit of Armenian–Latvian cooperation, but also empowered Armenian library professionals to rethink inclusivity not as a separate initiative, but as a core principle of library service design. It underscored the idea that an inclusive library is

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not only physically accessible - but also socially responsive, emotionally safe, and culturally respectful.

The webinar marked yet another step toward building a modern, inclusive library ecosystem in Armenia, informed by best practices and enriched by international dialogue.

From Results to Vision: Advancing Library Development Together

Building on this momentum, Armenia is taking steady steps toward strengthening its library sector through collaboration, capacity-building, and knowledge exchange. The Armenian–Latvian partnership has laid the groundwork for more inclusive, innovative, and community-oriented practices. As the outcomes of these initiatives continue to unfold, Armenian libraries are well-positioned to further evolve as accessible and engaged cultural spaces serving diverse audiences in the years to come.