



National Libraries in Voluntary National Reviews

Opportunities for Engagement

IFLA has produced a variety of materials on how libraries and library associations can get involved in Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) – the process which sees around 50 countries a year discussing their progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the UN. We have an overall [background brief](#), and a [monthly guide](#) to getting involved in VNRs. The [UN's own website](#) offers an overview of which countries are undertaking VNRs in 2020 and more.

When it comes to National Libraries, there are a number of specific reasons why governments may wish to engage them in preparing VNRs:

1. To meet the recommendation from the UN to engage with all parts of government.
2. To provide core information on how they are meeting SDG target 11.4 (Safeguarding cultural and national heritage).
3. To respond to the numerous references to the importance of information across the SDGs (appearing more or less explicitly in twenty targets).

In turn, National Libraries can potentially benefit from engaging for the following reasons:

1. VNRs provide a chance to underline the status of National Libraries as key agencies for promoting development in general within a country.
2. VNRs offer an opportunity to highlight the National Libraries' work across policy areas outside of culture among a wider range of contacts than usual.
3. National Libraries can act as ambassadors for the entire National Library field, raising the profile of (and potential support for) all institutions.

In terms of how to get involved, each National Library will have a good idea of how their government works. In some cases, the relevant ministry will have an SDG coordinator while in others, it may make more sense to contact the appointed coordinator for the VNR directly in order to underline experience. See our guide on ['Find Out Who's in Charge'](#) for more.

Once you know this, you can find out what the process to be followed is – are there consultations inside of government and/or outside? Are written contributions or hearings planned?

It will also make sense to coordinate with your national library association in order to share understanding and plan contributions. Some messages may be better coming from an association than from a national library, or vice-versa.

Finally, prepare evidence that you can use in the review. If you have evaluated projects which have made a difference to people outside of the library, you could turn this into an SDG Story. You will also have information about your activities which could contribute to any submissions.

You should also think about developing a Country Profile on the Library Map of the World and supporting further data provision – this will give you a great reference point in your submissions. To find out more about how to do this, please contact librarymap@ifla.org. For other question on engaging in Voluntary National Reviews, please contact stephen.wyber@ifla.org.