

**What was said about the National library of Albania on the first day of the conference
entitled "The Role of Libraries in knowledge-based Information Society"
(2 December 2010)**

Before the conference started, the director of the National library of Montenegro was approached by the vice-director of the National library of Albania (Etleva Domi), who announced that she would be taking the delegation of directors to see the director Aurel Plasari at 18.30.

In his lecture "COBISS system organisational model and regional COBISS.Net network", Tomaž Seljak, director of IZUM, among other things, stressed the leading role of national libraries and the hitherto attempts for establishing cooperation with the National library of Albania, as follows:

- On 12 September 2005, IZUM informed the National library of Albania that its delegation would like to visit them and present the COBISS.Net library network and the applications for library automation.
- In October 2005, a meeting was organised in Tirana between a delegation from IZUM and the representatives from various ministries; the arranged meeting with the vice-director of the National library was cancelled upon arrival at the library.
- Upon an invitation from IZUM, the director and vice-director of the National library of Albania confirmed their participation at the COBISS 2005 conference, but their attendance was cancelled at the very last minute (after their plane tickets had already been paid for).
- On 14 March 2006, an invitation to join the COBISS.Net project was sent by the directors of the national libraries of the participating countries and IZUM to the National library of Albania. There was no response.
- On 28 March 2006, two representatives from IZUM met in Ljubljana with the vice-director of the National library of Albania, and presented to her the possibilities of cooperation.
- On 8 May 2006 an invitation was sent to the National library of Albania to sign the Agreement on the Inclusion of Libraries in Albania in the Free Exchange of Bibliographic Records within the COBISS.Net Network. There was no response.
- On 21 May 2010, upon an intervention from the Ambassador of the Republic of Albania in Slovenia, the director of IZUM met with the director of the National library of Albania and presented to him the possibilities of cooperation. The library director told him that, according to the current legislation, he was not authorised in any way to sign the abovementioned agreement and that he was not interested in regional cooperation. According to him, signing the Agreement would be high treason.

After that, Tomaž Seljak presented the letter from the directors of national libraries dated 24 November 2010, along with his letter to Aurel Plasari dated 1 December 2010 and his reply. He also read out loud the Agreement on the Inclusion of Libraries in Albania in the Free Exchange... (the interpreters received the official translations) and added that the audience can judge for themselves, what kind of high treason signing such an agreement would be. He finished his presentation with the slide: "Further cooperation in the COBISS.Net project is impossible without the National library of Albania".

The question from the audience whether other countries encountered problems when implementing the system was answered by Sreten Ugričić, director of the National library of Serbia. He stressed the possibility of downloading records as the key advantage of a shared cataloguing system as in some cases only 5% of bibliographic records must be originally catalogued. He added that "everywhere in our region, as it seems, resistance due to inertia, traditionalism, unprofessionalism, mystification, fear of progress and cooperation with the region and the world is inevitable. Colleague Plasari's remark about high treason is tragicomic, for that would mean that all of us who cooperate in the COBISS.Net system would be traitors against our countries. On the contrary, we are doing our users, culture and science a favour and we came here to offer our Albanian colleagues help and cooperation that they would benefit from mostly."

That was all that was said about the National library of Albania that day. Meanwhile, the vice-director of the National library of Albania had left the hall; her colleagues left during the break too. Also, the announced meeting with director Aurel Plasari was called off. On the following day, Plasari declared the stated events to be an attack against the National library of Albania.