

RDA IN CENTRAL (AND EASTERN) EUROPE

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The paper provides an overview of the adoption, translation, and implementation of Resource Description and Access (RDA) in Central and Eastern Europe within the broader European context. It outlines the evolution of RDA from its origins as the successor to AACR2 to its current role as an international, framework-based standard grounded in the IFLA Library Reference Model and International Cataloguing Principles. Author examines the current state of RDA implementation in Central Europe, focusing on the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary, where varying levels of methodological preparation, translation activity, and practical application can be observed. The benefits of both partial and full translations of RDA are discussed, especially in relation to linked open data, interoperability, and long-term metadata sustainability.

Keywords: Resource Description and Access, IFLA Library Reference Model, International Cataloguing Principles, international standards, open data, Central Europe, Eastern Europe



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INTRODUCTION

Resource Description and Access (RDA) started its “career” as the successor of the second edition of the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules (AACR2 2006). It took a while until it became an international standard, based on fundamental IFLA documents such as the International Cataloguing Principles (Galeffi, Bertolini, Bothmann, Rodríguez a McGarry 2017) and the IFLA Library Reference Model (Riva, Le Bœuf and Žumer 2017). In some parts of the world, translation and implementation of RDA began well before the 3R Project (3R Project Final Report 2024) that led to the creation of the new, *Official RDA Toolkit* (RDA Toolkit 2025). (The first edition of RDA, referred to as *Original RDA Toolkit*, is set to end sometime in May 2027.) For example, in Europe, in the framework of the *DACH project*, German-speaking countries (Austria, Germany and the German-speaking part of Switzerland, also known as the DACH region) introduced RDA for authority data in 2014 and for bibliographic data in 2016 (Behrens 2024). As we shall see below, there are other countries in the content which also made significant progress in translating and adopting the standard.

RDA IN EUROPE

While the use of RDA started to become inevitable in the world of library cataloguing, there are regions

where its implementation is not even subject to consideration. At the same time, although it started as an Anglo-American initiative, a huge part of the world came to the decision to adopt it as the basis of its national bibliographic standard.

As for Europe, above-mentioned *DACH project* is more than worth mentioning. As the project is described in detail by Renate Behrens (2024) in her article published at the *Central European Library and Information Science Review (CELISR)*, I am going to summarize it here very briefly.

It is of huge importance when implementing an international standard such as RDA to have a reliable, well-functioning organisational structure. In DACH countries, the head of this structure is the Committee on Standards, made up of members from various major cultural institutions. The work is conducted by experts delegated to subordinate working groups. After the conclusion of the 3R Project, experts in the German-speaking region decided to launch their own 3R for DACH libraries project, which was carried out between March 2020 and December 2022. The aim was to develop a common cataloguing manual that would result in RDA-compatible data.

In addition to the RDA manual, a documentation platform has been established in order to collect the relevant documentation and make it available in a centralized Wikibase environment. This platform also provides a basis for training. As stated by Behrens (2024): „Following these two very successful projects, the cataloguing process in German-speaking countries was reorganised and adapted to the new *Official Toolkit*.”

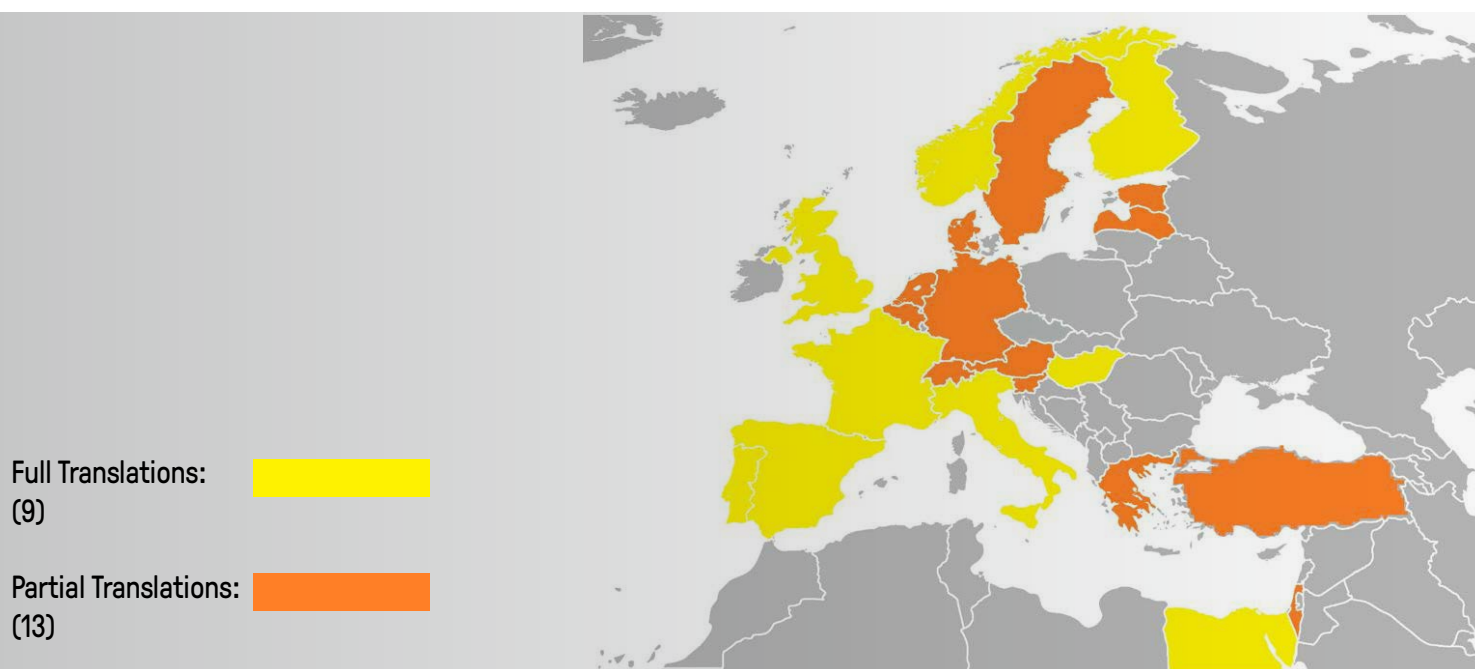


FIGURE 1 RDA IN EUROPE

Finland has also provided a possible model for RDA implementation. Finnish libraries have chosen to keep RDA as their main cataloguing standard and every effort has been made to translate it and implement it nationwide. The *Original RDA Toolkit* had been implemented not only by most of the libraries but some archives and museums as well. As a result, Finnish translators have committed to translating the text of the *Official Toolkit*, with the goal of implementing the *Official RDA Toolkit* in 2025. At the same time, Finnish content on the freely available *RDA Registry* remains updated, and, last but not least, the free access to the *RDA Toolkit* is provided to the Finnish libraries by the National Library of Finland via a national license (*RDA* 2021).

Plans are in place to translate RDA into other European languages as well. Aside from Finnish, a full translation is being prepared in Catalan, French, Hungarian, Italian, Norwegian, Portuguese and Spanish. In some cases (French, Portuguese and Spanish) the translation procedures are coordinated by non-European countries. Partial translation work is also underway for Danish, Dutch, Estonian, German, Greek, Hebrew, Korean, Latvian, Slovenian, Swedish and Turkish. (For the difference between full and partial translation see below: *Why to translate and implement RDA?*)

European institutions and organizations, such as (national) libraries, bibliographic agencies, and companies interested in (or even committed to) the translation and implementation of RDA can join the European RDA Interest Group (EURIG). Being a EURIG representative is an effective way to learn on best practices and share your own experiences with library experts across the continent (*About EURIG* 2025).

RDA IN CENTRAL (AND EASTERN) EUROPE

In Central (and Eastern) Europe, there is much work still to do in order to spread the use of RDA in this region.

The National Library of the Czech Republic started to create bibliographic descriptions according to RDA in 2015 (*Národní knihovna* 2016). Czech colleagues still use the *Original Toolkit*. Detailed guidance, instructions, and examples can be found on

the library's website (*Katalogizační pravidla* 2025). MARC 21 records created since implementation of RDA rules include the designation „rda” in the sub-field „e” of the 040 field (040 – Cataloging Source).

Similar to their Czech colleagues, experts at the National Library of Slovakia also compiled and published methodological documents to provide cataloguers with instructions on how to create bibliographic descriptions according to RDA (*Národná bibliografia* 2025). Additionally, Slovak National Library published the 2016 (print) version of RDA (*RDA Steering Committee* 2017). However, to my knowledge, they are not planning yet to translate and implement the new *Official Toolkit*.

To sum up, important steps towards implementing RDA at a national level have been taken in both countries. A further step of importance could be the publication of the Czech and Slovak translations of RDA vocabularies through the *RDA Registry*. (As far as our region is concerned, the *Registry* currently includes vocabularies in Estonian, German, Greek, Hungarian, and Latvian.)

In Hungary, an inter-institutional working group (*RDA-HU WG*) coordinated by the National Széchényi Library is preparing the translation and implementation of RDA. Several guidance papers and other relevant documents, such as articles on project results, have been published and made available through the WG's website (*RDA-HU* 2025). A detailed recommendation document is going to be published soon, as well as a manual entitled *Road to understanding RDA*. Learning materials, recommendations, and guides are planned to be collected and published on a wiki platform in the near future. Courses and workshops have been organized and run by the Hungarian Library Institute and the Bibliography Section of the Association of Hungarian Librarians in order to promote and facilitate the transmission to RDA at a national level (*Forrásleírás* 2025). The document entitled *RDA Frequently Asked Questions* has also been translated into Hungarian (*RDA FAQ* 2022).

Other national agencies in the region have already begun considering implementation and are trying to find the simplest and most cost-effective way to launch such a huge project. Outreach activities such as dedicated webinars could help a lot either in the decision-making, or in clarifying the workflows just before starting the process itself. The RDA Steering Committee is open to involving new communities and supporting them in their adoption of the framework standard.

WHY TO TRANSLATE AND IMPLEMENT RDA?

Let's have a look at the benefits of translating and implementing RDA. RDA is an international standard, an implementation of IFLA Library Reference Model, determining the future of library cataloguing. Through the *3R Project*, RDA has come to be understood as more than a descriptive cataloguing standard; that is, RDA has expanded to become a package of data elements, guidelines, and instructions for creating metadata, with the guidelines and instructions being encapsulated in the *Official RDA Toolkit*, and data elements readily available for reference in a linked open data context through the *RDA Registry*. In this sense, the term "framework" can be used to characterize the current RDA. According to FAQ, RDA is being developed to meet the needs of:

- international communities,
- cultural heritage communities,
- linked data communities.

Metadata created according to RDA guidelines are intended to support the discovery and identification of resources in library and other cultural heritage collections (*RDA Frequently Asked Questions 2022*).

RDA has already been translated into more than 20 languages, and is compatible with ISBD consolidated edition, MARC 21 format for bibliographic data, MARC 21 format for authority data, and DCMI metadata terms; RDA data can be representing using Resource description framework (RDF).

If you are considering translating RDA, you have two options: partial translation and full translation.

PARTIAL TRANSLATIONS

Partial translation covers the translation of *RDA Reference*, which contains the element sets and value vocabularies useful to managing your data in a way that is compliant with current publishing approaches for bibliographic data while preparing the data for reuse in the semantic web. „*RDA Reference includes the labels, definitions, and scope notes of RDA entities, elements, and vocabulary encoding schemes for controlled data values. RDA Reference data are continuously maintained and are published through GitHub in coordination with Toolkit releases*” (*RDA Frequently Asked Questions 2022*).

One of the main benefits of making partial translations publicly available is that the RDA ontology and RDA vocabularies become readily available to the creators and stewards of metadata working in various languages. The availability of the RDA ontology and vocabularies in multiple languages enables descriptions of a wide range of resource types to be sourced from many contributors, and supported in a linked data context.

Translating the *RDA Reference* file and applying RDA to your everyday workflow would enable the long-term accessibility of your high quality metadata, in a world that is rapidly changing due to new technologies. When developing *RDA Reference*, users' interest and convenience are the chief approach, in compliance with the IFLA document, *International Cataloguing Principles*. In addition, *RDA Vocabularies* and *RDA Registry* are licensed under a *Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License*, making them easy to share and use within your language community.

FULL TRANSLATIONS

Full translations cover the translation of not only *RDA Reference* as found in the *RDA Registry* and *GitHub*, but also the text of *RDA Toolkit*. This text includes guidelines and instructions regarding RDA entities and elements, and their application.

„*RDA Toolkit is an integrated, browser-based, online product that allows users to interact with a collection of cataloguing-related documents and resources, including RDA*” (*RDA Frequently Asked Questions 2022*). It provides metadata creators with guidelines, instructions, and useful examples (also in MARC 21, if applicable) for resource description. In addition, national bibliographic agencies and international communities may opt to publish policy statements and community resources to supplement the official text of RDA, all within the structure of the *RDA Toolkit*. The benefit of making full translations available in multiple languages is, again, to broaden the accessibility of RDA as an international standard, and enable communities around the world to communicate and support each other through a common framework.

Translators of RDA can use a computer-assisted translation software (TRADOS), but you can also apply other AI-based tools to support your translation process.

CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that RDA has a huge impact on the bibliographic universe. The draft of the *ISBD for Manifestation (ISBDM)* published by IFLA mentions RDA among related standards, emphasizing that:

- „ISBDM metadata is designed to be interoperable with RDA;
- ISBDM stipulations correspond to implementation scenarios A (linked open data) and B (relational or object-oriented data) of RDA;
- all ISBDM elements are mapped to RDA elements,

with minor differences in granularity that arise from the more restricted scope of ISBDM;

- *The RDA Toolkit* and *RDA Registry* are the basis of refinements to the LRM attributes and relationships in the ISBDM ontology with associated stipulations and guidance. The standard is maintained by the RDA Steering Committee“ (*Related standards 2025*).

The growing importance of the standard makes it necessary to raise awareness of it among library professionals worldwide. This short article aims to contribute in some way to the fulfillment of this task.

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