

# Internationalisation of RDA (with a special focus on Europe)

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## ABSTRACT

This article provides an overview of the implementation of RDA in Europe, focusing on the translations from English into European languages.

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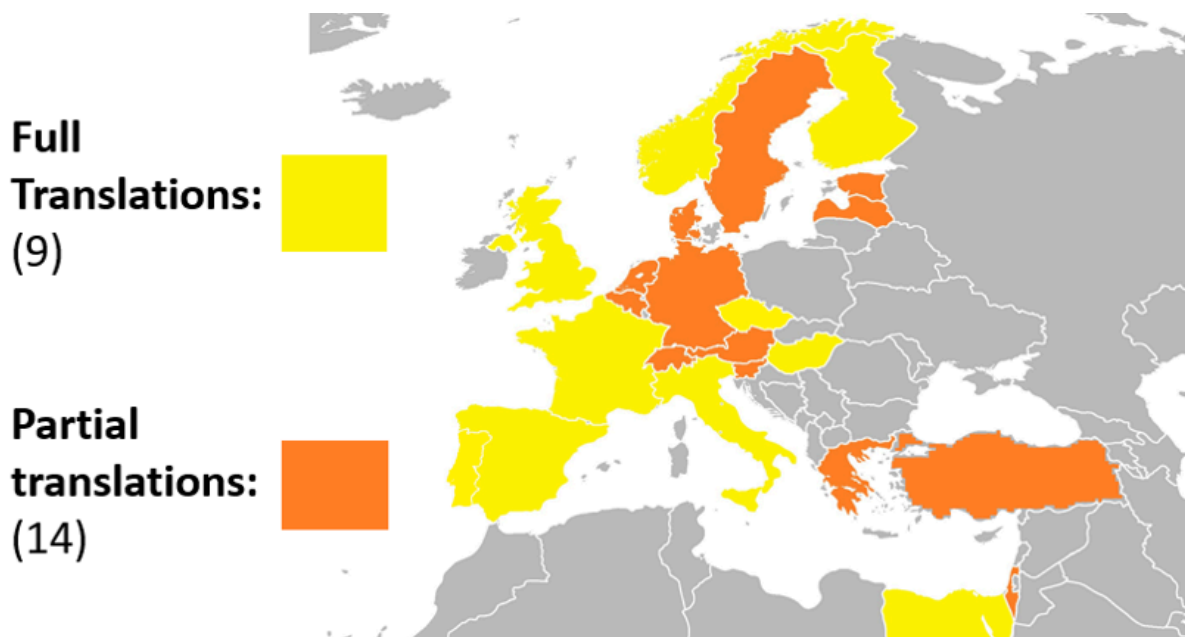
## RDA in Europe

Europe shows a pretty heterogenous picture in terms of adopting RDA. Some countries are quite active in this regard, while others have seemed to start considering adoption of the standard only recently, and there are regions where implementation is not even subject to consideration. Nevertheless, there are parts of the continent, where translation and implementation of RDA began well before the 3R project ([RDA Steering Committee and ALA Digital Reference, 2021](#)).

For instance, 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](#)). After the conclusion of the 3R project, experts of the region launched the "3R for DACH libraries" project, carried out between March 2020 and December 2022. They developed a common cataloguing manual and in addition to that, a documentation platform has been established in order to collect the relevant documentation and make it available in a centralized Wikibase environment. It also serves as a basis for training. The project is described in detail by Renate Behrens in her article published at the Central European Library and Information Science Review, CELISR ([Behrens, 2024](#)).

Another country which has also made significant progress in translating and adopting the standard is Finland. Finnish libraries have chosen RDA as their main cataloguing standard, and the Original RDA Toolkit has been implemented by most of the libraries, and some of the archives and museums. Finnish colleagues are keen on

keeping the content on the freely available RDA Registry updated. Access to the RDA Toolkit is provided to Finnish libraries by the National Library of Finland via a national license ([Kansalliskirjasto, 2016](#)).



**Figure 1:** RDA in Europe

[Figure 1](#) shows a map of European countries with or working towards full or partial translations of RDA. (Note: the UK, which uses RDA in its original English language version is also shown). Currently a full translation is being prepared in Catalan, Finnish, French, Hungarian, Italian, Norwegian, Portuguese and Spanish. It is worth noting, that in some cases (French, Portuguese and Spanish) the translation procedures are coordinated by non-European countries. Partial translation work is underway for Czech, Danish, Dutch, Estonian, German, Greek, Hebrew, Korean, Latvian, Slovenian, Swedish and Turkish. In Europe, institutions and organisations interested in the translation and adoption of RDA can join the European RDA Interest Group (EURIG) to learn about best practices and share their own experiences ([European RDA Interest Group, no date](#)).

At this point, it is worth clarifying the difference between full and partial translation. Partial translation covers the translation of RDA Reference, which “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 Steering Committee, 2022](#)). RDA Vocabularies and RDA Registry are licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

Full translations cover the translation of not only RDA Reference, but also the text of RDA Toolkit, including guidelines and instructions regarding RDA entities and elements, and their application. Translators of RDA receive a licence to use computer-

assisted translation software (TRADOS), and, of course, they can apply other AI-based tools to support their translation process as well. RSC provides help and support, including online “refresher” events on translation processes, to ease translators' work ([Dancs, 2026](#)).

We can see on the map in [Figure 1](#) that we still have much to do to reach new communities. However, some of the national institutions already made huge steps towards implementing the standard. For instance, the National Library of the Czech Republic started to create bibliographic descriptions according to RDA in 2015 ([Národní knihovna České republiky, 2015](#)). They have published detailed guidance, instructions, and examples on the library's website ([Národní knihovna České republiky, 2026](#)). Similarly, colleagues at the National Library of Slovakia compiled and published methodological documents to provide cataloguers with instructions on how to create bibliographic descriptions according to RDA ([Slovenská národná knižnica, 2025](#)). In 2017 the Slovak National Library published the print version of RDA ([Rohoňová and Valko, 2017](#)). A further step for these two countries could be the publication of the Czech and Slovak translations of RDA vocabularies through the RDA Registry. Czech experts already started to make a partial translation in 2025.

### **Outreach activities and internationalisation**

The RSC is usually informed of national agencies considering implementation and trying to find the simplest (and most cost-effective) way to launch their translation projects. The Committee supports decision-making through outreach activities such as dedicated webinars. As well as RDA Toolkit content and the RDA Registry, RDA FAQ ([RDA Steering Committee, 2022](#)) is suggested to be translated, even before starting your own implementation project. RDA FAQ can be shared with your language committee to help clarify what RDA is about. When promoting RDA, it is worth mentioning that the standard has already been translated into more than 20 languages, including ones with large language communities, such as Chinese, French, German, and Spanish. It is also helpful to emphasise its relations to other standards, and its compatibility with ISBD consolidated edition, MARC 21 format for bibliographic and authority data. The draft of the ISBD for Manifestation (ISBDM) made it clear that it aims to be compatible with RDA, stating “ISBDM metadata is designed to be interoperable with RDA: resource description and access” ([International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, 2025](#)).

Some outreach events are held as a part of the regular RSC meetings, and RDA regional organisations and representatives are also keen on holding such occasions, where RSC members are active participants. Once a year, Translators' Meetings are held at the annual EURIG meetings. In February 2026, the RSC organised an online event entitled *RDA in Europe (and the world) – a webinar on RDA for beginners and advancers* with more than 200 participants, which, besides providing an overview on the adoption of RDA around the world, covered some basic information on the standard, including the benefits of its translation and implementation, how to join the

RDA community, and insights into some best practices. At this free public webinar, experts were invited directly from European language communities, where implementation of RDA is taking place or under consideration.

By reaching out to potential users, RDA could become a global standard that is reflected in its linguistically and culturally diverse, heterogeneous user community. While striving to make the standard as international as possible, developers of RDA face challenges such as multiscryptism and religious-neutrality. RSC counts on active contributions of bibliographic agencies and other community members, who can assist the development of the standard through various working groups. The broader the user community, the more feedback can be integrated into the standard.

Here you can find a list of ongoing and finished translations. Languages with other writing systems than Latin are highlighted in italic.

As you can see, five of the nine full translations have already been published in the Toolkit, and most of the partial translations are available in the Registry. The full Hungarian translation is underway and is expected to be published in 2026. The Hungarian RDA Reference, as well as the Italian one, are in the Registry.

Full translations	Partial translations
<i>Arabic</i> (in Registry)	Czech
Catalan (published)	<i>Chinese</i> (in Registry)
Finnish (published)	Danish (in Registry)
French (published)	Dutch (in Registry)
Hungarian (in Registry)	Estonian (in Registry)
Italian (in Registry)	German (in Registry)
Norwegian (published)	<i>Greek</i> (in Registry)
Portuguese	<i>Hebrew</i>
Spanish (published)	<i>Korean</i>
	Latvian (in Registry)
	Slovenian
	Swedish (in Registry)
	Turkish (in Registry)
	<i>Vietnamese</i> (in Registry)

Publication of the Spanish translation of Official RDA can be viewed as significant due to the large community of Spanish-speaking users. It was completed by a small staff at the National Library of Mexico supported by the Información Científica Internacional and the RDA Toolkit staff ([RDA Steering Committee, 2025](#)).

If you are reading this article in a community whose language is not yet represented, please do feel free to get in touch for an informal conversation. You can approach me as Translations Team Liaison Officer ([transwgchair@rdatoolkit.org](mailto:transwgchair@rdatoolkit.org)), or the Director of ALA Digital Reference, James Hennelly ([jhennelly@rdatoolkit.org](mailto:jhennelly@rdatoolkit.org)).

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