The future of the European book sector

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The Committee on Culture and Education adopted an own-initiative report by Tomasz FRANKOWSKI (EPP, PL) on the future of the European book sector.

Books play an essential role in our societies, as an invaluable source of knowledge, education, culture, information and entertainment and a vital means of preserving and disseminating the EU's values, cultural and linguistic diversity and cultural heritage. The European book sector is one of the largest cultural and creative industries in Europe, with around 600 000 titles published annually, and the overall value chain is estimated to employ more than half a million people in the EU.

The societal importance of access to books

The report called on all Member States to recognise books as essential goods and take measures at national level to **further promote reading from an early age**. It stressed the value of books as tools for promoting diversity and the inclusion of groups at risk of marginalisation in society, in particular people lacking digital skills, people with disabilities and minorities.

Members called on Member States, in this regard, to implement the European Accessibility Act and to take measures to ensure that books are available in accessible formats for people with **disabilities**. They recalled the need to respect the derogations granted by the European Accessibility Act, particularly for small and micro-publishers, and to ensure that the requirement to make e-books accessible does not result in a diminished range of books on offer on the market.

Supporting and promoting better circulation of European books

The report called for a **budget increase for the Creative Europe programme** for 2028-2034, in particular by dedicating more funds to the book sector and support to the translation of European non-fiction books. In this regard, Horizon Europe should also be extended to book sector.

Member States are urged to promote diverse works of significant cultural and societal value by increasing the acquisition budget of **libraries** so that they can expand the range of their books and collections, support local bookshops and safeguard the investment capacity of publishers.

Members stressed the need to support the creation and translation of European books, in particular by enhancing public funding at national and European level so as to improve the circulation, visibility and diversity of translated books. They underlined the importance of mobility and exchanges for authors and translators in order to facilitate their creative work.

Members stressed the need to **support the translation of European non-fiction books**, particularly via the Creative Europe programme, which does not currently allow for this;

Members support the further promotion and wider outreach of the EUPL in the Member States, including through the creation of a category for European children's books.

Towards an inclusive reading culture

Members called for more initiatives to promote reading in the Member States, such as the introduction of **'cultural vouchers'**, particularly for young people and marginalised groups. They called for more support

for children's books in particular, which should be promoted by establishing a **'first book programme'**, or similar initiatives at national level to encourage reading.

Underlining the importance of early childhood reading, particularly of printed books, the report stressed the role of school libraries and trained librarians in providing guidance, facilitating access to knowledge and fostering reading habits.

Member States are called on to establish a network of **'reading ambassadors'**, consisting of respected and influential role models who would share their passion and enthusiasm in order to promote reading. For its part, the Commission should create a **label for independent bookshops in the EU** in order to boost the visibility of local bookshops and promote the diversity of European books.

Members welcomed the various initiatives to support Ukraine since the beginning of the war, and in particular those aimed at ensuring children's access to books, facilitating the integration of refugees and protecting Ukrainian culture. They called on the Commission to ensure that sufficient funding continues to support the Ukrainian book sector, including artists and authors, for the duration of the war and the reconstruction of the country.

Challenges for the future growth of the book sector

Members called on the Commission and the Member States to support the sector in its **green transition**, in particular through financial incentives, research and collaboration between all actors in the supply chain, including on the use of raw materials, sustainable packaging and transport needed for the production and distribution of printed books.

The Commission and the Member States are called on to monitor paper and ink production and to support the development of the industrial capacities of the European book sector in order to reduce carbon emissions by printing books in Europe.

The report welcomed the sector's efforts to produce printed books in a greener and more sustainable manner through the use of certified and recycled paper. It called on the Commission to create a **'Printed in Europe' label**.

Acknowledging the use in the sector of **artificial intelligence** (AI), Members stressed the importance of transparency related to AI training, including data collections and their sources. They encouraged the Commission to: (i) support training for those involved in the book sector to equip them with the knowledge and skills necessary to adapt successfully to changes related to AI; (ii) support research and innovation projects on the use of AI in order to enhance the efficiency of the sector, notably with regard to environmental sustainability and accessibility.

The report called for books to be **zero-rated for VAT** in the Member States, irrespective of their format or how they are accessed, in order to support the knowledge economy, encourage reading and promote its lifelong benefits. Members called for the **interoperability** of e-books across devices, as consumers should be able to acquire their e-books from any supplier, regardless of their e-reading device, and to access, read, store and transfer any e-book in any format.