The future of the European book sector

2023/2053(INI) - 14/09/2023 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 513 votes to 11, with 8 abstentions, a resolution on the future of the European book sector.

The European book industry is one of Europe's most important cultural and creative sectors, with around 600 000 titles published each year. The overall value chain is estimated to employ more than half a million people in the European Union.

The societal importance of access to books

Parliament called on all Member States to consider books as an essential goods and to take measures at national level to **encourage reading from an early age**. It stressed the need to strike a balance in the book ecosystem by safeguarding the role of the various players in the value chain, such as authors, publishers, printers, distributors, translators, bookshops and libraries.

Stressing the value of books as a tool for **promoting diversity and the inclusion of groups at risk of marginalisation** in society, Members called on Member States to implement the European legislative act on accessibility as soon as possible and to take measures to ensure that books are available in formats accessible to **people with disabilities**.

They called on Member States to provide sufficient financial and structural support to the sector, particularly to SMEs and micro-enterprises, while funding research and innovation to increase accessibility.

Supporting and promoting better circulation of European books

Parliament called on the Commission and the Member States to **increase the budget** of the Creative Europe programme for 2028-2034, in particular by allocating more funds to the book sector, and to extend its support to the sector through the **Horizon Europe programme** for 2028-2034.

Member States are invited to promote a diversity of works of significant cultural and societal value by increasing the acquisition **budget of libraries**, to support local bookshops and safeguard the investment capacity of publishers.

Members stressed the need to support the **creation and translation of European books**, including **non-fiction**, and the importance of mobility and exchanges for authors and translators to facilitate their creative work. They supported the continued promotion of the European Union Prize for Literature and the extension of its scope in the Member States, in particular 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, which could make it easier to buy books. **Children's books** should be given greater support through the establishment of a ‘first book programme’ or similar initiatives at national level to encourage reading. Member States should set up a network of ‘**reading ambassadors**’, respected and influential role models, who would share their passion and enthusiasm to promote reading.

The resolution emphasised the role of libraries and independent bookshops as cornerstones of the local community. It called on the Commission to create a label for independent bookshops in the EU in order to increase the visibility of local bookshops and promote the diversity of European books.

The Commission should ensure that sufficient funds continue to support the Ukrainian book sector, including artists and authors, during the war and the reconstruction of the country.

Challenges for the future growth of the book sector

Parliament 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 should take account of the importance of paper in the design and implementation of green transition policies. It is called on to create a **'Printed in Europe' label**.

The Commission should also establish clear guidelines for the implementation of the Deforestation Regulation, taking into account the specific nature and complexity of the book sector chain.

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 resolution stressed the need to ensure **fair competition** and transparency of publishing house ownership in the book market in order to guarantee consumer choice and cultural diversity. It underlined the unfair practices by certain dominant online players that abuse their position to the detriment of smaller actors in the value chain.

Parliament 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.

Lastly, 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.