

DIGITAL ECONOMY AND SOCIETY

ESTABLISHING A TRUE DIGITAL SINGLE MARKET WHILE PRESERVING A SUSTAINABLE BOOK TRADE

Brussels 12.05.2015

On 12 May, six days after the official release of the Digital Single Market strategy, the European and International Booksellers Federation (EIBF), together with the German Publishers & Booksellers Association (Börsenverein), organized one of the first events to publicly discuss the newly published initiative.

Hosted by the Representation of the State of Hessen to the EU, the event was honoured by the presence of Mr Günther Oettinger, Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society, who delivered the keynote speech. Each link of the book chain (author, publisher and bookseller) was represented on the discussion panel. French MEP Virginie Rozière took an active part in proceedings.

Like most cultural industries, EIBF acknowledges the efforts of the Commission to face the issues hindering the implementation of digital services. More particularly, the EIBF welcomes the Commission's commitment to tackle VAT issues related to e-books. EIBF is also delighted that the Commission wishes to foster e-commerce and make it easier for retailers trading over national borders.

Booksellers also noted with strong approval that the Commission acknowledged that the role of online platforms and their market power raises a number of issues that warrant further analysis.

Indeed, it is the establishment of a level playing field which is at stake here. So are issues such as interoperability, VAT, copyright and sustainability. Consumers must be able to buy their books at the bookshop and in the format of their choice. The more bookshops there are – whether bricks-and-mortar or online - the richer is the offering to consumers, who benefit from a variety of shopping opportunities and sales channels.

In a robust, diverse retail landscape, consumers can choose to buy their books locally or online, in the high street or in specialized bookshops, and in the format of their choice. Consumers are the ultimate beneficiaries of a level playing field governing commercial conditions and healthy competition between retailers.



EIBF co-President Fabian Paagman said: *“The European and International Booksellers Federation strongly believes that public policies should promote a competitive business environment so that consumers can have access to a broad array of retailers and a wide range of books in all formats. We welcome the Digital Single Market Strategy Communication and we are looking forward to co-operating with the European Commission in that direction”*

Going beyond the simple expression of support for the new Digital Single Market Strategy, the event co-organised by the EIBF and the German Publishers and Booksellers Association provided a good opportunity to kick off a lively debate crucial for creative industries and in particular for the book trade in the coming years.

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