

## FAQs Geoblocking

### What is geo-blocking?

Geo-blocking is a practice which effectively prevents consumers from buying certain electronic content or services if they are not from a specific country, generally the one in which the trader is based. For example, access to a website may be blocked to foreign users; content, goods or services may not be available to consumers trying to purchase or access these from abroad; or prices and conditions may differ based on the consumer's geographical location.

### What is the proposed Geo-Blocking Regulation and what does the European Commission hope to achieve with it?

In 2016, the Commission tabled a proposal for a Regulation to end unjustified geo-blocking and other online practices discriminating on the basis of consumers' location, residence, or nationality within the internal market.

With the geo-blocking proposal, the Commission hopes to unlock the full potential of the internal market in a digital age and to make cross-border online shopping a reality. The Commission hopes that opening up the digital markets across borders will allow consumers to benefit from the advantages of online commerce to a greater extent than is currently the case.

### What does the proposed Geo-Blocking Regulation entail for the sale of e-books, for booksellers, and for European consumers?

While the original proposal did not include copyright-protected material (including e-books) within the scope of the regulation, this measure was introduced by the European Parliament.

In practice, and if the legislation was passed in its current state, booksellers could find themselves being forced to sell e-books to consumers all over the European Union.

EIBF fully supports the objective behind the proposal – to open up markets to consumers across the EU and facilitate cross-border commerce. However, EIBF is convinced that including copyright protected content and services will not serve this purpose. On the contrary, oversimplifying the dynamics of the bookselling industry will undermine the profitability of the market, forcing traders to abandon e-books to the detriment of consumers and suppliers all over Europe.

At the time being, from a retail point of view, selling e-books is not profitable. Booksellers do it as a service to their customers, however they do not make any profit when selling an e-book: they actually sell at a loss. Selling across borders would represent further additional transaction and cyber-security costs for booksellers. In a market that is not, for the time being, showing signs of growth, these extra costs may cause some retailers to leave the market altogether, with reduced consumer choice and less cultural diversity on the e-book market as a result.

### Who is involved and who is deciding?

The Commission, the European Parliament, and the Council of the EU are all involved. The Commission tabled the original proposal in May 2016. The Council agreed on their position in November 2016, the European Parliament issued its report in April 2017. Assisted by the Commission, the Council and the Parliament will now meet in so-called "trilogue" negotiations – informal meeting of representatives from the Commission, the Council, and the Parliament – in order to align their positions.

---

#### Write to us

European and International  
Booksellers Federation  
Square Marie-Louise 69 – 1000 Brussels  
Belgium

[info@europeanbooksellers.eu](mailto:info@europeanbooksellers.eu)

#### Call us

+32 (0) 2 223 49 40

#### Follow us



@Booksellers\_Fed



European and International  
Booksellers Federation

[www.europeanbooksellers.eu](http://www.europeanbooksellers.eu)

### What is the timeline for the proposal?

It is difficult to say with certainty what the timeline for the proposal looks like, as it depends on the relative positions of the institutions, and on their willingness and ability to compromise. The European Parliament is expected to suggest amendments to the Council's position (also referred to as the Council's 'General Approach'), after which the proposal will be referred back to the Council for a second reading. As the European institutions are closed for most of the summer, the Competitiveness Council (the Council body in which the geo-blocking file is being discussed) will not reconvene until autumn.

If the Council can agree to the changes, the proposal will be passed. If not, a so-called Conciliation Committee will be convened, consisting of representatives from each of the 28 Member States, 28 MEPs, and the relevant Commissioner.

### Why should I sign the petition?

Inclusion of copyright protected content and services – such as e-books – in the scope of the regulation, remains one of the most contentious points of disagreement to be settled in the upcoming negotiations between The European Parliament and the Council of the EU. So far, The Council of the EU has advocated for leaving such content and services out of the scope of the regulation, and it is extremely important to make our voice heard in the course of the next couple of months to make sure that they will continue to fight for this. By signing the petition, you can increase the volume of our voice and help make the far-reaching, negative consequences this proposal could represent for the book chain clear to decision makers.

- Sign the petition here: [www.change.org/geoblocking](http://www.change.org/geoblocking)

### What else can I do?

If you would like to contribute to ensuring a book-friendly Geo-Blocking Regulation, please help us spread awareness by liking and sharing the content we post on Facebook and Twitter – including this petition. You can also get in touch with your national MEPs by sending them an e-mail.

- Find the EIBF on Facebook here: <https://www.facebook.com/BooksellersFed/>
- Find the EIBF on Twitter here: [https://twitter.com/Booksellers\\_Fed](https://twitter.com/Booksellers_Fed)
- Find your MEPs here: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/map.html>

### Background information

- See The Commission's initial legislative proposal here: <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/proposal-regulation-geo-blocking>
- Read more about The Council's position here: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/11/28-geo-blocking/>
- Read more about The European Parliament's position here: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/imco/subject-files.html?id=20170217CDT01221>
- Read more about the EIBF's position here: <http://www.europeanbooksellers.eu/gb-joint-letter-eibf-fep/>
- [Have a look at EIBF infographics:](#)

---

#### Write to us

European and International  
Booksellers Federation  
Square Marie-Louise 69 – 1000 Brussels  
Belgium

[info@europeanbooksellers.eu](mailto:info@europeanbooksellers.eu)

#### Call us

+32 (0) 2 223 49 40

#### Follow us



@Booksellers\_Fed



European and International  
Booksellers Federation

[www.europeanbooksellers.eu](http://www.europeanbooksellers.eu)

- You can follow the file in the EP's Legislative Observatory here:  
[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?reference=2016/0152\(COD\)&l=en](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?reference=2016/0152(COD)&l=en)
- Read more about the ordinary legislative procedure here:  
<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/aboutparliament/en/20150201PVL00004/Legislative-powers>

---

Write to us

European and International  
Booksellers Federation  
Square Marie-Louise 69 – 1000 Brussels  
Belgium  
[info@europeanbooksellers.eu](mailto:info@europeanbooksellers.eu)

Call us

+32 (0) 2 223 49 40

Follow us



@Booksellers\_Fed



European and International  
Booksellers Federation

[www.europeanbooksellers.eu](http://www.europeanbooksellers.eu)