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REPORT

on the future of the European book sector
(2023/2053(INI))

Committee on Culture and Education

Rapporteur: Tomasz Frankowski

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MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on the future of the European book sector (2023/2053(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Article 167 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
- having regard to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of 13 December 2006,
- having regard to the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired, or Otherwise Print Disabled of 27 June 2013,
- having regard to Directive 2001/29/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 May 2001 on the harmonisation of certain aspects of copyright and related rights in the information society¹,
- having regard to Directive 2001/84/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 September 2001 on the resale right for the benefit of the author of an original work of art²,
- having regard to Directive 2006/115/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 December 2006 on rental right and lending right and on certain rights related to copyright in the field of intellectual property³,
- having regard to Directive 2012/28/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 on certain permitted uses of orphan works⁴,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2017/1563 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 September 2017 on the cross-border exchange between the Union and third countries of accessible format copies of certain works and other subject matter protected by copyright and related rights for the benefit of persons who are blind, visually impaired or otherwise print-disabled⁵,
- having regard to Directive (EU) 2017/1564 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 September 2017 on certain permitted uses of certain works and other subject matter protected by copyright and related rights for the benefit of persons who are blind, visually impaired or otherwise print-disabled and amending

¹ [OJ L 167, 22.6.2001, p. 10.](#)

² [OJ L 272, 13.10.2001, p. 32.](#)

³ [OJ L 376, 27.12.2006, p. 28.](#)

⁴ [OJ L 299, 27.10.2012, p. 5.](#)

⁵ [OJ L 242, 20.9.2017, p. 1.](#)

Directive 2001/29/EC on the harmonisation of certain aspects of copyright and related rights in the information society⁶,

- having regard to Directive (EU) 2019/882 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 April 2019 on the accessibility requirements for products and services⁷,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2017/1128 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 June 2017 on cross-border portability of online content services in the internal market⁸,
- having regard to Directive (EU) 2019/790 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 April 2019 on copyright and related rights in the Digital Single Market and amending Directives 96/9/EC and 2001/29/EC⁹,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2021/695 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021 establishing Horizon Europe – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, laying down its rules for participation and dissemination, and repealing Regulations (EU) No 1290/2013 and (EU) No 1291/2013¹⁰,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2021/818 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2021 establishing the Creative Europe programme (2021 to 2027) and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1295/2013¹¹,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2022/1925 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 September 2022 on contestable and fair markets in the digital sector and amending Directives (EU) 2019/1937 and (EU) 2020/1828 (Digital Markets Act)¹²,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2022/2065 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 October 2022 on a Single Market For Digital Services and amending Directive 2000/31/EC (Digital Services Act)¹³,
- having regard to the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages,
- having regard to its resolution of 19 May 2021 on artificial intelligence in education, culture and the audiovisual sector¹⁴,
- having regard to its resolution of 5 May 2010 on ‘Europeana – the next steps’¹⁵,
- having regard to its resolution of 27 September 2007 on i2010: towards a European digital library¹⁶,

⁶ [OJ L 242, 20.9.2017, p. 6.](#)

⁷ [OJ L 151, 7.6.2019, p. 70.](#)

⁸ [OJ L 168, 30.6.2017, p. 1.](#)

⁹ [OJ L 130, 17.5.2019, p. 92.](#)

¹⁰ [OJ L 170, 12.5.2021, p. 1.](#)

¹¹ [OJ L 189, 28.5.2021, p. 34.](#)

¹² [OJ L 265, 12.10.2022, p. 1.](#)

¹³ [OJ L 277, 27.10.2022, p. 1.](#)

¹⁴ [OJ C 15, 12.1.2022, p. 28.](#)

¹⁵ [OJ C 81 E, 15.3.2011, p. 16.](#)

¹⁶ [OJ C 219 E, 28.8.2008, p. 296.](#)

- having regard to the Council resolution of 12 February 2001 on the application of national fixed book-price systems¹⁷,
 - having regard to Rule 54 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Culture and Education (A9-0257/2023),
- A. whereas 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;
 - B. whereas books improve vocabulary and language skills, helping people to understand and express complex ideas, as well as fostering critical thinking, curiosity, analytical skills, democratic participation and social inclusion;
 - C. whereas books also play a particularly important role in a person's life from a very young age, by contributing to children's cognitive, emotional and social development;
 - D. whereas 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;
 - E. whereas the entire book sector value chain relies on the balance between its various actors, such as authors, publishers, distributors, printers, translators, booksellers, libraries and ultimately readers; whereas each actor plays a vital role and any measure negatively impacting one of them affects the entire chain;
 - F. whereas authors are the creative source of all books and the backbone of the sector;
 - G. whereas European publishers, the vast majority of which are SMEs or even micro-enterprises, play a crucial role in guaranteeing cultural diversity and freedom of expression, thereby allowing a plurality of voices to be heard;
 - H. whereas the creation of a book requires publishers to make consistent and risky long-term investments in order to ensure a wide range of creative works;
 - I. whereas the ability of the European book sector to provide the public with a wide range of books relies on an effective copyright framework that allows each part of the value chain to remunerate creation and invest in new books;
 - J. whereas the book sector plays an essential role in fostering freedom of expression, which can only be exercised by ensuring freedom, independence, editorial plurality and authors' responsibility within the publishing industry;
 - K. whereas the influence and regulatory pressure exerted by the governments of some Member States on the book sector and the phenomenon of self-censorship by authors have a negative impact on cultural diversity and freedom of expression, which conflicts with EU values;

¹⁷ [OJ C 73, 6.3.2001, p. 5.](#)

- L. whereas printed books, e-books and audiobooks are distinct options available on the market, and they complement each other;
- M. whereas printed books account for around 85 %¹⁸ of book sales in the European market, are in particular preferred by young readers and have been proven to be more beneficial for child development;
- N. whereas bookshops and libraries, particularly within local communities, serve as gateways for promoting reading, knowledge and culture and play a crucial role in fostering social and digital inclusiveness;
- O. whereas Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, the consequent rise in costs for the sector, rampant inflation and the paper crisis have posed significant challenges to the book sector and hindered its competitiveness;
- P. whereas the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the European book sector, resulting in varying effects in the Member States and on different parts of the value chain; whereas the sector nonetheless showed resilience in that regard, in particular in those Member States that offered adequate and targeted support;
- Q. whereas many books published in the EU are not available to European readers, as a result of the linguistic and geographical fragmentation of the EU market and, in particular, the lack of translations from languages other than English, including lesser-used languages;
- R. whereas there has been a steady decline in reading owing to the popularity of social media, digital platforms and apps, which in many cases have replaced reading for pleasure as a leisure time activity;
- S. whereas the proportion of books produced in formats accessible to people with disabilities is steadily growing but still insufficient;
- T. whereas the availability of digital books offers an opportunity to improve accessibility for people with disabilities, which requires adequate investment in the production of different formats and the development of relevant skills;
- U. whereas the lack of interoperability between e-book formats reinforces the position of dominant market players while restricting consumer choice and protection;
- V. whereas Brexit has significantly affected the supply chain of the European book market by disrupting imports and exports and increasing book prices and shipping and customs costs, negatively impacting the dissemination of European content;
- W. whereas Brexit has also had an adverse impact on the development of much-needed skills in the publishing sector by reducing student exchanges between the UK, Ireland and other European countries in highly regarded publishing programmes;
- X. whereas the current shortages of paper and ink are making it more difficult to produce books;

¹⁸ European Book Market Statistics 2021-2022, Federation of European Publishers.

- Y. whereas many children's books are printed in Asia as a result of inadequate production capacity in Europe;
- Z. whereas the Deforestation Regulation¹⁹ will require printers and paper manufacturers to collect and transmit data on the sources of the wood used to produce paper for books, as this becomes impossible to trace once it has been transformed into paper;
- AA. whereas fixed prices for books in some Member States serve as an instrument for safeguarding their cultural policies and can help to ensure editorial plurality, the plentiful supply of books and a diverse local network of independent booksellers, particularly in the light of growing online sales;

The societal importance of access to books

1. Calls on all Member States to recognise books as essential goods and take measures at national level to further promote reading from an early age;
2. Underlines the need to achieve balance in the book ecosystem by safeguarding the specific roles of the various actors in the value chain, such as authors, publishers, printers, distributors, translators, booksellers and libraries;
3. Stresses 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;
4. Calls on the Member States, in this regard, to implement the European Accessibility Act²⁰ as soon as possible and take measures to ensure that books are available in accessible formats for people with disabilities, in the interests of cultural, social and professional inclusion;
5. Recalls that the European Accessibility Act goes hand in hand with the Marrakesh Treaty, which was transposed into EU legislation through Directive (EU) 2017/1564 and Regulation (EU) 2017/1563, and therefore underlines the need to avoid duplication and unfair competition when making books accessible;
6. Underlines that owing to the large number of titles available on the market and the technical challenges related to accessibility, not all e-books will be accessible by 2025;
7. Calls therefore on the Member States to ensure that adequate resources are made available to meet the high costs, and recalls 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;

¹⁹ [Regulation \(EU\) 2023/1115 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 31 May 2023 on the making available on the Union market and the export from the Union of certain commodities and products associated with deforestation and forest degradation and repealing Regulation \(EU\) No 995/2010, OJ L 150, 9.6.2023, p. 206.](#)

²⁰ [PE/81/2018/REV/1 of 17 April 2019 on the accessibility requirements for products and services, OJ L 151, 7.6.2019, p. 70.](#)

8. Calls on the Member States to provide adequate financial and structural support to the sector, in particular to SMEs and micro-enterprises, while financing research and innovation dedicated to increasing accessibility;
9. Invites the Commission in its mid-term review of the Creative Europe programme 2021-2027 to introduce measurable goals for how funding is used to improve the accessibility of books for people with disabilities;

Supporting and promoting better circulation of European books

10. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to increase the budget for the Creative Europe programme for 2028-2034, in particular by dedicating more funds to the book sector, and to expand support for the sector through the Horizon Europe programme for 2028-2034;
11. Urges the Member States 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 and meet the needs of their communities; urges the Member States furthermore to support local bookshops and safeguard the investment capacity of publishers;
12. Stresses 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;
13. Calls, in this context, on the Commission and the Member States to promote cultural diversity by supporting the translation of books into regional, minority and lesser-used languages;
14. Stresses the need to support the translation of European non-fiction books, particularly via the Creative Europe programme, which does not currently allow for this;
15. Underlines the importance of mobility and exchanges for authors and translators in order to facilitate their creative work and improve their opportunities to gain new professional experiences abroad;
16. Welcomes the new mobility initiative Culture Moves Europe, which is part of the Creative Europe programme and offers mobility grants to artists and cultural professionals, in particular for literary translators;
17. Calls on the Commission, in this context, to explore the possibility of further expanding this initiative to other representatives of the book sector;
18. Recalls that the ability of the book sector to maintain a diverse network of booksellers and an innovation-driven market relies on proper education and training that allows people to pursue a career in the book industry;
19. Underlines the fact that the Commission designated 2023 the European Year of Skills and, in this context, calls on the Member States to support education and training programmes dedicated to the various actors of the book sector;

20. Emphasises the importance of the European Union Prize for Literature (EUPL), which highlights the creativity and diversity of contemporary EU fiction, promotes the circulation of EU literary works and encourages greater interest in literary works originating from other Member States;
21. Supports 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;
22. Underlines the positive role played by influencers in promoting books on social media in an innovative way, thereby fostering reading and European culture among younger generations;

Towards an inclusive reading culture

23. Calls 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;
24. Encourages the Member States to develop an integrated national policy for promoting literacy skills, including through cooperation between the book and education sectors, and calls on Eurostat to provide up-to-date and comparable data on reading habits, particularly among children;
25. Calls 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;
26. Underlines the importance of early childhood reading, particularly of printed books, for the development of children's cognitive and literacy skills;
27. Stresses in this regard the role of school libraries and trained librarians in providing guidance, facilitating access to knowledge and fostering reading habits;
28. Welcomes the Commission's launch of the first Day of European Authors with a view to encouraging the reading of books by younger generations, and signals its desire to be involved in continuing and strengthening this initiative so as to guarantee a long-lasting legacy;
29. Calls on the Member States 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;
30. Highlights the important role played by Europeana, Europe's digital cultural heritage platform; calls, in this context, for greater efforts to further develop, fund and promote the platform;
31. Stresses the role of libraries and bookshops as safe and welcoming spaces where a wide diversity of viewpoints are respected and where reading and cultural activities are brought to life; deplores all attacks against them;

32. Underlines the social role of libraries as places where citizens meet with authors and exchange views, in particular in small towns and less developed regions; calls on the Member States to allocate appropriate funding to libraries and stresses the importance of cooperation between public libraries all over Europe;
33. Underlines that independent bookshops are cornerstones of local communities, offering a differentiated customer experience and often supporting emerging and local authors;
34. Calls, therefore, on the Commission to 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;
35. Underlines the positive role of book fairs in promoting reading and authors, fostering the circulation of European books and sharing good practices within the sector;
36. Notes with concern the growing trends towards censorship in some Member States, and recalls that the book sector has a significant role to play in protecting freedom of expression and fighting disinformation, notably by ensuring that authors, including those from diverse and marginalised backgrounds, have access to support and training opportunities;
37. Welcomes 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;
38. Calls 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;
39. Underlines the role played by the Creative Europe Programme in funding some of these projects, such as the Tales of EUkraine initiative;

Challenges for the future growth of the book sector

40. Calls 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;
41. Emphasises the prevailing paper-based nature of the book industry and calls on the Commission to take this into account in the design and implementation of green transition policies;
42. Welcomes the sector's efforts to produce printed books in a greener and more sustainable manner through the use of certified and recycled paper, as well as various related initiatives, such as carbon footprint calculators and green labels which help consumers understand and minimise their environmental impact;
43. Calls on the Commission to create a 'Printed in Europe' label;

44. Calls on the Member States and the stakeholders in the book sector to create plans for the prevention and disposal of excess and defective books as a part of the sector's green transition, including by supporting print-on-demand programmes and by limiting the pulping of books, particularly when linked to the renewal of collections;
45. Calls on the Commission and the Member States 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, including for books for children and young people;
46. Calls on the Commission to establish clear guidelines for the implementation of the Deforestation Regulation, taking into account the specific nature and complexity of the book sector chain so as to ensure that the obligations of the various actors remain proportionate and feasible;
47. Acknowledges the use in the sector of artificial intelligence (AI) such as automated text analysis, metadata tagging, online discoverability and professional translation automation tools;
48. Stresses the importance of transparency related to AI training, including data collections and their sources;
49. Encourages the Member States and the Commission to 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;
50. Calls on the Commission to 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, for example through Horizon Europe;
51. Calls on the Commission to support national initiatives on data sharing and standardisation, and to collect data on the European book sector as a whole, so as to better understand the challenges the sector is facing and further support it, optimising production, distribution and sustainability efforts in the process;
52. Underlines the importance of collecting data from publishers in order to display the origin of all parts of the book throughout the production chain, including information on the place of origin and sourcing certification of the materials used;
53. Calls on the Member States to ensure decent working conditions for employees in the book sector, including fair remuneration for translators and authors;
54. Notes that although women constitute the majority of employees in the book sector, they continue to be under-represented in senior executive positions;
55. Calls 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;
56. Stresses 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; underlines the unfair practices by certain dominant online players that abuse their position to the detriment of smaller actors in the value chain;

57. Underlines the role played by the free or low delivery charges offered by some dominant online platforms to lure consumers and the impact this has on fair competition, particularly with regard to independent bookshops;
58. Calls 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;
59. Urges the Commission to include the interoperability of e-book formats and devices within the scope of the Digital Markets Act;
60. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to monitor the effective implementation of the Digital Markets Act by dominant online market players and their compliance with the obligations;

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61. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

I. Overview

‘You don’t have to burn books to destroy a culture. Just get people to stop reading them.’

Ray Bradbury’s quote from *Fahrenheit 451* is important to society in many ways. If people stop reading books, then the acquisition of knowledge also stops. Knowledge is power. It is a cautionary tale that warns against censorship and the dangers of a society without knowledge and independent thought. One of the first things aggressors always order in times of war, like in Ukraine, is to burn all books that oppose their ideology. Only an educated society is thus able to use its voice to protect its culture. Getting people to stop reading is the fastest way to lose everything that helps us to move forward as a society.

In that context, books are invaluable as they are the foundation for learning and knowledge. When children learn to read, they don’t simply decipher words, their minds are opened up to a world of limitless ideas. They develop the ability to think critically, enabling them to become active, informed citizens who can participate fully in the democratic process. Books are also great source of entertainment and let us travel without moving our feet. They stimulate our imagination and creativity and enable us to better understand the world we live in.

The European book sector is one of the largest cultural and creative industries in the EU, employing more than half a million people and publishing around 600 000 titles annually. It reflects and cultivates the cultural and linguistic diversity of the EU. While mostly composed of SMEs, the sector is also a world champion, with most of the top publishers being Europeans.

In the last decades, the sector has experienced major changes, notably due to digital technologies and the rise of dominant online market players. It is also facing numerous challenges, such as the drive for greater environmental sustainability and the rise of artificial intelligence (AI). When the European Parliament adopted its resolution on i2010 digital libraries, the emergence of e-books was a matter of high concern. As their popularity grew steadily over the years, it was assumed that printed books would become marginalised. However, despite the rise of the internet and society’s shift to digital lifestyles, the attachment to the look, smell, and feel of a printed book remains dominant. Nevertheless, the sector faces other challenges such as rising production costs and paper supply chain issues.

Moreover, the power and the value of books in people’s lives was demonstrated emphatically during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many people turned to books as a way to find solace and to cope with the lockdowns and their consequences. Meanwhile parents purchased more educational books for their children to compensate for school closures. The pandemic provided a significant test for the book sector with the temporary closure of libraries and bookshops and the cancellation of events, fairs and the postponement of new releases.

However, the sector proved robust and adaptable in finding new ways to promote books, while e-books and audiobooks sales significantly increased. It equally fulfilled its societal responsibility by finding exceptional solutions to ensure that children and students could still have access to the content necessary for their education.

II. Main recommendations of the Rapporteur

The Rapporteur therefore welcomes the opportunity to address the various issues affecting the European book sector, which have not been dealt with by the European Parliament for many years.

In that context, the Rapporteur would like to make a series of recommendations in specific areas to support the competitiveness of the European book sector, while reinforcing as a priority, the role of books in society. The Rapporteur presents possible actions across four thematic areas detailed below.

a. The societal importance of access to books

Books are indispensable goods, and from their creation to the moment they reach the reader's hands, they will have undergone a long process involving many actors in the value chain of the book sector. While writers are the most visible actors of this value chain, they could hardly reach all of their potential audience on their own. Only mutually beneficial cooperation between writers, publishers, booksellers, translators, libraries and the other intermediaries along the value chain, each with their specific role, can enable books to reach their full potential and, ultimately, benefit society as a whole.

Some of these actors, like booksellers and libraries, also play a social role, particularly in rural or less developed regions, by becoming places where citizens can meet with authors, exchange views or simply have access to culture and education.

Measures must be taken to extend this access to culture, information and leisure to people with disabilities allowing them to fully participate in society. In particular, improving the accessibility of books for disabled, blind and visually impaired people must be a priority for the European book sector. Blind and partially sighted readers face a very limited choice of book titles, as only a very small proportion of books are available in suitable formats. As part of the review of Creative Europe and Horizon Europe, the Rapporteur suggests exploring ways to support funding and research for books in accessible formats.

Moreover, the European Accessibility Act (EAA), adopted in 2019, provides a legislative framework harmonising the rules regarding the accessibility of a number of products, services and infrastructures for those affected by a disability, in particular e-books. However, some Member States have not yet transposed the EEA. The Rapporteur therefore urges the Member States concerned to transpose the EEA as soon as possible.

b. Supporting and promoting better circulation of European books

Many European books are not available to all Europeans, because of the linguistic and geographical fragmentation of the markets, market dynamics and the domination of books written in English.

Public institutions at national and European levels have already put in place funding mechanisms to promote diversity and increase the number of literary works that cross borders, such as Creative Europe. Yet, the availability of translated books in the EU remains quite low. The literature of many European countries is rarely translated into other languages, notably due to lack of translators or funding. The Rapporteur would thus like to stress that translation plays a strategic role for the promotion of the EU's cultural and linguistic diversity, by

enabling people across the EU and beyond to discover non-national European literary works.

The Rapporteur would also like to highlight the role of libraries and local bookshops in supporting cultural diversity. In that regard, he would urge the Member States to increase the budget allocated to libraries to buy books, while also supporting local bookshops.

As a main priority for the next MFF period, the Rapporteur is calling for an increase in the budget of Creative Europe for 2028-2034, in order to provide more dedicated funds to the book sector, including support for translating non-fiction books. In that context, Horizon Europe should also be extended to the book sector.

The Rapporteur also welcomes initiatives taken at EU level, such as the European Union Prize for Literature (EUPL), supported by Creative Europe, which should be further developed and promoted.

c. Towards an inclusive reading culture

The Rapporteur would like to encourage the Member States to recognise the essential role books play in society, from a cultural, social, economic and intellectual point of view, and take measures to promote further reading.

With screen time increasing dramatically in particular for the younger generations, the promotion of reading from an early age is becoming even more crucial. The ‘first book programme’ that exists in some countries provides a first book and a library card to children. This would be an excellent pilot project to undertake at EU level to encourage parents to engage with libraries in their neighbourhood.

Moreover, the Rapporteur would like to call on the Member States to launch more initiatives to promote reading and the visibility of and access to European literary works, including setting up cultural vouchers to facilitate the purchase of and access to books. The passion and enthusiasm for reading among EU citizens can also be inspired by ‘reading ambassadors’.

The Rapporteur welcomes the various existing initiatives, which aim in particular to promote reading in the younger generations, and would like to support in that regard the launch on 27 March 2023 by the Commission of the first edition of the Day of European Authors.

Moreover, he would also call on the Commission to create a label showcasing independent bookshops in the EU, which promote European books and give them visibility. This would help levelling the playing field against certain dominant market players that abuse their position to the detriment of the other actors in the value chain.

The Rapporteur would also like to stress the importance of the various initiatives to support reading in Ukraine, such as the Tales of EUkraine which ensures children access to books and supports the protection of Ukrainian culture.

Finally, the Rapporteur would like to stress the importance of the digital cultural heritage platform Europeana, which should be further developed, in particular with financial and promotional support in order to give it more visibility at EU level.

d. Challenges for the future growth of the book sector

Firstly, the Rapporteur welcomes the many initiatives of the sector to reduce the environmental impact of producing books, such as emission calculators and green labels. He would also like to stress that efforts made with regard to paper itself are showing results: for instance, 98 % of the paper used to print books in France is certified or recycled. Many challenges remain, however, to further improve the sustainability of book production and distribution.

While there is no doubt that being able to store hundreds of books on a single device is exceedingly convenient and efficient, it does not necessarily mean that e-books on a dedicated reading device are more eco-friendly than a personal library of paper books, in particular for occasional readers. In that context, supporting the European book sector as a whole in its green transformation is essential and requires adequate support, research and funding.

Moreover, the European book sector, like other sectors, is being impacted by technological developments and is undergoing a significant transformation due to AI. The Rapporteur considers that AI can have positive effects on the sector, but it also presents risks. Notably, this applies in particular to a lack of transparency about what has been included in an AI training dataset and where it has been collected. The Rapporteur therefore stresses the need to support research and innovation projects regarding the use of AI in the sector and for transparency on how AI is trained.

It is also important to collect data on the European book market as a whole and to support national initiatives for data sharing and standardisation within the value chain. This would help to further optimise production, distribution and sustainability efforts.

One other crucial issue is lack of interoperability. Some e-book formats and e-reading devices are not interoperable today, due to the existence of voluntarily non-interoperable models. These products have been developed by a few dominant market players to trap consumers in their ecosystem and services, causing them confusion and frustration. The Rapporteur believes this practice is equally harmful for fair competition and therefore calls for the interoperability of e-books and reading devices and its inclusion in the scope of the Digital Markets Act (DMA) as soon as possible.

Finally, the Rapporteur emphasises the importance of a zero-rate VAT for books in Member States, irrespective of their format or how they are accessed, in order to make books, as essential goods, more affordable and accessible to the public.

To conclude, the Rapporteur believes that these recommendations will provide the vital support to the European book sector, which is needed to meet many new challenges and ensure that our society continues to benefit from a diverse selection of European literature.

INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE

Date adopted	18.7.2023
Result of final vote	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center;"> + : 27 </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center;"> - : 0 </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center;"> 0 : 1 </div>
Members present for the final vote	Asim Ademov, Christine Anderson, Andrea Bocskor, Ilana Cicurel, Laurence Farreng, Tomasz Frankowski, Romeo Franz, Sylvie Guillaume, Hannes Heide, Irena Joveva, Petra Kammerevert, Niyazi Kizilyürek, Predrag Fred Matić, Martina Michels, Niklas Nienass, Peter Pollák, Marcos Ros Sempere, Massimiliano Smeriglio, Michaela Šojdrová, Sabine Verheyen, Theodoros Zagorakis, Milan Zver
Substitutes present for the final vote	Isabella Adinolfi, Ibán García Del Blanco, Rob Rooker, Marc Tarabella
Substitutes under Rule 209(7) present for the final vote	Angel Dzhambazki, Erik Marquardt

**FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL
IN COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE**

27	+
ECR	Dzhambazki Angel, Rooker Rob
ID	Anderson Christine
NI	Tarabella Marc
PPE	Ademov Asim, Adinolfi Isabella, Frankowski Tomasz, Pollák Peter, Sojdrová Michaela, Verheyen Sabine, Zagorakis Theodoros, Zver Milan
Renew	Cicurel Ilana, Farreng Laurence, Joveva Irena
S&D	García Del Blanco Ibán, Guillaume Sylvie, Heide Hannes, Kammerevert Petra, Matic Predrag Fred, Ros Sempere Marcos, Smeriglio Massimiliano
The Left	Kizilyürek Niyazi, Michels Martina
Verts/ALE	Franz Romeo, Marquardt Erik, Nienass Niklas

0	-
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1	0
NI	Bocskor Andrea

Key:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstentions