

Brussels, 12 May 2017

The European and International Booksellers Federation – EIBF – and the Federation of European Publishers – FEP - have read with interest the Commission’s Mid-Term Review of the Digital Single Market, published just over two years after the strategy was launched in 2015.

The EIBF and the FEP fully support the aims and objectives of the Commission’s Single Market Strategy: A single market truly fit for the digital age, to the benefit of businesses and consumers alike. The book sector is embracing the digital revolution, with a growing number of booksellers and publishers making e-books available to consumers domestically as well as across borders.

However, although the ambitions underpinning the Digital Single Market are both welcome and admirable, they should not cloud our judgment of how best to achieve its aims.

With inter-institutional negotiations (the Trilogue) on the proposal to address unjustified geo-blocking set to commence shortly, the book industry reiterates its concerns about the inclusion by the European Parliament of non-audiovisual copyright protected content, such as e-books, in the scope of the Regulation, and calls on the Council and the Commission to maintain their original stance of non-inclusion.

On a nascent market, the profitability of which still has to be demonstrated, forcing traders to offer e-books across borders would give rise to legal uncertainties, require investments that few can afford, and many SMEs could be forced to exit the e-book market. Far from opening up the single market to consumers, this would be highly detrimental to cultural diversity and consumer choice in the EU.

EIBF co-Presidents Fabian Paagman and Jean-Luc Treutenaere commented: *“Our companies are present on the e-book market, selling e-books respectively in the Netherlands and in Flemish-speaking Belgium, and in France & in French-speaking Belgium, in spite of the fact that it is not a profitable activity, at least for the moment. Every business aims to grow and bookselling is no exception, with the right infrastructural conditions and if consumers’ demand reaches a critical mass to make the business sustainable”.*

Likewise, recent debates on the Directive on Copyright in the Single Market have been a cause for concern for our sector. The legislative proposal published on 5th September 2017 addressed a number of issues likely to affect the book world such as exceptions for text and data mining, illustration for teaching and preservation, or licensing solutions for out of commerce works. The text is now being discussed in the Parliament and the Council. For the book sector, it is paramount that the provisions of the future legislation provide for incentives to the new business models developed by the industry. With e-books, players are continually inventing new ways of letting consumers access their favourite reads, and this needs to be encouraged.

FEP President Henrique Mota said, *“The future is bright for the book sector especially as we are constantly developing new ways to access and read books. With e-books, I would be tempted to say that the sky is the limit. We are working with the legislators so that the text adopted will support innovation”.*

EIBF and FEP are keen to pursue their dialogue with decision makers involved in the Trilogue(s) between the European Parliament, the Commission and the Council, for the promotion of the rich European literary heritage and to the benefit of European consumers choice.

For further information, please contact:

EIBF Director Fran Dubruille (fran@europeanbooksellers.eu or +32 475 40 32 34)
or FEP Director Anne Bergman (abergman@fep-fee.eu or +32 477 33 65 76)

About EIBF & FEP

EIBF - The European & International Booksellers Federation represents the interests of the bookselling industry. Its Members are National Booksellers Associations in the European Union and beyond. Their Members, in turn, are all kinds of booksellers: brick and mortar, online retailers, independents and chains.

FEP – The Federation of European Publishers represents 28 national Publishers Associations from the European Union and the European Economic Area. The turnover of book publishers in 2016 reached 22, 5 billion euro. The more than 29.000 European publishing houses have published in 2015 some 575.000 new titles, a testimony of their role promoting culture and knowledge. FEP is the voice of European books and journals publishers in Europe.