



**THE EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL  
BOOKSELLERS FEDERATION**

# **A CALL TO ACTION**

Protecting freedom of expression,  
ensuring a sustainable future

# INTRO- DUCTION

**The book sector is evolving.**  
Adapting to keep up with a rapidly changing world.



In a post-covid era, bookshops have proven their resilience and relevance, and their customers have shown loyalty. Many bookshops have already invested in digital technologies and the green economy, and they're eager to be part of a sustainable future.

But they still face challenges. The environmental impact of books has become a topic of discussion in just the same way as it has for other commodities like food and clothing. We've also experienced a rise in extreme politics and censorship, which pose a threat to freedom of expression. And we see decreasing literacy rates and fewer young people choosing a career in the book sector.



Books touch our societies and communities at every level, from education to employment opportunities to politics. We believe that bookshops must provide a safe and inclusive haven for everyone. They are crucial to encouraging diversity through the voices they bring to readers via the books on their shelves. Bookshops are an intrinsic part of local life, offering an important alternative to the big tech giants.

That's why the European and International Booksellers Federation (EIBF) is looking to engage with policymakers and regulators to ensure that everyone has access to books and that no one is left behind by the changes taking place in the world around us.

## MEET THE TEAM



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# STANDING UP FOR WHAT MATTERS



## Standing up for **Freedom of Expression**

It's no coincidence that throughout history, during times of political oppression and turmoil, books have been banned and restricted, while authors, publishers and bookshops have been targeted, censored, silenced and even vandalised. With extreme ideologies on the rise across much of Europe and the world, we see a corresponding increase in the censorship of books.

EIBF and our community of booksellers believe in freedom of expression as a fundamental human right and the cornerstone of a healthy democracy. We know that reading books is not only enjoyable – it also promotes the exchange of knowledge, it leads to new ideas, and it encourages critical thinking. That's why freedom of expression is essential. At EIBF, we're committed to raising awareness and informing others about this important topic. But booksellers also play a crucial role in safeguarding that freedom, and they – just like publishers, authors and librarians – must not face retribution for standing up for what matters.

## **OUR CALL TO ACTION**

Upholding the freedoms to express, publish and disseminate ideas, books and cultural materials, while acting firmly against all forms of censorship.





## Standing Up For **Literacy**

Reading brings a multitude of benefits – not only to individual readers but to society as a whole. Books provide knowledge and education, of course, but they also instil empathy and understanding for other people. A literate population plays a more active role in society.

However, globally – including in Europe – reading skills are declining, with literacy rates dropping. It's well known that low levels of literacy predict poorer educational outcomes for children. But low literacy also makes participation in society more vulnerable. It's therefore essential that we work together to turn this trend around.

Bookshops and libraries both strive for the same goals of literacy, reading promotion and access to books. They have a long history of working together to get people reading. Because supporting a literate population also entails supporting a well-educated, active and understanding community.

### **OUR CALL TO ACTION**

Support for initiatives that promote reading, to enable well-informed, democratic participation in society.



# EMBRACING THE NEW

## Embracing Digital Technologies

Digitalisation has permeated every aspect of daily life. And that's no bad thing. The digital and the physical are not mutually exclusive but equally necessary and entirely complementary. Covid acted as a catalyst for many bricks-and-mortar retailers, bookshops included, to invest in e-commerce technologies, social media, hybrid events and more. Many booksellers have already recognised that a balance between online and offline is a winning business model.

However, technology is evolving at an ever-faster pace: the recent rise in artificial intelligence, TikTok book influencers and the Wattpad storytelling platform are just a few examples. Booksellers are eager to move with the digital times but they need the right tools, so that no bookseller is left behind.

They also need a level playing field to ensure fair competition: existing rules must be enforced, while new regulations should be fair and balanced, while protecting the interests of small businesses. Meanwhile, data has become a hot commodity: owning, accessing and understanding data are key to better meeting readers' demands and, again, operating on a level playing field.

### OUR CALL TO ACTION

Digital legislation that is progressive, innovative and balanced, holding the protection of SMEs at heart.







## Embracing The **Green Economy**

The focus on sustainability in general has come on in leaps and bounds over recent years. Everyone has a role to play here — including the book sector. Many booksellers have already embarked on their own transition to the green economy. But some lack the know-how on where to begin.

The literary value chain is an interconnected ecosystem — from publishing to printing, distribution and selling. And every link in that chain must work together towards the common goal of making the entire process more sustainable. Booksellers therefore need support and guidance when it comes to meeting environmental targets, transitioning to green energy and reducing the footprint of their business.

### **OUR CALL TO ACTION**

**Green policies and initiatives that empower and support booksellers throughout their environmental transition.**



# MAINTAINING LONG-TERM VIABILITY

## Maintaining freedom for small businesses

Bookshops are under pressure from all angles. While we welcome legislation that's helpful to the book sector, any additional laws that could further impose on booksellers in the years to come should be carefully thought out to avoid a detrimental effect on an already fragile sector. Regulations that impact bookshops' contractual freedom, investment choices, operations or financial capacities should not be rushed. If regulations are not thoroughly considered, they risk driving many bookshops out of business by imposing even more constraints on the industry.

Any additional red tape or administrative burdens for SMEs will always end up making it easier for the big online retailers to monopolise the industry and drive away fair competition. We know that a lot of bookshops are small, local businesses that need to evolve and invest to meet demand in a rapidly changing market. And we believe that local retailers should be free to make their own choices about whether and when to make their products and services available.

### OUR CALL TO ACTION

Upholding the freedom for booksellers to make their own well-informed decisions, to ensure the viability of their businesses for readers – both now and in the future.



## Maintaining bookselling as a **career path**

The recent cost of living crisis and surge in inflation have been felt by businesses up and down the high street – including bookshops. Many booksellers report that they're struggling to pay their staff a decent wage, and that talented employees are leaving to pursue more lucrative career opportunities. Fixed costs have increased tremendously, while people are buying fewer books due to rising prices. In short, bookselling is a tough business.

We want to ensure the viability of bookselling as a desirable, long-term career path for the next generation. Booksellers need strong cultural policies that promote books, reading and literacy. We're therefore looking for dedicated training for booksellers, as well as initiatives that support education, access to books and reading events. We're also looking for policies that support local purchasing of books – for example, public procurement that enables schools and libraries to buy their books through local bookshops. In short, we need more readers to get out there and buy books so that bookshops make higher revenues and are able to pay better wages.

### OUR CALL TO ACTION

Policies and initiatives that acknowledge, support and invest in both high-street businesses and a new generation of booksellers and readers.





# CONCRE USION

Bookshops are crucial local businesses. Unlike the tech giants they compete with, bookshops are intrinsic to our high streets: they invest in their employees and their local communities, and provide a vital service to society. Bookshops act as a cultural hub and a welcoming space, offering a meeting point for local people and encouraging diversity and inclusion within their neighbourhoods.

Without receiving any government subsidies, bookshops promote reading, literacy and education – participating in creating a knowledge society on a daily basis. Bookshops are about so much more than simply selling books: they are integral to the changing world in which we live. And they will continue to contribute to that world as long as they receive the support they need.





# EIBF'S MISSION

The European and International Booksellers Federation represents national booksellers associations in the European Union and beyond. Our members in turn represent a variety of booksellers, including bricks-and-mortar bookshops, online bookshops, independent bookshops and chains. Through its member associations, we speak on behalf of more than 25,000 individual booksellers.

Our mission is to represent our members and their interests on a global platform, before the European institutions and other international organisations.

We provide policymakers with professional information about the economic, cultural and educational role booksellers play, and advocate for book-friendly policies, for the benefit of all readers.

By strengthening the link between booksellers associations from across Europe and worldwide, we foster the exchange of best practice between our members and provide a forum for discussion and cooperation between the representative bodies of booksellers throughout Europe and beyond.

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## EIBF is the voice of booksellers

### Get in touch with us:

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 [@Booksellers\\_Fed](https://twitter.com/Booksellers_Fed)

 [BooksellersFed](https://www.linkedin.com/company/BooksellersFed)



# OUR MEMBERS

ALI - Associazione Librai Italiani	Italy
ALIRE - L'Association des librairies informatisées et utilisatrices des réseaux électroniques	France
American Booksellers Association	USA
APEL - Associação Portuguesa de Editores e Livreiros	Portugal
Асоциация „Българска книга“	Bulgaria
BookPeople	Australia
Booksellers Aotearoa New Zealand	New Zealand
Bookselling Ireland	Ireland
Börsenverein des Deutschen Buchhandels e.V.	Germany
Canadian Independent Booksellers Association	Canada
CEGAL - Confederación Española de Gremios y Asociaciones de Libreros	Spain
Den norske Bokhandlerforeningen	Norway
Fédération des Libraires Luxembourgeois	Luxembourg
Kirjakauppaliitto	Finland
Koninklijke Boekverkopersbond	Netherlands
Latvijas Grāmattirgotāju asociācija	Latvia
ReLI - A Rede de Livrarias Independentes	Portugal
SBVV - Schweizer Buchhandels- und Verlags-Verband	Switzerland
SDLC - Syndicat des distributeurs de loisirs culturels	France
SLF - Syndicat de la librairie française	France
Svenska Bokhandlareföreningen	Sweden
The Booksellers Association of the UK and Ireland	UK & Ireland
The Ceylon Booksellers Importers & Exporters Association	Sri Lanka
Združenie vydavateľov a kníhkupcov SR	Slovakia
Cărturești	Romania
Grāmatnīcas Jānis Roze	Latvia
Hoepli	Italy
Ici Sont les Lions	Belgium
IQ Bookstore	Kyrgyzstan
La Două Bufnițe	Romania
Librairie Ernster	Luxembourg
Librería SOPHOS	Guatemala
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