

Brussels, 05 July 2022

Adoption of the Digital Markets Act: A big step forward for the book sector after 25 years of abuses

The Federation of European Publishers (FEP) and the European and International Booksellers Federation (EIBF) welcome the adoption of the Digital Markets Act (DMA) Regulation today by the European Parliament.

The DMA imposes clear obligations upon the biggest online gatekeepers, prohibiting a number of anti-competitive practices and preventing them from unfairly harming the market and their competitors, including booksellers and publishers.

The book sector has been affected by the increasing market dominance of these gatekeepers for decades, leaving publishers and booksellers with no choice but to rely on their platforms to access the market, make their books available and reach consumers. This, in turn, has allowed gatekeepers to set their own rules and abusive conditions for many years up to this day, all while acting as direct competitors on their own platforms. These unfair practices have direct consequences, both on fair competition and on cultural diversity, and they will finally end with the adoption of the DMA.

FEP and EIBF particularly welcome the obligations regarding data-sharing, the prohibition of self-preferencing and the prohibition of Most-Favoured-Nation clauses, which will benefit both publishers and booksellers alike, especially where gatekeepers combine intermediation and retailing activities in a manner that is indistinguishable for the average consumer. We also welcome the positive first step made in the DMA on interoperability yet hope for more ambition on the topic in the future. The measures introduced should, therefore, be reinforced to ensure that consumers are not locked into artificial silos when using e-readers and reading e-books.

Peter Kraus vom Cleff, President of FEP, declared “the book sector was the canary in the mine of gatekeeper abuses, e.g., witnessing the rise of Amazon 25 years ago and being subjected to a death by a thousand cuts ever since. Today, Europe is showing once again its leadership and that abuses from online services will no longer be tolerated. Data is the life-blood of online competition and gatekeepers will no longer be allowed to deprive publishers of data derived from our works or weaponise them to their advantage.”

Jean-Luc Treutenaere, EIBF Co-President, added “We have been calling for a European piece of legislation like the DMA for many years, following decades of unfair practices by large online platforms acting as digital gatekeepers. We therefore welcome the adoption of these long-overdue rules and obligations, which will be hugely beneficial for the entire book sector and ensure fairer competition in the digital world.

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FEP is an independent, non-commercial umbrella association of book publishers' associations in the European Union. FEP represents 29 national associations of publishers of books, learned journals and educational materials of the European Union, the European Economic Area and other European countries. Thus, FEP is the voice of the great majority of publishers in Europe.

EIBF is a non-commercial umbrella organisation representing national booksellers' associations in the European Union and beyond. Our members in turn represent a variety of booksellers, including brick and mortar bookshops, online bookshops, independent bookshops and chains. Through its member associations, we speak on behalf of more than 25,000 individual booksellers.