



European and International Booksellers Federation

EBOOK INTEROPERABILITY: STUDY, COMMISSIONED BY EIBF, BACKS EC VICE-PRESIDENT KROES ON DIGITAL AGENDA

Brussels, 16 May 2013

“Ebook interoperability is a major requirement to build a truly digital society”, says European Commission Vice-President

A study into interoperability of e-book formats was unveiled at the EIBF Annual Conference, Brussels, 16 May.

In the preface to the study, European Commission Vice-President, Neelie Kroes, wrote: *“Now is the time for open standards regarding ebooks”*.



EBF President, John Mc Namee, Fabian Paagman and Olaf Winsløw, Executive Committee Members, and Françoise Dubruille, EIBF director, handing over the report to Vice-President of the European Commission Neelie Kroes

The study on the interoperability of e-book formats was commissioned from Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz by the European & International Booksellers Federation

The study was conducted by Professor Christoph Bläsi and Professor Franz Rothlauf of Johannes Gutenberg University, who said: *“There is no technical or functional reason not to use and establish EPUB 3 as an/the interoperable (open) ebook format standard.*

One short term obstacle is the non-availability of reader applications able to display all EPUB 3 features. However, this problem should be fixed soon by the IDPF Radium initiative which is developing an open source reference system and rendering engine for EPUB 3.”

They added: *“Given the will to do so on the side of Amazon and Apple, the DRM barrier between the ecosystems could be partly overcome by simple changes to the respective store and reader applications, and partly only by more demanding agreements between different players on interoperable DRM solutions. The latter is only necessary if copyright holders continue insisting on having their intellectual property protected by highly restrictive measures.”*

Vice-President of the European Commission, Neelie Kroes, in charge of the Digital Agenda, praised the study: *“My wish is that booksellers in Europe can take initiatives and benefit from the growth in the ebook markets. This is why I welcome this study by the European Booksellers Federation. Interoperability is a major requirement to build a truly digital society. This applies to ebooks too. This study provides interesting insights on ways to reach true interoperability in the ebook market,*

through both interoperable ebook formats and interoperable DRM schemes. Now is the time for open standards regarding ebooks, just like has happened in other areas of the digital economy.”

John Mc Namee, President of the European Branch, EBF, said: “The lack of interoperability between formats and platforms has been identified as one of the major obstacles hindering the Digital Agenda and is a real problem for booksellers in their daily contacts with their customers. On behalf of my colleagues from all Booksellers Associations in membership with EBF, I am very pleased that this study provides clear scientific evidence that interoperability is achievable. It also shows that there are alternatives to DRM’s and that content portability is feasible. Booksellers are keen to promote business models which make digital content easily accessible to the customers they are in touch with on a daily basis in their terrestrial or e-bookshops, the European readers.

Equally, booksellers are keen to sell e-books across borders and make as many customers as possible happy. They strongly support an open market, without territorial restrictions, in the full respect of copyright”.

The European & International Booksellers Federation’s Annual Conference with around 45 participants, representing all the major Booksellers Associations in the European Union and worldwide took place in Brussels today 16 May.

Booksellers have been fully supportive of the political objectives of the Digital Agenda, as promoted by the European Commission, since its launch.

Booksellers across Europe are fully engaged in developing and implementing the new business models that are opening up as a result of the digitization of books and reading. They are keen to meet the expectations of digital readers, as long as copyright, fair business models and independence of choice are respected.

They are aware that it is crucial to preserve a healthy book chain in Europe, as writers, publishers and booksellers are essential in promoting cultural diversity and high quality content. It is therefore of paramount importance to promote fair and sustainable business models and an even playing field for all book retailers in the book industry, and ultimately for the benefit of all European readers.

The report is available on

<http://www.europeanbooksellers.eu/positionpaper/interoperability-e-books-formats>

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