

Press release

2019 book market: revenue growth in many European countries

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Baden-Baden, March 12, 2020 – The book market ended last year with a turnover increase in many European countries. Higher average prices compensated for the considerable drop in actual volumes in some cases.

Whether in Paris, Porto, Palermo or Pamplona, printed books still enjoy strong appeal. A special multi-country analysis conducted by GfK Entertainment has revealed that the book market ended last year with a turnover increase in many regions. This positive development was particularly evident in Italy and Portugal, where turnover rose by 5.5 percent and 3.9 percent respectively compared with 2018. However, the other countries analysed posted growth too, with the Netherlands (1.9 percent higher), Switzerland (1.5 percent), France and Spain (1.1 percent each) and Flanders (0.8 percent) all making more from books sales. Only the Wallonia region saw a slight fall (of 1.3 percent).

Higher average prices have compensated for lower sales

The rise in turnover was accompanied by higher average prices, thus compensating for the considerable drop in actual volumes in some cases. For example, books cost 3.1 percent more in Switzerland in 2019 while the sales volume fell by 1.6 percent. In Flanders and the Netherlands, where sales dropped 3.5 and 3.9 percent respectively, prices even rose by 4.5 percent and 6.0 percent respectively (in the Netherlands, partly due to the increase of the VAT rate). Taking the year as a whole, in addition to the periods in which sales are usually high, the start of the school year in early autumn also made its own impact. In France, for example, it was stronger than at any time in the last six years.

Nonfiction more popular than fiction

In 2019, nonfiction items, such as reference and specialist books or guides, outperformed literature in many countries, such as Italy (7.8 percent higher compared with “only” 3.1 percent). In particular, biographies were much in

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demand throughout Europe: Fiorire d'inverno, the autobiography of the Italian investigative journalist Nadia Toffa, Edwin Schoon's Basta, which is about the Dutch football star Marco van Basten, Passions by former French president Nicolas Sarkozy or Michelle Obama's Becoming all ended up in the top 5 of the respective annual nonfiction charts. Other works in demand were guides, such as Mark Manson's The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F*ck; history books, such as Yuval Noah Harari's Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind; and cookery books, such as Yotam Ottolenghi's Simple.

New Asterix book with strong sales

Europe's most popular novelists last year included international best-selling authors like Lucinda Riley and Jojo Moyes as well as top-rated national writers like Arturo Pérez-Reverte (Spain) or Raul Minh'alma (Portugal). Huge success was enjoyed by Jean-Yves Ferri & Didier Conrad with the 38th Asterix adventure La Fille de Vercingétorix (English title: The Chieftain's Daughter), which not only advanced in the charts to become the best-selling work of fiction in Switzerland but also in Wallonia and France, where it made a significant contribution to the 9 percent surge in the comic book market.

The basis of the analysis were sales data for 2019 compared with the previous year for the following countries Belgium (Flanders/Wallonia), France, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and Switzerland.

About GfK Entertainment

GfK Entertainment is an official charts and market research data supplier to the Books, Games, Music and Video industries. The company works closely with all industry trade bodies and is currently active in over 30 countries supplying official charts, tailor-made sales-, market- and product data analysis reports to content holders, retailers and trade body groups for all products, physical, digital and social media related in the entertainment sector. For more information, please visit www.gfk-entertainment.com or follow GfK on Twitter www.twitter.com/gfkentertain.

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