

Press release

International book markets regaining their strength with significant growth in 2021

As an exclusive special analysis by GfK Entertainment shows, last year's book sales were without exception in positive territory - and even exceeded the figures for 2019 in most countries.

March 15, 2022

Hans Schmucker
Public Relations
T +49 7221 279 200
hans.schmucker@gfk.com

Nadine Arend
Marketing/Public Relations
T +49 7221 279 247
nadine.arend@gfk.com

Baden-Baden, March 15, 2022. - The international book markets have emerged strengthened from the last financial year, which once again faced a number of challenges. This is shown by an exclusive special analysis by GfK Entertainment based on physical sales data from the respective retail panels and the GfK Consumer Panel (Germany). Whereas nearly half of the nine countries surveyed still recorded in some cases appreciable falls in 2020, last year's figures were without exception in positive territory, with the Belgian region of Wallonia (+19.0 percent), Brazil (+18.8 percent), Portugal (+16.6 percent), Spain (+16.3 percent) and Italy (+14.7 percent) even managing double-digit growth rates.

The French book market did particularly well in 2021: after reporting a drop of 2.1 percent in the previous year, it was able to increase sales by more than a fifth (+21.2 per cent). In Germany too, the sales chart clearly pointed in an upward direction (from -2.5 to +2.9 percent). The Netherlands (+7.7 percent), Switzerland (+6.5 per cent) and the Belgian region of Flanders (+4.9 percent) closed the year with single-digit increases.

Here are the main findings and key insights of the analysis:

- **2021 outstripped the pre-coronavirus year 2019**

With the exception of Portugal, sales in 2021 even exceeded the figures for 2019, before the coronavirus hit. In addition, the highest sales since 2010 were achieved in the Netherlands and Spain matched the figures for 2011. While the stationary book trade employed innovative approaches to overcome the long drawn-out shop closures, the online trade continued to expand its share of the overall market. In the German book market, for example, every second euro is now spent online (including flat rates).

- **Average prices continue to rise**

The positive sales developments were accompanied by higher average prices in most countries, due in part to the general increase in costs. However, with the exception of Germany (+3.8 percent) and the Netherlands (+3.7 percent) this rise was fairly moderate. In Spain and France, for example, books were 0.7 and 0.3 percent more expensive respectively. Nevertheless, the sales growth rates were often below the turnover rates – with the exception of Brazil, Italy and Wallonia, where

GfK Entertainment GmbH
Lange Straße 65
76530 Baden-Baden
Germany

T +49 7221 279 0
F +49 7221 279 111

Represented by:
Dr. Mathias Giloth (Managing
Director)
Wolfgang Wanders (Managing
Director)

Commercial register:
Mannheim HRB 201294

average prices also fell accordingly.

- **Comics drive up sales**

From São Paulo to Seville and from Paris to Palermo: the comics boom is unstoppable and is responsible for a not inconsiderable proportion of rising overall market sales. In the nine-country average, sales of comics increased by almost half, reaching peaks in Italy (+98.0 percent) and Portugal (+72.7 percent). The 39th book in the *Asterix* series, *Asterix and the Griffin*, also made it to the top of the cross-genre annual charts in France, Switzerland and Wallonia. Even more impressive was the performance of mangas and manhwas, sales of which rose by over 100 percent in many places.

- **Crisis literature for times of crisis**

For the second time in a row, an entire year was marked by the coronavirus pandemic. In the case of the book market, this is also reflected in readers' choice of titles. There was increased demand for guides and non-fiction books on health, advice on life-related topics, psychology and esoteric subjects, most of which performed above the level of the market as a whole. Political books such as *Il sistema* (by Alessandro Sallusti and Luca Palamara) and *La France n'a pas dit son dernier mot* (by Éric Zemmour), the bestselling non-fiction titles in Italy and France respectively, were also much in demand.

- **YouTube reaches the children's and young adult book market**

In two-thirds of the regions analysed, children's and young adult books recorded even higher rises than the book market as a whole. For example, the segment increased its revenues in Brazil by more than a quarter (+25.6 percent) and in Portugal (+21.0 percent) and Spain (+19.4 percent) by around a fifth each. In addition to bestselling authors such as Jeff Kinney (*Diary of a Wimpy Kid*) and Kiera Cass (*The Selection*), books by YouTubers, like the Italy's Lyon Gamer or Spains's Mikecrack, also enjoyed increasing popularity.

About the study

The analysis is based on the physical book market figures for 2021, including eBooks (where available), provided by the trade panels for the following countries: Belgium (Flanders/Wallonia), Brazil, France, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and Switzerland and by the GfK Consumer Panel for Germany, in each case excluding subscriptions and downloads. If you are interested in further information on the analyses for 2021, please contact senta.wolf@gfk.com.

About GfK Entertainment

GfK Entertainment is an official charts and market research data supplier to the Games, Books, 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 further information, visit www.gfk-entertainment.com.

About GfK

GfK connects data and science. Innovative research solutions provide answers for key business questions around consumers, markets, brands and media - now and in the future. As a research and analytics partner, GfK promises its clients all over the world “Growth from Knowledge”.

For more information, please visit www.gfk.com.