



THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON WRITERS AND  
TRANSLATORS IN THE EUROPEAN BOOK SECTOR 2022-2023  
**3<sup>rd</sup> and final monitoring report**



European  
Writers'  
Council

*Doing the Rights thing since 1977*



## SEQUELS BECOMING SYMPTOMS

BY DR MIGUEL ÁNGEL SERRANO, HUMAN WRITER  
PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN WRITERS' COUNCIL.

When does a disease sequel become a symptom of a new disorder? We hear and read about persistent COVID-19 infections, and probably we all know someone who unfortunately disappeared, and someone who is still suffering because of the malignancy of this terrible virus.

Some of our social habits have been greatly modified because of the pandemic's huge impact in the years from 2020 to 2022. We were confined and our social interactions were highly impacted. In some countries, citizens were not allowed to leave home for months and had to modify the way they studied, worked, or spent leisure time. Basically, a great percentage of our daily activities were moved to the Internet. As a reminder, virtual meeting platforms now in intensive use were only beta versions at the beginning of 2020. The general consensus is that technology, and its adoption by citizens, experienced a quantum leap that first pandemic year.

But this didn't happen without a cost. A lot of artists and authors donated their work to provide comfort for a shocked population. But also, some ill-intentioned actors tried to gain an advantage by pirating the works of thousand of authors, excusing this behavior as addressing the educational or recreational needs of the people in lockdown.

At the same time, the population accepted this as though consumers had a right to not pay for entertainment. Major TV platforms also gave away products for free: The sequel (educating or entertaining people through the internet) becomes a symptom (more and more actors claim exceptions to allow them to stop paying copyright fees). This moves is seemingly a condemnation of writers. The false conceptions of literary talent as a "gift" (in some manner external and not deserved) implies that the author should also give away his or her work for free. This is not a gift; it is hard work.

The other sequel/symptom is that everything on the Internet is good and beneficial. This paves the way for so-called artificial intelligence. If products pop up, as in the pandemic, nobody asks who created the contents. People assume that the creators are paid or that their work is not valuable enough to deserve payment. Less valuable than groceries, toilet paper, or insurance. And of course, the wi-fi connection.

The physical disease seems to have been defeated, at least until a new pandemic emerges, if it does. There is no certainty about that. But we didn't anticipate the profound changes that the exceptional measures taken to fight the disease were about to cause. These new symptoms will eventually become sequels. And this vicious circle will continue to harm the creators at the very core of it: the writers.

This third and final survey shows how cultural changes are damaging the sources of the book value chain and written culture. And that's the skin of the social body. Eventually, it will erode more profoundly our very way of living as free citizens of old Europe.

Miguel Ángel Serrano  
President of the European Writers' Council

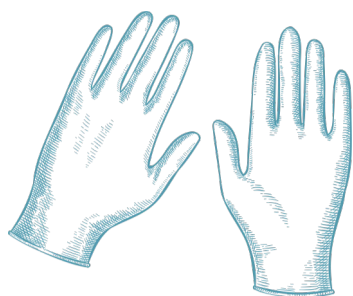


## COVID 19 LASTING IMPACT FOR WRITERS AND TRANSLATORS: THE UNSEEN SEQUELS **2023**

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## A LOOK BACK: THE FINDINGS OF THE 2020-2022 EWC REPORTS

# WHAT IS PAST IS PROLOGUE —

*The Tempest*

## Summary of the 2020-2022 EWC COVID-19 reports

In June 2020 and November 2021, the EWC published the results of Europe's most detailed surveys on *The Economic Impact of the Covid-19 Crisis on Writers and Translators in the European Book Sector*. Thirty-three organisations from 24 countries participated in the first edition, in while 27 organisations from 20 countries were involved in the second.

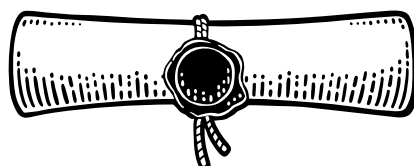
The EWC results have **been cited in several reports and consultations by the European Commission, WIPO, and UNESCO, among others.**

## 2020: A crisis that hit the freelancers in particular

When the pandemic began to spread its force, **the European Writers' Council conducted the first of what are now three surveys** among their member organisations and invited associations, to monitor the economic, legal, and social impact on writers in the book sector.

It quickly became clear that book authors were most directly affected by the cancellation of events – and that these represent a large part of their fragmented income. At the same time, their losses were not compensated by organisers, publishers, or state support. The independent book authors shouldered this loss entirely on their own.

Newly published titles in the first year of the crisis fell into a black hole of invisibility. No readings, closed bookshops and libraries, no award ceremonies – for many, this invisibility meant an irreparable break in their vulnerable futures.





## The key findings of the economic impact of the Covid-19 crisis in 2020:

- (1) **The consequences for the entire book sector were seen as very serious**, and will hit the authors in a second wave and directly threaten the diversity of European literature, as programs are downsized, thousands and thousands of titles disappear unread into oblivion, and the purchase of new voices pauses.
- (2) **Online activities** and digital distribution need support not only through funding but also through **much more author-friendly legislation and remuneration**, as there is no remuneration structure ( tickets, fees) for virtual events, and at the same time no effective protection against illegitimate distribution of online readings, for instance. Nor are there any instruments to combat skyrocketing e-book piracy.
- (3) **Full-time freelance authors and translators sustain significant losses** due to events that were cancelled up to the end of the first crisis year, and they are ineligible for most national aid programs.

## Losses and consequences for writers and translators in the European book sector in 2020

- Cancelled events: 97% of writers and translators experienced a high loss of income because of cancelled lectures, workshops, and readings.
- Cancelled publications: 64% sustained losses because of postponed publications (8-18 months delay on average).
- Reduced payments: 40% sustained losses because of postponed contracts and reduced royalty advances.
- 60% estimated the effects as very to extremely severe on the income situation of authors.
- Significant increase in e-book-piracy, increase in price dumping, increase in e-lending and low-priced subscription models without decent remuneration for authors.
- In a regular year, 500,000 to 600,000 new titles are published in Europe. Projections assumed 150,000 fewer titles in 2020 and 2021 (which became reality).
- There were few countries where tailor-made support for the book sector was available.
- Half of all national emergency aid schemes were not available or applicable to writers and translators.

## SOS: Call for Help from European Authors in 2020





## 2021: The echo of the crisis impacts writers – in a second wave

In the 2021 follow-up report, 27 writers' and translators' organisations from 20 countries contributed 112 pages in total figures, facts, and testimonials on 23 specific quantitative and qualitative questions proposed online.

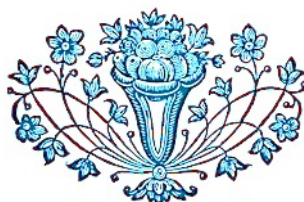
The second EWC monitoring project titled 'One Year of Crisis' focussed on the **scope of the economic loss for writers and translators, on how publishing houses and national governments reacted**, on the value gaps in the digital sphere, and included insights into the educational book sector and remote learning.

As the pandemic continued in the year 2021, **the serious consequences became visible**. Publishers started to work through the budget squeeze and the backlog of titles. In particular, the **reduction of titles** (national-language originals as well as translations), the **reduction of new contracts** and the **general drastic reduction of advance payments became noticeable**.

As **the EWC predicted, the loss of income for writers in the individual European countries** differed because of structural deficits – often due to a lack of social security systems and few opportunities for individual financial provision. Moreover, although the digital transformation has positively accelerated in many areas, the digital options have been not able to compensate for the deep fall.

## A devastating stocktaking: Voices from European authors in 2021

- » The crisis generated by the pandemic was felt like a tsunami blow. Instead of supporting the cultural field, there was open access to a wide range of literary or cultural activities, and many challenges to licensing agreements in the educational field. —ROMANIA
- » According to a survey of our members, about 28% of writers' publications were postponed —SWITZERLAND
- » Those who are full-time authors have been affected severely (est. 50%) with those who are part-time authors affected less severely (est. 25%). —UNITED KINGDOM
- » The effects of the pandemic vary, but 40% to 50% income loss is an average over the whole spectrum of writers and literary translators. —SWEDEN
- » Publishers overall are more reluctant, and picky. —NORWAY

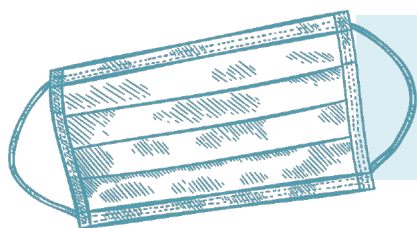




## The key findings of the economic impact of the Covid-19 crisis in 2021:

- **Cancellations continued:** 77% of authors suffered from cancelled readings, literary festivals and lectures, or appearances on panels in 15 crisis months. The lack of visibility at fairs also played a role (70%). In particular, the cancelled readings in bookshops, literature houses and libraries, as well as in schools played the most significant role. **Cancellation fees or remedies were not paid in 90% of cases.**
- **Income loss: 15% to 25% average income loss for part-time authors, 30% to 40% for full-time authors on average** – but full-time writers in the stronger markets registered an income loss of over 50% and more, while part-time writers generally experienced between 10% and 25%. Likewise, the national market size was relevant.
- **The impact was most severe on writers of fiction, translators, and new authors.**
- **Online readings and events were randomly paid.**
- **Over half of all publishing houses in the European book sector had cut back their programs by 20-40%.**
- **The use of educational book and text materials for schools, universities, researchers, or scientific institutions has risen considerably.** The International Federation of Reprographic and Rights Organisations (IFRRO) reported that 40% of CMOs received applications for license extensions or fee relief (which led to lower revenues for authors); 70% were expecting a negative long-term impact on licensing income – which came into effect in 2021 and 2022.
- **Instead of supporting writers, there were calls to introduce more limitations and exceptions that put them under further pressure;** in particular, this was done by library and university associations.





## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 2022/2023 REPORT

— HE JESTS AT  
SCARS THAT NEVER  
FELT A WOUND —*The Tempest*

## INTRODUCTION

While the world has got used to life without face masks again, in 2022 and at the beginning of 2023 writers were still dealing with the aftermath of the crisis. This impact is often unseen by the public, politicians and the reading community, but this

means that authors of texts in 2023 have to come to terms with a new, completely different ‘normal’, which for them contains economic challenges, content-related changes and future-oriented threats and developments.

**The key findings of the economic impact of the Covid-19 crisis in 2022/2023:****Your reading was cancelled (again), and we are postponing your publication**

Still, **readings in 2022 not taking place or being cancelled play a role - significant**, however, are the continued losses due to postponed and cancelled titles in 2022/23, as well as generally more difficult access for new contracts and debut authors, niche subjects, and non-bestsellers. **Advance payment levels also remain at significantly lower levels than before the pandemic. The publishing landscape is spare and relies on familiar themes and names.**

Keep in mind that **writers always perform unpaid advance work.** They are not paid for pages, quality, research, or hours of writing. Only the use of the work triggers a monetary share – and only after the author has earned out the advance. Accordingly, every delay of a title is, in the final analysis, a **delayed payment of 2-3 years for work already done. Authors thus give continuing credit and are subject to double jeopardy.**







## No name – no money: the most severely affected genres and writers

- Authors whose success is not in the bestseller segment – especially fiction, but also poetry and plays – are feeling the market shrinkage most strongly. **Debut authors are also having a hard time finding a publisher after the pandemic; publishers**, particularly in the larger markets, are relying on the ‘safe bank’ of bestsellers, series, well-known names, and established themes.
- All in all, **niche topics, high literature, poetry, and picture books for beginning readers find it difficult to be included in the reduced and reluctant programs** of publishing houses. This applies to national-language authors and translators alike. Commercial success is now the criterion for selection, rather than subject matter or literary relevance. The motto for survival is this: no experiments.  
A creeping death of bibliodiversity?

## Digital needs and lower revenues: the electronic dead ends

- The education book sectors have seen the trend that **although more digital works are being used, this has dramatically reduced the overall revenue for authors.**
- This is also evident when it comes to lending e-books and audiobooks through public libraries: **While electronic use continues to rise, the resulting revenues are falling.**
- **In hardly any Member State** has the library digital media budget been increased to meet the demand. Instead, there have been renewed calls to bend authors' rights law to the detriment of writers in order to save on educational budgets and appropriate, respectful remuneration.

## Lending is the new having

- **The pandemic has spread into all areas of life; this also applies to individual purchasing power** – and the reduced desire to buy – on the part of the reading community. Over the three-year period, **lending has increased substantially**; on average over 50% in e-lending from public libraries, as well as in print lending. Commercial subscription and flat rate models, on the other hand, have not experienced such an upswing. No-charge (e-)lending in libraries is already disrupting markets.
- **Flat rates mean flat income:** Writers' share in e-book and audio book distribution by subscriptions through the typical monopolies like Amazon or Audible, is on average one-fifth of what they would otherwise receive from a sale. The “shared revenue” business model goes fully to the cost of writers.
- **The second-hand book market is booming.** Readers are buying fewer new books and more used ones. This means that authors may be widely read or popular, but not proportionately remunerated. Without traceable sales figures, therefore, they are less likely to get new contracts.

## A selection of the EWC recommendations

- Improving **Public Lending Right**, protecting equipment levies, increasing the budget for education and culture, and controlling the exceptions in libraries and universities to the payment of authors rights.
- Establishing protective and **practical frameworks for online and offline authors' activities.**
- EU-wide harmonisation of the **authors' working conditions and social security.**
- A level playing field in the **digital distribution markets.**





## WHERE DO WE STAND IN 2023

# BE GREAT IN ACT, AS YOU HAVE BEEN IN THOUGHT —

*King John*

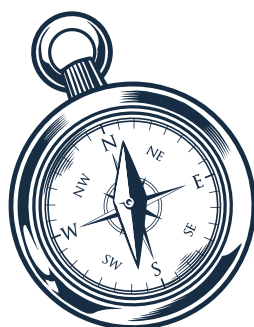
## IS IT OVER OR ARE WE JUST FAMILIAR WITH BEING UNDER PRESSURE?

For **almost 80% of the respondents to the third and last EWC survey, COVID-19 is no longer a burning issue in the book sector.** Dealing with the consequences comes with the symptom of

habituation – or even fatigue after a period of ‘driving on sight’, unpractised in a crisis whose psycho-logical, social, and economic consequences will shape the global community for years to come.

**The final monitoring closes with an evaluation of four main issues: economic impact, trends in the book sector, legal issues, and challenges of the future.**

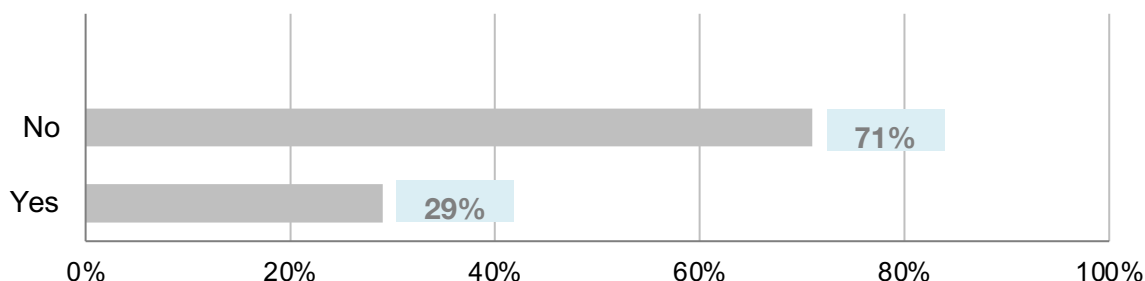
If sequels, seen or not, are becoming symptoms, it is because they are now imprinted in citizen’s and readers’ minds. **Legal changes, including those arising from so-called artificial ‘intelligence’** seem to worsen conditions for writers and translators, and on the whole, **the economic impact is still eroding income and the ability** to earn a living as authors. New practices and contextual tendencies in the publishing sector don’t seem to be of help either.





## One third of associations monitored the impact

### HAS YOUR ORGANISATION DONE ITS OWN MONITORING OF THE IMPACT OF THE COVID CRISIS ON YOUR MEMBERS?

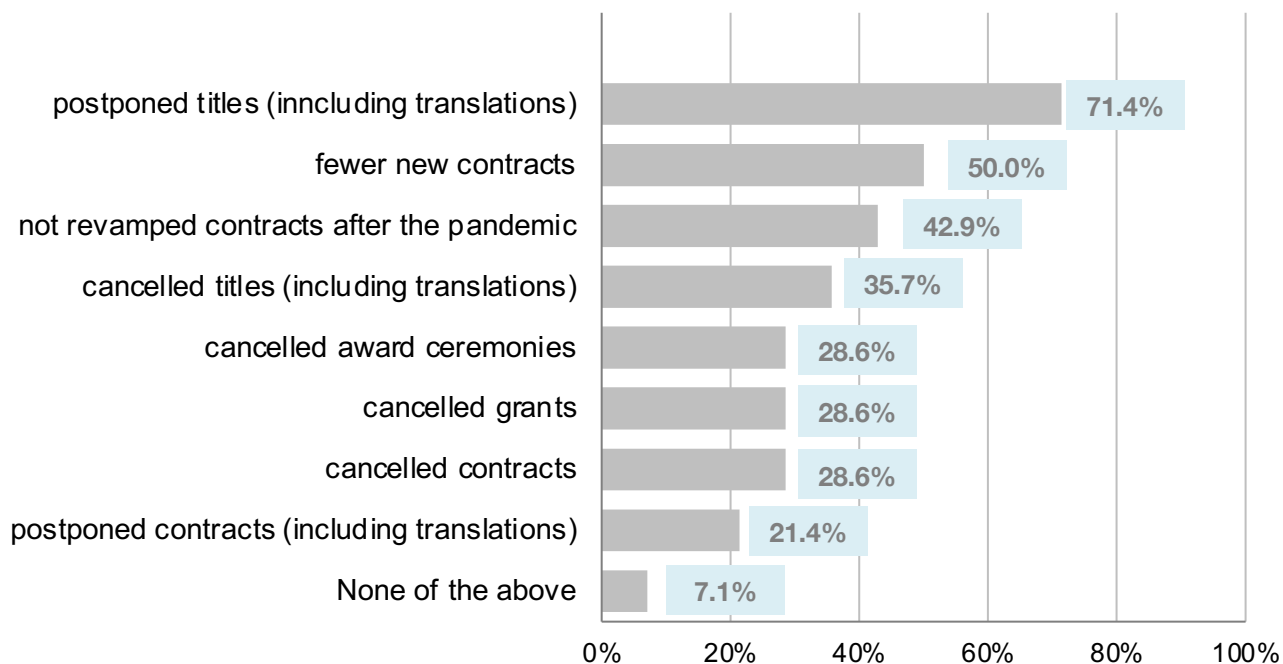


**One third of all respondents stated that they monitored frequently or conducted surveys.**

None of the respondents plan to take stock of the largest break in writing history in the future. One could conclude that **this shows a gradual lack of interest in dealing with the consequences of the crisis.** It is worth bearing this in mind, as **it's a reflection of the general social and political tendency:** No one is processing or dealing with ways to transform the crisis any longer. The desire for an undisturbed 'normal' is so high that even the more difficult 'new normality' is accepted as such.

## 1: THE ECONOMIC IMPACT: FEWER TITLES AND CONTRACTS

### HAVE YOUR INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS SUFFERED LOSSES IN 2022 RELATED TO THE PANDEMIC'S CONSEQUENCES AS A RESULT OF (UP TO 4 CHOICES):



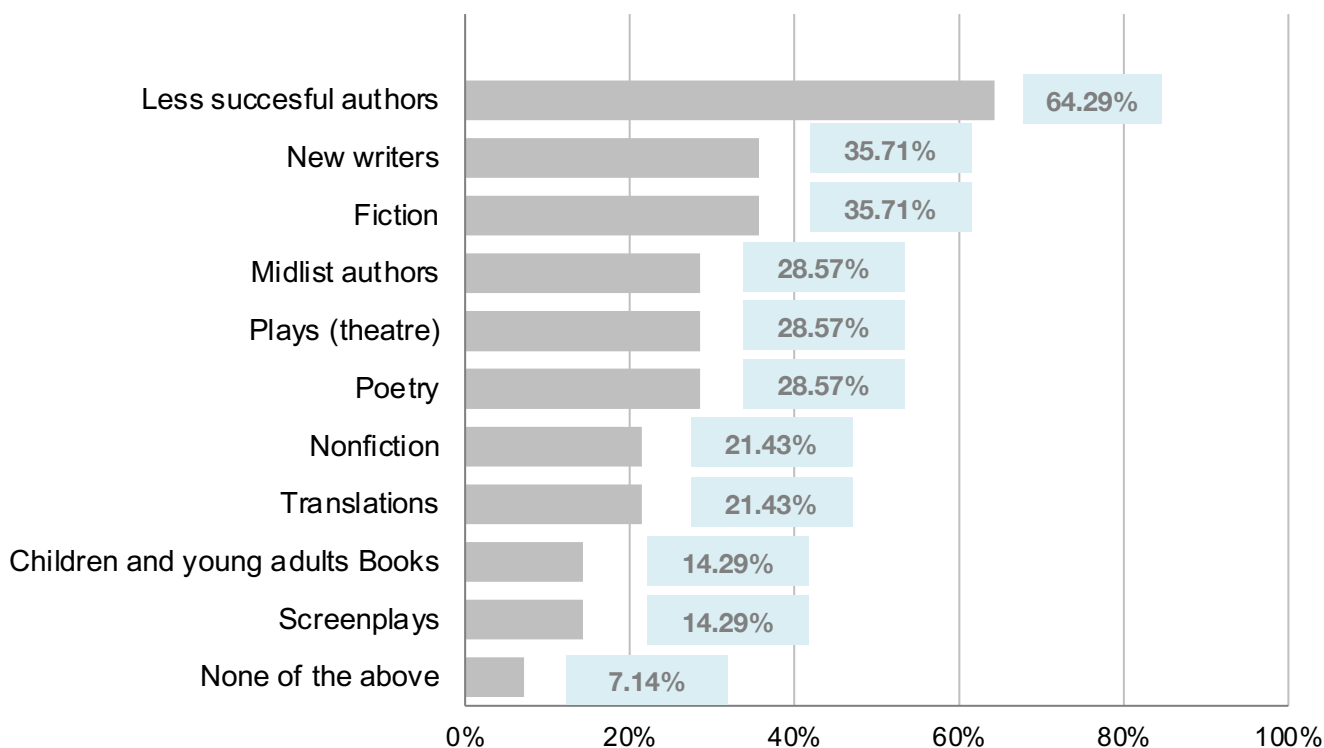
**The traffic jam of unpublished titles continues.** Books are appearing today that were written some time ago. For writers, postponing a title means not receiving the next instalment of their advance, and also having to wait years before they receive any royalties. During that time, however, they have to show social security funds or artists' funds, for example, proof that they are working as authors, and they must pay their taxes, etc. **It can be assumed that for many authors, insurance and pension protection have become more difficult, if not impossible.**



Some of the respondents **are still seeing a decline in live events**: they highlight fewer festivals, public readings, and other in-person events. Nevertheless, it is obvious that the losses are mainly due to a **certain contraction of the publishing sector**, with fewer contracts and therefore titles on the market. On the one hand, this can also have a positive effect: The merry-go-round of new publications turns quickly. Those that have not established themselves in the first six weeks disappear from the shelves. But will fewer titles have more time in the future? Because we are simultaneously seeing a thematic narrowing with a focus on bestsellers and well-known faces or genres ( francophone thrillers, celebrity biographies).

» Most importantly, writers have sustained losses due to cancelled events, paid speaker roles, etc., which in Denmark can be a big part of a writer's income. —DENMARK

**WHICH THREE GENRES WERE PARTICULARLY AFFECTED BY CANCELLED PUBLICATIONS AND/OR POSTPONED TITLES IN 2022? (CHOICE OF UP TO 3)**



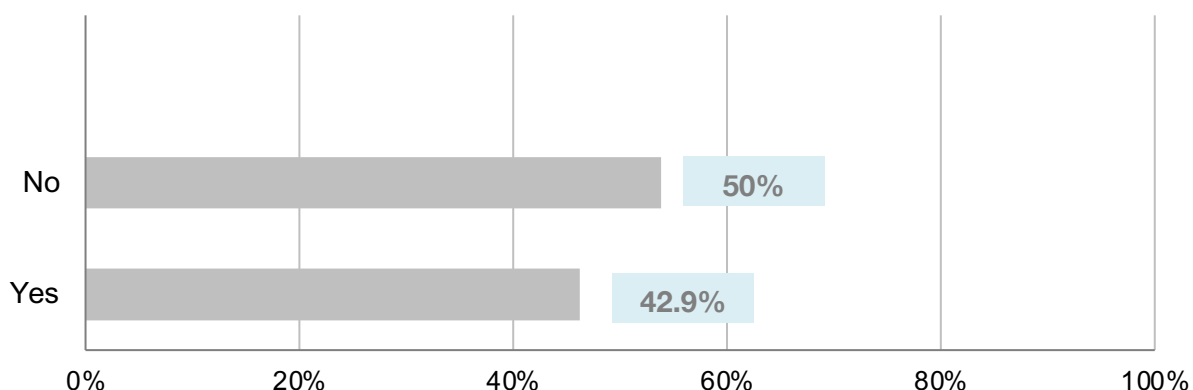
The decrease **in launching new or lesser-known authors shows the market's desire for sure bets**, which prevents there being new, more distinctive titles. The **robustness of children's and young adults' literature is good news**, and as far as the screenwriting sector is concerned, its strength is probably due to the rising popularity of the Netflix & Co. TV platforms.

Basically, **a bibliodiverse recovery of the European book market is not in sight**. This endangers numerous smaller markets whose languages are less frequently spoken, written, printed, and translated. To put this development in the context of the focus on bestsellers, we can predict that Europe's book culture will flatten, and the exchange of works from smaller markets and language cultures into larger markets will dry up.

**The economic impact on writers and translators, from 0 (nonexistent) to 100 (highly severe), is estimated to be near the median point of 50: not dramatically severe.** Getting used to the pressure.

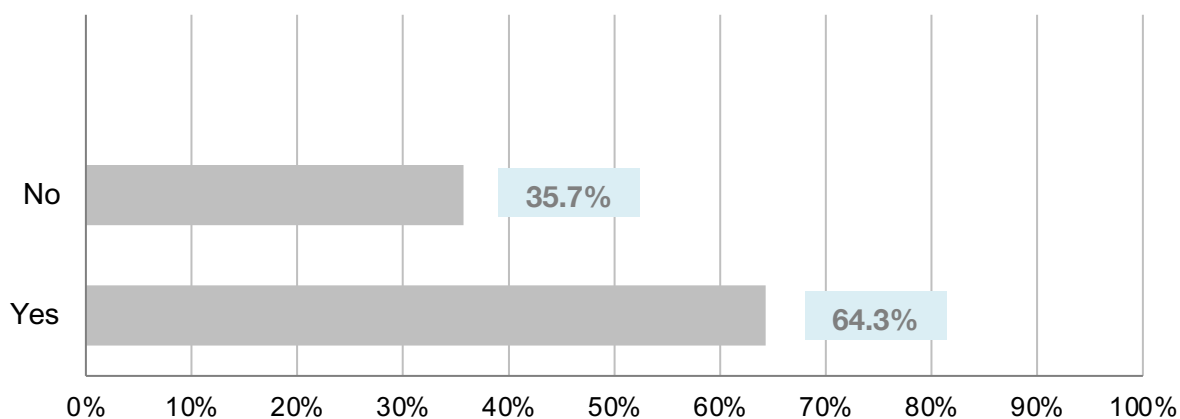


WERE COMPENSATION PROGRAMS BY YOUR GOVERNMENTS PROVIDED FOR WRITERS AND TRANSLATORS AFTER THE PANDEMIC AND ITS SANITARY MEASURES AND RESTRICTIONS? ATTENTION: THIS QUESTION DOES NOT INCLUDE INDIRECT FUNDING THROUGH SCHOLARSHIPS OR EVENT GRANTS, BUT ONLY REFERS TO STATE COMPENSATION FOR ALL THOSE AFFECTED.



As we saw in previous surveys, **it was difficult for freelance writers as self employed persons to access any official help**. Once the society returned to the ‘new normal’, compensation seemed to have returned to the usual pre-Covid schemes, therefore without tackling the **worsened conditions that arose during the pandemic**.

OPEN-ENDED QUESTION: WE RECEIVED OBSERVATIONS THAT ADVANCE PAYMENTS ARE LOWER, THAT THERE IS MORE FOCUS ON BESTSELLERS AND MASS MARKET BOOKS, AND THAT CONTRACTUAL RENEGOTIATIONS HAVE BECOME DIFFICULT DESPITE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF DIRECTIVE 2019/790 (EU) ON COPYRIGHT. HAVE YOU HEARD OF SIMILAR CASES WHERE THE CRISIS HAS CAUSED AN OVERALL DECREASE IN ROYALTY ADVANCES, WORSENEED ROYALTY TERMS, OR GENERAL COST-CUTTING?





## The writers pay the price: Voices from European Authors in 2023

- » Publishing houses are less keen on taking risks with less profitable titles and genres for sure. —CZECH REPUBLIC
- » In 2022, the Bulgarian Parliament did not increase the budget for culture, which remained 0.4% of the gross domestic product. The Ministry of Culture provided very little money for compensation for the recovery of creative organisations. So, at the end of 2022 the Union of Bulgarian Writers received nothing in compensation – neither for the maintenance of the organisation, nor for royalties, nor for the periodicals. —BULGARIA
- » The crisis in the price of paper, which came after the pandemic, provided an excuse to pay authors less. —FRANCE
- » Advances went down / New titles are often those that are similar to existing bestsellers / There is a slightly higher desire for entertaining series / Transparency is not higher than before, despite the Directive on Copyright / The paper crisis hit hard and brought a lot of publishing houses to buy fewer new titles or postpone them. — GERMANY
- » The number of copies of books decreased and bookstores were closed, which means less compensation for copies sold. —LATVIA
- » Yes, but here and there - but then this was also the case before the pandemic. Publishers have been getting more into new and opaque royalty calculations due to their pushing of new digital formats. Readers are avid users of new platforms for books, but often shocked to learn the harsh truth of how little the author gets. —DENMARK
- » There has been a severe reduction in advance payments (for bigger publishers) and in small and medium-sized publishers trying to not pay any advance at all. There is a sort of "boom" in best sellers: because of the writer or the theme. —SPAIN (1)
- » Lower advance payments. The Directive 2019/790 was not yet (2022) implemented in Belgium. A conflict in the Flemish publishers' association (VUV) made it impossible for VAV to negotiate needed changes in the model contract. Especially for digital exploitation of author rights, the drop off in the yearly Public Bookfair with 150,000 visitors and great media coverage had a negative impact on the promotion of new books and authors —BELGIUM
- » For academic writers, the digital demand has grown significantly due to the pandemic, and the royalties for digital works are much lower than those for print. Most publishers have withdrawn all advance payments for debut authors, and collective renegotiations are difficult.—SWEDEN

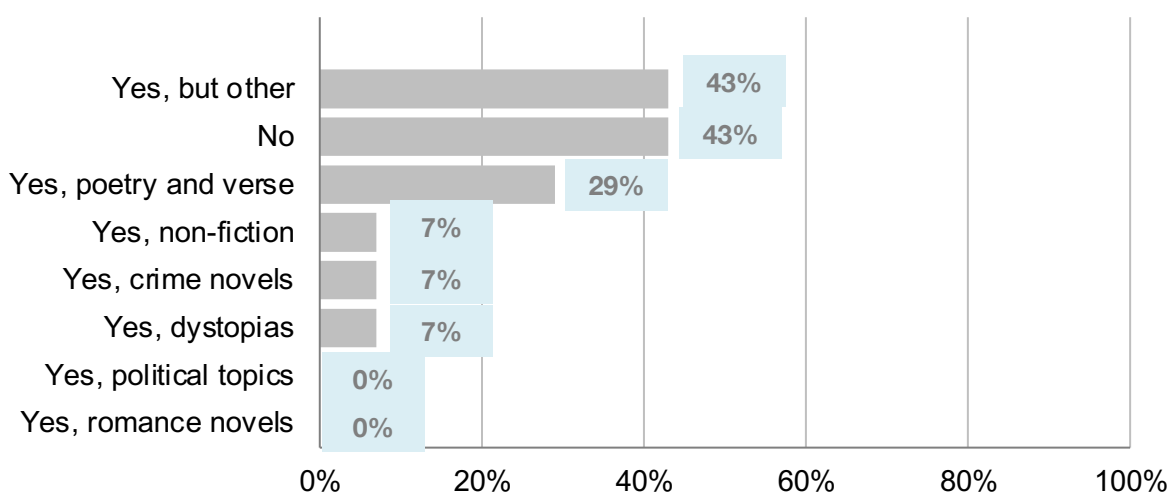


## 2: NEW (and old) TRENDS IN THE BOOK SECTOR

Did the preferences of the reader – or the publishers and editors – change after the pandemic? More escapism, less dystopias? Are some genres underserved or have they lost favour with the readers?

This part of the questionnaire shows one **trend that can result in profound disruptions in years to come.**

### DID YOU OBSERVE THAT CERTAIN TOPICS HAD A MORE DIFFICULT POST-PANDEMIC EXPERIENCE IN GETTING ACCEPTED FOR PUBLICATION - AND IF SO, WHICH ONES?



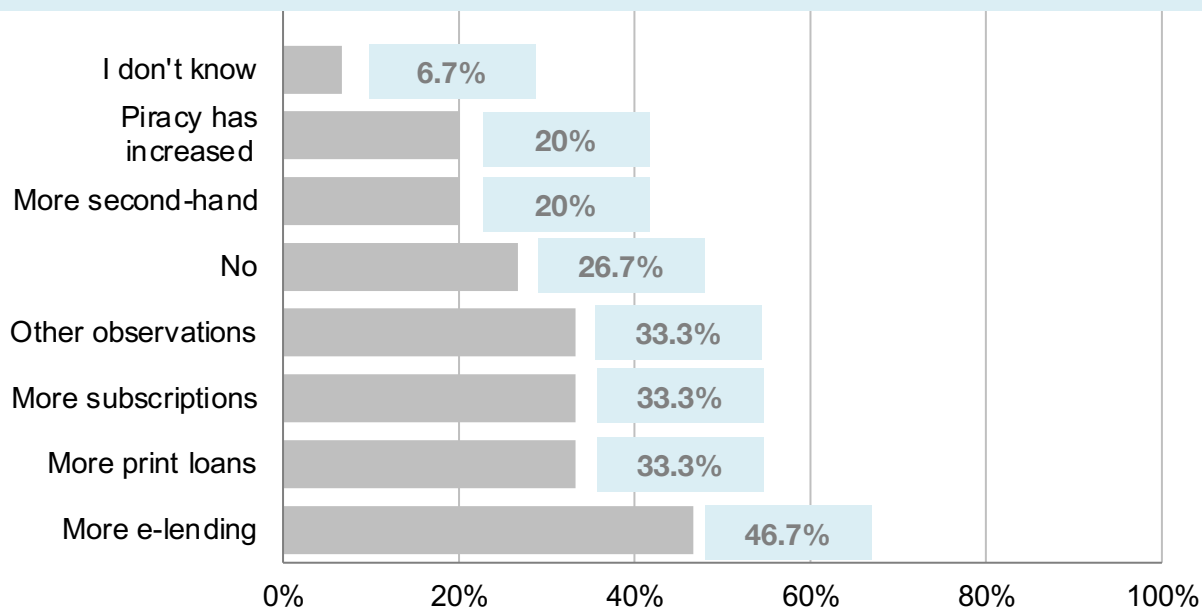
**The ever-suffering field of poetry seems to be even more wounded** in post-pandemic times. But the general impression is that, for almost half the respondents, no big difference was found compared to pre-pandemic themes and subjects. Among the individual answers by the respondents was the observation that niche books, travel guides, or translated books that are only printed to take advantage of grants for translations are published less often.

The importance of poetry, the oldest form of storytelling, which, more than any novel form, touches the reader most intimately and has been proven to have mental, physical, cognitive influences, making it essential to not turn a blind eye to this trend. Poetry is the most human expression of writing. If it is lost, we lose the oldest literary technique.





**HAVE YOU OBSERVED THAT BOOKS ARE BEING BOUGHT MORE SECOND-HAND, LOANED MORE FROM LIBRARIES, SUBSCRIBED TO VIA FLAT RATES, OR OBTAINED MORE VIA ILLEGAL SOURCES?**



**E-lending is the new having.** It seems logical that readers try to save money here and there. But within that reality, this trend is extremely damaging to the book sector: **We know that increased e-lending in public libraries drastically decreases author income, as book loans are either not paid (e.g., in Germany) or are compensated at a reduced price, which does not meet appropriate standards.** Also, the loans are directly related to a loss in sales as a result of the cannibalism of a state-owned, free e-lending platform.

The pandemic gave academic and public libraries associations the opportunity to ask for **extensions in legal exceptions for e-lending**. This violates the principle of ‘every use must be remunerated’. It is also another attempt to put authors at a disadvantage. Writers create substantive value and economic assets at their own risk, from which the general public benefits for free.

**Another observation in the electronic book sphere:** Piracy increased, and subscriptions to flat rate all-inclusive commercial lending platforms reduced the overall turnover for writers in the digital market.







**OPEN-ENDED QUESTION: WHAT OTHER CHANGES IN PRODUCING, BUYING AND READING HABITS HAVE YOU NOTICED? FOR EXAMPLE, MORE AUDIO BOOKS, FEWER OR MORE YOUNGER READERS, IMPACT OF THE PAPER PRICE CRISIS, MORE AND MORE AI-GENERATED TRANSLATIONS ...**

- » With trouble covering their basic living expenses and paper/book prices increasing, Czech households are cutting back on their spending in this sector. We can observe that more books in alternative and less widely popular genres seek crowdfunding as a way to get published. —CZECH REPUBLIC
- » Publishers raised the final price of books, even though VAT was reduced from 20% to 9%. —BULGARIA
- » Surveys show that there are fewer and fewer readers (and buyers) every year in Croatia. —CROATIA
- » More audiobooks. Impact of the paper price crisis: Publishers lower authors' remuneration (advances and percentages). Threats are more real: e-lending and education push for more accessibility, and AI is a threat for translators. —DENMARK
- » Publishers are very choosy. —MALTA
- » The digital transformation of the book sector and the readers' habits have increased exponentially. This has a huge impact on authors' earnings. It is difficult to say if this increase is a result of the pandemic or if it would have happened anyway. —FINLAND
- » E-books and audio books are doing better than before. In an additional sense, one writer also says: 'Younger readers now read for free on web serial platforms like Wattpad. These audiences can provide a boost to sales when you convert the web serial to e-books'. Some comments show that more books are being accessed via the second-hand book market. The cost-of-living crisis (inflation) is impacting on discretionary spending (on books). —IRELAND
- » More audio books / A certain high peak for children books / A rise in BookTok / Paper price: Books are getting thinner, but the prices are rising (we have a fixed book price system) / We hear a lot more about AI translations in nonfiction and academic fields etc., and translators working as post-editors / e-lending in public libraries increased and now cover nearly 50% of all electronic books read, while contributing only 6% to the revenue / monopoly platforms are getting stronger. —GERMANY
- » Publishers are very keen to push their own digital platforms and formats. We are also seeing a huge rise in audio formats – and literature being treated like 'content' more than individual works, no doubt because of streaming growth in general. This puts authors in a pinch. Eager to get their work out there, they may be forced to compromise on artistic integrity and to accept a role as subcontractor of stories that must fit a mould or not challenge readers/listeners. This sub-contractorship also means less transparency for authors and also more work, relying on self-promotion and book bloggers to avoid drowning in a sea of all too similar 'content.' —DENMARK



**CONTINUED VOICES: OPEN-ENDED QUESTION: WHAT OTHER CHANGES IN PRODUCING, IN BUYING AND READING HABITS HAVE YOU NOTICED? FOR EXAMPLE, MORE AUDIOBOOKS, FEWER OR MORE YOUNGER READERS, IMPACT OF THE PAPER PRICE CRISIS, MORE AND MORE AI GENERATED TRANSLATIONS, ...**

- » Fewer copies of books. The connection between authors and readers has decreased because there are no meetings in libraries. Online events are not always available for those who would like to communicate with authors. Readers in rural and remote areas suffer. —LATVIA
- » More audio books— HUNGARY
- » More audio books, boom of youtubers and influencers as poets or novelists.—SPAIN (1)
- » After the pandemic, the growth in book sales stopped and even declined / Prices have risen by more than 15% (the psychological threshold of 20 euros is exceeded (€ 22.50 instead of €19.50) / Younger readers are selling books in English (effect of BookTok) / e-book sales have stagnated at a low 3% level / The market share of internet bookshops, which was 25% during the pandemic (more than 50% in the Netherlands) has shrunk, but the position of brick-and-mortar bookshops is less than before / Buying habits: Professional booksellers still sell as much as before, but casual sellers not so much. —BELGIUM
- » More audio books, and narrower selections in public procurement. State run schools tends to go with one or two publishing houses and select all their materials so as to get a reduced price and digital additions, rather than buying the books requested by teachers and students. —SWEDEN
- » Audio books are being introduced to Catalan literature, while e-books and their public e-lending are becoming customary as well, despite the fact that most people still prefer to read literature in the traditional way on paper. —SPAIN (2)

### 3: LEGAL ASPECTS AND THE SHAPING OF FUTURE

Societies react to threats at the fastest pace they can. What we saw during the pandemic **was an emergency call to governments and supra-national institutions to try to bring about order as quickly as possible** in order to stop the contagion. Some would say it was made with mediaeval measures, but it was the only choice at the time. As we have pointed out, some regulations are delayed to keep pace with technological changes. This includes new ways to access leisure and culture through the internet, and, from 2023, the *fait accompli* of so-called artificial intelligence. **As demonstrated in the pages below, our members have been seeing and warning about some new developments that need to be followed up on** to ensure proper regulation and use.



**HAVE THERE BEEN NEGATIVE LEGAL DEVELOPMENTS IN COPYRIGHT LAWS FOR AUTHORS AND TRANSLATORS OR TENDENCIES TO REQUIRE THEM? IF YES, PLEASE DESCRIBE BRIEFLY.**

- » Yes, a tendency to ask for more exceptions (libraries and research universities): open access, creative commons, and publishing agreements being less and less negotiable. —FRANCE
- » The DSM directive is yet to be implemented in Finland. — FINLAND (2022)
- » Yes. Libraries are lobbying for more exceptions and limitations to lend out e-books, but under worsening conditions. The same has already happened in the educational field. We are also seeing that the transparency obligation of Art. 19 is still being ignored, mainly in digital usage. —GERMANY
- » Public administrations and universities are using copyrighted texts without a license, and the tendency is getting worse as more requests for rights to scientific papers to be assigned to universities. The development of Article 15 (DSM) is being blocked in Parliament. —SPAIN (1) (2022)
- » There is a struggle to get legislation written by one government to be passed by another. The Swedish election will probably result in a lot of potential progress being sent back to the drawing board. — SWEDEN

**HAVE THERE BEEN POSITIVE LEGAL DEVELOPMENTS, E.G., IN COPYRIGHT LAW, SOCIAL LAW, CULTURAL PROTECTION LAWS? AND IF SO, WHAT KIND?**

- » No.—MALTA, FINLAND, LATVIA
- » These issues are hopefully in progress, though very slow. — CZECH REPUBLIC
- » Norway is on the verge of getting a book law. Hopefully that will spill over to the rest of the Nordic countries and we will get a more harmonised and controlled book market. — SWEDEN
- » In the area of social law: The amounts needed to complete 4 trimesters per year for retirement rights to kick in have been lowered. — FRANCE
- » As of 09/2022: Department of Education in Ireland will purchase a central educational licence on behalf of all primary and post-primary schools recognised in the Free Education Scheme. Independent schools continue to be licensed individually. This is a much more favourable situation for the remuneration of content creators than when license money had to be collected school by school. — IRELAND
- » There are attempts to create an additional labour law where self-employed authors/artists can pay in on a volunteer basis. Also, there are efforts to implement the Culture in the State mandate. — GERMANY
- » The Danish Authors' Society and Danish Publishers organisations have worked together to create a transparency agreement that aims to help forge a better path forward. — DENMARK
- » DSM is being developed despite the blockage. Cultural associations are pressing to enhance the law but are facing challenges. The law doesn't meet all of the authors' demands. — SPAIN. (2)
- » The Directive 2019/790 was implemented only in July 2022, but more time is needed to see the effects (note the conflict in the Publishers Association) / The advantageous fiscal regulation for authors rights as movable duties establishing better access to unemployment benefits for artists (e.g., authors) is being developed and will start in 2023. — BELGIUM



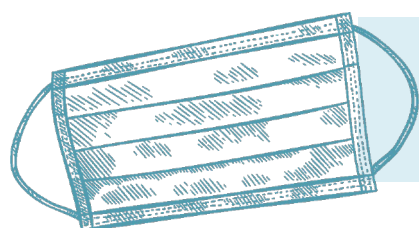
**WERE THERE OTHER POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS TRIGGERED BY THE CRISIS (E.G., CLOSER COOPERATION WITH OTHER CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS, HIGHER SENSITIVITY TO ISSUES SUCH AS FREEDOM OF SPEECH, NEW BUSINESS MODELS SUCH AS AUTHORS' PARTICIPATION IN SECOND-HAND BOOK TRADE, OR DIGITAL FORMATS AND ACTIONS ...)?**

- » As the Czech Writers' Association, we seek cooperation whenever possible as that gives us a better chance to be heard. —CZECH REPUBLIC
- » **No.**—MALTA, FINLAND, LATVIA, FRANCE, BULGARIA
- » Some increase in Arts Council funding, perhaps reflecting a better understanding (at an institutional level) as to how vulnerable writers' incomes and living standards are in general to adverse circumstances. Here in Ireland, a new basic pay for artists (BIA) scheme is being piloted. Due to the pandemic, this scheme has received wider attention and has perhaps more support generally that it might've had pre-pandemic. Generally, there is wider public understanding that the creative sector – including writers – was hit badly by the pandemic and is in general a vulnerable layer in society in terms of income/precarity. Re: publishing and accessing books: less gate-keeping by agents and publishers as authors can go straight to audiences digitally. There has been an explosion of connectivity for authors. The technology (such as Zoom) existed previously, but there had been no real attempt (or perceived need) to exploit it. One writer said that 'thanks to Covid, I am probably better networked with other authors than I ever would have been and have access to a far greater range of development opportunities'. —IRELAND
- » The writer's voice is better recognised in policy spheres. Ten years ago, we had no lobby.—GERMANY
- » Somewhat. I think the general public, culture lovers, and politicians alike learned a lot by artists voicing how much the pandemic affected their work and income. Usually, culture comes somewhere near the bottom of a very long list of things to deal with or strengthen. Our former minister of culture stated in the beginning of the crisis that 'the arts were the least of her worries' – this caused an outrage and sparked a public conversation on the impact of cultural experiences on the well-being of us all. Alas, this outrage has predictably simmered down as the restrictions lifted. We're still seeing a slow increase in people supporting the arts (coming to talks and so on) to get to the levels before Covid-19. As for our members, we strived to maintain a near-normal number of meetings and so on. And with Zoom, we were able to engage members living far from our headquarters in Copenhagen.—DENMARK
- » New business models.—HUNGARY
- » Unity among associations (writers, journalists, photographers...) has increased, and CMOs are expanding their activities. Grassroots petitions (up to 1,000 writers) to enhance authors payments for DSM Art. 15 by the big players (like Google).—SPAIN (1)
- » Greater solidarity between professional artists' organisations in contact with the government for general artists rights and concerns of the cultural sector (in the past, there was too much of a focus on music, podium arts, and plastic arts).—BELGIUM
- » There were some new platforms for e-books and subscriptions at the beginning of the pandemic, which pushed the market a little bit to the rights-holders advantage. Those have all been merged with the major distributors now. Large platforms now hold more variety of content, meaning that more collectives can combine their efforts to secure the right of the creators. Such as Spotify now having audio books and podcasts in Sweden.—SWEDEN
- » Authors, associations and public institutions have considered online resources to promote literature, and they are being used not only because of Covid but also in order to avoid geographical barriers, for example. The promotion of Catalan literature has experienced a huge online conversion —SPAIN (2)



## WHAT IS YOUR OVERALL IMPRESSION OF HOW THE CRISIS HAS AFFECTED THE APPRECIATION AND RECOGNITION OF AUTHORS' ACHIEVEMENTS?

- » It's perceived as far less important that other urgent burning issues (war in Ukraine, energy crisis, social problems, housing crisis), thus literature in general gets less coverage in media and public debate. —CZECH REPUBLIC
- » The authors focused on political and historical topics to be relevant in the current international environment. —BULGARIA
- » The Croatian market is small, and it depends on government financing. The government reacted with more funds for books, but there were no readings and festivals where authors make some money. —CROATIA
- » The crisis has enhanced all of the weaknesses of authors in the book sectors: difficulty to negotiate a contract, difficulty to have payments in a time of crisis, etc. Books were designated in France as "essential goods" to allow bookstores to remain open during shutdowns. However, recognition of their achievement did not follow. Overall, authors are less paid and not well treated and the crisis helped see the problems in the spotlight but did not help finding solutions. —FRANCE
- » People are buying less books. Prices of books went up. —MALTA
- » No, not at all. The situation might even be worse than before. —FINLAND
- » Overall, the perception is that the situation remains much as it was before the pandemic. No change. —IRELAND
- » Ambivalent. Often there are Sunday speeches on the importance of a diverse book world and the need for writers. But when it comes to action that includes budgets, it's off the table. Our Minister of Culture once said: if Culture is under pressure, a democracy is under pressure. This is true – but actions are needed if we are to believe the political will exists for promoting and protecting authors. So far, no profound action anywhere. —GERMANY
- » It opened the eyes of many readers and forced us to rethink a bit how to engage with our colleagues as well as with collaborators. —DENMARK
- » Authors have to fight harder to get noticed. In crisis situations, priority is given to those involved in the public sector and business. Individual authors are less visible and less protected. —LATVIA
- » Reading in digital formats has increased, even where the main genres are bestsellers. Traditional bookshops created [www.todostuslibros.com](http://www.todostuslibros.com) to compete with Amazon: the books are sent to your local library. —SPAIN (1)
- » it is more difficult for us as professional organisation to help our members involved in disputes with their publishers because of growing individualisation of the author-publisher relationship, the conflict within the Publishers Association, and the lack of knowledge and greater urgency in business aspects of authors (*le plaisir de se voir imprimé* is dominant and abused by the publishers). —BELGIUM
- » Worse. The general public had the impression that writers weren't affected by the pandemic since 'they can write from home'. Authors' struggles during the pandemic were disregarded, and since they weren't awarded governmental aid like many other cultural and creative workers, their status diminished amongst their peers as well. —SWEDEN
- » Books are being more appreciated than they were in decades past, thanks to the positive experience that people have had with them during these pandemic years. The literary sector is one of the few economic sectors in Catalonia that has not decreased but has remained the same in absolute figures. —SPAIN (2)



## SOME FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

— IT IS A KIND OF GOOD DEED  
TO SAY WELL; AND YET WORDS  
ARE NOT DEEDS —

*Henry VIII*

**Supporting writers is supporting diversity, freedom of speech and, ultimately, democracy, education, and the very substance of Europeans civilisation.**

This may seem like an exaggeration, but the reality is that we need different voices to build unity.

It is a mirage to assume that content on social media equals the quality of thinking and writing of our best authors. And it is suicidal not to protect the creation of the next batch of novels, poems, and essays: those that are called to light our way in these rather obscure times.

### **THE PANDEMIC IS OVER, BUT OTHER MENACES ARE WAITING. HERE'S HOW TO TACKLE THEM (WITH SOME INSISTENCE FROM THE EWC'S 2021 RECOMMENDATIONS):**

#### **(1) EU-WIDE HARMONISATION OF AUTHORS' WORKING CONDITIONS**

Member States have to implement a solid social security system for freelance authors, including pension schemes, accessible health and labor insurance, and gather them in Statutes of the Artists. There are good examples in Spain, Portugal, Germany, and France.

#### **(2) PUBLIC LENDING RIGHT, EQUIPMENT LEVIES, EDUCATIONAL BUDGET**

There are still Member States in the EU that do not have a functioning implementation of a Public Lending Right (PLR). We encourage public administrations to significantly increase the budget for e-lending in public libraries, and to avoid additional limitations and exceptions. The principle that 'every use must be remunerated', must be followed for each and every loan of a book. An increase in budgets for educational, academic, and teaching materials under licensing agreements is urgently needed. The protection of equipment levies and remuneration for authors through Collective Management Organisations (CMO) is also the key issue for the future.

#### **(3) SUPPORT OF MONITORING AND OF AUTHORS' ORGANISATIONS**

We call upon the Member States to implement frequent monitoring of the situation of writers and translators, by supporting national organisations, to adjust measures, and to establish a continued, coordinated stakeholder dialogue with all representatives in the national and European book sector.



#### **(4) BRING THE BOOKS BACK TO ADULT READERS – AND TO CHILDREN**

We request Member States to significantly increase the coverage of cultural and literary works in the public media, and to actively promote reading with the EWC's recommended campaign 'A book for every child'. This can be organised through the annual purchase of new titles in the segment of children and young adult books, and with vouchers handed out at school to be redeemed at local bookstores. The measure includes national reading promotion funds where organisers (schools, libraries, etc.) can apply for the payment of fair authors' fees. This can also be encouraged through existing activities such as the recently created Day of European Authors. The goal is to increase reading and literacy among the adult Europeans of the future.

#### **(5) PRESERVE EUROPE'S DIVERSITY ON AN EQUAL BASIS**

We declare that European literary awards or translation grants should be based on the principle of equal promotion of all spoken/written languages, to foster multilingualism. Diversity is one of the main pillars of European values. This also means re-establishing a dedicated scheme for writers within Creative Europe that is based on their real needs, and not just on commercial market success.

#### **(6) INVOLVING AUTHORS IN ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL TRANSFORMATION PROCESSES**

We advocate for a closer involvement of writers and translators within cultural councils, to implement new funding principles for culture as a state duty by law, as well as to complement important questions of digital transformation, inclusion, and the preservation of democracy. Authors are accustomed to listening, reflecting, and finding unusual solutions. Their voice is essential to any society.

#### **(7) NOT FORGETTING THE LESSONS LEARNT**

We call for a profound reflection on the great importance of written culture for the spiritual, mental, and even physical well-being of people. Literature is, in our view, a human right: To deprive citizens of the highest expressions of human achievements is a regression to much worse times. Self-censorship, restrictions by the market, and even actual censorship mean that the next masterpiece could not be written at all: It is essential that the European institutions face the many problems related to this.

#### **(8) EUROPE'S FUTURE DEPENDS NOT ON ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE – BUT ON AUTHORS' INTELLIGENCE**

We call for a regulated, remunerated, and transparent handling of data and protected works within the development of advanced informatics (so-called generative 'AI'). This includes reforming the TDM exception (Art. 4, EU 2019/790) with a remuneration-requiring design, implementing licensing obligations and obligations of proof and transparency regarding works used as training material. In the AI Act proposal (Art. 53.3a): Implement a transparency obligation and a labelling requirement for press, book, and text works generated, including translations. AI products should not be protected under authors' rights and copyright laws. Robotic engines mash-up and copy existing data; they create products rather than original art. The EWC statement on the AI Act proposal can be found at: <https://europeanwriterscouncil.eu/call-for-ethical-ai-regulation/>

**Check the following links for all recommended measures and schemes of the EWC's two Covid-19 surveys:**

[https://europeanwriterscouncil.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/EWC-Survey-Economic-Impact-of-Covid19\\_11062020.pdf](https://europeanwriterscouncil.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/EWC-Survey-Economic-Impact-of-Covid19_11062020.pdf)

[https://europeanwriterscouncil.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/ONE-YEAR-OF-CRISIS\\_EWC-SURVEY\\_FINAL021121.pdf](https://europeanwriterscouncil.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/ONE-YEAR-OF-CRISIS_EWC-SURVEY_FINAL021121.pdf)



## NOT THE LAST WORD.

BY NINA GEORGE, HUMAN NOVELIST

PRESIDENT OF HONOR OF THE EUROPEAN WRITERS' COUNCIL

I could take an alarmist approach to this. After all, the situation for writers and translators, as the sources of the 23.5 billion-euro book value chain in the European sector, continues to be serious. Event cancellations, sales losses, program downsizing, and reduced advance fees; fewer debut authors, the decline of poetry, publishers' unconditional love of commercial success rather than substance and bibliodiversity. Writers fall through the cracks when it comes to governmental support and to security schemes – and today, with advanced informatics (AI) stealing from us to create competing, soulless products, we stand on a cliff, and a roar comes from the abyss: What is the sense of having authors (or translators, or editors, or booksellers) when we have generative writing machines, translation robots, and algorithmic proofreading and recommendations?

However, I would like to articulate this in different terms: the first term is pride.

Yes, I am proud of all my colleagues. They refuse to be left high and dry. They continue to write, even if they don't know what lies in store for them. They continue to speak up and talk about money, about fairness, about the values they craft. They not only stand up for themselves but against racism, against sexism, against bias. They support one another at Zoom campfires, they tweet for Ukraine, they motivate readers to make purchases at their local bookshops, they take part in protests to support screenwriters in Hollywood, or to demand AI regulation, they join Friday for Future and care for climate change issues. Writers are used to taking risks, they are used to taking criticism in public, to never cease addressing what needs to be addressed. They are used to thinking, reflecting, and explaining to us what kind of world we actually live in. They are the ones who constantly go beyond their limits. I am proud to be one of them.

The second term is: Soul. The crisis releases something both gentle and forceful in equal measure. In the words of the late Carlos Ruiz: 'Every single book has a soul. The soul of those who wrote it, and the soul of those who read it, experienced it, and dreamt of it'. The intrinsic motivation that an author fulfils when s/he writes a book is, on the one hand, the manifestation of the individual will, of one's own experience, and receives in an authors' right the recognition of the human being as a valuable individual. On the other hand, every author is a membrane through which the present and the past pass, he is part of the We, and in every work also expresses the common soul of a nation, of a language world, indeed, of humanity – the link that allows us to understand each other and want to live together. This soul is above all that technology could ever achieve.

The third term is: Now.

Now is the time we live in. We are the people who are shaping the Now. No one will take the burden from us. We, the authors, are equipped with everything we need at the same time: Craft and opportunities to raise our voices, potentially to unite. We are now the ones who are in demand through our words. If our lives were a hero's quest, this would be the call – and like any hero, we are hesitant, don't think we are good enough, and would prefer that someone else take the responsibility. And like any hero crossing the line, we don't know what's going to happen to us, and whether the story will be driven by the plot or driven by us. But the secret to really good stories is always the characters. So let's act. Now. The last word is not yet written.

Nina George

Novelist, President of Honor of the European Writers' Council, former EWC President (2019-2023).





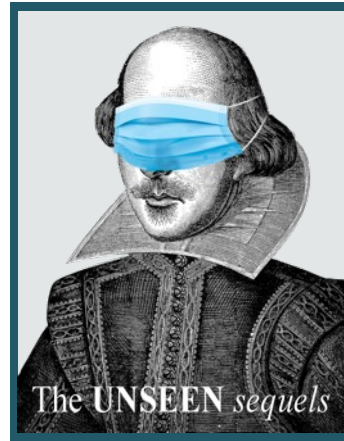
## ANNEX

### PARTICIPATING WRITERS' AND TRANSLATORS' ORGANISATIONS IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

#### The participating countries and organisations

- Belgium: Vlaamse Auteursvereniging
- Bulgaria: Union of Bulgarian Writers
- Croatia: Croatian Writers' Association
- Czech Republic: The Czech Writers' Association
- Denmark: Danish Authors' Society
- Finland: Society of Swedish Authors in Finland
- France: Société des Gens de Lettres
- Germany: Syndikat e.V. - Association of German Language Crime Writers
- Hungary: Szépírók Társasága Egyesülete
- Ireland: Irish Writers Union
- Latvia: Latvian Writers' Union
- Malta: Akkademja tal-Malti
- Spain: (1) Asociación Colegial de Escritores de España  
(2) Associació d'Escriptors en Llengua Catalana
- Sweden: Swedish Association of Academic Writers

The European Writers' Council is a non-profit, non-governmental federation constituted by currently 49 national professional writers' and literary translators' associations and unions in 31 European countries, from European Union Member States, the EEA countries Iceland and Norway, as well as Belarus, Macedonia, Montenegro, Switzerland, and United Kingdom. EWC members comprise over 220.000 professional authors in the text/book sector, writing and publishing altogether in 34 languages.



### **Survey period**

20 September 2022 – 9 February 2023

### **Tool and analysis method**

Monkey Survey (Extra) ©1999-2020, online query, secure invitation link, full text analysis, qualitative and quantitative methods, case examples, individual interviews.

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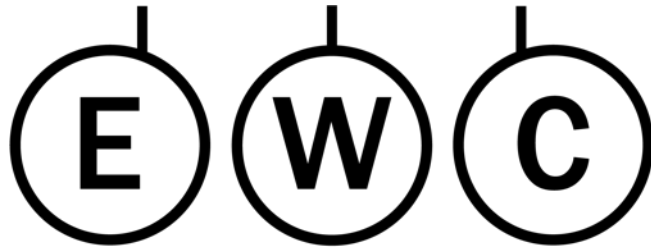
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