

Joint Press Release

E-Lending in Public Libraries: Ministerial round table presents study plus ten recommendations for improving authors' remunerations

The Round Table initiated two years ago by the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media (BKM) has published the evaluation of its study on *The Economic Impact of E-Book Lending in Public Libraries on the consumer book market* and presents ten final recommendations for e-lending in public libraries. The results, calling for higher remuneration for authors and for the establishment of voluntary licensing models with higher transparency and improved sustainability, are met by the approval of the German Writers' Union (VS in Ver.di), the Association of German-Language Literary and Scientific Translators (VdÜ) and the German-Language Network on Authors' Rights (NAR). The participating ministries gave no recommendations for provisions for further exceptions in the German Copyright Act regarding e-lending.

Starting in October 2022, upon the invitation of Claudia Roth, Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media, delegates representing writers and translators, the publishing sector, booksellers, libraries and librarians have been consulting with the BKM and with the Federal Ministries of Justice and for Economic Affairs and Climate Action on improvements to the legal framework governing e-book lending in public libraries. The Network on Authors' Rights (Netzwerk Autorenrechte, NAR), the German Writers' Union (VS in Ver.di) and the Association of German-language Literary and Scientific Translators (VdÜ), representing the specific interests and perspectives of fifteen German-language authors' and translators' associations covering the full spectrum of trade and educational publishing, would like to extend their gratitude to all participants in this results-oriented cooperation, welcoming the consensus that was reached in the form of ten final recommendations based on the results of the study on "*Die wirtschaftlichen Auswirkungen des E-Lending in öffentlichen Bibliotheken auf den Publikumsmarkt*" (*The Economic Impact of E-Book Lending in Public Libraries on the consumer book market*) and of the polling which the Federal Ministry of Justice conducted in parallel.

"Authors and translators, who constitute the basis for the entire publishing value chain, are gravely affected by the significant economic losses incurred through ever-increasing electronic lending by public libraries. We are confident that the results of the fact-finding process, together with the agreed-upon recommendations, will facilitate a convincing approach for state and federal actors to promote licensing models with higher sustainability and improved budgeting, in order to make a more appropriate and proportionate remuneration of authors and translators possible," to quote NAR round-table delegates Janet Clark and Nina George.

"The study illustrates the fragility of the book sector and the concurrent implications of no-cost library services. Even as it is, authors and translators are losing money with each and every book borrowed from a library, be it print or digital. If any further damage to the market is to be prevented, authors must always be allowed at the table, making their legitimate interests heard during negotiations," Lena Falkenhagen says, who participated in the proceedings in her capacity as federal chairwoman of the German Writers' Union (VS in Ver.di).

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“For all originators, the revenues

currently originating from public lending rights for print copies are insufficient as is. At the same time, lending statistics lack in transparency. We are glad to see that thanks to the unequivocal results of the study, all of those involved have come to the conclusion that author remuneration derived from e-lending, if from nothing else, *must* improve,” adds VdÜ representative Ingo Herzke.

The factual numbers shown in the [final report](#) illustrate the grave effect which public e-lending has upon book sales, as well as the essential economic import of the six- to nine-month hiatus after publication during which no electronic version of any print publication may be licensed for e-lending (so-called “windowing”). In addition, the study shows the shifting purchasing patterns exhibited by e-lending patrons, who – according to the study – tend to have higher-than-average incomes, along with being more highly educated. The data base for the independent study, which was conducted by researchers of the DIW Econ GmbH department of the German Institute for Economic Research, comprised title-by-title information on copies sold, copies borrowed, and windowing for not quite fifteen thousand titles, as well as data provided by market researcher GfK Consumer Panel Media*Scope. The questionnaire for the independent study had been developed in a concerted effort by all round table participants, ensuring a reliable data base satisfying all parties involved. In parallel, the Federal Ministry of Justice conducted its own polling on e-lending.

• **Study results and interpretation:**

https://www.diw.de/documents/publikationen/73/diw_01.c.912937.de/diwkompakt_2024-200.pdf (German version)

https://www.diw.de/documents/publikationen/73/diw_01.c.912941.de/diwkompakt_2024-201.pdf (English version)

• **Final Recommendations:**

https://www.netzwerk-autorenrechte.de/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/empfehlungen-e-lending_NAR_241031.pdf

• Comments on the Ministry of Justice polling:

https://www.bmj.de/DE/themen/wirtschaft_finanzen/rechtschutz_urheberrecht/urheberrecht/stellungnahmen/stellungnahmen_node.html

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About us: NAR (Network on Authors’ Rights) represents fifteen writers’ and translators’ associations from Germany, Austria and Switzerland comprising a total of 16,500 professional authors for the book sector. VdÜ is the Association of German-language Literary and Scientific Translators. VS in Ver.di is the German Writers’ Union .