



Public policies safeguarding bibliodiversity

Disclaimer

The following recommendations are not exhaustive. They reflect some current issues affecting independent publishers from various countries. Because it is impossible to formulate recommendations for each link of the book chain, not all are cited in these recommendations, including that of the bookshop. However, independent publishers do wish to work closely with independent bookshops and call on public authorities to create and/ or develop measures supporting independent bookshop networks.

These general proposals, aimed mainly at public authorities and international organisations, are therefore the **legal foundations required to safeguard in-country bibliodiversity**. They must be adapted and completed based on each country's socio-economic context. To ensure their coherence, they must be articulated in collaboration with all actors from the book chain throughout their development and implementation.

Recommendations

Legal instruments and taxation

- **In the countries where there are no such instruments, implement a fixed paper and e-books price legislation.** This legislation would curb disloyal competition between superstores (and bookshop chains), and independent bookshops. **The implementation of a fixed price policy on e-books would prevent** major digital platforms from abusing their dominant position to discount book prices, which is depriving publishers of business latitude.
- **Limit the scope of copyrights and intellectual property ownership logics**, to reinstate a balance between the right of the creator and the right to access knowledge, information and creativity found in society in general. It would for example reduce the duration of copyrights protection to return to more reasonable durations, in opposition to the current trend that prolongs it.

Competition between public and private publishers

- **Ensure that there is no unfair competition between state publishers and private publishers.** When a publishing structure exists, **great care must be taken for it not to be suppressed by state publishing.** In Mexico, for example, more than 60% of national publishing outputs are from the State, which drastically diminishes the competitive advantage of the private sector and its growth opportunities.

Publishers training

- Implement, in countries where it is not available, some **“book profession” training programmes** in universities, to guarantee the training of future professionals, strengthen the



capacities of professionals through in-service training, and promote the independent publisher profession.

- **Establish bursaries and grants schemes to enable study visits and temporary exchanges of publishers between independent publishing houses.** This would facilitate mutual knowledge and training, intercultural relations and the creation of networks, often necessary for the implantation of co-publishing and translation projects.

Translation and co-publishing aid funds

- **Maintain and/or develop aid funds for in-translation and ex-translation in each country,** based on the model of the French National Book Centre (CNL). Among the selection criteria, these funds must guarantee the fair remuneration of translators. It would also be advisable for these aid funds to support unusual translation flows: for example from Persian to English, from Arabic to Spanish, etc.
- **When there are several languages in one country, set up support programme for translations between the various local languages of the country,** enabling the development of local publishing and circulation of texts in languages less represented in publishing outputs.
- **Implement measures to support co-publishing addressed to independent publishing houses of various countries sharing a same language, by creating public bi-national and multinational aid funds** to support co-publishing practices between publishers from different countries, as for example the aid fund for bi-national co-publishing currently implemented between Peru and Chile.

See also “Proposals and actions to develop solidarity publishing partnerships” recommendations

Book circulation

- **Establish national and regional agreements to obtain preferential tariffs for book transportation and distribution.** Agreements between book professionals and post services, bus companies, airlines, etc. would enable the establishment of adapted tariffs for books, facilitating the circulation of books at the national and regional levels.
- **Implement a transport business labelling system to facilitate book distribution.** For example in Africa, labelling by public authorities of some bus or taxi companies would enable book professionals, among others, to identify providers who can be entrusted with the transport of their books.
- **Implement regional public policies that would strengthen the linkages and circulation of books between countries within a region and/ or sharing a same language, to support fair exchanges and curb colonial logics.** One the challenges of independent publishing in Latin America is to achieve fair exchanges (at present very unequal) with Spain. The same can be said of relations between Francophone Africa and France, and some Asian countries and the United Kingdom. In order to do so, national public policies must consider regional public policies and vice-versa, to create horizontal relations based on sharing, co-publishing and mutual assistance.



Public reading, libraries, and reading spaces

- **Implement efficient and sustainable public reading programmes for the development of reading.** These programmes must involve schools (colleges and secondary schools) and public libraries, and be sustainable. Practically, activities promoting reading can be workshops (storytelling, reading clubs, meetings with authors, etc.); book and reading days (youth literature day, well-known writers' calendar). The implementation of these programmes must involve all links of the book chain.
- **Consider and strengthen the presence of independent publishers lists in library acquisition criteria.** It is essential to ensure the presence of local publishing outputs in public, school and university libraries through acquisition programmes with transparent criteria, enabling a true representation of publishing outputs of a given country.
- **Ensure a linguistic representation in libraries.** It is necessary that libraries acquisitions not only focus on books published in the dominant language of a country, but also consider publishing in local languages (for example, Bambara language publishing in Mali).
- **Ensure representation of a country's coexisting cultures in libraries.** Encourage and support municipal libraries to annually purchase a certain number of foreign language books (proportionally to the presence of speakers of this language on the territory).

Support the digital development of independent publishers

- **Support the digitalization of independent publishers' backlists through public funds and present a multilingual offering of digital books.** The global domination of Google in terms of consultation and digitalization of contents (70% of search engine market shares in the world) is not neutral and is a threat for bibliodiversity. It impacts on negotiations with publishers and remuneration of authors.
- **Create public funds allowing the acquisition of software and computer equipment at competitive rates for independent publishers.** Contrary to major publishing houses, the smaller size of independent publishers does not allow them to recover costs of software and computer equipment through an economy of scale. The implantation of a support fund would allow them to acquire the computer equipment necessary for their publishing activities at a preferential rate, and to follow the technological evolutions at the same rate as major publishing companies.

Digital platforms

- **Ensure that major digital platforms pay the same taxes as local bookshops in countries where they operate.** If Amazon can propose advantageous trading conditions for consumers, it is because they pay less tax than local businesses (physical bookshops, online bookshops, digital publishers, etc.). For example, the quasi-totality of business done in France by the American giant company is declared in Luxembourg. This practice, not so dissimilar to tax evasion, enables Amazon to avoid tax and therefore suppresses competition. To support the emergence of actors offering an alternative to Amazon, and development of online sales through bookshops, it therefore seems essential that tax regulations be the same for all and that a common level of competition be guaranteed.
- **Prevent Amazon, through an appropriate legal instrument, from sending books ordered by its clients at tariffs below regular freight charges.** This law would end the disloyal



competition between independent publishers (who favour relationships with readers), and Amazon, who simply registers book orders and send them to its clients.

Local cultural expressions, and local and national languages

- **Develop and strengthen the national book industry in each country, including publishing houses, which encourage local cultural expressions and bibliodiversity.** UNESCO's "Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions" indeed highlights the core role played by local cultural expressions. Supporting local cultural industries is an essential objective not only to protect and encourage cultural expressions, but also to support education and societal development in general.
- **Develop in-country public policies to support publishing in local languages.** This support must include translation aid between the various languages of a given country. Also, international organisations (UNESCO, UN) must ensure that governments respect ratified international agreements on cultural diversity, including States that hinder local languages development.

See also "Essential measures for local and national languages publishing" recommendations

Book fairs

- **Support in-country establishment of independent publishers collective stands** that will allow them to be represented and identified in major book fairs such as Frankfurt, enabling purchase and transfer of copyrights, but also acknowledgment of independent publishers on the international market.

Toolboxes (non exhaustive)

Studies, analysis

- "Nueva agenda por el libro y la lectura: recomendaciones para políticas públicas en Iberoamérica" (© 2013 CERLALC-UNESCO): http://cerlalc.org/pdf/home_pdf/nueva_agenda.pdf
- "Modelo de Ley para el fomento de la lectura, el libro y las bibliotecas" (© 2011 CERLALC-UNESCO): http://cerlalc.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Modelo_Ley.pdf
- "Global Fixed Book Price Report" (International Publishers Association, 2014): <http://www.internationalpublishers.org/images/stories/news/FBP.pdf>
- "VAT/GST/Sales /Tax rate: Global Survey on Books & E-Books: Europe, Latin America and Canada" (International Publishers Association, 2013): <http://www.internationalpublishers.org/images/stories/news/VAT2013.pdf>
- "Appel pour des tarifs postaux préférentiels pour le livre en Amérique latine" (advocacy carried out in 2010 by the International Alliance of independent publishers): http://www.alliance-editeurs.org/IMG/pdf/Plaidoyer_tarifs_postaux_Amerique_latine-2.pdf
- "The Amazon system, what threats for bibliodiversity?" (considerations proposed by the International Alliance of independent publishers' Digital Lab in October 2014): <http://alliance-lab.org/archives/2320?lang=fr#.VGtyM2evjcs>

International Alliance of independent publishers – www.alliance-editeurs.org
80 recommendations & tools in support of bibliodiversity



Tools to be developed (2015-2016 perspectives)

- **Detailed mapping** of government policies in each geographical area (Latin America, Arab world, Africa, Europe, etc.) in order to compare existing book support instruments and identify each country's gaps and needs.

To make remarks and give your point of view on these recommendations, contact the team of the International Alliance of Independent Publishers (equipe@alliance-editeurs.org).

Read the [International Declaration of Independent Publishers 2014](#)