

Press release

International book markets defy the coronavirus with significant gains in the first half of 2021

Revenues increased by more than a third in some cases in the space of a year, as an exclusive special nine-country survey carried out by GfK Entertainment has shown.

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Baden-Baden, August 23, 2021. - An exclusive special survey carried out by GfK Entertainment has shown that the international book markets recorded a significant increase in sales in many places in the first half of 2021, both compared to the same period last year and the first six months of 2019, when no lockdowns were yet in place. In the nine countries covered, revenues increased by more than a third in some cases in the space of a year, for example in Brazil (+33.4%) and Spain (+38.3%). In a two-year comparison, the growth here was still 16.3% and 12.8% respectively. In Italy, growth compared to 2020 was around 36.8%, in France even as high as 43.4%.

The 2021 sales curve has been slightly flatter so far in the Netherlands (+4.3%), where many shops were forced to close temporarily, in contrast to the previous year. The trend in Germany was also up in single digits compared to the first half of 2020 (+4.1%), but down 4.9% over 2019. The Swiss book market ended the first six months 11.1% higher, while Portugal and the Belgium's Flanders and Wallonia regions reported increases of 18.9, 16.8 and 33.8% respectively.

The study's most important conclusions and key insights are as follows.

- **Sales trend spurred by higher prices**

The increase in turnover in the first half of 2021 was almost always accompanied by higher average prices. Although sales also posted positive growth for the most part, growth rates were lower than for turnover in eight of the nine regions surveyed.

- **Non-fiction outpaces fiction**

In most of the countries surveyed, sales of non-fiction and guidebooks grew even more strongly than the fiction segment. Many popular works were by politicians such as Barack Obama, Philippe De Villiers or Giorgia Meloni. Cookbooks, lifestyle and financial guides and feminism titles were also in high demand. At the same time, *The Missing Sister* by bestselling author Lucinda Riley, who died in June, was the best-selling novel in Switzerland, Flanders and the Netherlands.

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- **Culture passes widely used**

Comics, including mangas in particular, are still popular and were the fastest growing product group in France, Italy and Spain. This success may be partly down to Government promotions, such as in France and Italy, where young adults who have turned 18 are given a voucher worth several hundred euros that can be used for cultural purposes.

- **Video streaming is impacting the book market**

Since the beginning of the 2000s, blockbusters like *Harry Potter* and *The Hunger Games* have boosted sales of the corresponding books. Now that many cinemas have had to close for months and streaming services are still booming, the influence of hit series such as *Bridgerton* or *Lupin* is becoming increasingly apparent. These have helped the books by Julia Quinn and Maurice Leblanc to gain increased attention in Belgium, France, Italy and Spain, for example. The mini-series *The Queen's Gambit*, which also appeared on Netflix, led to a run on games and chess manuals in Italy.

- **Waning interest in e-books**

The e-book sales channel, which was surveyed separately, did not manage to continue the previous year's positive development in many places. Although sales of digital books were still in the black in Flanders (+16.5%) and the Netherlands (+12.7%) taking 2020 as a whole, the figures there were down by 3.6 and 5.3% respectively in the first half of the year. Switzerland and Spain also reported a drop, whereas sales of e-books in Germany are continuing their upward trend (+9.6%).

The survey: The evaluation is based on the physical book market figures for the first half of 2021 using trade panel data for Belgium (Flanders/Wallonia), Brazil, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and Switzerland as well as the GfK Consumer Panel for Germany, in each case excluding subscriptions and downloads.

If you are interested in further information or in receiving the complete study, please contact senta.wolf@gfk.com.

About GfK Entertainment

GfK Entertainment is an official charts and market research data supplier to the Books, Music, Games 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.

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