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BOOKS AND READING: A CULTURAL CHALLENGE FOR EUROPE

(Communication from the Commission)

Summary

In a society characterized by rapid advances in information and communication books, together with the audiovisual media, constitute the basic educational tool available to Europeans in their quest to relate to an environment distinguished by the diversity of national and regional cultures on the one hand and by a shared set of values on the other. They are the medium for literary creation, research and reflection, essential to the pursuit of knowledge, self-awareness and an understanding of others and of the world around us.

A special product, both in cultural and industrial terms, books - and, by extension, reading - represent a priority area for action as we move towards completion of the internal market in 1992: this was the conclusion reached by the Ministers for Cultural Affairs when they met within the Council on 27 May 1988 to consider the plan put forward by the Commission to provide a fresh boost for culture in the Community.¹

This paper attempts to summarize the different cultural and economic issues raised at each stage in the book's journey from author to reader and to examine how they interact; it looks in turn at the creative work involved, at publishing, translation and distribution and, finally, at the promotion of books and reading.

I. The creative work that goes into producing a book

1. Any action in the book sector must be of particular benefit to authors and translators, who provide the essential creative input. In the cultural sphere, as elsewhere, the Community has a duty under Article 117 of the EEC Treaty "to promote improved working conditions and an improved standard of living for workers, so as to make possible their harmonization while the improvement is being maintained". The aim must therefore be to guarantee authors and translators a fair standard of living - in social as well as fiscal terms - which takes account of their special living and working conditions.
2. Copyright enables authors to reap the benefits of their intellectual endeavours and, by protecting them, encourages literary production. However, providing protection for authors and translators and at the same time allowing books to circulate freely means finding a satisfactory solution to major problems such as the term of copyright protection, publishers' contracts, public lending right, and reprography.

¹ COM(87)603 final/2, 14.12.1987.

If these sensitive and controversial issues are to be resolved it will be necessary:

- to examine the scope for a gradual alignment of the terms of copyright protection and associated rights;
- to make collective agreements guaranteeing authors and translators a minimum level of protection and fair remuneration general practice throughout the Community;
- to propose measures on public lending right in the light of developments in legislation;
- to strike a balance between the interests of users and the requirements on the part of authors and publishers for the exploitation of printed material given the intensive use of reprography in libraries, schools, universities, research institutes and documentation centres.

II. Publishing

1. Publishing is an essential vehicle for promoting and disseminating culture. It is also of considerable economic importance in terms of employment, total added value, investment and external trade.

The Commission therefore intends to publish a set of statistics at the end of 1989 on the state of the book market in Europe and on the changing patterns and trends in consumption and practices in this sector.

2. The structure of the publishing industry is changing under the twofold pressure of national and international competition and rapid developments in the new technologies. Reconciling the vitality, independence and diversity of publishing companies with a healthy financial position is a cultural and economic target which must be achieved if cultural, scientific and technical knowledge and information are to be properly disseminated. The Commission believes that priority must be given to safeguarding the independent development on the Community and international markets of publishing firms with a commitment to producing quality books. A healthy competition policy within the single European market area is a must if the publishing industry is to respond not only to technical and economic developments but also to cultural requirements.

III. Translation

1. In a multicultural, multilingual Community, the objective of joint action in the book sector must be to give European citizens access in their own language to important literary, scientific and technical material - classical and contemporary - published in the Community and in the rest of the world. This would entail producing more and better translations, given that the chances of multilingualism becoming general practice are limited. The stakes for the Community are high, not only for the professional translator but also for the man in the street.

2. The implementation in 1989 of a Community pilot scheme to provide financial support for translations of works of contemporary literature will be the first experiment of its kind. Modest funding will mean that some 30 books a year can be translated over a five-year period and priority will be given to minority languages. The Commission will then make proposals for a more ambitious scheme in the light of the experience gained.
3. For a translation market which is expanding steadily, particularly for technical publications (economics, law and the sciences), the number of professional translators is low and the proportion with specialist knowledge far from adequate.

In order to rectify this situation, which can only get worse as 1992 approaches, priority should be given to Community action to improve translator training.

The Commission consequently intends to encourage the setting up of more training colleges for translators, the introduction of translation into university curricula and the organization of specialist training courses. The Commission also feels that a body of rules governing translation as a profession should be drawn up at Community level in cooperation with the Member States and the professional groups concerned.

IV. Dissemination

The main problems when it comes to dissemination can be summed up in two words: networks (bookshops and libraries) and pricing.

1. For books to be disseminated satisfactorily, each Community country has to have a network of good bookshops which can provide the public with the wide variety of published material available and a network of libraries which can rise to the challenge of the computer revolution and adapt to user expectations.

The Commission is planning to carry out a study of the part played by distribution systems in view of production and distribution developments, with particular reference to bookseller training and bookshop computerization.

It also intends to step up the action on the computerization of libraries in which it has been engaged since 1985.

2. Book pricing

The Commission set out its position on book pricing as far back as 1985.² It stands by this position, as its only objection in principle is to resale price maintenance which distorts trade inside the Community, particularly within language areas.

The Commission notes that there is as yet no proof that extending pricing arrangements to trade between Member States is the appropriate way, still less the only way, of raising production levels and promoting distribution.

It therefore intends, in cooperation with national authorities and representatives of all the professional interests concerned, to look more closely at distribution systems and at alternative measures to promote book publishing and distribution. On this basis it will, where appropriate, make specific proposals.

V. Promoting books and reading

A study of reading patterns in the Community shows that there is a high rate of functional illiteracy and that, in the face of the growth in the audiovisual media, reading is no longer the favourite leisure activity. This is a dangerous trend from both the educational and cultural points of view.

The Commission therefore considers that, in parallel with the action being taken within the Community to fight illiteracy and to encourage the teaching of foreign languages, a series of promotional activities should be organized aimed at providing better training for those responsible for organizing cultural activity, improving the facilities in places where the public come into contact with books and using the media to promote our literary heritage.

Such activities could be organized in cooperation with the Council of Europe and Unesco.

Summary

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Introduction

As part of the plan to provide a fresh boost for culture in the European Community¹ and with due regard to the priorities set by the Council and the Ministers for Cultural Affairs,² the Commission is proposing a programme of priority measures to constitute a vital component of Community cultural activity and complement the priority given to the audiovisual sector.

This paper has been discussed with the group of experts on books (the Book Group) set up by the Commission to assist the Committee of Cultural Consultants (CCC).³ The Group's opinion is given in Annex II.

Applying the general guidelines set out in the plan for a fresh boost for culture to the book sector, the Commission intends to continue to assume and to broaden the economic and social responsibilities incumbent on it in the cultural sector, as in others, under the EEC Treaty.

This then will be the basis for Commission action to apply the EEC Treaty and Community policies to the economic and social situations in which the individuals, professional organizations and companies involved in promoting books in the Community and the rest of the world develop, whether their business is creative literary work, producing, distributing and trading in books, cultural cross-fertilization between individuals and nations, or promoting reading.

I. The creative work that goes into producing a book

Ideas, knowledge, information and communication all spring from authors; in the book chain, they are both the source and the agent of creative literary work. They are also the guarantors of the continued existence and influence of Europe's cultural identity.

This communication concerns all authors of literary, scientific, technical or other material published in book form, excluding brochures and other writing and the other categories of material listed in Article 2(1) of the Berne Convention.

It should be stressed here that translators have a strategic part to play in communication between different language groups in the Community. They too are authors involved in the creative process, within the meaning of the international and national nomenclature for workers in the cultural sphere and the copyright laws in all the Member States.

This chapter will therefore discuss authors and translators from two different viewpoints:

- improvement of their social status;
- harmonization of copyright legislation.

I.A. Improving the social status of writers and translators

1. In a society where information and leisure are burgeoning and the

¹ COM(87)603 final/2, 14.12.1987.

² OJ C 197, 27.7.1988, p.2.

³ Plans to set up the Committee were announced in the Commission's paper on a fresh boost for culture; its inaugural meeting was held on 8 November 1988 in the presence of Mr Ripa di Meana.

market for culture is booming, it is unfair that the prime movers in creative literary work and intercultural exchange still have no specific status reflecting their special living and working conditions and the uniqueness of their contribution and guaranteeing them royalties and earnings directly linked to their capacity as authors.

In the cultural sphere as elsewhere, the Community has a duty under Article 117 of the EEC Treaty "to promote improved working conditions and an improved standard of living for workers, so as to make possible their harmonization while the improvement is being maintained".¹

The aim is therefore to guarantee cultural workers a fair standard of living so that they can carry on their intellectual and artistic activity free from any ideological or aesthetic pressures and without compromising their personal integrity.

2. To provide a basis for the formulation of this special status, in addition to the individual studies on their legal, social and tax status commissioned in recent years, the Commission has launched a **comprehensive study**, on a Community-wide scale, of the social and tax position of cultural workers.

In the light of the findings of this comprehensive study and of statistical information on the social situation of cultural workers,² the Commission will be presenting its conclusions with a view to a series of initiatives in respect of social security and tax arrangements.³

3. The Commission is also proposing firstly that the resolution on recourse to the European Social Fund to assist cultural workers adopted by the Council and the Ministers responsible for Cultural Affairs on 18 December 1984,⁴ is acted on, and secondly that a **guide for authors and translators** is produced in preparation for 1992.

In this context, we will deal with two problems in turn:

- 1) employment and vocational training for writers;⁵
- 2) freedom of movement and establishment.

1 Communications on Community action in the cultural sector (1977) and on stronger Community action in the cultural sector (1982), Supplements 6/77 and 6/82 - Bull. EC.

Guido Fanti, Improving the living and working conditions of cultural workers (Doc. PE 96-944).

Solemn Declaration on European Union adopted by the European Council in Stuttgart in June 1983, Supplement 6/83 - Bull. EC.

2 In response to Parliament's resolution on the social situation of cultural workers (OJ C 28, 9.2.1981, p.82), the Commission is working on a medium-term cultural statistics programme targeted in particular on the social situation of cultural workers (see Chapter II).

3 A draft resolution concerning the adoption of tax measures in the cultural sector presented by the Commission on 2 May 1985 for adoption by the Council and the Ministers responsible for Cultural Affairs provided that, for tax purposes, cultural workers' incomes should be averaged out over a number of years (COM(85)194 final).

4 OJ C 2, 4.1.1985, p.2.

5 Vocational training for translators will be dealt with in Chapter III.

1) Employment and vocational training for writers¹

1. Irrespective of whether the European Social Fund² is used - and the direct repercussions of such a move for writers can only be limited - the whole question of employment and vocational training for writers is governed by the need for most of them to have a second job, owing to under-employment and the fact that their income is both irregular and extremely uneven.

2. Similarly, although it would be difficult to create jobs directly linked to writing proper, involving writers in the socio-cultural network represented by schools, universities, libraries, cultural centres, writing or reading workshops, etc. would encourage them to develop as creators, teachers and community cultural workers, as well as providing them with jobs which were a natural extension of their intellectual work.

What is more, writers are more than likely to become authors in several disciplines, particularly with the development of the media. This has tended to create jobs for authors rather than do away with them. The progress being made means that writers must be given the opportunity to avail themselves of the new, increasingly sophisticated back-up facilities by receiving training in the new technologies so that they can express themselves as authors.

3. As well as broadening the reading public and directly or indirectly encouraging people to read, investment directed towards integrating writers into the socio-cultural fabric and training multidisciplinary authors would mean a real improvement in their social situation.

This is a field of action in which there should be specific cooperation on a Community-wide scale between the Community, national and regional authorities.

2) Freedom of movement and establishment

1. Freedom of movement and establishment for workers, both employed and self-employed, is one of the fundamental principles of the EEC Treaty. In the cultural sphere, as the 1992 deadline approaches, putting this principle into practice should mean an intensification in cultural exchanges between the Community's countries and regions.

It is especially important for authors, enabling them to become better known in their own countries by building up a reputation abroad and to improve their standard of living as a result.

In the case of authors, freedom of movement and establishment is valuable only if they are adequately informed about the legal, social security and tax arrangements which apply to them, the professional organizations and authors' associations which they may join, the way literary life is organized and the scholarships and grants available in each of the Member States.

¹ Vocational training for translators will be dealt with in Chapter III.
² OJ C 2, 4.1.1985, p.2.

2. In Europe there has been an upsurge in contact between people professionally involved in the arts and exchange of information in that field is consequently becoming a major concern. As provided for in its plan for a fresh boost for culture,¹ the Commission intends to produce a guide for authors and translators, along the lines of the one produced for those involved in the plastic arts.²

I.B. Harmonizing copyright legislation

1. Copyright is a basic instrument of cultural policy, as there is a vital commercial component in the aims it pursues and the ways in which it is applied. The primary purpose of copyright is to guarantee the originators of creative literary work a living from their intellectual activity by giving them an exclusive right to the use made of their work and a right to a fair share in the income which others, particularly publishers, likewise derive from it, thereby encouraging literary production and protecting authors.

This means that copyright is the only instrument which protects the interests of large numbers of authors at least to some degree against the purely commercial interests involved in the sale and utilization of the product of their intellectual work.

2. On 1 June 1988 the Commission adopted its Green Paper on copyright and the challenge of technology.³ The Green Paper deals with a limited number of priority fields in which existing copyright legislation is being called into question by the technological advances of the last ten years.

The purpose of the document is primarily to provide a basis for wide-ranging discussion among interested circles on a number of copyright questions relating to commercial piracy, audiovisual home copying, distribution right, exhaustion and rental right, computer programs, data bases and the role of the Community in multilateral and bilateral external relations.

Copyright, however, is a complex legal field and we cannot afford to overlook a number of sensitive and controversial questions which ought to be resolved from the point of view both of protecting authors and translators and of ensuring that literary work can circulate freely.

This communication will therefore confine itself to a brief discussion of four problems of particular importance from the cultural point of view:

- 1) the term of copyright protection;
- 2) publishing contracts;
- 3) public lending right;
- 4) reprography.

1) The term of copyright protection

1. However complex the issues and interests involved may be, the question of the term of copyright protection cannot be ignored.

1 COM(87)603 final/2, 14.12.1987, p. 9.

2 Raymonde Moulin, A Handbook for plastic artists. Studies Collection. Cultural Matters Series No 4 (1981). Second revised edition 1986. Commission of the European Communities.

3 COM(88)172 final.

After the author's death, the term of copyright protection for works of literature is 70 years in the Federal Republic of Germany, 60 years in Spain and 50 years in the other Member States, with extensions of unequal length granted in Belgium, France and Italy to allow for exploitation difficulties in wartime. In Belgium the draft law on copyright provides for this period to be increased to 70 years.

This is, incidentally, one of the rare cases in which, by introducing a minimum term, the Berne Convention has not produced convergence between the Member States.

The different terms of copyright protection may create obstacles to freedom of trade in books and distortions in competition. At any given time the same work may be protected in some Member States while in others, where it falls within the public domain, it can be freely exploited.

2. With the imminent completion of the single European market, the Commission considers that thought should be given to the extent to which the terms of copyright protection and of associated rights could gradually be harmonized, in respect of both literature and other artistic and musical material as well as the medium on which it is marketed.

2) Publishers' contracts

1. The publisher's contract constitutes the pivot between the legal protection enjoyed by authors and its practical application. A study of national legislation on copyright transfer shows that there are still serious gaps in the rules and considerable disparities between the various laws. In Belgium, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Luxembourg and the Netherlands there are no special regulations governing publishers' contracts. Contractual relations between publishers and authors are covered by the rules laid down in the civil law on contracts, which are based on the principle of freedom of negotiation.

There is hardly any difference in practice between this situation and the one which exists in countries where there are special rules in this area which are not binding and may be derogated from by clauses to the contrary. Italy, France, Spain and Portugal, on the other hand, have fairly detailed rules on publishers' contracts which do set out, albeit partially, to protect the authors' interests. In Belgium the draft law on copyright lays down provisions to this effect.

2. To rectify this situation, professional authors' or translators' organizations and authors' associations on the one hand and publishers' organizations on the other have, in most Community countries, negotiated codes of practice, standard contracts, outline contracts and general contracts which represent an arrangement between the parties involved and serve as points of reference for problems which crop up when publishers' contracts are being concluded at a level of detail frequently not reached by statutory regulations.

The fact, however, remains that, although the conclusion of these collective agreements constitutes undeniable progress in terms of protecting authors' and translators' interests, they contain no specific clause on payments to authors, except in the case of the Danish and Dutch standard contracts. Furthermore, these agreements do not actually have to be used as the basis for the conclusion of individual agreements.

3. A clear obstacle to the harmonization of national copyright legislation in relation to publishers' contracts, at least at the moment, is the fact that contract law as it relates to authors overlaps at many points with civil law in general and the approaches adopted by the national legal systems in this respect differ enormously.

With a view to ensuring that a balance is maintained between authors' and translators' interests on the one hand and the equally legitimate interests of publishers on the other, the Commission is, in principle, in favour of standard, non-compulsory contracts which would guarantee authors and translators minimum protection and fair remuneration becoming standard practice throughout the Community.

3) Public lending right

1. The Green Paper on copyright and the challenge of technology¹ deals briefly with the question of public lending right or book-borrowing. The Commission can only reiterate its position on this subject, namely that Community action to harmonize legislation in this field would not be justified in the present circumstances. That said, it is still incumbent on the Commission to ensure that the provisions of the EEC Treaty are complied with in this area as well.

2. To some extent the question of public lending right is linked to the development of libraries in the Community and to public reading habits. At the moment public lending right exists only in the four countries in the northern part of the Community where there is a dense network of libraries and where the public reads extensively: the Federal Republic of Germany, Denmark, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. The Flemish community in Belgium, in addition to copyright legislation, has drawn up a draft decree on public lending right.

With the build-up of a comprehensive network of libraries throughout the Community's regions, the problem of public lending right is bound to become increasingly acute. The Commission will, of course, monitor developments in this field and, if appropriate, put forward specific proposals in a wider context than that described in the Green Paper.

4) Reprography

1. The explosion in reprography, especially in Europe, can have an adverse effect on the economic interests of authors, translators and publishers. At the moment the phenomenon mainly affects school textbooks and scientific and technical books, posing a direct threat to the very future of such publications and an indirect one to educational, scientific and technical research.

Although the increasing sophistication of duplicating techniques is of considerable benefit when it comes to setting up archives and preserving collections and books in libraries and publishing houses, photocopying, if not kept under control, can be a disincentive to purchasing magazines and books, particularly quality publications; this results in falling print runs and higher prices, which in turn causes such publications to become rarer or even disappear altogether.

2. As far back as 1977 the Commission was emphasizing the difficulties involved in striking a balance between the interests of users and the

requirements on the part of authors and publishers for the normal exploitation of written material owing to the intensive use of reprography systems in libraries, schools, universities, research institutions, documentation centres and so on,¹ as it is here that most of the reproduction of copyright-protected material is done.

A legal framework therefore has to be worked out at Community level to keep a check on the reproduction of protected published material, given the rapid developments in technology as well as the increase in the different national regulations and in licensing agreements concluded by authors and publishers' associations and organizations representing schools, universities, libraries, etc.²

During the discussions on the Green Paper on copyright and the challenge of technology, it was decided that the question of reprography, as distinct from home copying of sound and audiovisual recordings, would be dealt with in the overall context of copyright, once the Green Paper had been published. In their conclusions of 27 May 1988,³ the Council and the Ministers responsible for Cultural Affairs also expressed the view that this question should be examined in depth.

The Commission has decided to conduct a study on the subject and will be putting forward proposals for action in the light of its findings and of consultations with the parties concerned.

II. Publishing

1. Publishing is regarded as one of the major vehicles for promoting and disseminating culture; it also plays an educational role vital to the development of cultural life.

2. In addition to its considerable economic importance (in terms of employment, total added value, investment and external trade), publishing is also an industry whose structure is changing under the twofold pressure of national and international competition and rapid developments in the new technologies.

Reconciling the vitality, independence and diversity of publishing companies with a healthy financial position is a target that must be achieved if cultural, scientific and technical knowledge and information are to be properly disseminated.

This chapter will deal in turn with:

- the situation on the European book market;
- publishing and the new technologies;
- concentration and internationalization in publishing.

II.A. The situation on the European book market

1. There are no reliable comparative statistics in the Community at the moment on the situation on the European book market taken as a whole or in sectors. The Commission has made the compiling of reliable, comparative statistics on European culture, as a permanent tool with which to observe and analyse, a priority objective of its plan to provide a fresh boost for culture in the Community.⁴

1 Supplement 6/77 - Bull. EC.

2 These licensing agreements exist in Germany, the United Kingdom and Denmark.

3 OJ C 197, 27.7.1988, p.2.

4 COM(87)603 final/2, 14.12.1987, p.9.

2. In response to the conclusions reached by the Council and the Ministers responsible for Cultural Affairs on 27 May 1988,¹ the Commission has decided to collaborate with the Council of Europe and Unesco on the gradual implementation of a **medium-term programme (1989-1992) for the publication of statistics on priority sectors (audiovisual sector, books, training and sponsorship)**. Top priority is to go to the book sector. The Commission anticipates that it will be able to release an initial set of European statistics at the end of 1989.

II.B. Publishing and the new technologies

1. **The publishing industry is directly affected by the new technologies.** They influence the supply of and demand for published material in competition with other forms of information, and have an effect on the strategy adopted by publishing firms.

Despite technological changes, the industry will continue to play an **important role as a vehicle for information and scientific and specialist knowledge**, given the complete transformation now beginning in publishing and the overestimation of competition from the new media.

2. All four of the stages in the book chain are affected by the new technologies, with the result that the line of demarcation between the writing, production and distribution of books is now receding and in some cases disappearing.

This development will certainly have a significant impact on the actual structure of the industry as a whole, especially in the case of small and medium-sized publishing firms.

II.C. Concentration and internationalization in publishing

1. **From the point of view of European integration, publishing is without doubt one of the most fragmented cultural industries in the Community.**

Within each Member State the salient feature of publishing is the **predominance of small and medium-sized publishers**. The notable exception is the United Kingdom. Most publishing groups in the Community are now having to operate in a climate of change due to a combination of factors: -

- the **low level of financial independence** which is a characteristic of publishing makes it frail and vulnerable to attempted takeovers by industrial and financial interests in some cases completely unfamiliar with the cultural field;
- new investors in publishing see in the industry a **back-up stock of cheap input material for the new audiovisual media in the race for pictures and programmes**;
- the advent of these new investors has coincided with an **internal rationalization of the management** of publishing groups, which are often fragmented and run on paternalistic lines.

2. It would appear that the following dual trend in the publishing industry is likely to continue in the years ahead:

- **a rationalization in distribution circuits and sales networks**, as witness new types of cooperation between publishers and distributors capable of

¹ OJ C 197, 27.7.1988, p.2.

adjusting to the developments in large-scale distribution and to changing patterns of consumption or the establishment of mail-order networks which, purely in economic terms, more than make up for the slump in bookshop sales;

- simultaneous vertical and horizontal concentration. The Community is full of examples which show that groups which are the most likely candidates for diversification into other media are also the ones whose traditional production structures are undergoing most upheaval.

Small and medium-sized publishing companies are in danger of being gradually absorbed by large amalgamating groups boasting unparalleled production capacity and distribution set-ups, even if this dual pattern of rationalization and concentration does not necessarily mean a loss of independence on the publishing front. However, such developments, dictated as they are by commercial and industrial logic, are still subject to the limits imposed on them by the cultural and linguistic sensibilities of the European public.

3. The Commission will therefore give assiduous attention to ways of safeguarding publishers' independence and to developments in publishing firms anxious to produce quality books, with a view to safeguarding vitality, originality and variety in publishing.

Consequently, the Commission considers that a healthy policy of competition within the single European market area is a must for the publishing industry if it is to respond not only to technical and economic developments but also to cultural requirements.

III. Translation

1. There can be no burgeoning of cultural and economic exchanges among the Member States or between them and the rest of the world without translation. The stakes for the Community are high - not only for the professional translator but also for the man in the street, given that in practice multilingualism is limited. In a multicultural, multilingual community, genuine European integration cannot be achieved without a coherent and comprehensive policy on translation.

As far as the spread of ideas and knowledge is concerned, it is a slow process. There is usually a considerable time-lag before contemporary literature from other Community countries and regions becomes available to the public; this is due to the objective obstacles represented by the Community's linguistic fragmentation, the predominance of translations from the widely-spoken languages, and the cost of translation.¹

This chapter will deal with:

- Community action to promote the translation of major works of European culture;
- training and professional status for translators.

III.A. Community action to promote the translation of major works of European culture

¹ Most Member States have increased the amount of financial assistance available either to publishers or to translators for the publication of foreign writing translated into the language of the country concerned, as well as for the translation and publication abroad of important home-produced works of literature.

1) Pilot scheme to provide financial support for translations of contemporary literary works

In response to the resolution adopted by the Council and the Ministers responsible for Cultural Affairs on 9 November 1987¹ and to their conclusions of 27 May 1988,² the Commission, working with the Committee on Cultural Affairs, has drawn up guidelines for a pilot scheme to provide financial support for translations of works of contemporary literature to complement the work which has been under way on an experimental basis since 1982.

The pilot scheme will give priority to the translation of works written in one of the Community's minority languages into the more widely-spoken languages. By way of exception, the translation of works of importance to European culture written by a national of a non-Community country which belongs to the Council of Europe will also be eligible. The translator's fee will be paid in full.

One of the main objectives is to increase publisher involvement in the submission of works for translation and to improve the selection procedure on the basis of criteria decided in advance.

An advisory group of European experts chaired by the Commission will be given the task of making the final selection from the lists of books put forward by the publishers, in the light of the views of the national experts as to their literary value.

Launched in 1989, the pilot scheme will initially run for an experimental five-year period only. It will receive ECU 200 000 a year in funding (enough to pay for some 30 books to be translated every year). The scheme will be reviewed before it enters its fifth year. In the light of the experience gained, the Commission will make proposals for a permanent and more ambitious scheme.

2) The European Translation Fund

This idea was raised at the European Council held in Milan on 28 and 29 June 1985. The Commission considers that, as things stand, the suggestion needs to be looked at more closely and the objectives, modus operandi and financing of the Fund defined.

Among the subjects to be considered, the Commission, in close association with the Member States and the professional groups concerned, would like to look into the realistic possibility of launching, as a publisher - along the lines of the experimental ventures by Unesco - and, if appropriate, in collaboration with the Council of Europe, a European collection designed to promote significant works by European authors which have not yet been published.

Lastly, with an eye both to 1992 and to developments in technology, thought should be given to ways of encouraging the production of more multinational joint publications, in ventures bringing together the publisher of the original version of the book and the publishers of its various translations.

Thought should also be given to setting up, at Community level, a computerized file of works already translated, which would act as a spur to further translations and thereby encourage the circulation of works of literature.

1 OJ C 309, 19.11.1987, p.3.

2 OJ C 197, 27.7.1988, p.2.

3) The European Translation Prize

In its plan for a fresh boost for culture¹ the Commission advocated the endowment of an annual European prize to be awarded by a European jury to the best translations of literary works from minority languages.

This prize could be organized to tie in with implementation of the pilot scheme to provide financial support for translations of works of contemporary literature as described at 1. above, and with the annual European City of Culture programme.

III.B. Training and professional status of translators

1) Training

1. Translator training must go hand-in-hand with multilingualism as part of the move to provide a fresh boost for culture in the Community;² this, together with the fees they receive, is a vital factor in determining the quality of translations.³

2. According to a study carried out by the Commission in 1981, publishing is one of the most promising sectors in the translation market; the expanding areas are, above all, the technical field (economics, law and science) and, to a very slight extent, literature and education. Literary translations account for only a tiny fraction of the translation market.

The fact is that, for a translation market which can only go on growing, the number of professional translators is low and the proportion with a specialist knowledge of the subject matter to be translated is far from adequate.

3. The Commission consequently attaches great importance to specialist training for translators. Consideration should therefore be given to setting up Community banks of semantic data and semantic difficulties and peculiarities for the use of technical and literary translators.

Linguists should be provided with more training in specialized areas (law, economics, and science and technology). Similarly, subject specialists could be trained in translation, with emphasis being placed both on knowledge of languages and on translation techniques; this could be done by organizing translation courses for the different subject areas.

The Commission would also like to see the experiment it had developed in the Joint Interpreting and Conference Service (JICS) extended; this involves organizing intensive training courses for university graduates in specialist fields.

The Commission is also pushing ahead with the Eurotra programme, now in its third phase.⁴ The aim of this programme is to set up a common system capable of coping with translations from and into the nine Community languages. Four fields are covered at present: political, scientific and technical, economic, and education and training.

1 COM(87)603 final/2, 14.12.1987, Fact Sheet III.1.

2 Ibid., Fact Sheets III.1 and IV.4.

3 OJ C 309, 19.11.1987, p.3.

4 COM(87)270 final, 31.5.1988.

Machine translation does not, however, solve the problem of training specialist translators. A translation produced by a machine has to be worked on by revisers who post-edit the raw product.

The results achieved by the programme will help in the compiling of dictionaries and in the setting of international lexicographical standards.

4. Without excluding the various types of training which might emerge and be developed in the future the Commission, taking as its starting-point existing ventures and achievements to date, proposes that priority be given to the following operations:

- setting up a network of training colleges for literary translators throughout the Community along the lines of the ones established in Straelen (Germany), Arles (France), Procida (Italy) and Tarazona (Spain);
- encouraging universities to introduce translation into their curriculum, in the form either of courses in the theory and practice of translation or of special courses for graduates and/or postgraduates in any discipline;
- developing special training courses for translators in the different specialist areas;
- increasing the number of scholarships awarded for translator training, especially under the Erasmus programme.

2) Professional status

Training translators also implies clarifying their professional status at Community level. What is expected of translators in the way of qualifications and experience is vague and the way in which they are organized varies from one Member State to another.

The Commission therefore proposes that a body of rules governing translation as a profession be drawn up in cooperation with the authorities in the Member States and the professional groups concerned reflecting *inter alia* the diversity of translations and of translator training and qualifications.

There can be no such body of rules without mutual recognition of qualifications and increased cooperation between the educational establishments in Europe awarding translators' diplomas.

IV. Dissemination

There are two distinct and complementary routes by which books reach their readers: retail sales and loans.

For books to be disseminated, there has to be a network of good bookshops in each Community country, as they provide the public with its only source of the wide variety of published material available by maintaining a permanent stock of books and by offering the advice and bibliographical research services associated with booksellers.

The dissemination of books also depends on a concentrated network of libraries, whose social and cultural role and responsibilities as "middlemen" in spreading knowledge and information are of vital importance.

This chapter will deal in turn with:

- bookshops;
- libraries;
- book pricing;
- facilitating the cross-border movement of books;
- imports and exports.

IV.A. BOOKSHOPS

1. Bookshops form the last link in the book chain connecting author to reader; as the place where books are physically present, they play a vital part in the success and promotion of books and a fundamental role in relaying information between the publisher and his market.

In terms of Community action on books and reading, the Commission is focusing primarily on bookshops, as they provide the public with the wide variety of published products by maintaining a permanent stock of books and offering a quality service.

2. Bookshops are the **weak link in the book chain**. In economic terms they are not particularly profitable, given the special nature of the way in which they operate. The high cost of stock management is due to a combination of four factors: the proliferation of titles on the market, slow stock turnover, shortening book-life, and literary fashions.

For a number of years, bookshops have been going through a process of **drastic change** which has transformed the ways in which generalist and specialist bookshops operate. These changes have been brought about by the need to rationalize distribution circuits and sales networks, the appearance of new retail sales methods alongside the traditional network, and the introduction of new technologies.

3. This is a field as yet unexplored at Community level, and the Commission feels that detailed consideration should be given, in cooperation with representatives of the parties concerned, to the following main points:

- the part played by distribution systems in book promotion, life expectancy on the market and cost;
- bookseller and staff training;
- bookshop computerization.

The potential for reorganizing and modernizing the book trade will in effect depend on the answers to these questions.

IV.B. Libraries

1. **Libraries are the second vital element in the dissemination of books, especially specialist books.** In countries where they are properly funded, they represent an extremely important market for the publishing industry: as well as encouraging the public to read and get to know authors, they can act as a stimulus to book-buying. **Libraries are therefore the point where action in the book field and action in the reading field converge.**

The role of libraries is changing. They are having to move on from the traditional service of providing information and adjust to technological developments by offering new services in line with user expectations.

A recent study,¹ however, has shown that there are wide gaps between the "north" and "south" of the Community as regards number of libraries and

¹ P. Ramsdale, Information Management. A study of library economics in the European Communities. Final report (June 1987). Lib. 1 - ECON, EEC - EUR 11.546 EN.

rate of development. It also confirms that different libraries perform different roles and functions.¹

1) Inter-library cooperation in data processing

In the light of the guidelines laid down by the resolution on collaboration between libraries in the field of data processing adopted by the Council and the Ministers with responsibility for Cultural Affairs on 27 September 1985,² as confirmed in their conclusions of 27 May 1988 concerning future priority actions in the cultural field,³ the Commission is now in a position, following comprehensive studies and the hearing on libraries in the Community held on 11 and 12 February 1987, to put forward a proposal for a draft action plan whose aims would be to promote:

- the availability of and access to modern library services throughout the Community, with due allowance for the geographical disparities which exist in relation to access to libraries;
- faster (but properly organized and cost-effective) penetration of libraries by the new information technologies;
- standardization, given the practical and economic advantages;
- the harmonization and convergence of national policies on libraries.

This plan, which will be adopted by the Commission very shortly, should be put into effect promptly and cover a period of five years.

2) Conservation and preservation of the cultural heritage held in libraries

1. The cultural heritage contained in the Community's libraries is currently under serious threat and a question mark hangs over its future as a result of deterioration and the fragility of the acid-based paper used by publishers since 1850. A substantial number of manuscripts and printed material is set to become unusable long before the information they contain has been reproduced and disseminated by replacement methods or the originals have been manually restored or chemically treated.

There is a direct link between preservation of the information contained in these documents using replacement methods to reproduce and disseminate it and the problems associated with improving access to that information. Such improvement presupposes the systematic, coordinated use, on an inter-library basis, of standard, high-quality microfilming techniques and the use of optical technology.

2. Given the inadequate financial resources, the insufficient number of qualified staff and the overutilization of the books, any practical solution to the problem will imply increased cooperation between libraries in the light of experience and achievements in each country and region of the Community and of the work of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) and the International Council on Archives (ICA).

¹ According to Unesco nomenclature, libraries fall into six categories: national, public, higher education, school, specialist and non-specialist.

² OJ C 271, 23.10.1985, p.1.

³ OJ C 197, 27.7.1988, p.2.

Such cooperation will entail special training for conservators, painstaking research into the most suitable methods and the costs of bulk treatment and paper strengthening, and coordinated use of substitute facilities employing data-processing and optical technology.

3) Permanence of paper

To conserve and preserve books printed on acid paper, libraries have to give them individual chemical treatment or microfilm them page by page; the high cost of both alternatives is compounded by the problem of microfilm durability.

Permanence of paper is one of the most encouraging factors in the preservation and conservation field. Notwithstanding the relatively high short-term cost of manufacture and use, this type of paper offers genuine advantages in the medium and long term from both the economic and the ecological points of view. Permanence of paper is likely to be an important factor in book exports, since a number of major markets, such as the United States and Austria, have drawn up national standards.¹

2. The European Committee for Standardization (CEN) has therefore decided to lay down European standards for permanence of paper and board, basing them on the work done by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO). The Commission fully supports the CEN's work and hopes that the standards will be formulated as soon as possible.

The Commission also hopes that this will be accompanied by the development of cooperation between paper manufacturers, publishers and library representatives with a view to promoting the use of "permanent paper", especially for books intended to last and for joint publications.

In 1989 it proposes to launch a publicity campaign to encourage the use of permanent paper in the Community, increase awareness of it among library users and the general public, and rehabilitate the image of the book.

IV.C. Book pricing

1. The Commission set out its position on book pricing as far back as 1985.² It stands by this position, as its only objection in principle is to resale price maintenance which distorts trade inside the Community, particularly within language areas.

2. The Commission would, however, like to draw attention to the following features of the book market:

- books are a special type of product, at one and the same time cultural and industrial; this means that there are likely to be difficulties inherent in distribution given the legitimate interests of authors, publishers, booksellers and consumers/readers alike;

- all the Member States except Greece, Belgium and Portugal have statutory or contractual arrangements whereby retail prices are fixed, though there are wide differences between the conditions governing them and the ways in which they are put into practice;

¹ The American standard (ANSI Z 39.48 - 1984) is called "Permanence of paper for printed library materials".

² COM(85)681/5.

- governments and the book trade generally feel that the existing national book pricing arrangements function satisfactorily and are therefore keen for them to continue;
- trading in books takes place essentially within separate language areas.¹

3. The problem of the compatibility of the transnational effects of national pricing arrangements with the EEC Treaty (Articles 30 *et seq.* and Articles 85 *et seq.*) arises mainly in the English-, French- and Dutch-speaking areas, the boundaries of which do not coincide with national frontiers.

In the two cases in which it has taken a formal decision the Commission established that the conditions for granting an exemption under Article 85(3) were not met.² The first case involved a transfrontier agreement and the second a national agreement with a transfrontier impact.

The Court of Justice has also ruled in this case and upheld the Commission's decision.³

It should, however, be noted that future developments due notably to completion of the single European market are likely to be in the direction of increased trade in books between language areas.

4. At the moment there is nothing new to report in this field.

Looking beyond the situation described at 2 above, however, the Commission notes that there is as yet no proof that extending pricing arrangements to trade between Member States is the appropriate way, still less the only way, of raising production levels and promoting distribution in such a way as to guarantee the originality and vitality of creative literary work and ensure that it is fully and freely accessible to consumers/readers.

Analysis of national resale price maintenance arrangements shows that these have failed to prevent either an overall rise in book prices, due in particular to rising distribution costs, or a fall in consumption leading to a slump in the number of titles published, as regards books both with slow and with fast turnovers. Furthermore, not only has the introduction of such arrangements failed to improve the position of bookshops; it has also done nothing to prevent a large number of them from disappearing.

1 François Rouet and Chantal Lacroix, Les échanges de livres des pays de la CEE 1966-1985. November 1987. Report submitted at the request of the Commission.

2 Commission Decision of 25 November 1981 in the VEEB/VEVB case (IV/428). OJ No L 54, 25.2.1982, p. 36.
Commission Decision of 14 December 1988 in the Publishers Association/Net Book Agreements cases (IV/27.393 and IV/27.394). OJ No L 22, 26.1.1989, p. 12.

3 Judgment of 17 January 1984, Joined Cases 43/82 and 63/82, VEVB and VEEB v Commission.

As far as Article 30 of the EEC Treaty is concerned, the "Leclerc" judgment of 10 January 1985 in Case 229/83 clearly sets limits on the establishment of a transfrontier resale price maintenance system.

5. The Commission therefore intends, in cooperation with national authorities and representatives of all the professional interests concerned, to look more closely at distribution systems and also at alternative measures to promote book publishing and distribution.

On this basis it will, where appropriate, make specific proposals with an eye to completion of the internal market.

IV.D. Facilitating the cross-border movement of books

The completion of the single European market will mean an **area without frontiers**, in which goods, individuals and services will be able to move freely.

The Commission has undertaken general action with particular implications for books in the following two fields:

- 1) the harmonization of VAT rates,
- 2) mailing.

1) Harmonizing VAT rates

With a view to the completion of the single market, the harmonization of indirect taxation, particularly VAT, is of vital importance.

Eliminating fiscal frontiers involves a closer alignment of VAT rates and the main forms of excise duty to prevent distortion of competition, deflection of trade and tax fraud. The VAT rates currently applied to books range from 0% to 22%.¹ The Commission is proposing a reduced VAT rate for books of between 4% and 9%.²

In its global communication³ the Commission recommends that in the case of sensitive sectors, such as the cultural sector, Member States set their rates in the lower half of that band. This proposal is currently being considered by the Council.

2) Mailing

The circulation of books in general and scientific and technical books in particular is to a large degree dependent on the cost and quality of the postal services between the Member States.

A system of joint European consultation has therefore been established under the auspices of the European Conference of Postal and Telecommunications Administrations (CEPT), involving representatives of seven national postal authorities (Germany, the United Kingdom, Austria, Switzerland, Belgium, Denmark and France) and representatives of the press and printed book publishing sector, to seek ways of rationalizing and optimizing existing structures with an eye to improved service quality linked to gains in terms of productivity. The Commission and the Universal Postal Union are involved in an observer capacity.

1 0% Ireland, Italy, Portugal, United Kingdom
3% Greece
5.5% France
6% Belgium, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Spain
7% Germany
22% Denmark.

2 OJ L 288, 21.10.1988, p. 39.

3 COM(87)320, p. 12.

As far as the European Community is concerned, the Commission is currently drafting a communication to the Council on postal policy, which will deal with the question of postal services in the widest sense. Subjects covered will include the conditions for the transfer of books and specialized information.

IV.E. Exports and imports

1. Exporting books creates serious problems for publishers, distributors and national authorities alike. Publishers and distributors have to face promotional costs, delays in executing contracts, an ever-greater number of insolvent customers and the effects of currency devaluation.

The existing export aid mechanisms were specially designed for industrial products with a high added value, even if, by extension, they are applied to a range of other products, including books.

In the Community context, despite the efforts made to draft common credit insurance policy documents,¹ the texts are not being applied, since their entry into force is subject to a number of conditions which have still not been met.

Thus, in the context of the OECD, the Community countries have reached "agreements" and "consensuses" on export credits. The Community is a party to these agreements.

2. Most of the Member States have developed measures to aid book promotion abroad. These include financial assistance for the translation and publication of important works of national literature abroad. These measures, as well as others, such as aid for cultural events, book fairs and the publication of literary magazines, show that the commercial promotion of published material and the promotion of books as an instrument of national culture tie in very closely.

At the same time, cooperation between the Member States in developing the promotion of European books in the rest of the world should be stepped up. This fits in with the concern expressed by the Commission in its "fresh boost" plan to set up cultural dialogue with the rest of the world.²

To this end, the Commission intends to carry out a comparative study of existing export aid measures in the Member States, with a view to determining whether it is possible and/or advisable either to establish special Community arrangements to provide aid for book exports or to lay down principles for coordinating existing national arrangements.

V. Promoting books and reading

1. Any action involving books must lead to action in the field of reading, since books are the complete cultural and educational tool precisely because of the special features which distinguish them from other vehicles for providing information, training and entertainment. High on the list of these special features come direct and permanent access to information and the consistency of the information provided.

¹ OJ L 234, 23.11.1970, pp.1 and 26.
² COM(87)603 final/2, 14.12.1987, p.34.

In a society reeling under an onslaught of information and images which cannot be properly assimilated, reading, especially the reading of fiction, provides an opportunity to affirm one's personality, both as an individual and as a social animal, intellectually and emotionally. It also provides an opportunity to find out about other national and regional cultures.

2. A study of reading patterns in the Community shows that there is a high rate of functional illiteracy¹ and that, in the face of the growth in the audiovisual media, reading is no longer the favourite leisure activity. This is a dangerous trend from both the educational and cultural points of view.

The functional illiterate cannot in fact engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for his own development and for effective functioning of his group and community.

The Commission therefore considers that, in parallel with the action being taken within the Community to fight illiteracy² and to promote the teaching of foreign languages,³ a series of promotional activities should be organized aimed at:

- providing better training for those responsible for organizing cultural activity and improving the facilities in places where the public come into contact with books (children's libraries, schools, bookshops, hospitals, old people's homes, prisons, cultural centres, etc.);
- using the media to promote our literary heritage (recording books on cassette, videos and television programmes with a literary content, etc.);
- organizing Community-wide meetings between writers and the general public.

Such activities could be organized as part of a "European Book and Reading Year", which could be tied in, as Europe's contribution, with the International Literacy Year being organized by Unesco for 1990, or could be the subject of a public-awareness campaign run jointly with the Council of Europe at a later date.

3. The audiovisual media, instead of competing with books, should ideally be consciously used as a positive influence on the reading of European books and as a contributory factor in their promotion and in increasing the reading public as a result.

1 The definition of illiteracy adopted by the Commission and the national authorities corresponds to the definition adopted by Unesco on 7 November 1978, supplemented by the definition adopted by the International Reading Association in 1974.

2 Conclusions on the fight against illiteracy adopted by the Council and the Ministers with responsibility for Education on 4 June 1984. Social Europe. Report on the fight against illiteracy. Supplement 2/88. Commission of the European Communities.

3 COM(88)841, 21.12.1988. The Lingua programme to encourage the teaching and learning of foreign languages in the European Community.

The Commission proposes to act as a catalyst in encouraging radio and television companies and the professional groups involved in promoting books and reading to lay down lines for action on literature in radio and television programmes, at Community, national and regional level.

The purpose of such action should be to increase public knowledge of works of literature and of their authors, to publicize publications and to make sure that books are mentioned in non-literary programmes as well.

4. The Commission at present has no overall picture of European cultural activities and habits in general or reading habits in particular.

To throw more light on Europe as a cultural entity¹ and to improve the statistics in its possession,² the Commission has decided to conduct a closely coordinated programme of studies on cultural habits in the Member States between now and 1990.

It will be publishing the findings of a special Eurobarometer survey providing a systematic and detailed picture of cultural habits, particularly reading habits, with special emphasis on young Europeans.

1 COM(87)603 final/2, 14.12.1987, p. 9.
2 See Chapter II.

CONCLUSIONS

It is proposed that the Commission:

- adopt the guidelines set out in this communication;
- instruct the Member with responsibility for culture to implement these guidelines in stages in close cooperation with the other Members concerned;
- transmit this communication to the Council, Parliament and the Economic and Social Committee forthwith.

Summary of proposed action

I. The creative work that goes into producing a book

I.A. Improving the social status of writers and translators

- In the medium term:

Progressive harmonization of legislation governing the tax and social security arrangements for writers and translators

- In the short term:

- 1) . Recourse to the European Social Fund to assist workers in the cultural sphere (follow-up to the resolution adopted by the Council and the Ministers responsible for Cultural Affairs on 18 December 1984) taking account of the objectives laid down in the rules currently in force .Integrating writers into the socio-cultural fabric, training authors in more than one discipline
- 2) Producing a guide for authors and translators

I.B. Harmonizing copyright legislation

- In the medium term:

- 1) Examining the possibility of gradually harmonizing the items of copyright protection and associated rights
- 2) Collective agreements guaranteeing writers and translators a minimum level of protection and fair remuneration to become general practice throughout the Community
- 3) In the light of developments in legislation proposal for action on public lending right.

- In the short term:

- 4) A Community study on reprography and consultations with the professional bodies concerned.

II. Publishing

II.A. The situation on the European book market

- In the short term:

Implementation of a medium-term programme (1989-1992) for the publication of cultural statistics in liaison with the Council of Europe and Unesco.

II.C. Concentration and internationalization in publishing

Application of the EEC Treaty rules on competition in the light of technical and economic developments and the cultural demands of the publishing sector

III. Translation

III.A. Community action to promote the translation of major works of European culture

- In the short term:

- 1) Launching of the pilot scheme to provide financial aid for translations of contemporary literary works

- In the medium term:

- 2) . Setting up of a European Translation Fund
 - . Commissioning of a study on the launching of a European collection designed to promote significant but as yet unpublished works by European authors
 - . Thought to be given to ways of encouraging the production of more multinational joint publications in ventures bringing together the publisher of the original version of the book and the publishers of its various translations
 - . Thought to be given to establishing a computerized Community file of translated works

- In the short term:

- 3) Endowment of an annual European prize for the best translations of literary works from minority languages

III.B. Training and professional status of translators

- In the short term:

- 1) . Decision by the Council to move into the third phase of the Eurotra programme
 - . Extension of the European network of training colleges for translators
 - . A higher translation content in university curricula
 - . More specialist training courses for translators
 - . More scholarships for translator training, especially under the Erasmus programme

- In the medium term:

- 2) A body of rules governing translation as a profession to be drawn up in cooperation with the authorities in the Member States and the professional groups concerned

IV. Dissemination

IV.A. Bookshops

- In the medium term:

Consideration to be given to the part played by distribution systems in view of production and distribution developments, with particular reference to bookseller training and bookshop computerization

IV.B. Libraries

- In the short term:

- 1) Adoption of an action plan for inter-library cooperation in data processing

- In the medium term:

- 2) Cooperation between libraries in the areas of conservation and preservation

- In the short term:

- 3) . Formulation of European standards for permanence of paper and board on the basis of ISO studies
 - . Paper manufacturers, publishers and library representatives to cooperate on the use of "permanent paper"
 - . Launching of a Community campaign to promote the use of "permanent" paper

IV.C. Book pricing

- In the short term:

Fresh critical appraisal of resale price maintenance arrangements and search for alternative measures to promote book publishing and distribution in the light of cultural and economic requirements

IV.D. Facilitating the cross-border movement of books

- In the short term:

- 1) Consideration of the problem of VAT rates on books
- 2) Presentation of a communication on postal policy

IV.E. Exports and imports

- In the short term:

Carrying out of a comparative study of existing measures to aid book exports in the Member States with a view to determining whether it is possible and/or advisable either to establish special Community arrangements to provide aid for book exports or to lay down principles for coordinating existing national arrangements

V. Promoting books and reading

- In the short term:

. Organization of a campaign to raise public awareness of reading in cooperation with the Council of Europe and Unesco

. Definition of guidelines for action to promote literature on radio and television; this will involve greater cooperation between television and radio companies and the professional interests involved in promoting books and reading

. A series of studies to be conducted between now and 1990 on cultural habits in the Community, particularly reading habits

Opinion of the Book Group on
"Books and Reading: A Cultural Challenge for Europe"
(preliminary draft Commission Communication from Mr Dondelinger)

Before commenting on the preliminary draft communication on books and reading submitted to us, we would like to start by warmly praising the Commission's initiative in bringing out what we believe is the first document of this scope exclusively devoted to books in the 30 years since the Community was founded. What makes such a move even more welcome is the fact that it seems to be part of what might be called a change of political direction by the Commission, which for some time now has been showing a new interest in matters cultural. One sign of this is the setting-up of the Committee of Cultural Consultants and the groups belonging to it, including the Book Group (consisting entirely of people with a professional interest in books, from writers to booksellers), which was the first to start work.

There is a feature of the preliminary draft communication which from the very outset, we feel we should stress. It sets out to study "the book" as a product in all its many aspects, whether from the cultural point of view, as a privileged method of passing on knowledge, or simply as a means of entertainment or a way of passing time, as well as from the economic point of view, as the product of an industry which might be described, to put it no more strongly, as "sensitive".

I. The creative work that goes into producing a book

With an eye, then, to 1993 and the establishment of the European book-publishing area, the communication sets out to look at books for the purpose of providing all those involved in producing them with "an economic, social and technological environment" which is as propitious as possible to "the economic and cultural aspects of book promotion, both in Europe and throughout the world".

More specifically, Chapter I deals with the most important aspects of the creative work that goes into producing a book, placing these, very rightly, at the very start of the process.

I.A. Improving the social status of writers and translators

Among the measures connected with improving the social status of writers and translators, the communication announces that the Commission has launched a comprehensive study, on a Community-wide scale, of the social and tax position of cultural workers. The Group can only congratulate the Commission on this move.

As regards the project involving setting up literary workshops for authors (a questionable undertaking given their usually profoundly individualistic personalities), we suggest that the principle be applied to translators as well, following the example set by translators' centres like the one in Arles or its counterparts in Germany, Italy and Spain.

Still on the subject of literary workshops, we find it difficult to see a role for them outside teaching, particularly in universities.

As regards the first chapter, we would like to suggest that a Community file-index of translated works be set up, to help promote the circulation of quality books and encourage more translations of them to be made.

The document by Mr Hubert Nyssen sets out a number of measures which we think need to be taken to improve the social status of translators.

The Group does, however, have some doubts about the point in the first chapter (See IA.1) point 2, § 3); the advantage of training authors in several disciplines; without wanting to deny authors the chance of becoming "multidisciplinary", most members of the Group think that such a practice should not be encouraged, but should be looked upon purely as a necessity, as it is sometimes their only way of making ends meet.

As far as freedom of movement and establishment is concerned, the Group welcomes the Commission's stated intention of producing a guide for authors and translators.

I.B. Harmonizing copyright legislation

On the question of harmonizing copyright legislation, the Group is unanimously in favour of a uniform term of protection, which must be of the order of 50 years, at the very least, though not more than 70, including all legal time-limits. The Group, however, unanimously rejects the "collective authors' rights" (a euphemistic way of describing a public domain which is charged for), as such a principle is wholly at variance with the spirit and political philosophy of the society we live in (see the document by Mr Fernando Guedes) and is simply a way of actually evading copyright.

On the subject of publishers' contracts, there was some difference of opinion in the Group as to the suggestion made in the text that standard contracts be drawn up. The fact is that the actual situations facing individual authors and translators are, in practice, so different that establishing binding norms, even minimal ones, does not seem to us at all the proper response. On the contrary, we think it would be useful to devise a measure whereby translators and authors could be informed of the actual bases on which they have to negotiate in individual countries.

The Group appreciated the caution with which the problem of public lending right was broached. This is very a delicate issue on which progress can only be made with the passage of time (on this subject, see the contribution by Mr Graham C. Greene). The problem of reprography, on the other hand, has to be dealt with in the firmest possible manner. This practice constitutes the most serious and most common violation of copyright and causes enormous losses not only to authors but also to publishers, whose legitimate interests are also affected (see the document by Mr Didier Decoin).

The Group gave an enthusiastic welcome to the announcement that the Commission proposes to bring out a Green Paper on reprography in the near future: this will be an inestimable service to everyone involved in producing books. This kind of plundering usually hides behind the false argument that it democratizes the written word and makes it easier for young people to gain access to culture, and it is vital that the veil of mystery surrounding it should be ripped away.

II. Publishing

Chapter II deals with publishing and, from the outset, stresses the serious shortcoming resulting from the lack of reliable statistics on which a full analysis of the problem can be based. A first set of statistics is promised for this year, a development which the Group can only welcome.

The assertion in the section on publishing and the new technologies that "such technological changes do not, admittedly, represent a serious threat to publishing" met with a negative response from the Group, a reaction which the claim, in the section on concentration and internationalization in publishing, that mail-order sales had more than made up for "the slump in bookshop sales" only served to heighten. Though this may be true from the economic point of view, it is a valueless consideration from the point of view of culture.

We must, on the other hand, single out and welcome the concern shown in the communication for safeguarding the independence of publishing firms "anxious to produce quality books, with a view to safeguarding vitality, originality and variety in publishing". The Group considers that it would be highly desirable and worthwhile to seek a formula whereby small and medium-sized publishing firms could be helped to retain their independence.

III. Translation

Chapter III discusses translation. when the Group looked at the proposal for a pilot scheme to provide financial support for translations of contemporary works, its unanimous comment was that, although it could only applaud the idea, the financial resources allocated to the scheme could only be described as derisory. To create an opportunity for translating some 30 or so books a year when, in theory, those 30 books will altogether come from some half-dozen places of origin and be directed at four or five target audiences is to do virtually nothing, as a small mathematical calculation will show.

It must also be said that the very fact of giving priority to translations from minority languages, though in principle understandable and justifiable, is a concept which it is difficult to entertain in absolute terms, particularly over any length of time.

The idea of a European collection (an old proposal which has already appeared in a variety of guises) also sparked off comment from some members of the Group. At all events, the suggestion which could draw least criticism from the Group would be that of "a European collection designed to promote significant but as yet unpublished works by young European authors".

In the section on the training and professional status of translators, the measures advocated in the communication met, generally speaking, with agreement and support from the Group, particularly the proposals to extend the European network of training colleges for translators, to encourage universities to devise special courses (see the document by Mr Hubert Nyssen) and to increase the number of scholarships awarded for translator training, especially under the ERASMUS programme.

IV. Dissemination

Chapter IV deals with dissemination, especially bookshops, which the communication regards - quite rightly - as "the weak link in the book chain".

IV.A and IV.C. Bookshops and book pricing

The professional organizations involved with books have for a long time been pressing for a measure which is (although not the only one that needs to be taken) vitally necessary if the network of bookshops is to be preserved: resale price maintenance on books, whether achieved by dint of legislation or by agreement between the parties involved. This Group, which is a forum bringing together well-qualified representatives of all the professions involved in producing books, unanimously endorses this stance and would add that, so long as no way is found of solving every aspect of this problem as it occurs at Community level, large numbers of bookshops will continue to go out of business, others will cut back on the services they provide and the major sales chains and large stores will take over the lion's share of the distribution market, with seriously damaging effects on culture (see the documents by Mrs Marleen Van Vollenhoven, Mr Pierre Mertens, Mr Hubert Nyssen and Mr Maroel Mertens).

It is not a matter of dramatizing the issue when the book trade is unanimous in stating that this question has to be the keystone of the preliminary draft, and that the proposed measures are all utterly pointless unless there is resale price maintenance on books. We can none of us afford to lose sight of the very recent example of Sweden, where book pricing was deregulated with lamentable consequences both for booksellers and for publishers and authors. The need to resolve this problem and to avoid delays which will only make matter worse must be stressed. The Group eagerly awaits the findings of the Commission's research into resale price maintenance on books in areas speaking the same language.

IV.B. Libraries

Chapter IV also deals in detail with the problems associated with libraries and book conservation. In general, the Group is in agreement. We would, however, draw attention to one aspect of the question which may seem to be of minor importance, i.e. the opening hours of libraries in some Community countries, which make it impossible for working people to use them; secondly, the Group considers that the problem of "permanent paper" does indeed require urgent and thorough study and that, at the same time, an information campaign ought to be launched to alert publishers themselves to the problem, they being by and large completely oblivious to it.

IV.D. Facilitating the cross-border movement of books

Still on Chapter IV, the proposal to harmonize VAT rates, which the communication recommends, deserves to be singled out; the Group regards this as a desirable move, provided the reduced VAT rate for books falls within a bracket ranging from 0% to 6% (see the document by Mr Graham C. Greene).

The Group also considered the important question of mailing, currently the subject of talks with the Universal Postal Union and came out firmly in favour of reduced costs.

IV.E - V. Exports and imports: promoting books and reading

The considerations and proposals on exports and imports set out in the preliminary draft met with well-deserved agreement and support from the Group, as did those relating to raising public awareness of books and reading. In due course, the Group is even prepared to help departments give detailed study to the problems which these issues raise, as well as to others suggested in the text already submitted by Mr Hubert Nyssen (of Education), with a view to finding the most appropriate solutions. It also intends to look at the possibility of establishing a Community system of aid for promoting European books in the rest of the world.

Lastly, the Group would draw attention to the text by Mr Christos G. Lazos, putting forward the suggestion of establishing a European Cultural Fund. a proposal which we feel is of the greatest interest.

Chairman
Pierre Mertens

Vice-Chairman
Fernando Guedes

Members of the Book Group

Didier DECOIN : Writer, Chairman of the "Société des Gens de Lettres"
Graham C. GREENE : Publisher, former Chairman of the Publishers Association, Chairman of the British Museum Publications
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Christos G. LAZOS : Translator
Marcel MERTENS : Bookseller, Chairman of the Group of Booksellers Associations in the EEC (GALC)
Hubert NYSSSEN : Writer and publisher
Marleen VAN VOLLENHOVEN : Writer and publisher
General Secretary of the Netherlands Publishers and Bookshops Association (VVVB)

N.B.: The papers by the members of the Group mentioned in this Opinion have been sent to the Commission.