

PRESS RELEASE

Frankfurt – Italian publishing increased abroad also in 2020 with sales of rights up by 0.2% Publishing confirms its position as Italy’s top cultural industry with a turnover of more than three billion euros and is third in Europe behind Germany and the UK

The Italian book sector strengthened in Europe: in 2020 Italian publishing again increased the number of titles sold abroad, especially in Europe. Within Italy, with a turnover of more than 3 billion euros (3,056 million euros, up by 0.1% on 2019) confirmed its role as Italy’s top cultural industry together with pay tv, and the third European publishing industry, behind Germany (9.3 billion) and the UK (7.5 billion). These figures include, as well as the trade book market, (fiction and nonfiction digital and printed books sold in physical and online bookstores and through large-scale retail), the educational sector, professional (books, ebooks, databases and internet services), exported books (*attached is a summary of the Report*).

“The Report on the state of publishing we are presenting today at the Buchmesse in Frankfurt,” commented Ricardo Franco Levi, president of the AIE (Italian Publishers Association), “confirms the good health of our industry but, above all, its appeal abroad.” We are pleased to be able to present these figures here in Frankfurt, where our country will be guest of honour in 2024, an event we are already preparing for, which will play a fundamental role for raising even more awareness worldwide about Italian culture.”

The market. The basic stability (3,056 million euros, up by 0.1% on 2019) is the result of good performance by trade (fiction and non-fiction sold in physical and online bookstores and large-scale retail) which posts a year-end growth in sales of 0.3%. Whereas scholastic books adopted by schools sees a drop of 3.5% (742 million). A big increase for digital: ebooks, audiobooks and databases gain 10.9%, at 430.2 million euros.

Production. Printed new titles published during the year were down by 5.9% at 73,675. At the same time, however, e-books grew by 7.2%, reaching a total of 52,273. These figures were affected by the first lockdown, which convinced some publishers to review their launch plans due to bookstore closures. Regarding the long-term trend, affected by the diffusion of online bookstores, which give access to a vast catalogue, the growth of in commerce titles must be highlighted: there are 1.26 million of these, up by 4.5% and this does not consider self-publication. This figure stood at 716,000 in 2010. E-books total 500,000, compared to 17,000 in 2010.

Internationalisation. In 2020, sales of rights stood at 8,586 titles, up by 0.2% on 2019 and accounting for 12% of new titles published. In 2001, only 4% of the titles published proved interesting to foreign publishing houses. Last year’s good results were influenced by the public support policies. There was a setback for imports however: 9,127 titles by foreign authors were purchased by Italian publishers, a 5.4% decrease that must however be set against a more general reduction in titles published during the year. The long period saw confirmation of the trend that leads to equal exports and imports: over the last 19 years the former have increased at an average annual rate of 19.9%, the latter at 4.3%.

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