



## **THE DIVERSITY OF EUROPEAN LITERATURE IS UNDER THREAT WRITERS AND TRANSLATORS CALL ON THE DECISION MAKERS FOR AN OVERALL POLITICAL COMMITMENT TO CULTURE**

Brussels, 2 June 2020

**European Writers and Translators call on all decision makers for an overall political commitment to culture and a system update of the book world. The EWC recommends 37 proposed measures to support authors, the diversity of literature and the book value chain during and after the Covid-19 crisis.**

Based on the European Writers' Council survey "The Economic Impact of Covid-19 on Writers and Translators in the European Book Sector", collected in 24 countries and available online, the consequences for authors – the origin of the book value chain – are very serious and will directly threaten the diversity of European literature and erode the entire book market, a most important sector in Europe's third largest economy, if no immediate action is taken.

### **The key findings of the 30-page EWC survey:**

- authors and translators not only have a significant loss due to events that are cancelled until the end of the year – but also are not eligible for aid in many national aid programs.
- national and transnational organisers of literary events are expected to cancel their schedules in 2020 to avoid cost and risks. The anticipated sanitary measures will lead to an ongoing difficulty and bring public literary life almost to a standstill.
- the online activities and digital distribution need support through funding and through much more author-friendly legislation and remuneration schemes.
- if all the above consequences additionally encounter a situation in which a copyright contract law or frameworks for transparent agreements with contractual partners have not yet been implemented, the key role of authors as primary source of the book world is at high risk.
- downsized programs will lead to an estimated 150,000 fewer new titles annually all of over Europe, to lower payment advances and royalties, to postponed payments, and to a more difficult market access for new authors, niche topics and translations from lesser written and spoken languages.

In every crisis there is an opportunity – if we take it. The crisis has identified the predetermined breaking points of the book world, which have now become overly clear, as are the matters of low remuneration and weak contractual agreements, or of the high dependence on live events, or the digital exploitation of authors' works and the resulting low share of financial benefits. The crisis revealed the helplessly tolerated dependencies on distribution monopolies, and the lack in legal, cultural and market policy.

It is time to commit to a system update, to correct these various deficiencies that are now threatening the existence of writers and translators, the backbone of most valued European ideals: diversity and freedom of expression, fact-based knowledge and pluralism, emotional, intellectual and cultural identification, innovation in thinking and imagining new – and sometimes better – worlds.

These ideals and the support of writers and translators are no luxury good. A sustainable Europe, in its struggle against fake news and extreme tendencies, and its hopes for togetherness and exchange, must ensure that the intellectual sources of knowledge and also of human education do not dry up –because every innovation, every development, every reconstruction after a crisis, begins with an author.

With this in mind, the Member Organisations of the European Writers' Council urge decision-makers to act promptly and decisively in favour of writers and translators:

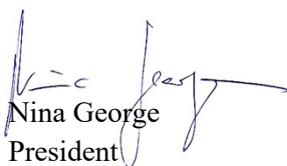
### **EUROPE NEEDS THE OVERALL POLITICAL COMMITMENT TO CULTURE**

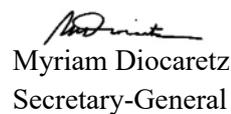
Only the cooperation among copyright policy, cultural policy, economic policy and regional development can contribute to the substantial protection and innovative capacity of the entire cultural landscape of Europe during and after the present crisis.

**To support decision makers in this task, the EWC has compiled 37 recommendations in the study for short-, medium- and long-term measures to support authors. A selection:**

- a full implementation of Chapter 3 of the DSM directive on copyright
- compensation funds for past and future losses
- remuneration schemes for online activities for authors
- a national increase in budgets for educational resources
- sustainable actions against e-book and audio book piracy
- harmonising the working conditions and social security systems
- regional development to preserve cultural venues
- sustainable funding for the European exchange of literature
- a book for every child – to support the promotion of reading
- expansion of the Creative Europe programs also in terms of diversity, inclusion and equality

The European Writers' Council, representing 150,000 professional writers and translators from 41 organisations and 27 countries, therefore calls on the Members of the European Parliament, the decision-makers of the European Commission, the EU Member States, and the Governments of Non-EU and the EAA countries, to act speedily and decisively across departments in horizontal frameworks to preserve and reconstruct the European diversity of literature and culture during and after the Covid-19 crisis. Its consequences must be transformed into a fair and sustainable new beginning.

  
Nina George  
President

  
Myriam Diocaretz  
Secretary-General

LINK TO THE SURVEY ONLINE: <http://europeanwriterscouncil.eu/ewc-survey-covid19/>

LINK TO THE STATEMENT ONLINE: <http://europeanwriterscouncil.eu/ewc-statement-impact-covid19/>