

➤ THE BOOK TRADE

The price of books in France



Ministère
**Culture
& Communication**

Division
of Books
& Reading

PRINCIPLE

The Law of 10 August 1981 sets down the principle of a fixed retail selling price for books, which is defined by the publisher or the importer, and upon which retailers can offer a maximum discount of 5 %. The extension of this principle of a fixed price to the purchase of books by libraries and other collectivities was adopted by Parliament as part of the law on lending rights (law of 18 June 2003), with the aim, in particular, of preventing wholesalers from overtaking the market and edging out bookshops. Consequently the discounts that can be offered to public authorities by book suppliers are now fixed at a maximum of 9 % of the public price, except for school books. The law also applies, in France, to Internet sales.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of the fixed price is to maintain the diversity of literary creation and to guarantee its widest distribution by preserving a dense and high quality network of bookshops, thereby giving as many people as possible access to works.

RESULTS

The law of 10 August 1981 was met with almost unanimous support from professionals. The results of its application revealed the following points:

- > The network of bookshops has been maintained and modernised. Today it represents 40 % of retail sales and much more in some sectors such as human sciences or new literary works;
- > Diversity has never been so wide with around 600,000 titles available and around 60,000 new books published each year;
- > The law has not led to higher prices. For several years now, book prices have risen at the same rate or even slower than the general consumer price index ;
- > The concentration of the publishing and book distribution circuits does not prevent the sector from showing an excellent vitality, with 1000 publishers in regular activity, 3000 'professional bookshops' and around 25,000 outlets selling books altogether.

FIXED BOOK PRICES IN OTHER EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

Twelve EU Member States currently apply a fixed price for books. For some (Denmark, Hungary, etc.), the fixed price system relies on agreements between publishers, distributors and bookshops. Nine countries including Germany, Austria, Spain, Greece, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia have, like France, chosen the legislative option.

REFERENCE:

> Law no. 81-766 of 10 August 1981 relative to book prices:
<http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/texteconsolide/ADEQC.htm>

> Law no. 2003-517 of 18 June 2003 on library loan remuneration and reinforcing social protection for authors
<http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/texteconsolide/ADEEV.htm>