

## **Report on the state of publishing in Italy**

**Consolidated 2022**

**first nine months 2023 trade market**

by the AIE Research Department

### *Summary*

Italian publishing is confirmed as the country's first cultural industry with a turnover (value of sales) of 3,388 million euros in 2022, up nearly 300 million from the values recorded in 2019, the last year before the pandemic. Turnover slightly decreases (-1.5%) from the previous year.

Numbers of the trade market alone (fiction and non fiction sold in bookstores, online and by large scale retail) in the first nine months of 2023 confirms the new, bigger dimension of post-Covid market, with sales amounting to 1,033.5 million euros, slightly up from 2022 (plus 0,2%). Copies sold in the nine months 2023 were 69.9 million, down one million from the previous year but up nearly nine from 2019. Italians are buying more books than pre-Covid, and the industry has accompanied this growth with an increasingly broader and more articulated offering: there are 83,950 new print titles published in 2022 while the catalog is close to 1.4 million titles (1,393,199).

### **The market in 2022**

The more than 3 billion euros (3,388 million) of Italian publishing sales are higher than the 2,941 million euros of pay TV, the 1,725 million of free-to-air TV (TV fee), and the 1,721 million of video games. More specifically, 1,777 million euros is the expenditure referred to printed books sold in bookstores, online stores, large scale retail, fairs and festivals, and stationery stores. School publishing, on the other hand, is worth 776 million euros, 444 million euros is digital (of which 104 ebooks and audiobooks, the rest platforms and services), 226 million is installment, 165 million as the sum of b2b, libraries and exports. In the European landscape, Italian publishing ranks fourth as value of sales in the domestic market (3,338 million: 50 million exports were excluded), behind Germany (9,444 million), the United Kingdom (5,327 million) and France (5,094 million). The Spanish market has a value of sales of 2,719 million.

### **Production**

In 2022, 83,950 print book titles were published in Italy, down 1.5 percent from 2021, an exceptional year in which several titles that publishers had postponed due to pandemic had been rescheduled for release. The 2022 figure thus confirms the breadth of national publishing offerings: the growth in new titles compared to 2010 is 37.8 percent. The growth in annual offerings is accompanied by the expansion of the catalog now totaling 1,393,199 titles, an expansion made possible by the possibilities provided by e-commerce to respond to an increasingly fragmented and varied demand. The increasing pluralism of the Italian publishing is also evidenced by the fact that there are more than 5,000 (5,184) publishers (imprints) entered at least one title in the books in print database in 2022: a thousand more than 12 years ago. On the other hand, e-book production decreased to 37,177 titles, but the figure is affected by a different cataloging of multi-format titles (that is, e-books of different formats with different ISBN codes are now counted in the system only once). Regarding prices, despite inflation, the average cover price at production (and thus not weighted on sales) in 2022 is 19.87 euros, which is in line with the figures for 2021 and 2020 and lower than the 2010 figure (21.6 euros). In contrast, the average sales cover price (sales-weighted figure) is 14.84 euros, the same value as in 2021 and lower than the 2020 figure (15.08 euros).

### **Internationalization**

Over the past two decades, Italy has maintained a strong openness to foreign publishing production while simultaneously growing domestic production and its internationalization through the development of new professional skills. In 2022, Italy bought from abroad the translation rights of 9,432 titles and sold abroad

7,889 translation rights of Italian works. In 2010 there were 9,009 purchases and 4,217 sales; in 2001 there were 5,400 purchases and 1,800 sales.

Specifically, in 2022 the top selling genres to foreign publishers were children's and young adult books (35%), general non-fiction (20%), adult fiction (19%), manuals and self-help (9%), and comics (5%). Europe is the top outlet with 62% of purchases, Asia 18%, Latin America 6%, Middle East (5%), Africa 4%, USA and Canada 3%. The European countries with the most exports in 2022 are Spain, France, Poland, Greece and Germany.

### **Reading** *(for comparison of IEA and Istat data on reading see attached sheet)*

According to the survey conducted by Pepe Research for AIE, in 2022 71 percent of citizens aged 15-74 say they have read at least one book, printed or electronic, or listened to an audiobook in the past 12 months, three percentage points higher than in 2019 (68 percent).

Specifically, in 2022 he reads 90% of the sample in the 15-17 age group, 89% in the 18-24 age group, 79% among 25-34 year olds, 78% among 35-44 year olds, 66% in the 45-54 age group, 59% among 55-64 year olds, 63% among 65-74 year olds.

Regarding time spent reading, 21% of readers read for more than five hours a week, 16% between three and five hours, 14% maximum three hours a week, 18% maximum two hours a week, 13% maximum one hour, and 18% read but did not do so in the last week.

Print-only readers are 46 percent of all readers (they were 59 percent in 2019), 39 percent use all formats, and 15 percent use only ebooks and audiobooks (they were 5 percent in 2019). Pandemic, in other words, returns us to a landscape where paper remains central but less predominant than it once was. At the same time, the growth is attributable to new audiences approaching reading primarily through digital and consuming genres and products outside the more traditional literary canons.

### **Sales channels**

As with reading, the pandemic years proved to be a watershed for purchasing behavior. Those who bought at least one printed book in 2022 were 56 percent of 15-74 year old; the average number of books purchased was 5.7 compared to 4.7 in 2019. If we look at sales channels in the trade sector (data updated to the first six months of 2023), physical bookstores weigh in at 53.9 percent, e-commerce at 41.3 percent, and large-scale retail at 4.8 percent. E-commerce in particular is at the values reached for the first time in 2020 with the pandemic, while bookstores remain the first purchasing channel with the absolute majority of sales.

*The Report on the State of Publishing in Italy 2023 is available for sale in EPUB format on major online platforms.*

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*All materials and video presentation of Italian publishing are available on the AIE website (<https://www.aie.it/buchmesse2023.aspx>). With the support of the Aldus Up, European Book Fair Network co-funded by the Creative Europe program of the European Commission.*

## READING DATA: ISTAT AND AIE COMPARED

The reading rate of Italians surveyed by AIE and by the national statistical agency – Istat – differs profoundly because of the different type of question that was asked of the two samples surveyed, which in turn are an expression of different segments of the population. The two surveys measure two different types of "reading": of a more classical type that of Istat; extended to new forms of reading, more discontinuous (in fact, the phenomenon of partial reading is also detected), and to genres other than the more classical fiction and non-fiction that of AIE. Below, for completeness, we report the specification of the questions asked to the sample.

### **Istat**

Have you read any books (print, ebook, online books, or audiobooks) in the past 12 months? Consider only books read for reasons not strictly educational or professional.

2022: **39,3%**

**Istat universe:** Italian citizens six years of age and older

### **AIE**

Thinking about the past 12 months, have you happened to read, even in part, a book of any genre, not only fiction (such as a novel, detective story, comic book, fantasy...) but also an essay, a manual, a travel or cooking guide, etc., on paper or in digital format such as an e-book, or listening to an audiobook?

2022: **71%**

**AIE Universe:** Italian citizens between the ages of 15 and 74.