



# THE RIGHT TO E-READ

## Press Release:

### EBLIDA highlights "The Right to e-Read" on World Book and Copyright Day

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On 23<sup>rd</sup> of April, to coincide with the United Nations' World Book Day and World Copyright Day, the European Bureau of Library Information and Documentation Associations (EBLIDA) is rallying the European community to its ["Right to e-Read" Campaign](#).

EBLIDA's campaign aims to raise awareness among policy makers and the general public about the difficulties facing libraries trying to provide access to e-books and other digital content.

During the day, EBLIDA did a press conference tour from the EU Parliament Library in Brussels to the Hague.

#### **Luigi Berlinguer (MEP, S&D's) talked positively in his video message about the importance of the development of e-reading.**

He stated that "[...] *we must now exploit technological means that can ensure a wider access to reading so that we don't only have a right to read traditionally speaking but now a new right to e-read, a digital reading right. This is the engagement that we want to suggest to the new Parliament that will be elected at the end of May.* He proposed his group "[...] *to continue what we have already started to do with the current legislature*". Luigi Berlinguer hopes that EBLIDA's initiative "[...] *could offer elements, details and any kind of suggestions to make the Parliament's work to succeed with this very important goal*".

#### **Later on, Marietje Schaake (MEP, ALDE) stated that "there is a need to reform copyright at the European level and to enable access to knowledge and culture".**

She made clear that "*the public value of libraries in enabling access to information, developing knowledge, literacy and digital skills needs more recognition and acknowledgement.* She believes that policy makers should help sustain the public interest and not favour certain business models over others. She concluded by stating that "*the right to e-read is part of the right of access to information and that is a key element in a knowledge and highly educated society*".

The main messages put forward by EBLIDA were that for more than two years, EBLIDA has been part of a continuing dialogue with stakeholders from the book industry to make the voice of libraries heard. During both informal and structured dialogue, such as Licences for Europe, there has been a lack of recognition of the obstacles faced by libraries and the lending of e-books.

Therefore, on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of April, EBLIDA officially launched its petition for "The Right to e-Read", which has now collected more than 3000 signatures, thereby exposing the issues faced by libraries in this context to a wider audience.

The current legal framework is inadequate since many publishers are using the power of their monopolies to determine what digital content libraries may have access to and what they may lend to the public.

Libraries have actually experienced instances of publishers:

- refusing to include certain e-book titles of packages;
- subsequently removing certain e-book titles from subscription packages in order to sell the books exclusively to individual private customers; and
- prescribing the terms for access.

**This is a direct challenge to the core activities and responsibilities of libraries.** Librarians, who are governed by professional principles and codes of ethics to ensure the highest standards, are being excluded from exercising the professional responsibilities entrusted to them by their patrons and funders.

### **EBLIDA's aims and objectives are that libraries want the following:**

- all citizens – not just those who can afford it – to benefit from free access to e-books in libraries!
- to provide library users with the latest e-books as they do printed book!
- to buy e-books at fair prices and on reasonable terms!
- authors to receive fair remuneration for the lending of e-books to the public.

The 'right to e-lend' in libraries needs to be recognised, in order for libraries to provide their users with a 'right to e-read'.

### **EBLIDA announced new developments in the form of a publication of a Position Paper in the coming weeks with two overarching recommendations:**

- To move from the current unsatisfactory licensing offer to libraries to a regime of 'Mandatory Fair Licences';
- That the European Copyright Acquis be updated to deliver fair access to information for European libraries and their patrons.

EBLIDA President, Klaus-Peter Böttger, declared that "*Libraries (and public libraries in particular) have a major public interest mission in developing a strong and vibrant reading culture that forms nations of readers and a Europe of readers*". He added that "*this library mission is entirely in the interest of the public and the market. It is time for other stakeholders in the e-book market to clearly acknowledge the important role of libraries in developing a reading culture which actively fosters the sale of books and e-books*".

EBLIDA President also highlighted that "*European elections offer the opportunity to remind European policy-makers and politicians that this issue addresses fundamental questions about democracy, access to information and completion of a true knowledge society*".

Klaus-Peter Böttger therefore called on all candidate MEPs to:

- Sign the campaign petition at <http://www.change.org/en-GB/organisations/ebliida>;
- Commit to engage in negotiations on this issue in the next European term; and
- Meet with library organisations.

### **EBLIDA is ready to support further positive development at the European level.**

**If you are interested to support** EBLIDA's "Right to e-Read" campaign sign the petition at: <http://www.change.org/en-GB/organisations/ebliida>

**Stay tuned** for the latest updates and get promotional materials at: <http://www.eblida.org/e-read/get-involved/> .  
**You can follow** the conversation on Twitter #eread.

