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Press Release

The ThinkPub Report “Books in Translation”: Mapping Europe’s Cultural Exchange Through Books

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The report “**Books in Translation**” offers a comprehensive, data-driven analysis of book translations across Europe, examining how literary works move between languages, markets, and cultures. At a time when Europe’s cultural diversity and democratic resilience are increasingly linked to cross-border exchange, the report provides timely insights into the role of translation as a cornerstone of the European book ecosystem and as a key cultural policy instrument.

Drawing on quantitative data, qualitative market analysis, and country-level case studies, the report aims to deepen the understanding of how translations shape readerships, publishing strategies, and cultural flows across Europe — and how these dynamics are evolving under economic pressure, digital transformation, and geopolitical change.

Approach and Scope of the Report

“Books in Translation” develops a Europe-wide perspective, combining statistical evidence with market intelligence from national book industries and national libraries.

Its scope covers:

- **Translation flows** between European languages and from non-European source languages into European markets;
- The **role of English** as a dominant source language alongside regional and smaller languages;
- Structural differences between **large and small book markets**;
- The **impact of subsidies**, institutional frameworks, and public funding on translation activity;
- The **strategic position of translations** within publishers’ catalogues.

Rather than treating translations as a marginal or purely cultural phenomenon, the report positions them as a **structural component of Europe’s book economy**, influencing competitiveness, discoverability of authors, and long-term cultural exchange.

Key Data and Trends

The analysis identifies several overarching trends shaping European translation markets:

- First, **translation volumes are increasingly concentrated**. While the overall number of translated titles remains substantial, a growing share is accounted for by English-language originals, reflecting both global market power and rising costs for acquiring translation rights.
- Second, **economic pressure on publishers** has intensified. Declining unit sales in many markets, combined with rising production and translation costs, are narrowing the financial margins for translation projects, especially for smaller publishers.

- Third, **regional translation ecosystems matter**. Countries with strong public support schemes and long-standing cultural exchange traditions show more diverse language portfolios, whereas markets with weaker institutional support tend to rely more heavily on commercially dominant source languages.
- Finally, the report highlights a persistent **data gap**. Comparable, harmonised statistics on translations are often incomplete or fragmented, complicating evidence-based decision-making for both industry actors and policy makers.

Strategic Main Findings

“Books in Translation” identifies translation as both a **market activity and a public good**. Commercial logic alone is insufficient to sustain linguistic diversity, particularly for works from smaller languages or less commercially dominant regions.

Public support mechanisms — including translation grants, publisher subsidies, and international cooperation programmes — emerge as decisive factors in maintaining diversity and ensuring long-term cultural circulation.

The report also underscores that translations are **investments in cultural infrastructure**. They build bridges between readerships, enable authors to travel beyond national boundaries, and contribute to Europe’s shared cultural space.

Relevance for Book Professionals and Policy Makers

For **publishers, editors, and literary agents**, the findings offer strategic guidance on how translation choices interact with market size, rights costs, and catalogue development. Understanding broader European trends allows professionals to position their lists more effectively and to identify opportunities for cross-border cooperation.

For **policymakers and cultural institutions**, the report provides an evidence-based foundation for assessing existing support schemes and for designing future policies. Translation emerges as a powerful tool for sustaining cultural diversity, strengthening smaller markets, and reinforcing Europe’s cultural cohesion.

At a time when cultural exchange faces economic, political, and technological challenges, the *Translation Report* makes a clear case: **supporting translation is essential to maintaining a vibrant, pluralistic European book landscape — and to ensuring that Europe continues to speak to itself, and to the world, in many voices.**

“Books in Translation” has been **authored** by **Miha Kovač**, professor of publishing studies at the University of Ljubljana (SLO), the book market researcher Rüdiger **Wischenbart** (AT), the cultural manager and researcher **Yana Genova** (BG), and the PhD researcher at the University of Ljubljana, **Anja Kamenarič** (SLO).

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