SWEDEN

Information on the Swedish economy and society

Area: 450,295 km²
Population: 9.6 million (May 2014)
Population growth: 0.8% (2014)
Literacy rate: 99%
Gross Domestic Product: € 420.1 billion (2013)
GDP per capita: € 43,800 (2013)
Inflation rate: 0.4% (2013)
Unemployment: 8.0% (2013)
Exports: € 126.3 billion (2013)
Imports: € 120.4 billion (2013)

Sources: Germany Trade & Invest – Wirtschaftsdaten kompakt

Information on the Swedish book market

The Swedish book market has not yet recovered from the downturn it experienced over the last few years, but there is now some light at the end of the tunnel. The Publishers Association has reported a 1% drop in turnover for 2013. The number of titles published fell by 3%. However, these figures are based on the responses of 59 association members and therefore do not take into account the substantial increase in the number of small publishers setting up shop. In fact, though the three largest publishing groups (KF Media/Norstedts, Bonniers, Natur & Kultur) are continuing to expand their market share, a full range of micro-publishers has emerged at the other end of the spectrum. While these small operations tend to focus on niches and publish well-known international authors, large publishers are increasingly focused on mainstream and local bestselling authors. The number of medium-sized publishers is steadily declining.

Book production data
Publishers

Sweden is home to approx. 300 publishers, around 59 of which are members of the Swedish Publishers Association. The biggest players:

- Bonnier Förlagsgrupp: internationally established publishing group, particularly in the English-speaking world, but also in Germany (includes renowned publishers like Carlsen, Piper, arsEdition and Thienemann)

- Norstedts Förlagsgrupp: also includes the largest children’s and YA book publisher Rabén & Sjögren

- Natur & Kultur: general books and textbooks

Booksellers

One important milestone in the Swedish book trade was the antitrust authority's decision to approve the merger of the two largest book chains, Akademikbokhandeln and Bokia, in 2013 – the market concentration that resulted and the increasing relevance of online booksellers have further weakened independent bookstores in Sweden, where competitive pressure is particularly strong due to the lack of fixed book pricing.

Since 1970, a time when the book market was subject to extreme regulation, the complete deregulation of the market and the substantial drop in book prices that resulted have led to a dramatic thinning out of the bookstore network throughout the country. But small bookstores are not the only ones currently facing difficult times; the large chains are also experiencing problems and responding by reducing their retail space and incorporating more non-book products into their merchandise. Both of these measures lead to fewer books being displayed, which in turn increases the emphasis on bestsellers. One unique aspect of the Swedish book market is the fact that all the major publishing groups are also established as booksellers. The most important online booksellers are Adlibris and Bokus. Amazon’s entry into the Swedish market in January 2014 has not yet had a noticeable impact.

Distribution

Bookstores generate only 38% of book sales in Sweden. Remaining sales can be attributed to online bookstores (21%), wholesalers (16%), department stores (9%) and book clubs (9%).

Turnover

The Publishers Association recorded a 1% decrease in publisher sales for 2013:

2013: 1,819.3 million SEK (Swedish krona) = € 196.3 million
2012: 1,843.1 million SEK = € 198.9 million
2011: 2,117.4 million SEK = € 228.5 million
2010: 2,044.5 million SEK = € 220.6 million

The number of copies sold also fell by 4% in 2013 according to the Publishers Association:

2013: 33.5 million
2012: 36.6 million
2011: 40.3 million
2010: 40.4 million

Title production/New releases
2013: 4,810  
2012: 4,965  
2011: 4,010  
2010: 4,074

**Average book price**

- Hardcover: approx. 250 SEK (€ 25)  
- Paperback: approx. 80 SEK (€ 8)

**E-books**

The e-book business has not yet taken root in Sweden – depending on the source, they are said to represent 1% to 2% of sales in the book market. Reasons for this include a meagre selection of titles, unappealing devices, relatively high prices and a shortage of innovative spirit in existing companies. This could gradually change with Amazon’s arrival in the Swedish market. Eighty-five per cent of e-books produced are currently still purchased by libraries.

**Licensing statistics (2013)**

In keeping with the growing interest in local authors at the expense of international authors in recent years, Swedish publishers have been acquiring fewer licenses from abroad. Like everywhere else, English-language titles represent the highest percentage, followed by translations from other Scandinavian languages. In 2013, Swedish publishers licensed 38 titles from German publishers – half as many, on average, as in the previous three years.

Conversely, for the last three years, the Swedish language has held steady in fifth place among source languages for titles acquired by German publishers. However, they still only represent 2.3% of all titles translated. In general, the number of licenses sold abroad by Swedish publishers decreased in 2013 – a turnaround that has been evident since 2010. However, it is important to consider the impact of mega-bestsellers like Stieg Larsson’s books.

Revenue from sales of licenses:

2013: 35.3 million SEK (= € 3.8 million)  
2012: 49 million SEK (= € 5.3 million)  
2011: 106.2 million SEK (= € 11.5 million)  
2010: 105.2 million SEK (= 11.4 million)
Exports

Revenue from sales of Swedish books abroad:

- 2013: 37.4 million SEK (= € 4 million)
- 2012: 38.6 million SEK (= € 4.2 million)
- 2011: 39.8 million SEK (= € 4.3 million)
- 2010: 49.3 million SEK (= € 5.3 million)

Fixed book prices

The fixed book price law was abolished following the complete deregulation of the Swedish book market in 1970. Publishers are increasingly troubled by the difficulties facing brick and mortar bookstores as they attempt to compete with the prices of online book retailers. In recent years, the issue of price maintenance has repeatedly come up for debate.

Book fair

Bok & Bibliotek, Sweden’s most important cultural event, is held annually on the grounds of the Svenska Mässan in Gothenburg. The event primarily draws librarians and educators in addition to members of the general public.

www.bok-bibliotek.se

Associations and institutions

Swedish Publishers Association – Svenska Forlagareforeningen: www.forlagare.se
Swedish Booksellers Association – Svenska Bokhandlareforeningen: www.booksellers.se
Svensk Biblioteksförening: www.biblioteksforeningen.org
Swedish Arts Council – Kulturradet: www.kulturradet.se
Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award (ALMA): www.alma.se

Sources: