EGYPT

Information about Egypt’s economic situation in numbers

Area: approx. 1 million km²

Population: 85.4 million (2014)

Population growth rate: 1.8% (2014)

Illiteracy rate: 26% (2012)

Internet users: 496 out of every 1000 inhabitants (2013)


GDP per capita: 3,723.7 USD (2015)

Rate of inflation: 13.5% (2015)

Unemployment: 13.9% (2015)

*Estimate or projection

(Source: Germany Trade & Invest 2014)

Data on book production
(Where older figures are cited, more recent data is not available.)

Information about book production in Egypt

The statistics on industrial production and domestic trade provided by the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS) in Cairo do not record or identify figures for the book industry separately. The Egyptian Publishers Association for its part does not collect data. Consequently, sales can only be estimated indirectly on the basis of surveys regarding the situation of the printing industry and private household expenditures (Income, Expenditure, and Consumption Survey 1999/2000), and in terms of public expenditure (libraries, education). The sales volume for the year amounted to approximately 204 million USD.
Title production / new releases

The authoritative figures on title production are those published in the Legal Deposit Bulletin of the Egyptian Publishers Association. While just under 7,000 titles were published in 2000, by 2004 annual production had increased to over 7,600 titles. Figures gathered by UNESCO (for previous years) and ALECSO are extremely incomplete and thus unreliable. The Egyptian compilers of the Legal Deposit Bulletin produce a parallel list with a much larger number of published titles, probably partly due to the inclusion of multiple copies of the same title. In addition, the specific criteria for officially defining a book in Egypt are often not observed.

A breakdown by category reveals the following averages over the period from 2000 to 2004 (in percentages, based on the Legal Deposit Bulletin. Unfortunately, the current figures on the Arabic website of the Egyptian national library, www.darelkotob.gov.eg, cannot be accessed):

- General knowledge / reference books 4
- Philosophy / Psychology 3
- Religion 31
- Social sciences 17
- Exact sciences 2
- Applied sciences 8
- Art 3
- Language 4
- Literature 19
- History and geography 9

Average book price

The average price for new releases in 2014 was approx. 9 USD (2014 exchange rate: 1 USD = 7.12 EGP). Legal and foreign-language books are more expensive, while government-subsidised publications are considerably more affordable.

Fixed book pricing

Book prices are relatively uniform in Egypt. The public sector has fixed prices, which are only reduced uniformly for specific sales events (such as book fairs). Individual distribution channels prescribe uniform prices. This largely applies to the private sector as well since these publishers use the distribution mechanisms of the public publishers, which generally require uniform pricing.
Copyright laws
Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works, in force since June 1977
World Trade Organisation (TRIPS-WTO), in force since January 1995
National Law No. 82 of 2002 on the Protection of Intellectual Property Rights
The enforcement of legal regulations cannot be assured.

Licensing statistics
According to information from Buch- und Buchhandel in Zahlen 2009 (BuBiZ), a total of 60 licenses were sold from German into Arabic in 2013, including 20 to Egypt. From 2010 to 2013, a total of 96 licenses were sold from Germany to Egypt, accounting for roughly 41% of all German licenses sold to Arab countries. According to BuBiZ, in 2013 there were 36 translations from Arabic into German. Egypt itself does not record licensing statistics.

Export / Import
Exports in the category HS 4901 (Harmonized System Code for books, brochures and similar printed matter) decreased from 6.9 million USD in 2001 to 2.5 million USD in 2004. This reduced value can be attributed in part to the discontinuation, in January 2003, of the practice of directly fixing the EGP to the USD. Moreover, Egypt's foreign trade export figures only rarely correspond to the import figures of certain recipient countries. One reason for this might be different HS allocations (in the country of origin as well as in the destination country); another might be the known tendency of exporters to underestimate the value of their products so that shipments are recorded at a higher value in customs valuations in the recipient country.
Imports in the category HS 4901 fell from 17.4 million USD in 2001 to 12.2 million USD in 2004, with publications from Great Britain alone accounting for 4.5 million USD that year. Products valued at 1.5 million USD were imported from Italy, while shipments from Lebanon accounted for around 1.3 million USD.

Number of publishers and bookstores
Egypt has a large proportion of publishers in the public sector. The relevant institutions and projects are the General Egyptian Book Organization (GEBO), the family library, the Supreme Council of Culture (SCC), as well as the semi-autonomous so-called national press institutions (Al-Ahram, Al-Hilal, Akhbar Al-Yawm and others). From 2000 to 2004, the public sector was responsible for fewer than 10% of the titles published, but in some cases these titles had print runs of 50,000 copies or more. In contrast, the private sector contributes a significantly larger number of titles, which however are printed in smaller numbers. According to information from the Egyptian Publishers Association, there are 503 registered publishers (as of December 2014), the majority of which are located in the greater Cairo area, Alexandria and in the Delta region.
Sales / Distribution channels
The public sector has an independent distribution network. GEBO maintains 24 distribution centres in Egypt and 21 abroad. The private sector uses both the distribution mechanisms of the state-run and autonomous sectors, in particular the distribution network of the Al-Ahram newspaper and magazine group, which has its own agency for distributing publications (22 sales and distribution centres in Egypt). However, the existence of distribution points does not necessarily attest to their efficiency. Private publishers also operate on the basis of direct sales and through agents and partnerships with other publishers, who sell on a commission basis. Wholesalers receive between 20% and 50% of the retail price of a book. There are just over 100 general bookstores nationwide, and most of these sales points do not offer ordering or research services.

Book Fair
The Cairo International Book Fair is the largest in the region; however, following the demolition of the exhibition grounds, it now takes place primarily in tents. Prior to the 2011 revolution, the fair always received some 1.8 million visitors. This number has declined sharply since the revolution. In 2014, 250,000 tickets were sold. After a few days of the fair, the entrance fee was waived and visitors were no longer counted. In 2014, 775 exhibitors from 24 countries participated in the fair. Around two dozen other local book fairs are held throughout Egypt. Egyptian publishers are represented at most foreign book fairs in the Arab world either directly or via agents. The Gulf countries in particular draw publishers from Egypt because of the high purchasing power there. In 2014, for example, 124 Egyptian publishers took part in the Abu Dhabi book fair. As in other parts of the region, the fairs serve as an opportunity to sell directly to readers and public buyers, as well as to initiate partnerships with publishers, distributors and agents.

Outlook
After the sharp decline in sales of up to 70% that followed the beginning of the 2011 revolution, the Egyptian book market is gradually showing signs of recovery. Many publishers are trying to counter the economic slump with new approaches. New sales channels are being developed; there are new independent bookstores; book chains are expanding; and new books and genres are being introduced to the market, reaching a previously untapped audience. While the e-book market remains very small, a number of Egyptian publishers have recognised its potential and are working to expand it. In early 2014, the e-book shop kotobi.com was launched. Here, for the first time, e-books can be purchased via mobile phone, without the need for a credit card. Specialised training courses for publishers have long been offered in Cairo (Egypt) as well as in other countries of the Arab world. In 2015, for the first time, the Cairo Book Fair plans to offer a professional framework programme for international participants.

(C. Helle, 2014)