



Brussels, 18<sup>th</sup> June 2010 – 45 Booksellers and representatives of Booksellers' Associations' from the 5 continents met during the past 2 days in Brussels to discuss trends in the book industry, to exchange views on the adaptations made necessary by digitisation, to hear how other industries were coping with new business models and to learn how to play an active role in the EU decision-making process.

This year's EBF-IBF Annual Conference "Breaking the rules to survive" took place partly in Brussels, at the heart of the European quarter, and partly in Antwerp. The event was co-organised by the European and International Booksellers Federations and by the Flemish Booksellers Association, Member of Boek.be. Prior to the conference, our Flemish colleagues had also hosted the International Congress of Young Booksellers (ICYB), a 3-day workshop, which attracted young booksellers from all over Europe. The Annual Conference opened with a joint EBF/IBF/ICYB welcome dinner, a unique occasion for over 70 booksellers and representatives to meet, mingle and network.

**Key note speaker of the EBF/IBF Conference was Kelly Gallagher, Vice-President of the American company Bowker**, provider of bibliographic information. In his presentation "The consumer demand chain – thriving in the New World Publishing Order", he explained how the traditional business model of the book supply chain was being reversed upside down into a consumer driven model, where more and more stakeholders play ever evolving roles and where new opportunities can arise for booksellers. On Friday, a similar message was delivered by Geert Joris, Director of Boek.be, who also spoke about the changing roles for all the stakeholders in the book chain and the need for booksellers to rethink their position in this changing environment.

**Fergal Tobin, newly elected President of the Federation of European Publishers and the Director, Anne Bergman**, explained their work priorities and stressed again the key importance of a correct protection of copyright for the well being of the whole book chain. Other areas of potential collaboration between FEP and EBF were also mentioned for further consideration.

**In the same vein, Kurt van Damme, Legal Advisor of boek.be and Managing Director of the Flemish Collecting Society RUIT, as well as Vice-President of Reprobel**, the Belgian Collecting Society, stressed once again that copyright was essential and gave a thorough overview of the different - bad and good- methods to fight online piracy.

Booksellers had decided to open the floor to other industries which have also been undergoing major changes in the online environment and listened with great attention to **Olivia Regnier, Deputy Director of IFPI (International Federation of the Phonographic Industry)** speaking about the music industry's experience as well as to **Michel de Blust, Secretary General of ECTAA (European Travel Agents' & Tour Operators' Associations)** who both explained how they had to radically revisit their business models because of the fierce competition of online sales.

**Ann Branch, Head of Unit of the European Commission's DG Education and Culture**, gave an overview of the measures in favour of the book industry promoted by the Commission and was eager to hear booksellers' points of view regarding the involvement of bookshops in the promotion of European literature and the European Union Literature Prize. Delegates were further introduced to the complexity of EU decision-making and the role of Permanent Representations in Brussels by **Johanna Hulkko, Counselor for cultural issues at the Finnish Permanent Representation**.

Prior to the professional conference, EBF and IBF held a joint General Assembly during which **Inara Belinkaja, bookseller from Latvia**, was confirmed as the new **IBF President** for the period 2010-2013. **President of EBF until 2011 is John McNamee, bookseller from Ireland** and board member of the UK & Ireland Booksellers Association.

For further information, please contact [eurobooks@skynet.be](mailto:eurobooks@skynet.be)