

Flanders (Belgium)

Social and economic information

Area:	13,522 qu km (Belgian total: 30,528 sq km)
Population:	6.5 million (Belgian total: 11.3 million)
Population growth:	0.8 % (2015, Belgian total)
Gross domestic product (GDP):	€ 208.3 billion (Belgian total: 400,6 billion)
Per capita GDP:	€ 36,511 (2015, Belgian total)
GDP growth:	1.3 % (2015, Belgian total)
Inflation rate:	0.6 % (2015, Belgian total)
Unemployment rate:	8.5 % (2015, Belgian total)
Imports:	€ 342.7 billion (2014, Belgian total)
Exports:	€ 355.3 billion (2014, Belgian total)
Literacy rate:	99 % (Belgian total)
Internet connections:	850 per 1,000 inhabitants (2014, Belgian total)
Mobile phone connections:	1,143 per 1,000 inhabitants (2014, Belgian total)

(Sources: Germany Trade & Invest; Internationale Märkte; Vlaanderen in Cijfers 2014)

Information on the book market

The Flemish book market is closely linked to the Dutch book market as they share the same language area. As in the Netherlands, scientific and educational publishing also plays a significant role in Flanders, contributing a large share of the overall market turnover. In terms of international licensing, children's and young adult books from Flanders and the Netherlands are highly popular.

Figures for book production

Publishers

There are fewer than 100 publishers in Flanders. The largest are Lannoo and WPG (general-interest publishers), as well as the education and specialist publishers Keure, Pelckmans, Plantyn, Van In and Wolters Kluwer.

Booksellers

The booksellers association has 82 members which, together, operate 295 bookshops across Flanders. The largest retail chain is Standard Boekhandel, with 145 shops.

Distribution

CB Logistics holds a monopoly for the distribution of books here, as it does in the Netherlands. It runs a Flemish subsidiary, alongside its main business in the neighbouring country. However, individual publishers also work with their own distribution services, such as Distrimedia (Lannoo), Elkedagoeken (Vrijdag) and De Boeck Services (De Boeck Verlag). Pinceel is an important distributor for comics and graphic novels, while Exhibitions International Services serves group of publishers in the art and design segment. A relatively new distributor is L & M Books, which has grown strongly in the last two years.

Book sales

Overall sales for the book industry in 2014 amounted to around € 365 million. Approximately 70 % of this amount was earned inside Flanders. Here, the education and science segment occupies a strong position (€ 172 million), while non-fiction, fiction and children's books together achieved combined sales of € 82 million. The remaining 30 % came from sales outside Flanders, with the Netherlands and France as the primary target markets.

Title production/new releases

In 2014, 11,013 new books were published in Flanders, a figure which includes specialist publications and scientific literature. This amounted to a 3.8 % increase on 2013 (10,608).

The shares of the most important segments:

- Trade (non-fiction, fiction, children's books): 5,086 new titles (46.2 %)
- Scientific literature: 3,137 new titles (28.5 %)
- Education: 2,409 new titles (21.8 %)

Compared to 2013, the number of scientific and educational titles remained constant. As such, growth could be attributed solely to the trade segment.

Rights and licences

It is generally difficult to attract international attention to titles in Dutch. This fact is exacerbated in Flanders by the importance of the education segment (around 16.3 % of the book market) and non-fiction (43 % of production in the trade segment). Nevertheless, over the last five to ten years Flemish publishers have invested a lot in expanding their rights departments and raising their professionalism. These efforts have already had its clear impact on the sales figures. Between 2012 and 2014, the international licensing trade grew in Flanders by around 163 %.

Digital media, including e-books, platforms and innovations

A total of 446,297 e-books were sold in Flanders in 2014. That corresponds to a 2.9 % share of the entire book market. This is a slow development in comparison to the Netherlands, where the e-book share is already 5.4 % . The lower share in Flanders is more similar to the situation in France.

Regulation of prices

In Flanders there is no fixed book price at present. However, the Flemish government has committed itself to introducing a fixed book price on 1 January 2017. Currently, negotiations are ongoing with the federal government in Brussels as well as the government of the Francophone region of Wallonia. The aim is to introduce a uniform regulation for the whole of Belgium.

Books are subject to a reduced VAT rate of 6 % (as opposed to 21 %).

Book fairs

The Antwerp Book Fair (October/November): in 2015, this received 155,000 visitors:

<http://www.boekenbeurs.be/>

Associations and institutions

Flemish Publishers Association: <http://www.boekenvak.be/voor-uitgevers/vlaamse-uitgeversvereniging>

Flemish Booksellers Association: <http://www.boek.be/>

Flemish Literature Fund: <http://buitenland.vfl.be/en/45/content/123/about-us.html>);

Everyone Reads (reading promotion): <http://www.iedereenleest.be/#whoarewe>);

- Dutch Language Union (support for the Dutch language): <http://taalunie.org/dutch-language-union>

Passa Porta (International House of Literature in Brussels): <http://www.passaporta.be/en/home>

Behoud de Begeerte (Flemish Arts Centre for Literature):
<http://www.begeerte.be/page.php?page=nieuws>

Sources:

VUV (Vlaamse Uitgeversvereniging/Flemish Publishers Association) 2015

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