



**COUNCIL OF  
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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**INFORMATION NOTE**

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from : General Secretariat of the Council

to : Council

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Subject : Improving the position of publishers who issue books in languages with small numbers of speakers

- Information from the Slovenian delegation

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Delegations will find attached an information note from the Slovenian delegation on the above subject which has been put on the provisional agenda, under "other business", for the forthcoming Education, Youth and Culture Council meeting on 26 and 27 November 2009.

## **Information from the Slovenian delegation on improving the position of publishers who issue books in languages with small numbers of speakers**

*Concern for the place of books in native languages has to be one of the fundamental factors in cultural policies of individual countries, especially in countries with languages spoken by relatively small numbers of speakers. Books are essential for the preservation and development of languages. In addition to readers, a large number of creators also depend upon them. The accessibility of books in native languages is of vital importance for the preservation of numerous cultures that are otherwise subject to global competition and its economic pressures; these, of course, do not promote the development of physically weaker links in the world of spiritual creation.*

*Due to historical developments and the needs in the contemporary world, taking into account the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, it would be suitable to allow individual Member States to shape their own cultural policies, also by certain fiscal provisions. In some Member States certain creative sectors may be left to market mechanisms. This is also true of the book sector in environments where book production in the broadest sense allows the use of economically effective mechanisms; in such environments it is only sensible to include cultural industries in the general economic policy systems. However, this is not possible when dealing with books published in languages with small numbers of speakers – in such cases special approaches are needed due to specificities.*

*One of the key elements that can support language development, literary creation and culture in general in small language communities is the affordability of books. Therefore, it would be suitable to allow the cultural policies of individual Member States to find and implement measures tailored to their specific needs. One of these measures is undoubtedly the rate of VAT on books, since VAT directly affects the price of books and therefore their accessibility and availability. Thus it seems only logical that, in a multicultural Europe, Member States, in line with their specific characteristics and traditions, design the kind of measures they judge to be suitable for the development of all areas of their individual cultures; an appropriate attitude to native languages and books is therefore of key importance, and for Slovenia a zero VAT rate would be one of important instruments which can support it.*

*Member States should therefore be allowed to keep a degree of flexibility on how to use taxation to supplement other policies, especially where there are no single market arguments against rate differences. And this is undoubtedly true where the sales of books in small languages on the local level are concerned, as they do not distort competition on the single market.*