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PRESS RELEASE

Publishing: the Italian book market picks up in November, and the decline compared to 2024 narrows to 1.98%
Sixty million euros in funding reach libraries: the South gains ground

Cipolletta (AIE): “We are optimistic about the end of the year and the beginning of 2026. We need a law for books and support for publishers in technological innovation”

Armando (AIE): “For small and medium publishers, economic conditions are challenging: we need industrial policies to help businesses navigate the age of AI”

Giuli: “The publishing industry today needs incentives for innovation. All 60 million euros for libraries have been used up, and now 180 million euros will be allocated for the Carta Valore.”

The Italian publishing industry looks ahead to the end of 2025 and to 2026 with confidence, both in terms of market performance and book-related public policies. Growth in trade-channel sales in November (print fiction and nonfiction sold in physical bookstores, online, and in supermarkets) reduced the year-to-date decline over the first eleven months to -1.98% compared to the previous year. In the coming weeks and months, the positive impact of measures aimed at stimulating demand will also be reflected in the data.

“It’s difficult to make predictions about the end of the year,” said Innocenzo Cipolletta, president of the Italian Publishers Association (AIE), during a meeting with Minister of Culture Alessandro Giuli at *Più libri più liberi*, the national fair for small and medium-sized publishers organized by AIE at the Nuvola in Rome. “But the arrival of 60 million euros for libraries, along with 18 million euros for the Culture Card for low-income families and the reactivation of the Teachers’ Card, gives us hope for a positive year-end. With 2026 comes a new phase, and on the public policy front, we believe it is time to discuss a law for books’ industry. Since 2021, the market has stalled: we need to launch a new phase while keeping in mind our goal of narrowing the reading gap that continues to penalize the South of the country.”

“2025 has been a particularly challenging year for small and medium-sized publishers, and the outlook makes it increasingly urgent to discuss measures - ideally organic and part of a new systemic law for books’ industry - that support publishing houses continuing to invest. We need to make industrial development easier and encourage innovation in a rapidly changing environment shaped, among other factors, by Artificial Intelligence and its impact on the market and workflows,” said Lorenzo Armando, president of AIE’s Small Publishers Group.

The Minister of Culture Alessandro Giuli explained: “I agree with you: I don’t like to talk about subsidized systems, but today’s publishing industry needs incentives for innovation. We are therefore



working on a system of public-private partnership to ensure that this essential support is put to good use.

Next will come a law on books, which is the responsibility of Parliament. And in the case of enabling legislation, we are obviously ready to do our job by writing it together with you and all the operators in the sector: that is why we want to have an intense dialogue with employers' and workers' associations.

As far as libraries are concerned, all 60 million euros allocated have been used, and now 180 million euros will be added, which is a lot, with the Carta Valore (Value Card) finally rewarding what has often been denied: merit. We are moving forward step by step; we want to map the situation to get an overview, and that is why your data is important."

The market data and future outlook were discussed as part of the fair's professional program.

Reading habits. Reading has grown across all age groups over the past 10 years, but more than 15 million Italians still did not read a single book, e-book, or listen to an audiobook in the previous 12 months.

Long-term copy sales. According to AIE's Research Office based on NielsenIQ BookData, the Italian book market has experienced three distinct phases since 2008. After growth in 2008–2010, a sharp decline followed, reaching a low of 81.3 million copies sold in 2016. This was followed by a period of strong growth, which accelerated after Covid, peaking at 104.8 million copies in 2021. Growth then stalled, and in 2024, total copies sold reached 102.6 million.

Market value in 2025. After the trade market recorded a 2.4% decline in value in the first ten months of the year compared to 2024—amounting to a total of 1,128.8 million euros—a positive November reduced the decline to 1.98%.

Sharper declines among small and medium publishers. Large publishing groups and their affiliated imprints recorded flat growth in 2025 compared to the previous year. Publishers with sales above 5 million euros declined by 1.9%; those with sales between 1 and 5 million euros declined by 9.7%; those between 500,000 euros and 1 million declined by 6.8%; and those with sales up to 500,000 euros declined by 6.5%.

In the ranking of the most purchased books during the first ten months of 2025 published by publishers under 5 million euros in annual sales, the top three are: *Il dio dei boschi* by L. Moore (NN Editore), *Lo svezzamento è vostro! Manuale pratico di autosvezzamento* by Pediatra Carla (Sonda), and *Dammi mille baci* by T. Cole (Always Publishing) (full top ten list attached).

The gap penalizing the South. Although the South is home to 34% of the Italian population, only 30% of readers live there, and the share of copies sold through physical bookstores, online stores, and supermarkets amounts to just 19% of the national total (2024 data). An AIE study highlighted the correlation between low reading rates and inadequate reading infrastructure — primarily bookstores and libraries. Notably, the allocation of library funding in 2025 showed a rebalancing in favor of the South and Center. The South received 31.2% of total funds, compared to 23.2% in 2023. The Center increased from 15.3% in 2023 to 16.2% in 2025.



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