Dear Executive Vice President,

On behalf of the European and International Booksellers Federation (EIBF), we would like to thank you for your unfailing support in working for a fairer level playing field within the digital world. As representatives of thousands of booksellers of all kinds— from independent shops to family businesses, chains, brick and mortar retailers and online sellers – we know first-hand the devastating effects that the dominance of some major US tech giants, such as Amazon, has had in the bookselling sector. Their impact on our sector and the need for fairer competition have proven to be even greater during this pandemic, as giant e-retailers are still operating and making huge profit while European bookshops are fighting to be recognized as essential in order to remain open for the holiday season.

Christmas sales are essential in enabling bookshops to operate during the rest of the year. As some European countries are going back into lockdown and some others are tightening restrictions, European booksellers have doubled their efforts to find creative ways to continue engaging with their customers and providing their local communities with access to books and culture. However, despite booksellers having proven time and again their innovativeness and resilience over the last months, they remain nonetheless one of the first collateral damage of the rise of these giant e-retailers.

This is why, a week away from Christmas, the European and International Booksellers Federation warmly welcomes the European Commission’s announcement of the Digital Markets Act, as a sign of willingness from European decision-makers to reinstate the balance between the digital and physical world. Essentially, the more bookshops there are, the larger is the choice and offer for consumers and the bigger is the cultural diversity.

We see the Digital Markets Act as a crucial file that interconnects both areas of fair competition and the digital world: a unique opportunity to level the playing field online. In particular, with the introduction of a list of prohibitions and obligations for online gatekeepers, we finally have an instrument that prevents anti-competitive practices rather than addressing the consequences of such actions ex-post, through lengthy and delayed antitrust charges and heavy fines, which these tech giants can easily afford to pay.

Throughout the year, EIBF has enthusiastically supported the development of the IMCO committee’s ambitious Digital Services Act report in the European Parliament, which calls for a strict enforcement of rules and obligations for large online platforms with a gatekeeper role, while also guaranteeing the long-term digital sustainability of SMEs in the EU and the protection of consumers. Therefore, we hope we can count on your determination and support to achieve the right balance between the online and offline world.

We are fully aware of the demands on your time and we understand perfectly that your agenda is extremely busy. However, it would be a great privilege for our members if you accepted to meet with a small EIBF
delegation in the New Year and agreed to discuss the importance of the Digital Markets Act for our sector, given the intersection of fair competition and the ongoing digitalization of the bookselling industry.

Wishing you already a very safe and Merry Christmas and a successful year in 2021.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Best regards,
The EIBF