Participants

Esref Gurban (Birey Education)
Eyüp Kul (Birey Education)
Sintija Buhanovska (Zvaigzne)
Magda Riekstina (Zvaigzne)
Vija Kilbloka (Zvaigzne)
Manfred Meraner (Veritas Verlag)
Rok Kvaternik (Rokus-Klett)
Marusa Kmet (Rokus-Klett)
Elena Pataki (Patakis Publishers)
Paul Hedlund (Gyldendal Education)
Jelena Duic (Profil International)
Jelena Bevandic (Profil International)
Riine Latserus (Koolibri Publishers)
Maire Tänna (Koolibri Publishers)
Preben Spåth (EEPG)

Minutes:

Thursday 11 June
Morning session

Impact of economic crisis to textbook publishing in your country. Is there any impact at all?

All participants explained the situation in each country in the perspective of the financial crisis. One interesting piece of information was that in Croatia the government has decided to buy all schoolbooks from the publishers and give them to the schools – one reason is said to be the coming general elections. In Estonia the state approval system for schoolbooks is being abandoned this year. In Turkey many courses for students have been closed down which means decrease in the book sales. The government buys the schoolbooks and workbooks after a tender (auction) where the publishers make bids with books that have been printed already – and if you loose the tender the books are lost. The private courses cost money and the financial crisis means that the parents do not have the resources.

Paul Hedlund gave a short presentation of the situation in Norway. Here there are no signs of a financial crisis, and education is high on the political agenda – but nevertheless there is some crisis in the publishing sector: until 2009 students bought their books for upper secondary in the bookstores. From now the schools will buy the books and lend them out to the students one, two, three even four times. That means dramatic decrease in the sales (around 80% decrease is foreseen). The regions in Norway own the upper secondary schools and have put computers, networks, free electronic learning resources into the schools – using money that was foreseen for schoolbooks. The company producing these resources is state owned and becoming monopoly in the area – so the free market is disappearing and a state owned publishing house is being born. In the primary market is still ‘normal’ free market
Sintija Buhanovska explained the current situation in Latvia. The VAT on books was until December 2008 5% (other goods 18%); schools get money from the state to buy the textbooks. Now the VAT is 21% on all goods, on books it is also 21% (increase from 16%). Right now there are negotiations to lower books VAT to 10% on all Latvian books (e.g. Russian and all foreign books will still have 21%). In general people have less money in the crisis and they have not enough to buy books. Many smaller publishing houses are forced to close down. Schools do not get money from the state and since they are getting poor they cannot buy the books. Smaller schools are getting closed and teachers being fired. The state approval runs so that the publisher has to pay around 1,000 euro for an approval. From now on the schools do not have the money to buy new books, so the question who will buy the books (parents? Students?). This means that it is impossible to foresee the number of books to be printed. New curriculum for secondary school has been introduced recently and new books are needed for this. The result is that the publishers have to find new marketing strategies, e.g. using the portals and the homepage extensively to get into contact more directly with customers (parents). Also the 20 bookstores owned by Zvaigzne will play an important role for this approach. Rumor says that the goal of the politicians is one state owned educational publisher. Marusa Kmet told that the financial crisis has not yet had any direct influence on educational publishing. However, the situation may get problematic in the near future. There is some decrease in the sales of additional materials.

**Afternoon session:**

*Marketing methods which help to keep customers during economic crisis (presentations by the participants and discussion)*

Marusa Kmet presented the approach used in Slovenia for marketing during the crisis. She described several marketing strategies they have introduced in the company, e.g. invitation to teacher seminars using GSM mobile phones and other modern applications (quicker and cost effective).

Jelena Bevandic presented the marketing strategies used by Profil (promotion materials, positioning in the bookstores, e-mail marketing, word of mouth, etc.). The numerous seminars are always very popular and well visited by teachers (good wine, comedians’ performances, cocktail master and other relaxing activities). All teachers receive for free samples of new titles.
Sintija Buhanovska gave a presentation about the marketing activities that are being implemented by Zvaigzne. Examples are activities directed at younger school children like a campaign called ‘what to read in summer?’, where a whole class is visiting one of the bookshops or the School Information Centre. These activities are carried out by editors. The children learn how a book is produced and they look into different books for their age group, and finally they get 21% discount for books they buy on this day. Other activities include two annual magazines for teachers (4 and 6 times a year), e-newsletter to all schools about new textbooks and seminars, questionnaire to ensure feedback on all seminars and other events for teachers, an active role in major cultural events (e.g. the Museum Night).

Manfred Meraner showed from the company homepage the campaign “Ferienhefte” (Holiday Exercise Book) about what the children can do in the long boring time of summer holiday. The book sold last year was a successful Math book for children starting in 4th grade after the holiday. Contents: letter to the teacher, letter to the parents, folder with 4 pages, order form (to be sent by fax).

Paul Hedlund presented Gyldendal’s homepage and explained how paper and web site together are used for the many courses arranged by the company. The teacher can have newsletters sent about subject and age group. In addition there is access to a seminar and event calendar where you can have an overview of all activities in the country month for month. Finally he showed the web site of the ‘Multi’ Math project.

Friday 12 June
Morning session:

Example of campaign (successful or not)

Maire Tänna gave a presentation about the general education in Estonia. From 2009 textbooks do not need state approval any more. The state gives €50 per student textbooks – an amount that is normally raised by support from local authorities. A new strategy has been initiated in Koolibri offering a whole package with all books for all topics in a bag. These bags were presented at seminars for teachers across the country.
Manfred Meraner showed an example of re-launching a textbook. First he explained how the schoolbook system works in Austria, where books have to be approved by the Ministry, who also oversees the whole traffic of books from the publisher to the schools. An interesting approach is an annual survey where teachers are asked a list of questions concerning the service (e.g. how important is it that books are always published on time? Will access to online information be possible for teachers? Free accompanying materials important?) – in total 2,000 persons have answered these questionnaires. The presentation described finally the whole process of launching the mother tongue system “Deutschstunde” with extra materials and different levels in the same grade. KISS = “Keep it simple and stupid” is a good guideline for the communication strategy. It was for example a problem that the older version with one book was now expanded to 4 different books (levels, pupils with language problems) and that was confusing for the teachers who therefore to some degree selected the one book from the competitors. But to make sales better they organized seminars with focus on how to implement differentiation ‘in the easy way’.

Jelena Duic gave an example of a successful campaign launching a book for teaching Traditional Croatian Music. The book is meant to be used from 5th to 8th grade along with 3 CD’s and other types of accompanying materials (e.g. one booklet with lots of illustrations describing the music and dance traditions in each of the regions of Croatia). Among the reasons for the success in sales of this series are the following: the book set can be used with any other music books, the company has a long tradition for caring about the traditions and history of Croatia. In 2008/9 the company has sold over 100,000 copies of the package.

Marusa Kmet showed an example of a successful campaign. Please watch the funny presentation of the company on YouTube (look for ‘ROKUS POKUS ENG’). After some decrease in the sales of books for Slovenian language they started a so called loyalty program for the teachers. Elements of this approach include to contact each teacher at least 9 times a year, inviting them to seminars and/or theatre performances, invitation to literary contest (this year more than 7,000 short stories from pupils were participating and writing their stories inspired by some funny drawings), invitation and trip to Austria, send each of them the new catalogue, invitation to a symposium on how to integrate web based materials into the teaching process, and in June all participants at the events receive a thank you letter and a small gift.
Afternoon session:
Summary and looking ahead session

It was agreed that the meeting had been a success in raising the awareness of the financial crisis for the marketing activities. In addition the participants agreed to suggest the following topics to be dealt with at coming meetings of this network:

- the use of videos, YouTube clips and other web based applications in marketing strategies
- marketing materials and strategies for kindergarten and pre-school children
- how much does a good image mean for the sales?
- How to market a new textbook in a market where you know competition is hard?
- Marketing strategies for e-learning applications
- Lobbying for textbook publishers on a national and international level

Finally two decisions were taken: First it was noticed that Tomas Mikalonis had left Alma Littera and therefore could no longer be the EEPG representative of the marketing network. Fortunately the attendants agreed to elect Marusa Kmet (Rokus-Klett) as the new EEPG representative for the marketing network. Secondly it was decided that Birey Education would organize the 2010 meeting of this network in Istanbul.

On behalf of all participants I wish to thank Maire Tänna to help organizing the meeting and making it another successful meeting in the history of the EEPG Marketing Network.

Preben Spâth