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Subject: Protection of the free market and copyright in the context of modern education in Slovakia

Dear Minister,

Allow us to address you on behalf of the Federation of European Publishers (FEP) and the International Publishers Association (IPA). Our organisations represent the interests of publishers at the European and the global levels. Our collective mission is to promote freedom of publication, copyright protection and the development of a transparent and pluralistic market for educational materials.

We are following with great concern the recent amendment to the Education Act (No. 245/2008 Coll.), specifically the introduction of the new provision **§ 13aa**. Although the establishment of a central library of digital educational publications under the administration of the ministry may appear to be a step towards modernisation, a deeper analysis reveals risks that could fundamentally damage the quality of education in Slovakia.

From the perspective of the international publishing community, we consider the following points to be particularly critical:

- **State monopoly and threat to competition:** The provision whereby state-funded textbooks become the exclusive property of the state is in direct conflict with the principles of the free market. If the state becomes the regulator, producer and distributor at the same time, this leads to de facto re-centralisation, which suppresses private initiative.
- **Devaluation of intellectual property:** The transfer of copyright to the state demotivates top authors and publishing teams. Investments in innovation, modern teaching methods and digital tools are only sustainable in an environment where intellectual property is respected and healthy competition exists.
- **Risk of stagnation in quality:** Experience from other countries confirms that the absence of market competition leads to a loss of diversity in educational resources. Without the pressure for continuous improvement that a competitive environment brings, the Slovak education system risks falling behind technologically and pedagogically.
- **Lack of transparency and systemic risks:** The accumulation of decision-making and production power in the hands of a single institution opens the door to inefficient spending of public resources and increases the risk of clientelism in the awarding of contracts.

We viewed the liberalisation of the Slovak textbook market in 2020 as a progressive step in line with European trends, which strengthened the autonomy of schools. However, the current wording of Section 13aa negates this progress and returns the Slovak education system to the era of state dirigisme.

We understand that the representatives of the Slovak Ministry of Education have met with the Slovak educational publishers under the umbrella of the Slovak Publishing and Bookselling Association, however with no progress and with only very general promises of taking their points into consideration. As time is running out, we believe the message from the Ministry should be clear whether the system is supposed to return to the state controlled system of the past or continue in the form of the free competition between various educational publishers.

Dear Minister, as an international authority in the field of publishing policy, we ask you to maintain an open textbook market in Slovakia. We are convinced that modern education needs partnership between the state and the private sector, not its elimination.

We are prepared to provide you with our expertise and share international best practices in the search for a solution that will be in the best interests of Slovak students, teachers and authors.

Yours sincerely,



Anne Bergman-Tahon
Director FEP



José Borghino
Secretary General IPA

About the FEP

FEP is an independent, non-commercial umbrella association of book publishers' associations in Europe. FEP represents 31 national associations of publishers of books, learned journals and educational materials, in all formats, from 30 European countries. FEP is the voice of the great majority of publishers in Europe. Founded in 1967, FEP deals with European legislation and advises publishers' associations on copyright and other legislative issues.

About the IPA

The International Publishers Association (IPA) is the world's largest federation of publishers associations with 107 members in 85 countries. Established in 1896, the IPA is an industry body with a human rights mandate. The IPA's mission is to promote and protect publishing and to raise awareness of publishing as a force for economic, cultural and social development. Working in cooperation with the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and numerous international NGOs, the IPA champions the interests of book and journal publishing at national and supranational level. Internationally, the IPA actively opposes censorship and promotes copyright, freedom to publish (including through the IPA Prix Voltaire), and literacy.