

book
PLATFORM

Translations from Armenian after 1991 facts, trends and recommendations

Based on 11 country studies in the framework of
the *Book Platform* project

The Book Platform project is
funded by the European Union and is
implemented in the frames of the
Eastern Partnership Culture Programme



EUROPEAN
CULTURE

AIMS of the studies

Tendencies after independence: what had changed in the conditions for communication with audiences abroad via translations?

What role do the different mediators play: translators, publishers, periodicals, funding bodies, events

How are translations from Armenian perceived by audiences in the recipient language (reception)

Where are the gaps and which are the success stories?



THE STUDIES PROCESS

1. Commissioning 11 studies to researchers that include:
 - Collection of bibliographic data
 - sources: national libraries, university libraries, National Library of Armenia, Index Translationum, BiP catalogues, personal libraries, previous studies
 - Overview of historical developments
 - Overview of publishing and translation market in the given country
 - Analysis of the biblio data: authors, genres, publishers, translators
 - The status of the translators from Armenian, professional background and perspectives
 - Conclusions and recommendations
2. A summary of the results of all studies written by an international expert of translation policy
3. Recommendations on strategic approach and possible actions for the future
4. Written comments by Armenian book experts and a public discussion of the results of the studies and the recommendations



MAIN FINDINGS / FACTS

The quantity of titles of all genres is not very high: **221 titles** translated over 21 years into the 11 languages

Over the last 10 years there is a **slight increase** in dynamics of translations compared with the previous decade

French is the top language of translations from Armenian: 60 titles

Translations from Armenian are mostly done **directly from the original text** but not via an intermediary language

Poetry translations prevail over fiction: poetry, both classical and contemporary, accounts for approximately one-third of all translations

Classical literature, folklore and texts from the Christian tradition **clearly dominate** over other epochs and genres

Dominant themes are Armenian history, Armenian Christianity, Armenian language, the Genocide

Hovhannes Tumanyan remains to date the most translated Armenian author: 11 titles into 5 languages

The situation in some smaller European languages is particularly worrying, since into some languages there is either not a single translator from Armenian (e.g. Swedish) or there is only one active figure at the moment (e.g. Dutch, Serbian).

SOME OBSERVATIONS

1. TRANSLATIONS FROM ARMENIAN ABROAD HAPPEN MOSTLY BECAUSE OF THE EFFORDS OF THE TRANSLATORS: the translator is a “multifaceted intermediary” who participates in all stages of the publishing process: choosing the work, convincing a publisher to print it, finding funding for the publication, and participating in the promotion and marketing of the published book
2. THE PUBLISHERS, TRANSLATORS, PROMOTERS AND OFTEN EVEN THE READERS ARE USUALLY OF ARMENIAN DESCENT: break-out appearances in the “mainstream” publishing chain of the recipient country are rare.
3. CONTEMPORARY WORKS OF LITERATURE ARE PREFERRED BY INTERNATIONAL PUBLISHERS BUT the cultural mediators focus on classics and history
4. THE PRACTICE OF PUBLISHING TRANSLATIONS IN ARMENIA ITSELF makes little contribution to getting Armenian literature known abroad to its intended readers: these editions serve only as an “advertisement” for their authors or publishers
5. **THE LACK OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND OF A LONG-TERM VISION** FOR THE PROMOTION OF ARMENIAN CULTURE ABROAD is a serious impediment
6. INTERNATIONAL INTEREST IS GROWING but there are no channels to sustain it: no information, literary agents, funding, events
7. VARIOUS EFFORTS TO PROMOTE ARMENIAN LITERATURE **REMAIN ISOLATED** a) from each other; b) from presentations of other forms of Armenian culture abroad; and c) from partnerships with multilateral international initiatives, networks and projects dedicated to lesser-known literatures

THE MECHANISMS FOR BRINGING ABOUT AN ARMENIAN TRANSLATION ABROAD DO NOT FOLLOW THE USUAL PATH THROUGH WHICH RIGHTS ARE SOLD INTERNATIONALLY

POSSIBLE STRATEGIC APPROACHES

INCREASED ATTENTION TOWARDS THE MEDIATORS: paying due attention to translators would include better relations with Armenian studies departments, greater care in sustaining the translators' motivation, and a continuity between different generations of translators, support for the continuous training of translators and for their relations with Armenia

THE EXPORT OF A LESSER-KNOWN LITERATURE STARTS "AT HOME": a given literature's chances of gaining international attention directly correlate with this literature's openness to the world, to its "hospitality" towards other worlds, which is manifested in the level of translations into its own language, in hosting book fairs, festivals, readings and other events.

STARTING WITH THE CONCEPT OF AN EQUAL "DIALOGUE" RATHER THEN OF "EXPORT OF LITERATURE" OR OF SIMPLY PUSHING TEXTS INTO THE FOREIGN MARKETS, PROVIDES BETTER CHANCES FOR SUCCESS

DIVERSIFICATION OF OFFERS WITH VIEW OF THE DIFFERENT AUDIENCES EXPECTATIONS, KNOWLEDGE, PREFERENCES, ETC has better chances of success than attempts to promote only "the best of" Armenian literature

SOME INSTRUMENTS

FOR ENCOURAGING TRANSLATIONS FROM ARMENIAN

- o **A specialized agency** for supporting the translation, publication and promotion of Armenian works in other languages - independent and with mixed funding sources
- o **Grants scheme** for foreign publishers, translators, periodicals, events and other projects
- o **Translation and other awards:** better promotion of the existing and creation of new ones
- o **“Hospitality” programs** for translators, authors, editors, and journalists, including residencies, scholarships, and mentorship programs for young translators.
- o **Mobility programs** aiming at overcoming isolation by supporting participation in international events
- o **Information resources** that are accessible to and understandable for international mediators

THE NEXT PAGE FOUNDATION HAS A LARGE BODY OF INFORMATION AND EXPERIENCE FROM OTHER COUNTRIES THAT CAN BE EMPLOYED FOR MAKING THE MOST OUT OF THESE INSTRUMENTS AND SCHEMES



FULL TEXT VERSIONS OF THE STUDIES, THE SUMMARY OF THE
RECOMMENDATIONS ARE AVAILABLE AT:

www.bookplatform.org (*Resources* section)

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION
AND HAVE A PRODUCTIVE DEBATE!