

Anti-Amazon bill adopted in France

PARIS, FRANCE: French lawmakers adopted a bill that prevents Amazon and other online booksellers from offering free deliveries of discounted books, in a bid to support the country's small bookshops.



Aurelie Filippetti, France's Culture Minister has welcomed the ban against Amazon's free shipping and discounted prices. Image: Wikipedia

The Senate gave its approval for the bill, which had already been unanimously backed in the lower house National Assembly, and it is expected to be signed into law by President Francois Hollande within the next two weeks.

The bill bans online companies such as Amazon from delivering books without charge, but still allows them to set discounts of up to five percent, the maximum allowed under existing French legislation.

In 1981 the government ruled that publishers must set a standard selling price for their books in a bid to protect small retailers and set a limit of five percent on any discount.

Culture Minister Aurelie Filippetti welcomed the parliamentary approval, saying it showed "the nation's deep attachment to books."

No free shipping

While the measure adopted is not specifically aimed at Amazon, Filippetti has singled out the US company's practices in the past, attacking both free deliveries and the firm's tax arrangements.

The online retailer reports its European sales through a Luxembourg-based holding company, taking advantage of the

duchy's relatively low corporate tax rates for earnings outside its borders.

Amazon insists the arrangement, which has been criticised by politicians across Europe, is legal under the European Union's single market rules.

Filippetti has also attacked Amazon for its "dumping strategy" and for selling books at a loss.

"Once they are in a dominant position and will have crushed our network of bookshops, they will bring prices back up," she said last year.

France is proud of a network of bookstores it says is unique in the world and crucial for culture to reach small towns.

The country has about 3,500 stores, including between 600 and 800 so-called independent retailers that do not belong to a publishing house, a chain or a supermarket, compared with just 1,000 in Britain.

Source: AFP via I-Net Bridge

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