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**Some Aspects of Book Publishing in Eastern European Countries:  
Historical and Methodological Specifics**

**Abstract**

The article analyzes the historical and methodological characteristics of the book publishing process in Eastern European countries. Since the late 19th century, publishing activities in the region have served the functions of enlightenment and the preservation of national identity, while during the Soviet era, they developed extensively under ideological control. In the post-socialist period, the publishing sector adapted to the principles of a market economy, beginning to operate through new methodological and organizational models. The study examines the main challenges within the Eastern European publishing landscape, including economic difficulties, shifts in the reader audience, digital challenges, and language barriers. At the same time, digitalization, international cooperation, and the strengthening of state support are identified as key directions for future development. The findings indicate that the Eastern European publishing system relies on a synthesis of historical experience and contemporary trends, emphasizing the need to simultaneously preserve national culture and integrate into the global information environment.

**Keywords:** Eastern Europe, Book Publishing, Publishing History, Methodological Specifics, Post-Socialist Transformation

**Doğu Avrupa Ülkelerinde Kitap Yayıncılığının Bazı Yönleri: Tarihsel ve  
Yöntemsel Özellikler**

**Öz**

Bu makale, Doğu Avrupa ülkelerinde kitap yayıncılığı sürecinin tarihsel ve yöntemsel özelliklerini incelemektedir. 19. yüzyılın sonlarından itibaren bölgede yürütülen yayıncılık faaliyetleri, hem aydınlanma işlevini hem de ulusal kimliğin korunmasını sağlamış; Sovyet döneminde ise ideolojik denetim altında kapsamlı bir şekilde gelişmiştir. Post-Sosyalist dönemde yayıncılık sektörü, piyasa ekonomisinin ilkelerine

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*uyum sağlayarak yeni yöntemsel ve örgütsel modellerle faaliyet göstermeye başlamıştır. Çalışmada Doğu Avrupa yayıncılık ortamının karşı karşıya olduğu başlıca sorunlar; ekonomik zorluklar, okur kitlesindeki değişimler, dijitalleşmenin getirdiği sorunlar ve dil engelleri olarak ele alınmıştır. Bununla birlikte, dijitalleşme, uluslararası işbirliği ve devlet desteğinin güçlendirilmesi gelecekteki gelişimin temel yönleri olarak belirlenmiştir. Bulgular, Doğu Avrupa yayıncılık sisteminin tarihsel deneyim ile çağdaş eğilimlerin bir sentezine dayandığını ve ulusal kültürün korunması ile küresel bilgi ortamına entegrasyonun eş zamanlı olarak yürütülmesi gerektiğini ortaya koymaktadır.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Doğu Avrupa, Kitap Yayıncılığı, Yayıncılık Tarihi, Yöntemsel Özellikler, Post-Sosyalist Dönüşüm

## Introduction

The book publishing process has historically been one of the most significant spheres in the development of human culture. Historical experience demonstrates that, across various political, ideological, and economic systems, books have not only served as a means of transmitting scientific knowledge but have also played a strategic role in shaping national identity, cultural self-awareness, and public thought (Snyder, 2003). In this context, the study of book publishing in Eastern European countries is of particular relevance (Dagienė, 2023; Petr et al., 2021). The geography of Eastern Europe is characterized by centuries-old historical traditions, the influence of diverse empires, and frequent changes in political regimes. In this region, book publishing reflects both the general developmental patterns of the European continent and the region's unique specificities. While in Western European countries the publishing process has been largely associated with market relations, bourgeois culture, and intellectual freedoms, in Eastern Europe statehood, ideological control, and cultural policy have played a more dominant role in shaping the publishing landscape (Kiebusinski, 2024; University of Oxford, 2025). The topic's relevance is further reinforced by the fact that the book culture of Eastern European countries is currently undergoing processes of integration into the global information environment. Following the strict censorship and ideological control mechanisms of the socialist period, these countries have transitioned to new publishing models under conditions of a market economy and democratic governance. This transition generates significant scientific and methodological challenges, both in terms of preserving historical and cultural heritage and in applying modern technological capabilities (Rzayeva, 2025a; Balayeva, 2025b). The main objective of this article is to analyze the historical development and methodological specifics of the book publishing process in Eastern European countries, to identify the distinctive features that existed in different periods, and to examine the challenges and prospects faced by the regional publishing sector in the contemporary stage. To achieve this objective, the following tasks have been set:

\*To systematize the historical stages of book publishing in Eastern European countries;

\*To demonstrate the influence of various political and economic systems on publishing policies;

\*To analyze the scientific approaches used in the methodological study of book publishing;

\*To investigate the characteristics of the contemporary regional book market and the challenges it faces under globalization.

The theoretical and methodological foundation of the article is based on the fundamental principles of library science, publishing studies, cultural studies, and history. The study employs comparative-historical methods, a systematic approach, structural-functional analysis, and a cultural-typological perspective (Ismayilov & Sadigova, 2022; Tofiq et al., 2022). Thus, the present research aims to provide a comprehensive examination of the historical roots, methodological foundations, and contemporary development trends of the book publishing processes in Eastern European countries.

## **1. Historical Stages of Book Publishing in Eastern Europe**

### **1.1. Medieval and Early Modern Period: Transition from Manuscript to Print Culture**

The historical roots of book culture in the Eastern European region date back to ancient times, particularly associated with the spread of Christianity. Between the 9th and 10th centuries, the formation of writing among Slavic peoples—most notably through the activities of Cyril and Methodius, which led to the creation of the Cyrillic alphabet—paved the way for the dissemination of religious texts in the region. Manuscript book culture developed primarily within monastic schools, preserving religious, liturgical, and philosophical texts while also contributing to the development of national languages.

By the mid-15th century, Johannes Gutenberg's invention of the printing press in Western Europe began to influence Eastern Europe (Snyder, 2003). In the early 16th century, the first printing houses were established in the Czech lands and Poland, and the publication of Bible translations in Slavic languages represented a significant milestone in the development of national literary culture. In Hungary, Croatia, Slovenia, and later in Romania and Bulgaria, book printing was carried out under the initiatives of religious and political centers. During this period, publishing activities were predominantly under the patronage of the Church. Nevertheless, the dissemination of Enlightenment ideas and the translation of humanist literature facilitated the integration of regional peoples into broader European cultural processes.

## **1.2. Modern Period: Formation of Book Culture in the 18th–19th Centuries**

From the 18th century onward, the Enlightenment movement in Eastern European countries accelerated the growth of book publishing. In Poland, textbooks were published; in Hungary, works of national literature; and in the Czech lands, publications aimed at language reforms—all of which significantly influenced the formation of socio-political thought. In the 19th century, the strengthening of national statehood ideas was reflected in publishing activities. Publishing expanded beyond religious and educational works to include national literature, historical research, folklore collections, and political treatises. The emergence of the “national library movement” marked a new stage in the cultural and social life of Eastern European countries.

## **1.3. Early 20th Century: Political Changes and the Expansion of the Book Market**

At the beginning of the 20th century, Eastern European countries were simultaneously striving for independence and open to cultural influences from Western Europe (Petr et al., 2021). In Poland, the Czech lands, Bulgaria, and Romania, the publication of works reinforcing the ideological foundations of independence movements grew significantly. During this stage, the book market acquired a more commercial character. Publishing houses and bookstores opened in urban centers, and alongside journalism, the circulation of literary and scientific works increased. Most works were now published in national languages, contributing to the expansion of the readership.

## **1.4. Socialist Period: State Control and Ideological Censorship**

After World War II, the majority of Eastern European countries became part of the socialist system. During this period, book publishing came entirely under state control and became a tool for promoting communist ideology. State publishing houses were established in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Hungary, and other countries, and the subjects and content of books were strictly determined by censorship.

One advantage of the socialist publishing system was mass accessibility. Books were inexpensive, making them available to a wide audience. However, a significant drawback was the restriction of creative freedom and the prohibition of alternative ideological publications (Dagienė, 2023). Nevertheless, underground “samizdat” literature existed and became a primary means of expression for dissident intellectual movements.

### **1.5. Transitional Period: From the 1990s to the Contemporary Stage**

Between 1989 and 1991, with the collapse of socialist regimes, Eastern European countries embarked on the path to independence. During this period, the book publishing sector was reorganized according to market principles. Independent publishing houses and printing presses were established, censorship was abolished, and readers gained unrestricted access to world literature. In the contemporary era, the book markets in Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, and other countries have reached a level capable of competing with Western Europe. E-books, online publishing platforms, and participation in international book fairs facilitate these countries' integration into the global information space. Nonetheless, challenges such as financial difficulties, declining reader interest, and language barriers remain persistent.

## **2. Methodological Specifics and Scientific Approaches**

### **2.1. Theoretical and Methodological Foundations for the Study of Book Publishing**

The study of book publishing should be approached not merely as a technical activity but also as a socio-cultural, ideological, and economic phenomenon. Accordingly, researching the history of publishing requires multifaceted scientific approaches. Contemporary scholarship identifies the following methodological directions for studying book publishing:

**\*Historical-Methodological Approach** – examines the development of book culture across different periods and identifies the influence of specific historical contexts.

**\*Sociological Approach** – investigates the impact of books on readership and their role in shaping public consciousness (Rzayeva, 2025a; Маммадов & Исмаилов, 2023; Rzayeva, 2024).

**\*Cultural Studies Approach** – explains the function of books in the preservation of national identity and cultural memory.

**\*Economic Approach** – highlights aspects of the publishing business related to market mechanisms, financing models, and commercial principles. The integrated application of these approaches allows for a clearer understanding of the specific characteristics of book publishing in Eastern European countries.

### **2.2. Formation Characteristics of the Book Market in Eastern Europe**

In Eastern Europe, the book market has been shaped not solely by market laws but also by state policies and ideological factors. This has manifested across different historical periods.

## **3. Formation Characteristics of the Book Market in Eastern Europe**

### **3.1. Historical Formation of the Book Market**

In Eastern European countries, the book market has been shaped not solely by market mechanisms but also by state policies and ideological factors. This has manifested across different historical periods:

**\*Enlightenment and National Awakening Period (18th–19th centuries)** – the book market developed primarily through the initiatives of intellectuals and national societies. Here, the focus was less on state control and more on promoting national ideas and educating the readership.

**\*Socialist Period** – the book market operated outside the framework of market economy laws, with all publishing activities conducted under centralized state planning. Economic competition was absent, and both the print runs and content of books were determined centrally (Kiebuzinski, 2024).

**\*Post-Independence Period (after the 1990s)** – the book market rapidly adapted to commercial principles. The emergence of private publishing houses, access to international markets, and the growth of electronic publications increased competition.

Thus, the formation of the Eastern European book market has been closely linked to the character of state-society relations in different historical periods.

### **3.2. The Influence of the State and Ideology on Publishing**

A key methodological feature of book publishing in Eastern Europe is the influence of the state and ideology, which manifested in several ways:

**\*Censorship and Control Mechanisms** – during the socialist period, censorship was an integral element of publishing. Only works aligned with communist ideology were published, while other topics circulated in clandestine *samizdat* literature (Alizadeh & Mahammadli, 2025).

**\*State Patronage** – at certain periods, the state supported publishing, facilitating mass accessibility. Low prices and high print runs helped develop a broad readership (Balayeva, 2025b; Rzayeva & Balayeva, 2024).

**\*National Ideology and Cultural Policy** – in the 19th century, the publication of folklore collections, language reform texts, and national history books played a crucial role in promoting statehood and forming national identity. Therefore, the influence of the state and ideology should be considered a distinct subject of methodological investigation.

### 3.3. Comparative Method: Differences Between Western and Eastern European Experiences

When studying Eastern European publishing, it is essential to compare it with Western European experiences. Key differences include:

**\*Free Market Principle** – in Western Europe, book publishing was largely based on commercial and market principles, whereas in Eastern Europe, it was often under state control.

**\*Ideological Influence** – Western publishing was characterized by intellectual freedom and pluralism; in the East, censorship and ideological restrictions were more pronounced.

**\*Technological Development** – printing technologies were adopted earlier in Western Europe; in Eastern Europe, innovations were often introduced with delay (Ismayilov & Sadigova, 2022; Rzayeva, 2025b).

**\*Readership** – Western book markets primarily served bourgeois and intellectual classes, whereas in Eastern Europe, state policies promoting inexpensive books ensured access for a broad audience. This comparison demonstrates that the study of book publishing must consider not only technical aspects but also the broader political and economic context.

### 3.4. The Necessity of a Comprehensive Approach

The history of book publishing in Eastern Europe cannot be adequately studied using a single methodology. In addition to collecting historical data, it is essential to analyze it from sociological, cultural studies, and economic perspectives. A comprehensive methodological approach is therefore required:

**\*Historical analysis** enables the systematization of stages in book culture development.

**\*Sociological research** reveals reader behaviors, print-run policies, and the social composition of audiences (Mammadov & Mahammadli, 2025).

**\*Cultural studies approaches** demonstrate how national identity and ideological influences permeated publishing.

**\*Economic analysis** elucidates market relations, commercial principles, and sources of publishing financing.

Consequently, the methodological specificity of Eastern European book publishing can only be fully expressed through multifaceted and integrated scientific approaches.

## **4. The Contemporary Publishing Landscape in Eastern European Countries**

### **4.1. Transition from Socialist to Market Economy**

Between 1989 and 1991, the political transformations in Eastern European countries had a profound impact on the publishing sector (Oqlu, Nadir, & Tofiq, 2023). During the socialist period, publishing was dominated by centralized state publishing houses. From the early 1990s onward, however, private publishing houses, independent printing presses, and autonomous distribution networks began to develop rapidly.

This period was characterized by increased competition in the book market, as well as greater diversity in subjects and genres. The abolition of censorship allowed the publication of works that had been banned for many years, and broad access to Western literature was established. Translation gained particular significance: in Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic, works by both classical and contemporary authors from Western Europe, the United States, and Asia began to be widely published.

### **4.2. National Characteristics of Book Publishing**

#### **4.2.1. The Polish Experience**

Poland is among the countries in Eastern Europe with the most robust post-socialist publishing markets. Both state support and private initiatives have developed in parallel. Major centers such as Warsaw and Krakow host numerous large publishing houses (Alekper & Tofiq, 2020). Key features of the Polish book market include:

- \*Strong emphasis on national literature.

- \*High-volume publication of historical and political works.

- \*Active participation in international book fairs (notably the Frankfurt Book Fair and the London Book Fair).

- \*Extensive development of the electronic book market.

In Poland, state policies in libraries and education provide support for the publishing sector. Children's literature, school textbooks, and academic publications are financed through government programs.

#### **4.2.2. The Czech and Slovak Experience**

In the Czech Republic and Slovakia, the book publishing process is closely linked to Prague, one of the major centers of European culture. Here, the high-quality publication of both classic Czech literature and world classics became a long-standing tradition. Even during the Soviet



period, these countries maintained a high cultural standard in book publishing. Today, publications in both the national language and English are widely available in the Czech book market.

#### **4.2.3. Publishing Systems in Hungary and the Czech Republic**

Hungary is one of the leading countries in Eastern Europe in terms of publishing traditions. Budapest is recognized as a major European publishing center (Books and Articles - Slavic and East European Textual E-books, 2025). Since the 1990s, private publishing houses in Hungary have increased significantly, facilitating the republication of national classics and the widespread translation of Western literature.

#### **4.2.4. Publishing in Romania and Bulgaria**

Although the book markets in Romania and Bulgaria faced certain economic challenges in the post-socialist period, they have gradually developed. The publishing market is concentrated mainly in the capitals, Bucharest and Sofia (Slavonic and East European Area Studies: Books, 2025). In Romania, membership in the European Union has increased support from Western funds for the publishing sector, and the scope of translated literature has expanded. In Bulgaria, national folklore, historical novels, and religious publications predominate.

#### **4.2.5. Book Publishing in the Baltic States**

Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia have emphasized publishing in their national languages during the post-Soviet period. In these countries, the primary goal of the book market has been the preservation of national identity and the promotion of cultural heritage. Estonia, in particular, has taken a leading role in electronic publishing. The Baltic states actively pursue integration into the European book market and participate in international projects.

#### **4.3. Digital Publishing and New Technologies**

Since the early 2000s, digitalization has become increasingly important in the Eastern European book market. E-books, audiobooks, and online sales platforms have become widespread, with Poland and the Czech Republic taking particularly advanced positions in this area. At the same time, the adoption of open access models has enabled scientific publications to reach wider audiences. University presses and academic journals are now accessible internationally through electronic platforms.

#### **4.4. International Cooperation and Regional Networks**

Eastern European countries actively participate in international book fairs and cultural programs of the European Union (Journal Archives - Digital Resources for Eastern Europe, 2025).

This cooperation connects the regional publishing space with Western Europe. Additionally, translation projects and bilateral cultural exchange programs among different countries contribute to the enrichment of the book market.

#### **4.5. Economic Challenges and Market Issues**

The contemporary book publishing landscape in Eastern European countries underwent significant economic trials during the post-socialist transformation period. In the early 1990s, the weakening of state support, rising book prices, and declining print runs led to a contraction of the book market. In the current stage, the high level of competition in the global book market poses additional challenges for Eastern European publishers (History Databases by Subject: Central Europe, Eastern Europe, 2025).

Book sales remain concentrated primarily in capital cities, while the scarcity of bookstores in regional areas continues to be a serious issue. Furthermore, the limited purchasing power of readers restricts the commercial success of certain publications.

#### **4.6. Technological Transformation and Digitalization**

The development of digital publishing technologies has opened substantial opportunities but has also created challenges for the traditional book market. The growing popularity of e-books has reduced the sales of printed editions. Some publishing houses struggle to adapt to technological innovations, which negatively affects their competitiveness. Moreover, piracy and copyright infringement in digital environments remain among the most pressing problems in the publishing sector.

#### **4.7. Changes in Reader Interests**

At the beginning of the 21st century, reading habits began to shift (Tofiq, Oqlu, & Kazimi, 2022). With easier access to information via the internet and social media, traditional reading practices have weakened, particularly among younger generations. As a result, certain genres—such as classical literature, scientific works, and monographs—have a smaller readership. Conversely, detective fiction, fantasy, young adult literature, and popular science works are in higher demand. This trend also influences publishing strategies and market offerings.

#### **4.8. Cultural and Language Barriers**

One of the main challenges facing the Eastern European book market is language. The languages of the region are not widely spoken internationally, limiting the access of local publications to foreign markets. Consequently, translation activities are of particular importance.

At the same time, preserving national culture amid globalization is crucial. Integration into the global book market poses the risk of marginalizing national literature.

#### **4.9. Prospects for Development**

Several key directions emerge for the future development of the book publishing sector in Eastern European countries:

**\*Strengthening State Support:** Publishing of children's literature, textbooks, and classical works should be supported through state programs to preserve national culture.

**\*Advancing Digital Technologies:** Expanding the e-book market, implementing open access models, and protecting intellectual property rights are essential challenges for the contemporary stage (Bayramov & Məhəmmədli, 2025).

**\*International Cooperation:** Expanding translation projects, regional book fairs, and European Union cultural programs can facilitate the access of national publishers to global markets.

**\*Cultivating Reader Audiences:** Educational projects, book festivals, and library–publisher collaborations can significantly contribute to the development of a reading culture.

### **5. Contemporary Trends in the Eastern European Book Market**

#### **5.1. Rise of Digital Publishing**

In the 21st century, the primary trajectory of development in the Eastern European book market has been closely linked to the adoption of digital publishing technologies. E-book platforms, online sales, and digital library initiatives have opened new opportunities for readers.

#### **5.2. Expansion of Translation Activities**

In the context of globalization, Eastern European countries increasingly translate literature from Western Europe and North America. Simultaneously, works by national authors are being translated into foreign languages and showcased at international book fairs, expanding their global reach.

#### **5.3. Role of State Policy**

State support remains a key condition for the stable development of the book market. In several countries, subsidies for textbooks and children's literature, as well as the organization of book festivals, are widely implemented.

#### **5.4. Formation of the Reading Audience**

Against the backdrop of declining reading culture, Eastern European countries are implementing various projects to engage youth with books. Initiatives such as “reading marathons,” “book festivals,” and public book exchange campaigns have gained popularity.

#### **5.5. International Integration**

Eastern European publishers are increasingly participating in international book fairs (e.g., Frankfurt, London, Bologna), receiving financial support from European Union projects, and securing a more active position in the regional book market (Russian and East European Studies: Articles, Books, and Databases, 2025). Nevertheless, the main objectives remain the preservation of national culture and the enhancement of competitiveness in the global market.

### **6. The Role of Digital Technologies and Innovations**

#### **6.1. E-Books and Online Platforms**

The development of e-books and online book platforms plays a significant role in the book market. In Eastern European countries, digital publications in formats such as EPUB, PDF, and others provide readers with convenience and speed.

#### **6.2. Social Media and Reader Engagement**

The dissemination of information about books through social media channels enhances the reader audience (Исмаилов & Халафова, 2022). Blogs, websites, and online communities serve as effective tools for promoting books and fostering engagement.

#### **6.3. Digital Libraries and Archiving**

National and regional digital libraries play a crucial role in the preservation and accessibility of both scientific and literary works. This also contributes to the advancement of academic research and educational processes.

### **7. International Cooperation and Prospects of Eastern European Book Publishing**

#### **7.1. Participation in International Fairs**

Publishers from Eastern Europe actively engage in prominent international book fairs, including those held in Frankfurt, London, Bologna, and Warsaw. Such participation not only facilitates the translation of literary works into foreign languages but also promotes regional cultural heritage on a global platform.

## 7.2. International Projects and Financial Support

Financially supported initiatives by the European Union and UNESCO play a crucial role in advancing the Eastern European book market (Balayeva, 2025a). These projects emphasize improving translation processes, enhancing publication quality, and developing digital infrastructure to meet contemporary industry standards.

## 7.3. Prospective Development Directions

Looking ahead, the development of Eastern European book publishing is likely to focus on several key areas:

- \*Expanding the market share of digital publications.
- \*Producing multilingual editions to reach broader audiences.
- \*Strengthening competitiveness within both regional and global markets.

\*Fostering a robust reading culture among diverse demographics (Kazimi, Ismayilov, & Rzayeva, 2023). Overall, international collaboration, technological innovation, and sustained state support are identified as the primary drivers for the sustainable growth and modernization of Eastern European book publishing.

## Conclusion

The study demonstrates that the book publishing process in Eastern European countries has undergone a multifaceted development path from historical, methodological, and socio-cultural perspectives. Since the late 19th century, book publishing in this region has served as a significant tool for both the preservation of national identity and the dissemination of enlightenment ideas. During the Soviet era, publishing activity was centralized and shaped under ideological supervision, yet it remained accessible to a wide readership (Balayeva & Məhəmmədli, 2025). In the post-socialist period, the publishing sector began operating according to market economy principles, adopting new methodological approaches and organizational models.

At the contemporary stage, the Eastern European book market faces several challenges: economic difficulties, limited regional distribution, changing reader behavior, issues associated with digitalization, and language barriers (History Databases by Subject: Central Europe, Eastern Europe, 2025; Ismayilov & Khalafova, 2022). Simultaneously, the application of digital technologies, the expansion of international cooperation, intensified translation activities, and strengthened state support define the prospects for future development of the publishing landscape in these countries (Journal Archives – Digital Resources for Eastern Europe, 2025; Russian and

East European Studies: Articles, Books, and Databases, 2025; Rzayeva & Balayeva, 2024; Bayramov & Məhəmmədli, 2025). Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that the synthesis of historical experience with contemporary trends occupies a leading position in the book publishing processes of Eastern European countries. On one hand, the preservation and promotion of national literature remain a crucial task; on the other hand, integration into the international book market and the adoption of digital technologies are key priorities. Thus, the publishing system in Eastern European countries develops under the influence of both regional and global cultural processes. Its primary task is to form a flexible and competitive publishing model that not only preserves national cultural heritage but also responds adequately to the demands of the global information society.

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