



# BoD SELF- PUBLISHING STUDY 2013

**MOTIVES AND MOTIVATION.  
AN INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON OF  
SELF-PUBLISHING AUTHORS.**

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### METHODOLOGY

**Client:** BoD™ — Books on Demand

**Respondents:** 1,748 BoD authors in Austria, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Sweden and Switzerland ranging in age from 12 to 88

**Survey Period:** 30 July to 31 August 2013

**Procedures:** Online study using semi-standardised questionnaires. Responses were rated on a scale from 1 to 5. Affirmative responses of 4 (Tend to agree) and 5 (Completely agree) as well as disclaiming responses of 1 (Do not agree at all) and 2 (Tend not to agree) have been merged in results.

**Conducted by:** University for Applied Management, Erding, Dr Joerg Pfuhl, Dr Vanessa Haselhoff

**Date of Publication:** October 2013

## INTRODUCTION

# BoD SELF-PUBLISHING STUDY.

Never before has it been so easy to publish a book. Thanks to self-publishing, authors can publish their book professionally and independently of a publishing company — as an e-book and in printed form. Self-publishing is enriching and expanding the book market by opening it up to new stories, themes and talent. Both newcomers and established authors are taking advantage of the new liberties and possibilities only self-publishing can offer and revolutionising the book market — worldwide. Market observers in the US are speaking of the »Golden Age of Self-Publishing«.

In July 2013, BoD started the first international survey in Austria, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Sweden and Switzerland to gain more insight into the motives, motivation and viewpoints of self-publishers in these countries. BoD is Europe's leading self-publishing provider, serving more than 25,000 authors and publishing more than 10,000 new books every year.

We are sure the findings will be of interest to you.



For **68.6%**  
of the authors,  
self-publishing offers  
the first chance ever  
to publish their books.

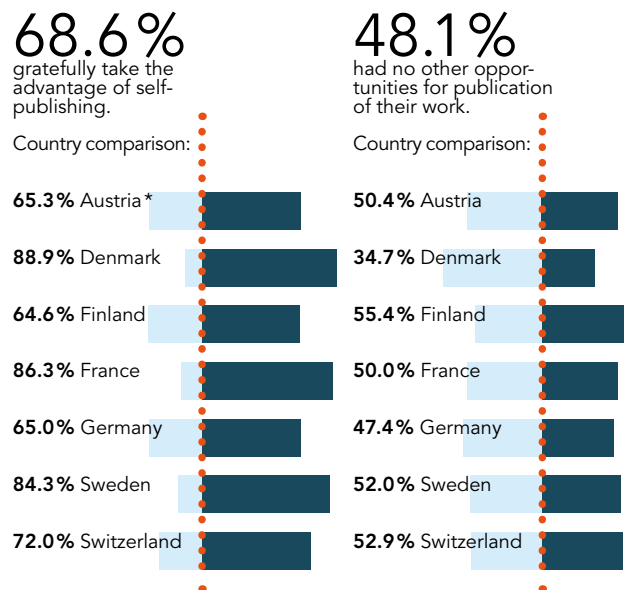
## POTENTIAL

# SELF-PUBLISHING DEMOCRATISES THE PUBLISHING INDUSTRY.

Self-publishing opens up free access to the book market for all authors. Two out of three authors state that self-publishing gave them the first opportunity to publish their books. Moreover, almost half of the self-publishers had no other possibility to publish their books because their manuscripts were rejected by traditional publishers. New ways of reaching readers are opening up for self-publishing authors, especially in the Nordic countries where traditional publishing companies still dominate the market.

The gatekeeper function of traditional publishing companies, which in the past predominantly determined which stories and topics would be published, no longer exists. As a result, both new talent and experienced authors are exploiting a potential for development and structuring which has never been seen before. For their part, readers enjoy a new dimension of literary diversity — extending to the smallest thematic niche.

Acceptance by the literary community still lags behind the democratisation of the publishing business. A look at the book market in the US reveals that quality alone — and not the publication channel — is decisive for the judgement of a book.



\* Online study using semi-standardised questionnaires. Responses were rated on a scale from 1 to 5. Affirmative responses of 4 (Tend to agree) and 5 (Completely agree) as well as disclaiming responses of 1 (Do not agree at all) and 2 (Tend not to agree) have been merged in results.

## SELF-CONFIDENCE

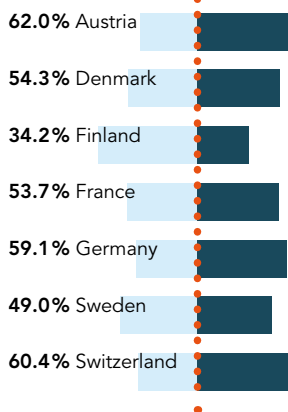
# THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SELF-PUBLISHING.

The reservations about self-publishing which still dominate parts of the literary community are countered in the meantime by the healthy self-confidence of the majority of the authors. Most of them do not see any qualitative differences between authors published by

traditional companies and self-publishers. This attitude is bolstered especially by the fact that many authors are unwilling to commit to a single publication channel — a third of all European self-publishers have published their work with traditional publishing companies as well as through self-publishing. The result: 56.8% of the respondents view themselves as fully-fledged authors. In Finland, self-confidence and the standing of self-publishing authors are least distinguished, which could be a consequence of the frequent confusion between self-publishing and vanity publishers.

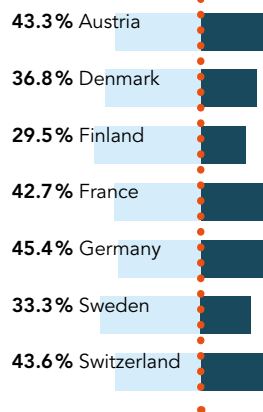
**56.8%**  
view themselves as full-fledged authors.

Country comparison:



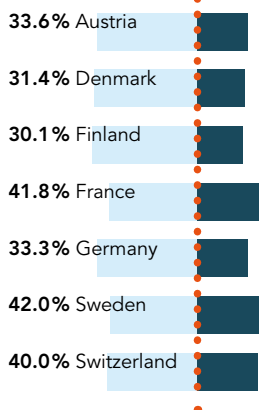
**43.0%**  
are viewed as full-fledged authors by others (booksellers, friends etc.).

Country comparison:



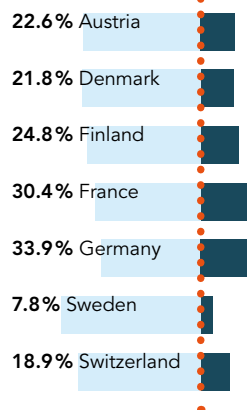
**34.2%**  
intentionally decide against a traditional publishing company.

Country comparison:



**29.9%**  
have already self-published more than 4 books.

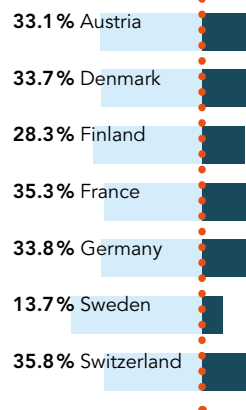
Country comparison:



The growing self-confidence of one out of three self-publishers leads to the conscious decision against a traditional publisher and in favour of self-publishing. The reasons vary from a quick publishing process — a particular advantage for subject matter related to current events — to an attractive author's commission. In Germany and France, almost a third of all the interviewed BoD-authors have already published four or more books.

**33.0%**  
have already published a book through a traditional publishing company.

Country comparison:



## FREEDOM

# SELF-PUBLISHING IS CHANGING THE AUTHOR'S ROLE.

Self-publishing provides the author with new-found liberties. At the same time, it demands more individual responsibility. The consequence: a fundamental change in the author's role.

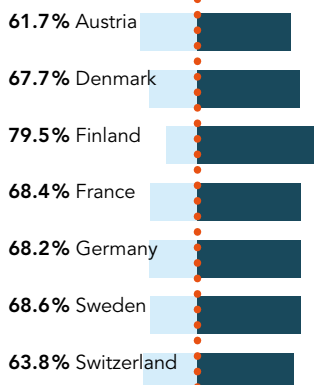
Control, simplicity and fun are the greatest advantages of self-publishing from the author's point of view. Control is the key benefit over traditional publishing. This is especially valued by Finnish writers. There are no more limits with regard to creativity when it comes to realising a specific idea. In addition, self-publishers retain full control over the rights to their books.

However, the author's responsibility does not end with the creative process. Self-published authors must also manage the task of marketing the book. Social media platforms offer effective marketing channels which allow broad and direct access to potential readers, making digital networking a must for self-publishers.

### Reasons for choosing self-publishing:

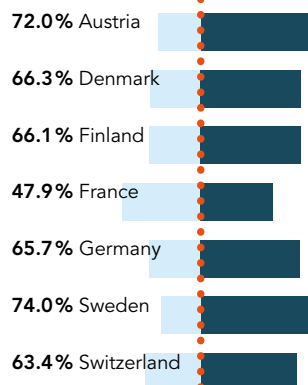
**68.2%**  
to keep complete control with regards to content.

Country comparison:



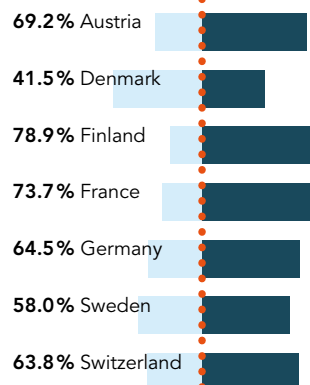
**65.3%**  
because of the fun involved.

Country comparison:



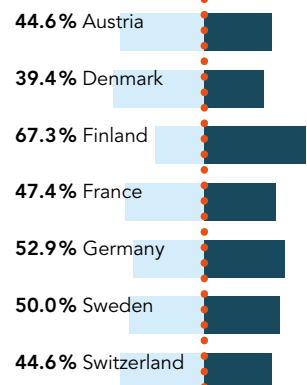
**64.8%**  
because it's simple.

Country comparison:



**51.6%**  
to retain full control over all related rights.

Country comparison:



## COURAGE

# SELF-PUBLISHERS TAKE ON THE CHALLENGE OF BEING ON THEIR OWN.

This new role of responsibility for themselves which is assumed by self-publishing authors demands a greater degree of initiative. If they are to reach potential readers, authors must get in touch with their target group and initiate the appropriate advertising. An unusual challenge for authors, but one which is being accepted, providing room for personal growth. This is why almost three-fourths of all writers are satisfied with the process of self-publishing — almost 90% in Austria. On the other hand, only one out of five is

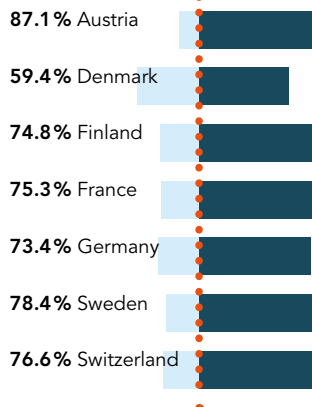
content with his or her particular marketing activities. Half of the respondents acknowledge substantial potential for improvement.

Close networking with readers offers yet another important benefit: the vast majority of self-publishers are open to constructive reviews and utilise them to enhance their writing and marketing skills. Self-publishing strengthens the author's independence and creative skills — particularly so for Finnish and Danish writers.

## 74.1%

are satisfied with the publishing process.

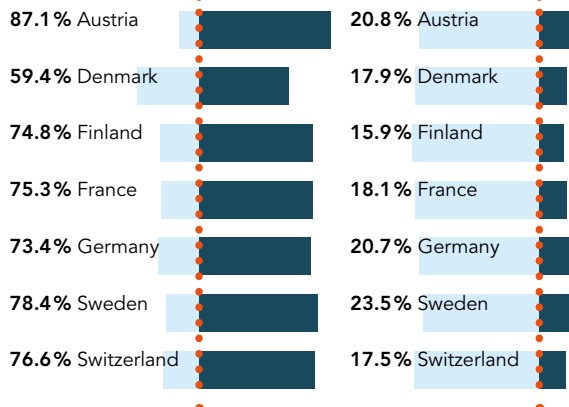
Country comparison:



## 20.0%

are satisfied with their own marketing activities.

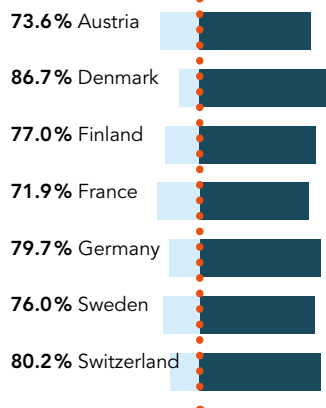
Country comparison:



## 79.0%

learn from constructive criticism.

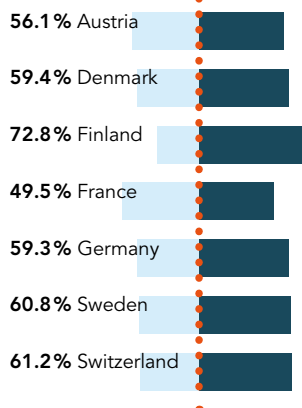
Country comparison:



## 59.6%

improve their skills for working independently through self-publishing.

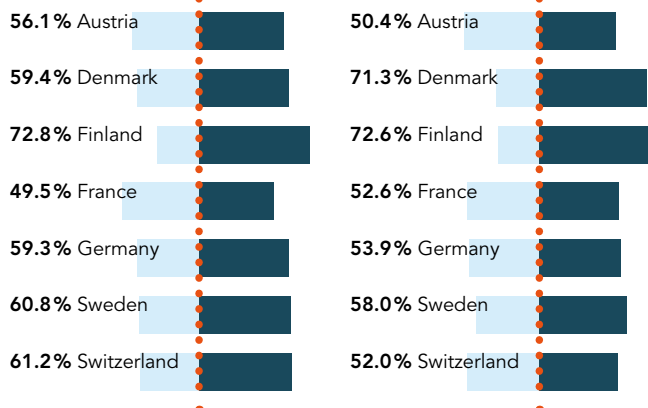
Country comparison:



## 55.8%

improve their ability to create structure through self-publishing.

Country comparison:





BEHAVIOR

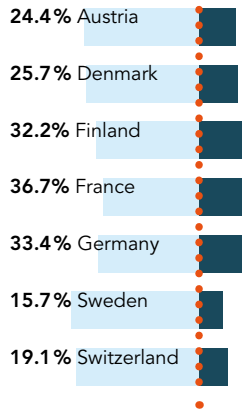
# SELF-PUBLISHERS ARE BOTH ARTISTS AND MERCHANTS.

Self-publishing enriches the role of authors. They are not only artists, but also merchants who need to market themselves and their books — provided their goal is to reach as many readers as possible. However, the study reveals a substantial imbalance between these two aspects of self-publishing. While 57.9% spend more than 5 hours per week on writing, only 6.8% devote the same amount of time to marketing their books. Two-thirds of the respondents spend an average of less than €200 for services related to design and marketing of their books — the artist currently outbalances the merchant. However, increasing professionalism in self-publishing can be expected to support a steady realignment of the two roles. Swiss writers are an exception in terms of their willingness to invest in services. More than half of them spend over €200 for cover design, proofreading or marketing services — the three services most in demand.

German publishers spend the largest amount of time on marketing activities. 8.3% devote more than five hours per week to this task. Europe's most productive authors are the French. 36.8% of them spend more than 10 hours a week on writing. The most popular genres among European self-publishing authors are non-fiction and guides, fiction and specialist literature.

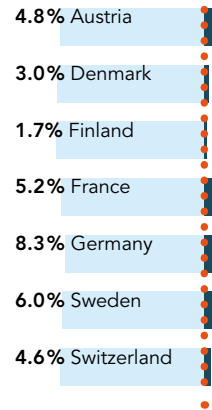
**31.0%**  
write 10 hours and more per week.

Country comparison:



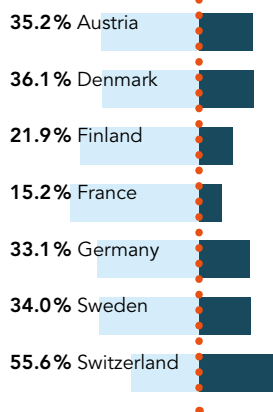
**6.8%**  
spend 5 or more hours on marketing activities.

Country comparison:



**33.1%**  
invest more than €200 in services (e.g. cover design, proofreading, marketing).

Country comparison:



The most popular genres are:

Country comparison:

**32.0%**  
non-fiction and guides.

**30.8%**  
fiction.

**27.3%**  
specialist literature.

Austria	Denmark	Finland	France	Germany	Sweden	Switzerland
43.0% fiction	54.1% non-fiction	44.1% fiction	31.6% specialist literature	33.7% non-fiction	42.0% non-fiction	35.5% non-fiction
31.4% specialist literature	31.6% fiction	33.3% poetry	29.5% romance	32.1% fiction	38.0% fiction	29.9% specialist literature
30.6% non-fiction	24.5% children's books	27.9% non-fiction	26.3% poetry	29.7% specialist literature	22.0% poetry	26.2% fiction

## DIVERSITY

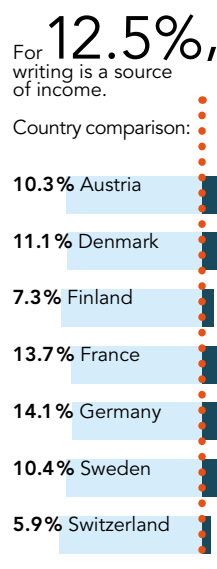
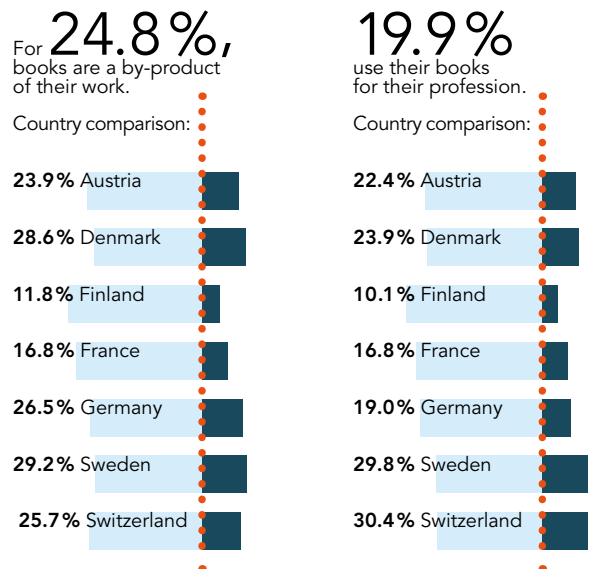
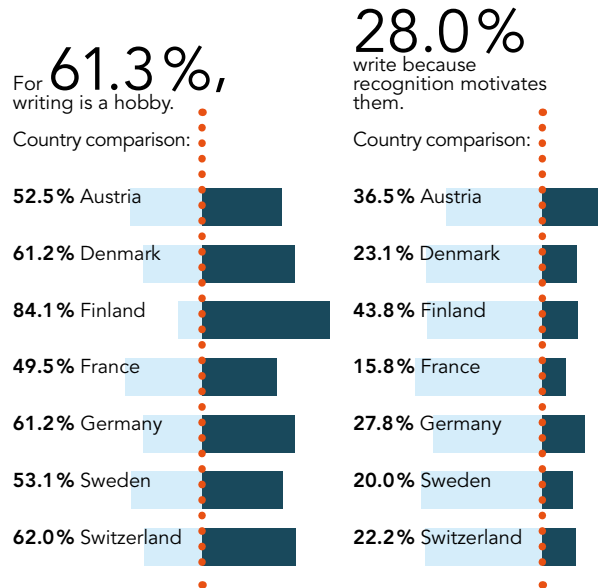
# THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS »THE« SELF-PUBLISHER.

With the increasing establishment of self-publishing, the focus shifts more and more towards the players involved. From the perspective of the authors' motivation, one thing becomes clear: there is no such thing as a typical self-publisher. On the contrary, authors have different motives for writing and publishing their books on their own.

For the vast majority — almost two thirds of all respondents — writing is a passion pursued in their leisure time. Especially in Finland, where writing enjoys high local status, there are large numbers of hobby authors. These writers are motivated mainly by their readers' recognition. The situation is different in France; the percentage of hobby authors and self-publishers here who feel motivated by recognition is lowest. It may be caused by the high professional expectation of quality writing in general and a still relatively low reputation of self-publishing.

Alongside hobby authors, there is a group of self-publishers who publish books related to their professions (e.g. journalists or consultants). For this group, self-publishing is the ideal way to publish content related to their work quickly and easily. These expert authors are strongly represented in Switzerland and Sweden.

At this time, 12.5% declare self-publishing as a source of income. This includes a growing group of authors who, in addition to traditional publishing, are exploring the possibilities of self-publishing. This group in particular is expected to continue to grow as professionalism and establishment of self-publishing in Europe rises. As of now, German and French authors are in the lead.



# SUCCESS SELF-PUBLISHERS HAVE THEIR OWN CRITERIA FOR SUCCESS.

The authors' definitions of success vary just as greatly as their motives for self-publishing. The study clearly reveals that the criteria for success correspond to the motivation to write.

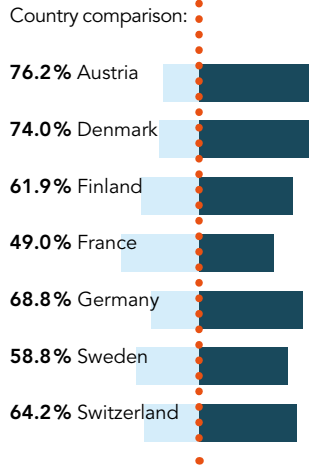
For the majority, and especially for the hobby authors, financial aspects are not of primary importance. For more than two thirds, success means positive reviews. For just under 60%, it means invitations to public readings, and 55.3% see acknowledgement from friends and family as the benchmark. Austrians and Danes in particular measure their success on the basis of direct feedback from their readers.

Economic aspects play a rather subordinate role in defining criteria of success. On average, only 39.0% define their success in terms of sales figures. Only one out of four self-publishers views his or her financial

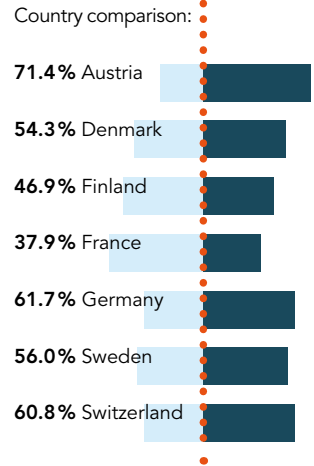
success as important — while French and Finnish authors are least in agreement here, German self-publishers take the lead with 27.2%.

However, the survey reveals a correlation between the time spent on writing and the importance of the financial aspect: the more time a self-publisher spends on writing, the more important the financial aspect becomes.

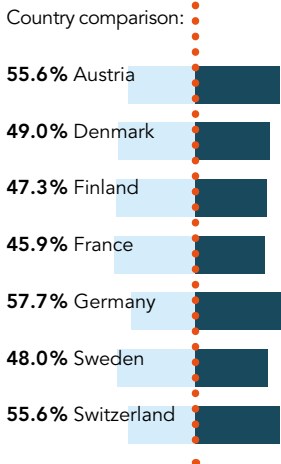
**67.5%**  
measure success according to feedback and positive reviews.



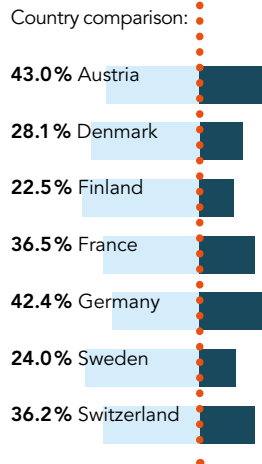
**59.4%**  
measure success according to invitations to public readings.



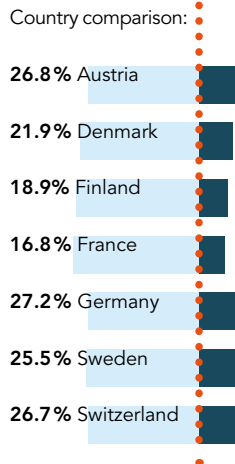
**55.3%**  
measure success according to recognition through friends and family.



**39.0%**  
measure success according to sales statistics of their books.



**25.6%**,  
To financial success is important.



## FUTURE SELF-PUBLISHING WILL CONTINUE TO GROW IN IMPORTANCE.

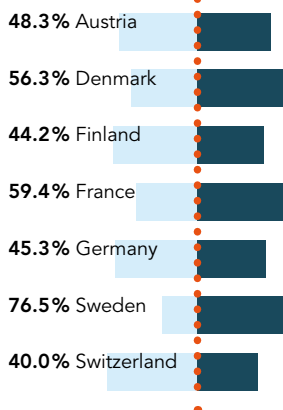
The number of self-published book releases will continue to grow. Almost half of the European self-publishers plan to self-publish more books. Only one in four respondents disagrees. In Sweden, where three-fourths of the authors intend to publish even more self-published books, self-publishing is growing fast in importance. In France, the pace of self-publishing is also accelerating. A growing number of successful self-published books portrayed in the French media motivates writers to build increasingly on this form of publication.

In contrast, traditional publishing is losing ground: only 16.8% plan to publish more books in the future through a traditional publisher — about 60%, on the other hand, reject this path. Remarkable differences can be observed in the Nordic countries: while only 7.8% of all Swedish self-publishers aim for traditional publishing, 25.8% of the Danish authors still plan to publish traditionally. Danes are most attracted by advance of royalties and the handling of marketing responsibilities by the publisher.

The study shows that future plans of self-publishers are closely related to one's own expectations. Authors who are satisfied with their results are fond of the benefits of self-publishing. A significant factor regarding the fulfilment of the author's expectations is the number of benefits the writer will be able to draw from the possibilities of self-publishing — not only regarding creative freedom, but regarding self-marketing as well.

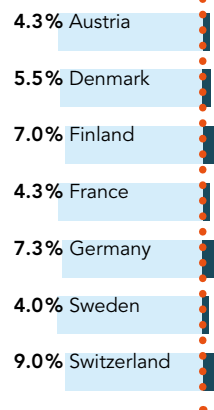
**47.5%**  
plan to self-publish more books in the future.

Country comparison:



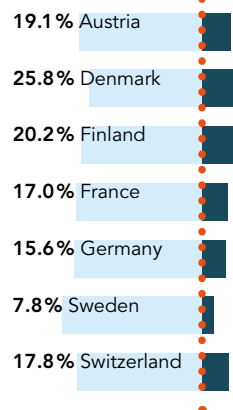
**6.8%**  
Only plan to discontinue self-publishing their books.

Country comparison:



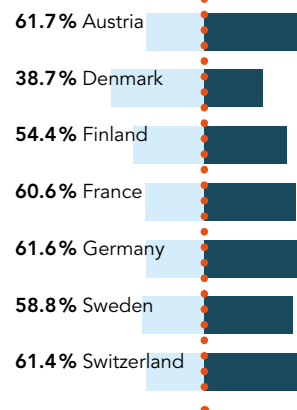
**16.8%**  
plan to publish more books with traditional publishing companies.

Country comparison:



**59.6%**  
do not intend to publish with traditional publishing companies in the future.

Country comparison:





**72.2%** view  
the moment they hold  
their book in their hands  
for the first time  
as fulfilling.

## CONCLUSION

Self-publishing is gaining recognition across Europe. Although the degree of establishment varies in the examined countries, one thing can be said for them all: more and more writers are consciously deciding in favour of self-publishing, making their books available to readers in a quick and easy way and without any compromises in content. This is strongly influencing a structural transformation of the publishing industry, a trend that will accelerate in the future.

Self-publishers are willing to accept the change in the author's role which is inherent in self-publishing. While authors are already taking full advantage of artistic freedoms, the great majority of the study respondents are self-critical enough to recognise the need to improve their own marketing activities.

But despite all of the innovations self-publishing brings to the table, the study shows that the most beautiful moment for most self-publishers is quite traditional: holding their own book in their hands for the very first time.

## ABOUT BoD

BoD is the European market and technology leader for digital book publications and a platform for authors who want to self-publish their books in electronic as well as printed form. Content, layout, format and price are determined by the authors themselves. BoD ensures availability in all traditional book stores and more than 1,000 online bookshops. E-books published by BoD are distributed through major e-bookshops such as Apple iBooks, Google Play etc. Success is determined solely and exclusively by readers. Additional information at [www.bod.fi](http://www.bod.fi).