

PRESS RELEASE

Blue Sofa Invites 20 Writers to ‘European Authors Summit’

- Bertelsmann organizes event as part of European Cultural Heritage Summit in Berlin
- Writers take turns reporting on their hopes and experiences in connection with Europe

Berlin, June 7, 2018 – Twenty authors from twenty European countries will convene in Berlin on June 21 for the “European Authors Summit.” On the Blue Sofa jointly hosted by Bertelsmann, ZDF, Deutschlandfunk Kultur, and 3sat, the writers will talk about their books and about their personal experience of Europe. The “European Authors Summit” is a highlight of the European Cultural Heritage Summit in Berlin from June 18 to 24 – which in turn is organized by Europa Nostra, the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation, and the German National Committee for the Protection of Cultural Heritage as part of the 2018 European Year of Cultural Heritage. The EU Commission had rung out the year to sharpen public perception of their shared cultural heritage and shared history and thus bring Europe a bit closer to Europeans again. As a media company that has long been actively committed to preserving Europe’s cultural heritage, Bertelsmann is also involved in the European Year of Cultural Heritage.

In cooperation with Berlin’s embassies and cultural institutes, the following authors were invited to the “European Authors Summit” on the Blue Sofa:

Geert Buelens, Flanders, **Zaza Burchuladze**, Georgia, **Hélia Correia**, Portugal, **Jacques De Decker**, Wallonia-Brussels Federation, **Radka Denemarková**, Czech Republic, **Dana Grigorcea**, Switzerland and Romania, **Sabine Gruber**, Italy and Austria, **Hugo Hamilton**, Ireland, **Guy Helminger**, Luxembourg, **Hédi Kaddour**, France, **Laurynas Katkus**, Lithuania, **Maja Lunde**, Norway, **Terézia Mora**, Germany and Hungary, **Pierre Mejlak**, Malta, **Claire North**, Great Britain, **Tomasz Rózycki**, Poland, **Sjón**, Iceland, **Janne Teller**, Denmark, **Hans Maarten van den Brink**, Netherlands, and **Svetlana Žuchová**, Slovakia.

In their works, these authors describe the thoughts, experiences, longings, fears, hopes, certainties and errors they associate with Europe. Across cultural and linguistic borders, they thus form a European narrative that can strengthen and further develop cohesion in Europe.

Except for Hédi Kaddour, all invited authors were born in Europe and grew up with European history and culture and its values. Some of them have parents, partners, friends or fellow students from other European countries, others have had to migrate.

Ahead of the summit, the participants revealed why they feel European, what they miss about Europe, and where Europe ends for them:

Zaza Burchuladze said that while yesterday he still felt like a Georgian, today he feels like a European... and it's hard to tell how he'll feel tomorrow. **Jacques De Decker** would need many lives to be truly European, **Geert Buelens** urges Europeans to face the future and not to hide from the past. **Guy Helminger** believes in the European idea, **Hélia Correia** suspects that danger could intensify European identity, **Hugo Hamilton** wants more decisions at local and regional level, and **Radka Denemarková** dreams of an unencumbered future.

While **Janne Teller** misses a definition of human identity based on values instead of norms and ethnicity, **Dana Grigorcea** would like to see a consistent and ethical refugee policy. **Sabine Gruber** wishes for a diminishing of the prosperity gap, while **Hans Maarten van den Brink** sees a lack of pride in what has been achieved together and optimism for the future. **Maja Lunde** would like to see more humility in Europe. **Sjón** misses the animal and plant species that Europe has already lost due to global warming, **Terézia Mora** feels that autocratic regimes don't fit well with the European idea, and for **Svetlana Žuchová**, Europe ends in our hearts. **Pierre Mejlak** feels at home in Europe, **Hédi Kaddour** feels the lack of a high-speed train connection between Brest and Moscow, **Tomasz Różycki** quite simply misses – besides freedom, equality, brotherhood, peace, reconciliation and openness – having California in Europe. For **Laurynas Katkus**, America is a complement, not a limit, to Europe. **Claire North**, who can no longer be an EU citizen after Brexit, laments being “part of a shameful socio-political experiment”.

Starting at 7 p.m. on June 21, 2018, the writers will take turns talking for 30 minutes each, on five blue sofas in five salons at Bertelsmann Unter den Linden 1 in Berlin. They will be interviewed by ten moderators from ZDF, Deutschlandfunk Kultur and 3sat. More information about the event is available at <http://www.das-blaue-sofa.de/veranstaltungen/autorengipfel-2018/> and <http://european-cultural-heritage-summit.eu>.

The “European Authors Summit” was developed in close cooperation with the embassies of Denmark, Iceland, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal and Switzerland, the Representation of the Federation of Wallonia-Brussels and East Belgium, and the General Delegation of the Government of Flanders and Flanders Literature. The Community of European Cultural Institutes in Berlin (EUNIC), the British Council, the Georgian National Book Centre, the Institut Français d'Allemagne, the Istituto Italiano di Cultura Berlino, the Lithuanian Culture Institute, the Ministry of Culture of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, the Austrian Cultural Forum Berlin, the Polish Institutes in Berlin and Leipzig, Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia, the Slovenský inštitút v Berlíne, and the Czech Centre Berlin also supported the project.

On June 20, 2018, Bertelsmann and Europa Nostra are hosting another European Cultural Heritage Summit event: a symposium on “Communicating Cultural Heritage in the 21st Century.” Experts from a number of European countries will discuss best-practice examples for communicating cultural heritage throughout Europe.

For many years, Bertelsmann has been engaged in a variety of cultural initiatives both in Germany and internationally. The Group's “Culture@Bertelsmann” activities comprise exhibitions, readings and concerts, the “Blue Sofa” literary format, as well as a commitment to preserving Europe's cultural heritage. For instance, Bertelsmann owns the Archivio Storico Ricordi in Milan, a music archive that contains a wealth of unique testimonies to Italian opera history. Bertelsmann is indexing the archival holdings to meet the latest standards and making the cultural treasures accessible for a wide audience. As a company with a long history in filmmaking, Bertelsmann also supports and sponsors the restoration, digitization and screening of major silent films.

Registration

As of June 15, 2018, a link will be published here where interested parties can register as guests for the European Authors Summit:

<https://sharingheritage.de/en/events/european-authors-summit-on-the-blue-sofa/>

Thank you for understanding that the number of seats is limited.

About Bertelsmann

Bertelsmann is a media, services and education company that operates in about 50 countries around the world. It includes the broadcaster RTL Group, the trade book publisher Penguin Random House, the magazine publisher Gruner + Jahr, the music company BMG, the service provider Arvato, the Bertelsmann Printing Group, the Bertelsmann Education Group and Bertelsmann Investments, an international network of funds. The company has 119,000 employees and generated revenues of €17.2 billion in the 2017 financial year. Bertelsmann stands for entrepreneurship and creativity. This combination promotes first-class media content and innovative service solutions that inspire customers around the world.

About the Blue Sofa

The Blue Sofa is the author forum jointly hosted by Bertelsmann, ZDF, Deutschlandradio Kultur and 3sat. It has become a fixture at the book fairs in Frankfurt and Leipzig. The Blue Sofa Berlin celebrated its premiere in 2005. In 2011, Frankfurt's Open Books reading festival opened with a Blue Sofa author's gala for the first time. Since the 2000 Leipzig Book Fair, more than 2,400 discussions with authors have taken place on the Blue Sofa, including with Nobel Prize laureates Svetlana Alexievich, Mikhail Gorbachev, Günter Grass, Herta Müller, Christiane Nüsslein-Volhard, Orhan Pamuk, Joseph Stiglitz, Mario Vargas Llosa, and Mo Yan.

For further questions, please contact:

Bertelsmann SE & Co. KGaA

Andreas Grafemeyer
Senior Vice President Media Relations
Phone: +49 5241 80-2466
andreas.grafemeyer@bertelsmann.de

To contact the authors, in particular for interview requests:

Kirchner Kommunikation GmbH

Tatjana Kirchner
Phone: +49 30 84 71 18-12
kirchner@kirchner-pr.de