



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

PRESS RELEASE

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## Winners of 2013 European Union Prize for Literature announced at Göteborg Book Fair

The winners of the 2013 European Union Prize for Literature, recognising the best emerging authors in Europe, were announced today at the opening of the Göteborg Book Fair in Sweden by Androulla Vassiliou, European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth. This year's winners are: **Isabelle Wéry** (Belgium), **Faruk Šehić** (Bosnia Herzegovina), **Emilios Solomou** (Cyprus), **Kristian Bang Foss** (Denmark), **Meelis Friedenthal** (Estonia), **Lidija Dimkowska** (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), **Katri Lipson** (Finland), **Marica Bodrožić** (Germany), **Tullio Forgiarini** (Luxembourg), **Ioana Pârvolescu** (Romania), **Gabriela Babnik** (Slovenia) and **Cristian Crusat** (Spain). See below for more details of the winning authors and their books.

*"My warmest congratulations go to all of this year's winners. The European Union Prize for Literature draws international attention to fantastic new or emerging authors, who might otherwise not gain the recognition they deserve outside their home country. As well as helping these writers to reach new audiences, our aim is to introduce readers to great new European literature and offer them more choice. This can also contribute, in the long term, to creating a genuine European readership, with nearly half a billion potential readers. Our new Creative Europe funding programme will enable us to provide greater support towards the cost of book translations and enhance cultural diversity,"* said Commissioner Vassiliou.

Each winner receives € 5.000. More importantly, their publishers are encouraged to apply for EU funding to have the winning books translated into other European languages. The European Union Prize for Literature (EUPL) is open to 37 countries which are part of the current EU Culture Programme (28 EU Member States as well as Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Iceland, Liechtenstein, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Norway, Serbia, Turkey). Each year, national juries in a third of the countries nominate the winning authors, so that all are represented over a three-year period.

This year's winners will be presented with their awards at a ceremony in Brussels on 26 November, in the presence of Commissioner Vassiliou and leading representatives of the worlds of literature, culture and politics. The EUPL is organised by the European Commission with the European and International Booksellers' Federation (EIBF), the European Writers' Council (EWC) and the Federation of European Publishers (FEP).

*John Mc Namee, President of the EIBF, said: "Once again, I am thrilled to discover new talents and I wish to express my warmest congratulations to all of this year's winners. Booksellers are delighted that the EUPL Prize helps literature cross borders and are looking forward to offering readers more choice, more books, more European literature."*

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*Pirjo Hiidenmaa, President of the EWC, said: "Europe needs stories and storytellers, and there is an endless demand for books on eternal topics. Writers bring vital sparks to minds and languages, and only change keeps cultures alive; therefore, it is always a joy to celebrate new literary voices assuring us that culture keeps growing and changing."*

*"I am very pleased that our organisation takes such an active part in the European Union Prize for Literature. Thanks to this Prize, we discover new worlds, new cultures, through the work of the talented winning authors. I hope that the 2013 winners will get as many translations as they deserve - it is a fantastic way to celebrate the diversity of Europe, a value we should cherish in those times of crisis," added Piotr Marciszuk, President of FEP.*

Romania will receive a special focus at this year's Göteborg Book Fair. Commissioner Vassiliou participated in the opening ceremony this morning with Mircea Cărtărescu, the acclaimed Romanian poet, novelist and essayist.

## **Europe Loves Reading**

After a press conference (12.15), Commissioner Vassiliou will also take part in an event linked to her 'Europe Loves Reading' literacy campaign. She will meet young pupils from the international school in Göteborg (Internationella Engelska Skolan) who will read from their favourite books. One in five 15 year olds in the European Union, as well as many adults, cannot read properly. The campaign aims to raise awareness of Europe's literacy crisis and to promote reading for pleasure. Commissioner Vassiliou regularly attends reading sessions involving children, adolescents and adults. The events with children often have a multilingual dimension to encourage them to read aloud in different languages and to highlight the importance of linguistic diversity.

## **Background**

The European Commission invests €3 million a year on literary translation and more than €2.4 million on cooperation projects involving the book sector. The industry contributes €23 billion to the EU's GDP and employs 135 000 people full time. Books are the second most exported cultural goods in the EU, after works of art and antiques.

Since the European Prize for Literature was launched in 2009, the EU Culture Programme has provided funding for the translation of books by 43 EUPL winners, in 20 different languages, covering a total of 149 translations. The winners also benefit from extra visibility at Europe's major book fairs, including Frankfurt, London, Göteborg and the Passaporta Festival in Brussels.

Book publishing is a significant part of the cultural and creative sectors, which account for up to 4.5% of EU GDP and more than 8 million jobs. Although these sectors have proved relatively resilient in the crisis, they also face considerable challenges stemming from the digital shift, globalisation and market fragmentation along cultural and linguistic lines.

In January 2014, the Commission will launch the new **Creative Europe** programme, which aims to strengthen the competitiveness of the cultural and creative sectors, and to promote cultural diversity. It is envisaged that the new programme will have a total budget of €1.3 billion in 2014-2020, which represents a 9% increase compared with current funding levels. The programme will provide funding for the translation of more than 4 500 books; it will also enable 300 000 artists, cultural professionals and their works to operate across borders and gain international experience.

## **For more information**

Website of the prize: <http://www.euprizeliterature.eu/>

Culture portal of the European Union <http://ec.europa.eu/culture>

[Androulla Vassiliou's website](#)

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## **Annex: winning authors and their books**

**Isabelle Wéry**

**Belgium**

*Marilyn Désossée / Marilyn Deboned*, Éditions Maelström, 2013



As well as being an author, Liège-born Isabelle Wéry is an actress and theatre director. She has been nominated for the Prix de la Critique de Théâtre belge three times, winning the prize in 2008 for her play *La tranche de Jean-Daniel Magnin*.

Her previous works also include the novel *Monsieur René*, an imaginary biography of the Belgian actor René Hainaux, and *Saisons culottes amis (Yvette's Poems)*. In 2013, her short story *Skaï* was published in *Feuilleton*, a collection featuring Belgian authors.

*Marilyn Désossée* is a road-movie in the form of a novel. The central character is Marilyn Turkey, who has always been fascinated by romantic and intimate encounters. What is this crazy thing that brings two lives together? Marilyn's exploration knows no bounds, seeking to reach every corner of existence.

## **Faruk Šehić**

### **Bosnia Herzegovina**

*Knjiga o Uni / The Book of Una*, Buybook d.o.o., 2011



Faruk Šehić was born in 1970 in Bihac. He grew up in Bosanska Krupa, then part of Yugoslavia. He was studying veterinary medicine in Zagreb when war broke out in 1992. Then 22, he voluntarily joined the army of Bosnia and Herzegovina, leading a unit of 130 men. After the war he studied literature and, since 1998, has created his own works. Critics regard him as one of the most gifted young writers in the region, a shining light of the so-called “knocked-over generation”.

*The Book of Una* is about a man trying to overcome a personal trauma resulting from the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina between 1992 and 1995. It covers three periods, starting with his carefree childhood, living beside a beautiful river in a small Bosnian city, the time of war, and finally his attempts to lead a normal life in a destroyed city and country. The book is dedicated to those who believe in the power and beauty of life in the face of death and mass destruction. In parallel to the main story, the book’s passages describing the river Una take on a mythical and dreamlike dimension.

## **Cyprus**

### **Emilios Solomou**

*Ημερολόγιο μιας απιστίας / The Diary of an Infidelity*, Psychogios Publications SA, 2012



Emilios Solomou was born in 1971 in Nicosia and grew up in the village of Potami. He studied history and archaeology at the University of Athens. He also studied journalism in Cyprus and worked for a daily newspaper for several years. He now teaches Greek and history in a public high school.

One of his previous novels, *An Axe in Your Hands*, won the Cyprus State Prize for Literature. He has also written many short-stories, which have been published in literary magazines.

*The Diary of an Infidelity* is a novel about time, destruction, memory and love. Yiorgos Doukarelis is an archaeologist and professor, who returns to an island, 20 years after the excavation that made him famous - the discovery of the remains of a young pregnant woman murdered 5 000 years ago. At the time of the trip, he is having an affair with one of his students, Antigoni, who he later marries after divorcing his wife. His return to the island comes six months after the mysterious disappearance of Antigoni. Yiorgos finds himself exploring the secret ties that connect him with the three women in his life, moving from the present to the past.

## Denmark

### Kristian Bang Foss

*Døden kører audi / Death Drives an Audi*, Gyldendal, 2012



Born in 1977, Kristian Bang Foss initially studied mathematics and physics at university. He graduated from the Danish Writers' Academy in 2003.

His first novel *Fiskens vindue (The Window of the Fish)* was published in 2004 and impressed reviewers with its style and depiction of seemingly everyday actions and pursuits. His debut was followed by *Stormen i 99 (The Storm in 99)*, which takes place in an ordinary workplace environment that, with wonderful black humour, becomes the epicentre for slander, power games and a variety of absurd events.

In *Døden kører audi / Death Drives an Audi* is set in 2008.

Asger lives with his girlfriend and her daughter in Copenhagen and works for an advertising agency. The credit crunch has just begun to bite, and after leading a catastrophic campaign, Asger is fired. He spends his days lying on the sofa, developing weight and alcohol problems. His girlfriend leaves him and he moves to a flat in Sydhavn, losing contact with everybody. Half a year later, he takes on a job as a disabled carer, looking after a sick man called Waldemar, who wants to see a healer in Morocco. Asger is sceptical, but helps him raise money for the journey. They embark on a road trip through Europe – and find themselves being followed by a black Audi. As they get closer to Morocco, the trip turns into a race with death.

## **Marica Bodrožić**

### **Germany**

*Kirschholz und alte Gefühle / A Cherrywood Table*, Luchterhand Literaturverlag, 2012



Marica Bodrožić was born in 1973 in Svib, Croatia, in the former Yugoslavia. She moved to Germany at the age of ten. As well as writing essays, novels and poems, Bodrožić is a literary translator, teaches creative writing, and has made a documentary film.

In *A Cherrywood Table*, Arjeta Filipo is a young woman who has been robbed of her homeland after the civil war in the former Yugoslavia. While moving home, she finds some old photographs that help her to understand parts of her life that had long seemed obscure. Arjeta can dissociate herself from many things, but not from her grandmother's table. As she sits at this inherited piece of furniture in her new Berlin apartment, gazing at the photographs, memories begin to surface: it is as if the cherrywood table offers up all the stories it bore witness to through the years.

## **Meelis Friedenthal**

### **Estonia**

*Mesilased / The Bees*, AS Varrak, 2012



Meelis Friedenthal, also born in 1973, is the author of a doctoral thesis on a 13th century philosophical-theological treatise about seeing and vision. He is currently a senior researcher in Tartu University Library, where he has also lectured in the faculty of theology and history. Friedenthal's first novel, *Golden Age*, won third place in a national competition in 2004. The following year, *Nerissa* won an Estonian science fiction prize. He is also a member of the editorial board of the webzine *Algernon*, which publishes science fiction, news and articles.

*Mesilased* follows the adventures of Laurentius Hylas, a student travelling from the University of Leiden to the Academia Gustavo-Carolina in Tartu, Livonia.

Tartu has a reputation as a city of muses, but Laurentius can only see starving people and damp houses. His melancholia worsens and he fears he will again see the ghosts which have haunted him since his childhood. Laurentius hears a professor talking about the medicinal theories of Boyle and follows his advice of moderate blood-letting to cure his condition. Unfortunately, it does not work and Laurentius faints from loss of blood. In the haze of weakness he sees a girl who has "eyes like gold, like the dark honey, her breathing like humming". She starts appearing at night, offering him food and, later, Laurentius begins to discover that strange events are happening around him.

### **Lidija Dimkovska**

#### **Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM)**

*РЕЗЕРВЕЖ ЖИВОТ / Backup Life, Ili-Ili, 2012*



Lidija Dimkovska was born in 1971 in Skopje, Macedonia. She is a poet, novelist, essayist and translator. She studied comparative literature at the University of Skopje and took a PhD in Romanian literature at the University of Bucharest. She has lectured on Macedonian language and literature in Bucharest, and on world literature at the University of Nova Gorica, Slovenia. Since 2001 she has been living in Ljubljana, Slovenia, working as a freelance writer and translator of Romanian and Slovenian literature into Macedonian. She edits poetry for *Blesok*, the online literary review, in Macedonian and English.

*Backup Life* is about two Macedonian Siamese twins, Srebra and Zlata, and their struggle for individuality, privacy and a life of their own. The story is told by Zlata and begins in 1984, on a June suburban afternoon in Skopje; it ends on August 18, 2012, at the exact same location. The characters play a fortune telling game to decide who's going to marry whom, at what age etc. Later in the novel, their prophecies come true, but in a tragic fashion. In the beginning, Srebra and Zlata get to play the game; in the end, it belongs to Zlata's daughters, Marta and Marija, also twins. The circle is complete - 28 years of living, growing, suffering, love and hate. The darkness surrounding the separation of conjoined twins also applies to the break-up of the Yugoslav republics.

## **Katri Lipson**

### **Finland**

*Jäätelökauppias / The Ice-Cream Man*, Tammi Publishers, 2012



Katri Lipson was born in Helsinki in 1965. After secondary school, she studied medicine in Sweden and graduated from the Medical School of Uppsala University in 1993. Since then, she has worked as a doctor in Sweden, Africa and Finland. She has always written, including fairytales, short stories, poems, plays and novels. Her debut novel, *Cosmonaut (Kosmonautti)*, was nominated for the Finlandia Prize in 2008 and won the Helsingin Sanomat Debut Book of the Year Award. Her second, *Jäätelökauppias (The Ice-Cream Man)*, was published in 2012. She lives with her family in Vantaa, Finland.

*Jäätelökauppias* is a playful and charming story, mostly set in the Czechoslovakia of the 1940s and 1950s, but also progressing to the present. A film crew is making a new movie. The director wants to work without a script. The film is made in chronological order, so that the actors cannot guess the destinies of their characters. They are depicting and living the lives of their characters at the same time – but can the life of these fictional characters become more real than reality itself? And what is, after all, the difference between real and invented or fictional experiences? In this novel, life is seen as a collection of details and stories, and history conducts a fascinating dialogue with the present.

## **Tullio Forgiarini**

### **Luxembourg**

*Amok – Eng Lëtzebuenger Liebeschronik / Amok – A Luxembourg Love Story*, Éditions Guy Binsfeld, 2011





Tullio Forgiarini was born in 1966 in Neudorf, Luxembourg, the son of an Italian father and a Luxembourgian mother. He studied history in Luxembourg and Strasbourg. Since 1989, he has been teaching history, Latin and geography at the Lycée du Nord in Wiltz, Luxembourg. He is also very engaged with children coming from difficult social backgrounds. Forgiarini writes dark stories, mostly in French and inspired by *série noire* crime novels and genre films. His work has been published in newspapers, magazines and anthologies and he is the author of several novels. He is married and lives in Luxembourg.

In 17 short chapters, *Amok* tells the story of an adolescent's search for love, recognition, happiness and a place in today's society. Using often crude language, it convincingly reflects the social isolation, neglect, lack of perspective, behavioural disorders and senseless violence that prevail today. It explores everyday realities that are often absent in the media and public discourse. The reader is thrust into the imaginary and ingeniously crafted dream worlds of the protagonist that stand for his doomed attempts to escape an unmanageable reality.

## **Ioana Pârvulescu**

### **Romania**

*Viața începe vineri / Life Begins on Friday*, Humanitas Publishing, 2009



Born in Brașov in 1960, Ioana Pârvulescu graduated from the Faculty of Letters at the University of Bucharest in 1983. Since 1996, she has taught modern literature at the same faculty, her 1999 doctoral thesis *Literary Prejudices: Comfortable Options in Interpreting Romanian Literature* earning her a PhD. She has coordinated the series *Cartea de pe noptieră (Bedside Book)* at Humanitas Publishing House and worked as an editor at the literary journal *România literară*. She is a member of the Romanian Writers' Union and a founder member of the Comparative Literature Society in Romania.

*Life Begins on Friday* is a unique and charming journey into bygone times. A young man is found lying unconscious on the outskirts of Bucharest. No one knows who he is and everyone has a different theory about how he ended up there. The stories of the various characters unfold, each closely interwoven with the next, outlining the features of what ultimately turns out to be the most important character of all: the city of Bucharest itself. We might, in fact, say that it is we who inhabit their future. And so too does Dan Crețu, alias Dan Kretzu, the present-day journalist hurled back in time by some mysterious process for just long enough to allow us a wonderful glimpse into a remote, almost forgotten world, but one still very much alive in our hearts.

## Slovenia

### Gabriela Babnik

*Sušna doba / Dry Season*, Študentska Založba, 2012



Gabriela Babnik was born in 1979 in Göppingen, Germany. After her studies at Ljubljana University, she spent some time in Nigeria and did her master's degree on the modern Nigerian novel. Since 2002, she has regularly contributed articles to major daily and weekly publications in Slovenia. In 2005, Babnik graduated in comparative literature and literary theory at the University of Ljubljana.

Her first novel *Koža iz bombaža (Cotton Skin)*, published in 2007, was awarded the Best Debut Novel by the Union of Slovenian Publishers. Her second novel *V visoki travi (In the Tall Grass)* was shortlisted for the Kresnik Award in 2010.

*Dry Season* is a record of an unusual love affair. Anna is a 62-year-old designer from Central Europe and Ismael is a 27-year-old African brought up on the street, where he was often the victim of abuse. What unites them is their loneliness, a tragic childhood and the dry season or Harmattan, during which neither nature nor love can flourish. Anna soon realises that the emptiness between them is not really the result of their skin colour or age difference, but predominantly due to her belonging to a Western culture in which she has lost or abandoned the preordained roles of daughter, wife and mother. Sex does not outstrip the loneliness and repressed secrets from the past surface into a world she sees as much crueller and, at the same time, more innocent than her own.

## **Cristian Crusat**

### **Spain**

*Breve teoría del viaje y el desierto / A Brief Theory of Travel and the Desert*, Editoriales Pre-Textos, 2011



Cristian Crusat (b.1983) is the author of *Estatuas* (2006), *Tranquilos en tiempo de guerra* (2010) and *Breve teoría del viaje y el desierto* (2011). In 2010, he was awarded the Manuel Llano International Prize. He has seen his essays, translations and articles on comparative literature published in a wide range of Spanish and Latin American journals. In 2012, Crusat edited and translated *El deseo de lo único. Teoría de la ficción*, the critical essays of the French writer Marcel Schwob. He teaches Spanish and literature abroad.

The six stories of *Breve teoría del viaje y el desierto* contemplate the full range of human experience. They take us on a journey around the world, from the arid landscapes of the Mediterranean coast to the work of the brilliant Serbian writer, Milorad Pavić. All of the characters are waiting for, searching for, or exploring the possibility of a revelation which never appears in their numbed here-and-now. And yet, paradoxically, they seem incapable of taking any kind of effective action, with the possible exception of Lena, who writes from the floating world of dreams. However, fate or mere chance (an irrelevant incident, someone fainting on a nudist beach, a plane crash that never actually happened) can reveal in a flash the true face of a character's isolation.