



Literature & Books | Featured Stories

"A Continent of Stories - EU schemes for publishers, writers and translators"

"The EU's mission to translate and share Europe's diverse literary heritage through different programs and an open call on literature."

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When Croatian author Martina Vidai? won the prestigious European Union Prize for Literature (EUPL) last May for her novel *Bedbugs*, she was very surprised to beat competition from across the continent. Vidai?, a 37-year-old graduate in Croatian language and literature who also writes poetry and short stories, didn't expect to get ahead of the national nominees from 12 other European nations. But the international Jury was impressed by the intimate exploration of familial relationships in the wake of personal turmoil narrated in her novel. *Bedbugs*, published last year by Croatian independent press Naklada Ljevak, delves beneath the surface of its characters' lives to reveal their inner struggles and the universal frictions that arise within the domestic sphere.

Vidai? said winning the award was an outcome she had not dared allow herself to envision. Now her subtle yet resonant tale reaches a new continent-spanning readership thanks to the prize's remit to promote emerging writers and foster cultural understanding across boundaries through translated works. Backed by Creative Europe and coordinated by publishing industry bodies the Federation of European Publishers and the European Booksellers Federation, the

EUPL throws a spotlight on Europe's rich linguistic heritage while also supporting cross-border collaboration. Past winners like Iceland's Auður Ava Ólafsdóttir have their works spread to new fans.

The larger Creative Europe programme gives platforms to promote must-read European authors. The annual Day of European Authors raises profiles, while initiatives like the European Literature Night spark new passion for continental classics across borders. Experts say these schemes have been pivotal in ensuring the richness of Europe's diverse literary heritage is experienced far beyond its origins. Without translation funding, many greats may have remained trapped in their native tongues and diminished a broader understanding between cultures. The impact shows how strategic investment can open up eclectic influences to a global readership, with the societal benefits of building empathy through shared storytelling.

Several initiatives have seen European literary greats picked up by new audiences worldwide thanks to translation funding. From neglected 19th-century Slovenian works that found modern listeners to Danish children's books for French readers. In English lists like the "14 Books in Translation" by Penguin Random House to "10 Translated Books to Have on Your Radar" from Shondaland feature a variety of translated literary works that have been well-received and have contributed to the diversity of voices and stories available to readers. From Latvian crime writing to Polish poetry, these EU-funded projects have enabled the rich and diverse literary European waves to travel to wider seas of audiences across the globe. An average of 40 projects of about 500 European literary works are translated and promoted into at least 40 languages each year thanks to the Creative Europe Program of the European Commission. Running since 1991, the Circulation of European Literary Works potbacks projects are strengthening ties between nations through shared stories. A few more schemes that build the larger European literary platform include:

- CEEBP, another initiative, seeks to promote free expression in Central and Eastern Europe by facilitating the flow of ideas across the region through books and authors.
- Literary translation and education outside Creative Europe are also backed by Germany's Senate Department for Culture and Europe. Its funding programme aims to foster literary learning and writing.

Through the 'circulation of European literary works' funding scheme, 60% of total project costs are covered on translation, publication and promotion. Many promotional events are organised with bookshops, libraries and literary festivals to bolster local and national book industries.

Novelists, publishers and literary organisations can also receive funding to encourage the international spread of European fiction. Supported activities include distributing books abroad and campaigns showcasing European authors. Priority is given to projects strengthening the global reach of diverse European literature, translating lesser-used languages and getting books from the continent into new markets worldwide.

The schemes demonstrate the EU's ongoing efforts to bring European literature to new audiences internationally and invest in the cultural and creative industries. This supports greater translation, understanding between countries and appreciation of their shared cultural heritage.

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Open Call: Creative Europe will support 40 projects in 2024 to boost literary translations. You can apply for the program of Circulation of European literary works (CREA-CULT-2024-LIT)