

Reshaping the European Union Prize for Literature?

Summa Artium, an NGO in Budapest, and the Budapest Observatory, linked to one another in a number of ways, were trying to define the lines along which the actual running of the EU's literary award should be overhauled. We hoped to find allies with whom to apply for the "[organisation and implementation](#)" of the Prize. This hope did not come true. We are eagerly looking forward to see whether those who apply come forward with similar ideas.

The current model of the European Union Prize for Literature (EUPL) is little effective. Promoting 12-13 emerging – by definition little known – authors, selected (delegated) by national bodies, brings limited impact. The [award ceremonies](#) are protocol and diplomacy events rather than marketing gigs.

In fact, what appears to pay off best, is the priority in the Creative Europe translation grants and the marketing of the translated titles; yet this happens on peripheral markets, in majority in eastern member countries.

[The call](#) for the new management of the project does not make it clear whether changing the model is possible from 2019. What is happening [in 2018](#), a competition between all previous winners, nevertheless shows in the right direction.

The proposed concept

The proposal is presented on the example of 2019-2020, which could be repeated along the same rhythm in later years.

The principle and method of selecting national "winners" can remain the same – except for the number of countries involved. The rotation system should be replaced by a full list of 30-40 candidates (one per willing country) each year – let us count with 36. A gala event that presents 12 winners is a pointless waste of money: the same with 36 would be a nightmare. Therefore the presentation of the 36 winners must be virtual (press releases and digital communication) **focusing on the next stage, the selection of the top winner**, labelled e.g. the *Literary Hopeful of the Year*.

Instead of the €5000 per annual winner (adding up to €60 000), **altogether €100 000 should be earmarked to arrive at 36 top level manuscripts in English¹ within six months after the announcement of the 36 names in April 2019**. The €100 000 should be divided along a previously established scheme that involves size, cent/character in two or three categories by language challenge, upon consultation with the international translators' bodies. Where English original exists, this could be "rewarded" with a smaller amount (e.g. 20% of the average grant), which can be used for copy editing. The translator can be selected and commissioned by the national hub of the project, or a willing publisher. No contract or letter of intent is a condition but is not excluded either. Where translation costs more than the EUPL grant, countries must cover the difference.

Between October 2019 and March 2020, **five acknowledged experts** undertake reading all 36 manuscripts for a fee of 8 000 each (12 000 for their President), adding up to €44 000. At first glance this appears impossible; editors and festival jury members nevertheless routinely cope with similar tasks.

¹ Alternatively: English, French or German, which would require jury members with the command of each.

They five readers score the works, come together for two days in March 2020 and select:

- The European *Literary Hopeful of the Year* – which is a work, but the author is the real beneficiary.
- The Jury furthermore defines three more awards along themes that they collectively define, based on the actual offer. They might distinguish the work that is most innovative, or the opposite: the one that best cultivates traditional forms, the work that best addresses the young, eminently handles current traumas, and so on. The special awards could change from year to year.

The winners are **announced in April 2020** together with presenting the list of the 36 new works submitted by the 36 countries upon the 2020 call.

An **award celebration** takes place in May 2020 where the author of the *Literary Hopeful of the Year*, its translator, and those of the three Jury's Awards are present. Inserted into the celebration, short videos introduce the 36 new emerging authors.

Promotion

We do not think the ways and instruments of promotion need to necessarily differ much from the existing forms. The **fundamentally increased attraction** that this project deserves would be achieved by focusing on a single top winner (plus three special awards), produced by way of a competition between different nationals – which would constitute the real appeal to the wider public.