

Author biographies

Amin Maalouf

In the course of his extensive travels, Amin Maalouf has witnessed war, radicalisation and collapse close up. The Prix Goncourt winner will be talking to Safia Messas about his latest work, *The Wreck of Civilizations*, in which he makes a plea for global solidarity as perhaps the only way to bridge the cultural divides that he has studied for so long.

Thomas Friedman

With three Pulitzers, seven bestsellers and more than twice that number of honorary doctorates, Thomas L. Friedman is an established if at times controversial figure in the world of journalism. This year he celebrates 40 years with *The New York Times*, where he continues to write a column on foreign affairs. His strong views on globalisation, pluralism and climate change make him a welcome guest at this year's Europe Day.

Dubravka Šuica

In 2001 Dubravka Šuica became the first woman mayor of Dubrovnik, between 2013 and 2019 she represented Croatia in the European Parliament and today she is Vice President of Ursula von der Leyen's European Commission. As Commissioner for Democracy and Demographics, Šuica is an extremely interesting guest on this Europe Day.

Karolina Szejda

Karolina Szejda was born in 1995 in Elk, Poland but has lived in Brussels since the age of six. In 2019 she graduated from the LUCA School of Arts in Brussels with a Masters in Graphic Storytelling. Karolina makes illustrations and comics that are usually based on her own life, teaches drawing to children and is one of the young authors who meet up every week to participate in the Knalgele Kubus project at the Marc Sleen Museum in Brussels.

Irene Solà

Although Irene Solà lives in London, her work has seen her travel from her native Barcelona to New York and beyond. With *I Sing and the Mountain Dances*, Solà has struck a balance between her own Catalan roots and much more universal themes of war, myth and fanaticism. The result is a deeply poetic novel, at times beautiful and terrifying, but above all an indicator of the cultural insight of its author.

Lana Bastašić

If ever there were such a thing as a Pan-European nationality, then surely Lana Bastašić would be considered one of its heralds. Born in Zagreb, raised in Bosnia and Herzegovina, she has been published in all of Eastern Europe and is working in Barcelona. *Catch the Rabbit*, a modern search for identity and a Balkanised retelling of

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Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, is set to cement Bastašić as one of Europe's leading voices in transnational literature.

Matthias Nawrat

While Matthias Nawrat's previous work has garnered plenty of praise in his homeland, this third and most recent novel finds the author in a very quiet and melancholy place, looking for what it really means to be European. *The Sad Guest* is about longing, loss of homeland, memory and the fragility of existence, all framed within a narrative that is not quite autofiction, but all the while feels so very personal.