



## PRESS INFORMATION

# GOETHE MEDAL 2025 AWARDED TO OSMAN KAVALA, LI YUAN, AND DAVID VAN REYBROUCK

This year, the Goethe Medal is awarded to the Turkish philanthropist Osman Kavala, Chinese linguist Li Yuan, and Belgian writer David Van Reybrouck. The Goethe Medal will be presented during a ceremonial event on August 28, 2025, in Weimar by the President of the Goethe-Institut, Gesche Joost. For the first time, the award ceremony will be held publicly. During the concurrent *Kunstfest Weimar*, the laureates' work will be presented in discussions and on stage. Candidates for the Goethe Medal are nominated by Goethe-Institutes abroad based on their significant contributions to international cultural and educational policy and their outstanding artistic and educational achievements. The recipients are selected by a jury chaired by Thomas Oberender.

Brussels, 6 May 2025 - The President of the Goethe-Institut, **Gesche Joost**, emphasises on the occasion of the announcement of this year's Goethe Medal laureates: "We are witnessing a world marked by a new harshness, in which democratic values are increasingly under pressure. Now more than ever, we need cultural understanding and people who make a difference. In our global network of Goethe-Institutes, we encounter exactly such people who, with courage, creativity, and a keen eye for culture and language, engage in dialogue with Germany: Osman Kavala is a tireless source of ideas and a cultural initiator who, with great dedication, continues to create cultural spaces and strengthen civil society networks in the region in a lasting way. Since her studies in Berlin, Li Yuan has been advancing the professionalisation of the field of German as a foreign language with great commitment - as a professor, she inspires countless aspiring teachers and scholars in China. With initiatives like the NGO 'G1000,' David Van Reybrouck fundamentally rethinks democracy - not as mere representation, but as a lively, participatory practice. His independent research provides the foundation for a deep understanding of social dynamics and political participation. Through their bold approaches and projects, the awardees make an impact far beyond Turkey, China, and Belgium. I am very pleased that this year we are honouring the outstanding commitment of these three individuals, who work in such diverse ways, with the Goethe Medal."

### Goethe-Institut

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**Thomas Oberender**, Chairman of the Commission for the Awarding of the Goethe Medal, says about the selection of the awardees: "This year's awardees create new perspectives and innovative forms of cultural and linguistic mediation through their work. In doing so, they challenge and transform established norms of cultural practice and are, in their own way, quiet revolutionaries."

**From the jury statements:**

The organisation Anadolu Kültür, founded by **Osman Kavala** in 2002, has initiated projects such as the Diyarbakır Arts Center and the Depo art space in Istanbul, which strengthen human rights, art and culture. Anadolu Kültür is dedicated to promoting cultural diversity and dialogue, especially with Turkey's neighbouring regions. Even after his arrest in 2017, Kavala continues to make an important contribution to peace and reconciliation work in the region. His organisation supports the preservation of the diverse Anatolian heritage and fosters local and international collaboration between artists and non-governmental organisations for a culture of peaceful coexistence.

With her research projects, numerous monographs and textbooks and the founding of three national competitions for students of German, German studies scholar **Li Yuan** has profoundly influenced and advanced the curriculum and teaching practice at Chinese schools and universities. She is responsible for creating the largest learner language corpus – a collection of texts and spoken language by foreign language learners. The aim of the corpus is to identify typical errors and develop didactic concepts from them. Her work contributes significantly to intercultural understanding, the promotion of young academics and the strengthening and preservation of German as a foreign language in China.

**David Van Reybrouck** advocates for the renewal of democratic processes with his controversial pleas for alternative electoral procedures and the establishment of citizens' assemblies. His extensively researched books on South Africa, the Congo and Indonesia reveal perspectives that are often ignored by Western-dominated historiography. The interdisciplinary approach of his books and their focus on marginalised voices combine a clear literary style with an emotional approach. For this reason, they are among the most significant contributions to contemporary political discourse.

**Press photos of the 2025 awardees can be found  
at: [www.goethe.de/bilderservice](http://www.goethe.de/bilderservice)**

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The **Goethe Medal** is the official decoration of the Federal Republic of Germany and the most important award of Germany's foreign cultural policy. It is being awarded for the 70th time this year. Every year, staff of the Goethe-Instituts, in coordination with German missions abroad, nominate cultural actors from all regions and cultural fields, as well as from the fields of science and language. From these nominations, the commission for awarding the Goethe Medal, a jury consisting of persons from Germany's academia, art and culture, chooses three awardees. The Goethe Medal honours achievements in promoting the German language, culture and arts in the awardees' home countries. It also honours the renewal and constant updating of an international understanding of culture. The award draws attention to forward-looking topics and trends and strengthens the internationalisation of the German cultural landscape, global networking and mutually beneficial cooperation. The award ceremony will take place on August 28, the birthday of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, in Weimar.

The **Commission for the Awarding of the Goethe Medal 2025** consisted of René Aguigah (Moderator and Head of the "Literature, Philosophy, Religion" Department at Deutschlandfunk Kultur, Berlin), Julia Grosse (Artistic Director of Contemporary Art, Berlin), Anna Henckel-Donnersmarck (Curator and Head of Berlinale Shorts, Berlin), Matthias Lilienthal (Dramaturge and Director, Berlin), Thomas Oberender (Author and Curator, Berlin), Antje Rávik Strubel (Author, Potsdam), Andrea Zschunke (Head of Music at WDR3, Cologne); representing the Federal Foreign Office: Anna Bartels (Commissioner for Foreign Cultural Policy); representing the Goethe-Institut: Carola Lentz (Former President of the Goethe-Institut), Gesche Joost (President of the Goethe-Institut, as a guest), and Johannes Ebert (Secretary General of the Goethe-Institut).

*The artistic and discursive programme for the Goethe Medal in Weimar is developed in cooperation with Kunstfest Weimar. The cultural programme of the 2025 Goethe Medal is supported by the Holtzbrinck Publishing Group.*

Further **information about the Goethe Medal, biographies of the awardees, and a list of previous honourees** can be found at: [www.goethe.de/goethe-medaille](http://www.goethe.de/goethe-medaille)

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### **The Goethe-Institut**

*The Goethe-Institut is the cultural institute of the Federal Republic of Germany with a global reach. With 151 institutes in 98 countries, it promotes knowledge of German abroad, encourages international cultural exchange and conveys an image of contemporary Germany. The Goethe-Institut's ties with partner institutions in many other places give it about 1,100 points of contact around the world.*

### **The Goethe-Institut Brussels**

*The Goethe-Institut is the globally active cultural institution of the Federal Republic of Germany. The office in Brussels contributes to strengthening the European integration process and conveys Europe's cultural diversity at a political and strategic level. Its cultural, educational and information programmes in Belgium promote exchange and cultural engagement, as well as interest in the German language, Belgium's third national language.*

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