

**Presentation of the honorary »Patron of Books« medal to Monika Grütters,
Germany's Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media**

On the occasion of the official opening of the Frankfurt Book Fair on 13 October 2020
Laudatory speech by Karin Schmidt-Friderichs,
President of the German Publishers and Booksellers Association

I do not wish to end my appeal
without adding a word of special thanks to one person in particular.

In the past several months, Monika Grütters,
the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media,
has, at all times, had an open ear for our concerns.

Not only did she listen intently to our feedback,
she also worked unwaveringly to support the book trade
with all of the means at her disposal.
Her dedication and assistance – in every sense of the term –
is the reason we are standing here today.

As a token of our deepest gratitude,
I would like to present you, Minister Grütters,
with the Börsenverein's honorary »Patron of Books « medal.

It wasn't just in the past year that Monika Grütters advocated tirelessly
on behalf of books, the whole time insisting they were essential cultural assets.
Indeed, she has long since worked to promote a diverse landscape
of books, bookstores and publishers in Germany.

To name just a few examples, she initiated the German Bookstore Award
(Buchhandlungspreis) and the German Publishers Prize (Verlagspreis),
and also recently took over the patronage of the German Non-Fiction Prize (Sachbuchpreis).

She is also a trusted ally
when it comes to addressing the material conditions of individuals and companies
active in the book industry, as well as copyright issues and fixed book prices.

The Office of the Federal Commissioner for Culture and the Media,
which Monika Grütters has headed since 2013,
is a position that she has carried out with political and personal conviction,
taking every opportunity to express her passion for literature.

Evidence of this love of books is often expressed casually, en passant. For example, several years ago, I had the opportunity to greet Minister Grütters at this very book fair, at a stand set up by the Book Art Foundation (Stiftung Buchkunst), of which I was chairperson at the time.

We got to talking about how to best maintain an overview of the growing numbers of books on our own personal bookshelves at home. As soon as we began exchanging ideas on the myriad of potential ways to categorise one's own books, I knew once and for all that my interlocutor was not only an enthusiastic reader, but also a true bibliophile.

More recently, at a press conference at Berlin's Literaturhaus in August marking the launch of the »Neustart Kultur« programme, this became quite clear once again. On that day, Monika Grütters presented a support package designed to assist the entire book industry to an extent never seen before – a total of over €25 million. However, before she presented the funding programme, she chatted about books with some of the people gathered at the event: she talked, for example, about David Grossman's latest novel *Was Nina wusste*, which she had just bought, and about Nicolas Mathieu's novel *Rose Royal* and the entire oeuvre of Robert Seethaler.

Books bring people into conversation with one another. And conversations are an essential form of interaction among human beings. As Hölderlin expressed it in his poem *Celebration of Peace*: "For we are a conversation, and we can listen to one another".

Only in this way – that is, by speaking and listening to one another, are human encounters possible: whether of a physical nature or by means of books. Minister Grütters – thank you for supporting our book industry and for your vigorous efforts to promote human exchange through literature. Unfortunately, it is not possible for me to present you with this honour in person today, so instead I will read the text of the certificate out loud:

In recognition of
her steadfast commitment to the book industry,
the German Booksellers and Publishers Association
(Börsenverein des Deutschen Buchhandels)
has chosen to honour

Monika Grütters

by awarding her the honorary medal

»Patron of Books«

For many years, Monika Grütters has worked tirelessly to foster the diversity of Germany's book and publishing landscape, knowing that this diversity would lead to a richer exchange of ideas and a strengthening of our ability to form opinions.

As Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media, Monika Grütters has been a constant and reliable ally to the book industry, even in uncertain times. Her unwavering efforts on behalf of authors, translators, publishers and bookstores in the course of the current, highly challenging year has been extraordinary and given us courage to face the future.

May this honour be a reflection of our very special gratitude to Monika Grütters for her inspiring efforts over the past several years.

German Publishers and Booksellers Association
Office of the Chairperson

Frankfurt am Main, 13 October 2020