

Dear finalists and jury members,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all I would like to congratulate the finalists on behalf of the Aventis Foundation. And I would like to thank the jury members for their commitment. I think it's a great achievement that you have agreed upon the shortlist and the winners and that you are all here with us tonight.

Let me just share a few thoughts with you from the Aventis Foundation perspective.

We have defined some criteria for cultural promotion:
Our projects should be
international,
innovative
and interdisciplinary

and the supported artists should
cross boundaries
eliminate prejudices
and create original works.

These criteria also reflect the company Aventis, which established the Aventis Foundation, and which operates globally and employs people in nearly every country of the world, providing patients and physicians with medicines and vaccines. These activities are international, interdisciplinary and innovative, and we experience and we have to know about social realities all over the world.

We are convinced that a better knowledge and a better understanding of different cultures and living conditions, that diversity and mutual respect will contribute to sound and sustainable development.

When Lettre International approached the Aventis Foundation with the proposal for this project, it became clear that our criteria would be ideally met. So we decided to support the project – for one good reason:
to promote a multicultural understanding of the world.

By supporting international authors and the literary reportage genre, the Aventis Foundation wants to promote a better and deeper understanding of the living conditions in forgotten areas of the world, as well as in those that we presume we know so well.

The genre tells us how little we know, yet if we choose to join the journey, we will learn about the breadth and depth, the historical roots, the horrors and the strength of human existence.

We think that a better understanding of different cultures and their roots could be a way to solve many of the world's problems and conflicts or perhaps prevent them from arising in the first place– if more people would embark on this journey, whether as authors or readers.

Our special thanks is due to Lettre International and to Frank Berberich for his great achievement in initiating this award and organizing this evening. It has been an immense workload and a long, difficult and complex process, and I think we all owe him a debt of gratitude.

Finally I would like to thank the project partners Goethe Institut and Script for their dedication and their support.

Now I'm looking forward to find out who the winners are and I wish all of us a memorable and enchanting evening.
Thank you.