

Guest of Honour FAQs

Why a Guest of Honour?

The presence of a country as Guest of Honour gives the Frankfurt Book Fair a new character every year. For the Guest of Honour itself, this appearance is of double importance: not only does the country's literature and culture always garner tremendous attention, but its publishing industry also becomes the focus of the largest international event in the book and media world.

The Guest of Honour's presentation is a magnet for audiences and a significant hook for the media in its coverage.

Since when has there been a Guest of Honour?

The Guest of Honour programme for countries and regions has existed since 1976. Initially, the Frankfurt Book Fair would present and organise focal topics every two years, beginning with "Latin America" (1976). Since 1988, a country has been Guest of Honour every year, though the Guest of Honour itself largely organises and finances this appearance.

What are the aims?

Among the key objectives of the Frankfurt Book Fair is strengthening international networking in each country's publishing industry and cultural institutions, bringing its literature to the world and increasing the number of translations from the country.

To this end, the Guest of Honour generally establishes a programme to promote translations. For the featured country's book industry this means: strengthening license trading and expanding international publishing contacts – and not just during the year that it is Guest of Honour. The industry also benefits from the heightened attention, promotion of authors and presence of publishers at the world's largest book market.

For readers and the general public, the Guest of Honour's presence offers a new point of access to its literature and culture. The featured country garners tremendous interest in the media (mentions in some 5,000 media reports). Its appearance as Guest of Honour provides the impetus for intense debate about the country – resulting in greater awareness of its politics, history and present.

The Guest of Honour's supporting cultural programme contributes to the (lasting) establishment of international cultural relations and promotes cultural exchange, dialogue and, last but not least, tourism.

How does a country become Guest of Honour?

Any country can apply to become the Frankfurt Book Fair's Guest of Honour. The application is usually made by the country's publishers' association, which approaches the Frankfurt Book Fair with its interest. Initially, there are intense discussions regarding the essential requirements: an emerging publishing industry, support for translations and an adequate budget and organisational structures to realise the programme.

Ultimately, the Frankfurt Book Fair chooses a Guest of Honour in consultation with the supervisory board of the Börsenverein des Deutschen Buchhandels (German Publishers and Booksellers Association). A contract between the Frankfurt Book Fair and the Guest of Honour – often the country's ministry of culture or publishers' association – seals the collaboration. Contracts are usually signed three years in advance of the country's actual appearance as Guest of Honour.

How is the Guest of Honour's appearance organised and financed?

The Guest of Honour is essentially responsible for designing, organising and financing its appearance at the fair.

In order to do so, soon after the contract is signed, the Guest of Honour establishes an organising committee to handle the roughly two-year preparation. Frequently, this organising committee is affiliated with a state ministry (e.g. the ministry of culture or education) and with the national publishers' association. About one year before the country's appearance as Guest of Honour, an office is opened in Frankfurt, with contact persons from the organising committee on site. In addition, a PR agency is hired to handle all of the Guest of Honour's public relations, advertising and online presence.

What is the role of the Frankfurt Book Fair?

From the start, the Frankfurt Book Fair offers the Guest of Honour guidance: The two employees of the Guest-of-Honour team support the committee in planning and carrying out the country's appearance at the fair. For the Guest of Honour, they serve as the "interface" both for individual projects at the Book Fair itself and between the numerous cultural institutions and cooperating partners throughout Germany. In addition, through programmes and professional events, the Frankfurt Book Fair supports networking between the Guest of Honour's publishing industry and the international book and media industry.

For the Guest of Honour's appearance itself, the Frankfurt Book Fair provides a roughly 2,000-sqm pavilion area on the fairgrounds.

What else does the Frankfurt Book Fair do for the Guest of Honour?

In addition to offering each Guest of Honour intense support in its plans for its programme, the Book Fair also initiates and coordinates its own projects regarding the Guest of Honour. These include, amongst others:

- / Compiling a list of new releases – an overview of the Guest of Honour's publications in German-speaking regions.
- / Organising the international book exhibition "Books on ...". The Frankfurt Book Fair invites publishers from around the world to display their current titles in the Guest-of-Honour pavilion. The exhibition, with roughly 1,000 items on display, brings together literature in translation from the country featured as Guest of Honour as well as books about it.
- / In addition, in the run-up to the fair, the Frankfurt Book Fair organises a series of professional events for representatives of the publishing industry from the country featured as Guest of Honour.
- / The Frankfurt Book Fair organises the popular public "Handover Ceremony: Guest of Honour": a literary-cultural event held on the last day of the fair, during which the current Guest of Honour hands over the "GastRolle" ("Guest-of-Honour role", represented by an art object) to its successor.
- / Booksellers and librarians can order decorative material, specially designed every year, from the Book Fair webshop free of charge in order to display literature from the country featured as Guest of Honour in an attractive way.
- / With the "Competition for Young Designers" the Frankfurt Book Fair calls on design students throughout Germany to submit poster designs to welcome the Guest of Honour. In the run-up to the Book Fair, posters of the winning designs are posted in the city of Frankfurt and also published as postcards.
- / All events in the Guest of Honour's programme (on the fairgrounds and in the city) are included in the Frankfurt Book Fair's online Calendar of Events.

What's included in the Guest of Honour's programme?

Naturally, the Guest of Honour's programme focuses on the five days in October at the Frankfurt Book Fair.

The Guest of Honour already makes an important appearance at the fair's official opening ceremony, with a literary and a renowned political keynote speaker.

The Guest-of-Honour pavilion is at the heart of the featured country's appearance at the fair. Here, the Guest of Honour presents itself through a specially designed

exhibition and offers a diverse programme in the integrated event space, with readings, discussions, performances and the popular Happy Hour. On average, the Guest of Honour brings some 50 authors to the Book Fair. Also on view in the pavilion: the international "Books on ..." exhibition, with publications about the Guest of Honour and literary works in translation. Publishers from the featured country are present at the collective stand as well as in various thematic areas of the Frankfurt Book Fair (including the Gourmet Gallery and the spaces dedicated to children's books, education and art & design), on the Agora and in the conference programme of the Frankfurt Book Fair.

Yet, even beyond the fairgrounds, a diverse supporting programme is offered in the city of Frankfurt and other locations.

The presence of the Guest of Honour is hardly limited to just the five days of the Book Fair in October and to the featured country's numerous new releases. Throughout the year of its appearance as Guest of Honour, and in particular during the week of the Book Fair, the featured country brings its cultural highlights to the city: In Frankfurt and the surrounding areas, as well as in many other cities, there are readings; panel discussions on politics, literature and current events; (art) exhibitions; theatre; dance; music; film; performances; literary-culinary nights; professional conventions and parties. Numerous publishers and cultural institutions take up the Guest-of-Honour theme, integrating titles and contributions into their programme. The Guest of Honour generally takes advantage of this major boost by already participating in other trade fairs and literary and cultural festivals in advance of the Frankfurt Book Fair. Book tours by authors during, before and after the fair also bring the topic into the media throughout Germany. In this way, even before the Guest of Honour's actual presentation at the Book Fair, a complex picture of the featured country's literature and culture is conveyed, and curiosity regarding its appearance in Frankfurt is whetted.

A total of some 500 events related to the Guest of Honour take place every year, at the Frankfurt Book Fair and beyond.