

Reinhard Mohn Prize awarded to Maia Sandu and Michael Otto

Thursday 20 February, 2025

Gütersloh – February 20, 2025. The Bertelsmann Stiftung today awarded the 2025 Reinhard Mohn Prize to the President of the Republic of Moldova, Maia Sandu, and to entrepreneur and philanthropist Michael Otto. In keeping with the title of this year's prize – "Strengthen democracy!" – it presented the award in recognition of both recipients' commitment to democratic values and a free society. At Gütersloh Theater, before an audience of some 500 guests, Germany's Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier and Liz Mohn, honorary member of the Bertelsmann Stiftung's Board of Trustees and the foundation's global representative, gave the presentation speeches. The two award winners will share the prize money totaling €200,000 euros and will donate it to non-profit projects and initiatives. The Bertelsmann Stiftung broadcast the ceremony via livestream.

"In a crisis-torn world, democracy faces enormous challenges," said Liz Mohn. "Maintaining, developing and strengthening democracy was one of the key concerns my husband and I had when we established the Bertelsmann Stiftung. That is why we want to send a strong signal on its behalf by awarding the Reinhard Mohn Prize to Maia Sandu and Michael Otto."

"Democracy thrives when people stand up for it"

Maia Sandu: "Democracy thrives when people stand up for it, even in the face of adversity. In Moldova, we have chosen the path of democracy, freedom, and European integration, despite immense challenges and external pressures. The recent elections and referendum showed the resilience of our people and their unwavering commitment to a future in the European family. This award is not just for me—it belongs to the people of Moldova, who have chosen democracy over fear, truth over disinformation, and progress over stagnation."

Michael Otto: "Democracy thrives on diversity, just as democracy alone can create diversity: diversity of opinions, of voices and of solutions and the possibilities for realizing them. It is the only way to obtain the best solutions for the future. That is why we must all do our utmost to preserve and strengthen liberal democracy."

Committed European, entrepreneur dedicated to multiple causes

Maia Sandu has been president of the Republic of Moldova since the end of 2020. She was elected to a second term of office at the beginning of November. During the election campaign and voting process, massive attempts by Russia to prevent her re-election through manipulation, interference and the spread of disinformation were documented. Sandu has actively promoted Moldova's EU integration for years.

Michael Otto was chairman of the Executive Board of the Otto Group from 1981 to 2007 and has served as chairman of its Supervisory Board since then. The Hamburg-based entrepreneur was an early advocate of environmental protection, development aid and social and educational projects. He has established several foundations, including the environmental foundation bearing his name as well as Stiftung KlimaWirtschaft and the Michael Otto Foundation for Sustainability.

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Additional information:

The Reinhard Mohn Prize is given in memory of the Bertelsmann Stiftung's founder, Reinhard Mohn († October 2009). It is awarded to internationally renowned individuals who have played a key role in developing forward-looking solutions to social and political challenges. Past recipients include Joachim Gauck, Rita Süssmuth and Kofi Annan. More information is available on the [Reinhard Mohn Prize](#) website and on the website [Strengthen democracy!](#)

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