



**BOLOGNA
CHILDREN'S
BOOK
FAIR**



**31 MARCH
3 APRIL
2025
BOLOGNA
ITALY**

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THE 62ND BOLOGNA CHILDREN'S BOOK FAIR

The major themes at the 2025 edition: sustainability, with the collaboration of the United Nations and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, Artificial Intelligence, the world of comics and supporting African publishing and minority publishing

The 62nd edition of Bologna Children's Book will be promoting dialogue and debate among the main stakeholders in international publishing, focusing on the issues guiding the industry and demanding the most urgent attention.

SUSTAINABILITY

The first of these issues is sustainability, which is once again the focus of the Bologna event thanks to the renewed collaboration between BCBF and the United Nations. For the second consecutive year, the two organisations are joining forces to promote the principles set out in the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which have already featured prominently among the fair's activities since 2019 through the SDG Book Club initiative.

The theme will be explored at the fair in a variety of ways: from male identity to gender representation, from respect for the environment to the education of children, with meetings such as **"Boys will be boys?"**, **"Trans-cendent: Embracing inclusive gender expression beyond tokenism or issue books"**, **"Where the Boys Are: The Right Books Can Make Them Heroes"** and **"In search of a literature free from stereotypes: the European G-BOOK projects"**.

For the first time, this year **the topic of sustainability in the publishing industry** has been added to the debate lineup: **"Sustainability Summit - Taking Stock and Reviewing the Roadmap to a Sustainable Future in the Book Industry"** is the event organised jointly by the Bologna Children's Book Fair and BolognaBookPlus that will involve representatives of the world publishing industry in a dialogue about strategies and visions for the future. The **"Focus on the SDG Book Club"** will concentrate attention on the 17 United Nations goals.

Sustainability is also at the centre of the BolognaRagazzi Awards as a special award category in 2025: the large number of high-quality entries received has made it necessary to set up **The BRAW Amazing Bookshelf - Sustainability: 17 Goals for a Better Future**, a selection of the 150 most deserving books submitted, organised in collaboration with the United Nations, at whose headquarters in New York the exhibition will be displayed at the beginning of 2026.

AFRICA AND MINORITIES

The intense scouting activity that BCBF carries out through its events in Bologna, and even more so through its Grand Tour of the main book fairs around the world, has long been turning its attention to emerging markets and minority publishing. After the three-year experience of Spotlight on Africa, the space through which the Bologna Children's Book Fair promoted the participation of 100 African publishers at the fair, the BCBF's commitment has now turned to training in the field of illustration. Supporting African talents and providing them with opportunities to emerge on the international scene in Bologna is the objective of **The "Make-a-Picturebook" Project**, an illustration course created by the Bologna Children's Book Fair in collaboration with Lola Shoneyin (Author, Publisher and Director of the Book Buzz Foundation) and curated by Mimaster Illustrazione. At the end of the initiative the two best projects will be presented at the fair in The Illustrators Survival Corner, where the winner of the two will be announced: the prize being the publication of their work by Tanja Books, an imprint of Ouida Books (Nigeria) for children's titles.



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Since its inception BCBF has always been committed to unearthing and promoting emerging illustrators. For the 2025 edition the Bologna Children's Book Fair has selected some of the best young international illustrators whom it met and awarded during its international tour 2024, and will involve them in a discussion at the fair on the theme of artistic and creative work in very different cultural contexts. Participants will include: the Chinese artist Heimi (winner of The Golden Pinwheel Young Illustrators Competition, an initiative by the China Shanghai International Children's Book Fair, which is co-organised by BCBF), the Mexican artist Mariana Alcántara (awarded the new Bologna Portfolio Award at the Guadalajara Fair), the Thai artist Lychee Chai (selected by BCBF at the BKKIF in Bangkok) and the artists on the course for African illustrators organised by BCBF Barbara Chiamaka Chukwu and Kayode Onimole.

The events focusing on the theme of borders will also be held again. The success of these events in past editions shows that the topic is still relevant: **"Thousands of Roots, One Shared World: The Strength of Diverse Voices in Children's Books"** and **"Bridges of Literature: How Books Cross Borders Between Latin America, Spain, and Italy"**.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Artificial Intelligence is increasingly at the centre of public and political debate worldwide, particularly in the publishing sector. A focus on this topic, addressing both challenges and opportunities, was therefore essential. The **AI Summit**, organized by BBPlus, will discuss copyright protection, creative work, and the development of specific regulations, on which numerous institutions and international organizations are working. At the same time, it will explore the opportunities this tool offers the industry to enhance or simplify processes such as distribution and targeting.

COMICS

Comics for children and teenagers continue to play a leading role among the latest developments in children's publishing. While the recent figures on the sharp decline in comics after years of exponential growth have caused surprise, it should be noted that the drop concerns almost only manga (-9%)*, while sales of graphic novels for the very young segment continue to grow. Comic books and graphic novels are therefore back at the centre of the debate at BCBF and its Comics Corner, the business and exhibition area for specialised and non-specialised publishers, created in 2022 in response to the notable growth in this sector.

Each year BCBF organises a comprehensive schedule of meetings and events for this sector, and once again this year topical issues and new trends will be explored. These include: an international overview of **comics in schools**, in which publishers from four very different countries (Brazil, Italy, the USA and the Philippines) will discuss the early readers situation and how this segment of publishing can be deployed in schools to create new readers; likewise there will be a focus on **comics in museums**, a valuable learning tool for children and young people that benefits both publishers and young readers; a reflection on how hot topics such as **identity, bodies and feminism** are addressed in fiction comics for children and middle-grade readers, both from the point of view of the imaginary and of editorial opportunities and choices. Then there is comics for **teens and young adults**, with a comparison of three of the main international independent publishers (Fantagraphics, Atrabile and Reprodukt) that are increasingly using experimental and contemporary approaches to address a readership of adolescents. Attention will also turn to production in countries outside the traditional markets for comics, which are showing signs of new experimentation: on the one hand the **Baltic countries**, a tribute to Estonia, 2025 Country Guest of Honour, and on the other **South**



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America. After the golden age of the 50s and 70s, four publishers from four different countries in the area will talk about the current scene, including new challenges, the relationship with tradition and publishing trends.

Finally, there will be a tribute celebrating the 50th birthday of **Pimpa**, featuring **Altan** himself as well as other authors who will talk about the impact that the polka-dotted character has had on them as cartoonists and comic book readers. Celebrations are also planned for the 80th anniversary of **Italy's Liberation**, a theme that has long featured in the education of young children, and for which comics are an important vehicle.

Among the most eagerly awaited guests in this central section are **Nikolaus Heidelbach** and **Ole Könnecke**, two of the greatest contemporary exponents of the genre, authors of the BRAW winning book in the Comic Early Reader section.

* data from the Italian Publishers Association (2024)



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