

City of Barcelos—Creativity during the Covid-19 Pandemic

The city of Barcelos is located in the Northwest of Portugal, with about 120,000 inhabitants, and 61 parishes dispersed around approximately 380 km², mostly situated in a rural territory.

Barcelos emerged in the national history during the twentieth century, deeply connected to the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela. Privileged landscape, unique cultural, patrimonial, and demographic characteristics, as well as the heterogeneity of crafts and folk arts still remain today as prominent contributors to the city's territorial balancing and development.

The local economy is based on the traditional textile industry that employs roughly half of the local working population. Also, the crafts activity is a permanent occupation for roughly eight percent of the working population, with a considerable percentage working as a second job. Finally, Barcelos is well known for its mixed farming activities—the city is the largest national milk producer, and also strongly dedicated to wine making,



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producing the famous Vinho Verde.

Since 2017, the city has become an active member of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network in the field of Crafts and Folk Arts. To substantiate this membership, the city has been actively involved in or commenced several activities and programs to support the craftsmanship and preserve the knowledge and heritage that drive Barcelos' artisanal community.

In this current publication of the *International Journal of Crafts and Folk Arts*, we would like to briefly introduce some of the works that have been done in our city in 2020/2021, particularly concerning the measures we have implemented to cope with Covid-19 pandemic, as presented next:

- The Operational Support System to Support the Craftsmanship Community is a program that has already benefited 16 artisans and provides support limited to a maximum amount of 2,500 euros in equipment, machinery, raw materials, and other structures essential to the crafts activity. Individual artisan and/or production unit can apply and benefit from this support every two years.
- The Craftsmanship Incentive System for Crafts and Folk Arts is a program supporting the participation of artisans in fairs and exhibitions, and aims to create new distribution circuits and boost both national and international recognition of Barcelos handicrafts.
- Micro Handicraft Fairs took place every Thursday of August and September in 2020. In 2021, the event took place every Thursday from the first of July until September.
- Promotional videos: *Discovering Barcelos* (2020, <https://55secrets.com/guia-de-viagem-barcelos/>) is a film focused on the local tourism potential, sustainability, creativity, ecotourism and experiences, as the basis for local tourist development.
- In March 2021, Barcelos produced "We Create Hope," a video that aims to raise the awareness for the various issues that artisans and creators are facing due to the COVID-19 pandemic (<https://en.unesco.org/creative-cities/events/barcelos-supports-its-creators-through-we-create-hope-campaign>).
- Workshops of creative experiences took place between July and October, and during Christmas season in 2020, in order to facilitate the interactions



© Barcelos Municipality—Ceramic rooster painting creative workshop

between general public and local artisans. These workshops have started again since June in 2021.

- Barcelos celebrated the World Tourism Day in 2020, with various activities, such as creative workshops, a virtual conference about creative tourism, a tour to the Wonderful World of Imagery, and the workshop entitled “One work, 7 arts...” that allowed participants to co-create with local craftsmen in various craft activities.
- On Pilgrim’s Day, October 13, 2020, the city of Barcelos challenged all pilgrims on the Portuguese Way of Santiago to paint their own Rooster at the Tourist Office and Medieval Tower.
- Christmas Market opened in December of 2020, exhibiting local traditions and allowing visitors to communicate directly with local wine producers as well as master craftsmen of all local renowned handicraft productions. Through this event, the city contributed to boosting and supporting the activities of more than 40 artisans during the pandemic. This market is expected to return in 2021.

- Barcelos provided financial support to local craftsmen in 2020, through the municipal acquisition of handicraft pieces from 50 artisans or crafts units (€800,000). These objects are being allocated to several exhibitions in commercial spaces across the country, boosting the local craftsmanship in the business dynamics.

In short, the actions above have been aimed to symbolically raise awareness on the different challenges that are being faced by the city's artisans and creators during the COVID-19 pandemic. The city of Barcelos also acknowledges that supporting these key cultural and creative values is of utmost importance to its local community. The efforts do not only concern the preservation of national culture, but also promote its safeguarding and communication to future generations.

Barcelos Creative City Team