

Biella, ITALY



The Main Action Plans of Biella

Biella joined the UNESCO Creative Cities Network in the field of Crafts and Folk Art, at the end of 2019. “Arts and crafts” are an essential part of Biella’s traditional heritage, which is inextricably linked to the wool textile production. During the application process, Biella and its territory have become increasingly aware of the richness of its resources. Becoming a UNESCO Creative City has been a driver for the transformation of Biella from a district of clusters to a creative and cultural ecosystem, especially because it allows to find scenarios and unprecedented opportunities for growth and collaboration, starting from its own cultural field of reference.

The main action plans of Biella Creative City are: **Weave Memory**, to strengthen the creation, production, distribution and dissemination of cultural activities, goods and services: starting from the extraordinary Biella’s intangible and tangible heritage (i.e. archives of Made in Italy brands), the realization of a double “high-tech space/portal” in the city dedicated to information on wool and fashion design; **Weave Talent**, to develop hubs of creativity and innovation and broaden opportunities for creators and professionals in the cultural sector: scholarships for university students from network cities and courses dedicated to sustainable design; **Weave Territory**, to fully integrate culture and creativity into local development strategies and plans: recovery of the architectural heritage in urban settings (abandoned buildings in the city center), improved accessibility and valorization of human capital (advanced training courses in hospitality and territorial marketing); **Weave Relations**, Biella is going to provide Keetmanshoop, the leading center of the wool-producing region

of Namibia, with training (workshops in Biella for Namibian operators) and a mentorship for its future application in field of crafts and folk art; **Weave Future**, to organize a biennial forum dedicated to sustainability, urban development, textile production processes and the impact of the final products on health. Implementation of R&D oriented towards the UN SDGs; and **Weave Art&Enterprise**, to host worldwide creative talents and artists, participating in and conducting workshops, meetings and forums with businesses, stakeholders and students.

During 2023, the 39th World Federation of Master Tailors Congress was held in Biella, hosting global tailoring excellence with 270 worldwide master tailors. The event, held from July 31 to August 5, 2023, featured remarkable fashion parades in the historic city center, where the master tailors received prestigious awards (Golden Thimble, Golden Chalk and Golden Scissor). This international gathering, supported by institutional partners like Federmoda, Confartigianato, UIB, and the Piedmont Region, involved key local textile companies offering guided tours and exhibitions. Tailoring, as a pillar of the textile industry, fosters a vital connection between customers and textile culture. With the participation of high-level professionals from 34 countries, the Congress focused on sustainability and offered first-hand experiences of Biella's textile excellence.



The 2023 edition of the Biella Creative Cities Forum, with the theme “Values and Culture of Water and Environment,” is dedicated to sustainable creativity, a key concept that integrates three strong and relevant trends in the Biella district on a global scale in an innovative and distinctive way: Industry, crafts, local activities; Environment; and Alpine City (operational network with the Alpine Convention).

Two days of discussion on environment, soil protection, climate change, water culture and landscape design also meant dealing with the complexity of the “water” element, addressing the issue of sustainability in ecological-environmental, economic, and ethical terms.



The Forum was attended by representatives of industry, universities, associations, schools, and architects. Special guests included Nathalie Morelle (Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention) and Georg Kaser (Professor of Climate and Cryosphere Research and Member of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change). A special mention goes to Giovanni Soldini, Ambassador for the Safeguard of the Oceans. As a member of the Alpine Cities Network, Biella had the honor of welcoming Reinhold Messner, a renowned mountaineer whose legacy is closely tied to sustainability and respect for the environment.

There was a significant participation from local businesses committed to green and sustainable production conversion, and they showcased the richness of creativity in Biella. The panel dedicated to Creative Cities was introduced by the Italian Ministry of Environment and Energy and

proved to be valuable and inspiring for the Creative Cities present: Carrara, Fabriano, Como, Pesaro, and Paducah. The recordings are now available on the YouTube channel of the city of Biella.

The Forum was accompanied by various surrounding initiatives, including a fashion show featuring a Dubai-based tailor, the launch of a school contest with awards scheduled for 2024, the exhibition of images of Keetmanshoop (Namibia), and other events throughout the city.



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