

IBBY 39TH INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS

“JOIN THE REVOLUTION! GIVING EVERY CHILD GOOD BOOKS”

The 39th Congress of IBBY, the non-profit organisation founded in 1953 by Jella Lepman and now present in 84 countries to promote literature and reading as an engine of change, is about to begin in Trieste.

More than 630 delegates are expected from all over the world.

The **39th Congress of IBBY- the International Board on Books for Young People**, the non-profit organisation founded in Zurich in 1953 by Jella Lepman, is about to begin. Jella Lepman was a journalist and writer born in Stuttgart in 1891 to a Jewish family who emigrated to England in 1936 to escape Nazi persecution. At the end of World War II, however, she returned to Germany, where she came to the conclusion that in order to rebuild the conscience of a country to counteract the despondency, sadness and lack of prospects left by Nazism, the most urgent task was to give women and children not only bread and clothes, but also ‘food for thought’ – books from all over the world that would help cultivate respect for foreigners and curiosity about that which is different.

To this end, she set up the Internationale Jugendbibliothek (International Youth Library) in Munich and, with the help of Astrid Lindgren, Lisa Tetzner and Erich Kästner, founded IBBY, which today consists of 84 national sections worldwide, representing countries with well-developed publishing and literacy programmes and others with just a few dedicated professionals performing pioneering work in publishing and the promotion of children’s books.

The Congress, which takes place every two years and is hosted alternately by one of the member countries, will be held **from 30 August to 1 September in Trieste**, where 630 delegates from 65 different countries are expected to attend. **This is Italy’s third time hosting the event:** the first was in Florence in 1958 and the second in Bologna in 1970, when Gianni Rodari was awarded the Hans Christian Andersen Prize, considered the foremost accolade for Children’s Literature.

Now it is the turn of Trieste, the capital of the Friuli Venezia Giulia region and one of Italy’s most active in promoting books and reading for children and young adults, also thanks to the regional administration’s LeggiAMO 0-18 initiative to promote reading among boys and girls from birth, actively involving schools, libraries, families and the entire community. Trieste was chosen not solely due to the city’s status as regional capital, but also for the fact that it has been recognised by CEPELL as a ‘City that Reads’ and by UNESCO as a ‘Learning City’. Trieste, in fact, boasts a rich cultural and literary tradition and a multicultural community, all bolstered by a substantial network of libraries, the presence of prestigious international scientific institutions – some of which are active in the dissemination and promotion of reading (OGS) and research on the brain and reading (SISSA) – as well as publishing houses for children and young people, not to mention organisations such as the Centre for Children’s Health, which organises targeted projects and programmes like *Nati per Leggere* (Born to read). Trieste is also a city that has witnessed all the horrors and tragedies that IBBY founder Jella Lepman hoped future

generations would be spared, but as a border city it has also seen the benefits that dialogue and mutual understanding can bring. The event has been put together thanks to the support of the co-organising institutional partners: **CEPELL-Centre for Books and Reading of the Italian Ministry of Culture**, the **Friuli Venezia Giulia Regional Administration** and the **Municipality of Trieste**.

The slogan chosen for the 2024 edition – “Join the revolution! Giving every child good books” – is a rallying call but also an act of courage during difficult times, in which good books can make a difference in fostering international understanding and helping the youngest children in particular to imagine different, fairer worlds for all.

After the official welcomes and a performance by the Piccoli Cantori and the Coro Giovanile della Città di Trieste (Trieste City Youth Choir), the conference will be opened on Friday 30 August by **Michael Rosen**, British novelist and poet specialised in writing children’s stories and the author of the classic of children’s literature ‘*We’re Going on a Bear Hunt*’, who will offer participants a reflection on ‘Literature as an engine of change’. Also scheduled to give a talk that morning is **Roberto Piumini**, chairman of the Scientific Committee, pedagogist, lecturer, actor and author. And at the end of the Congress on Monday 2 September, thanks to the precious collaboration of the **Miela Theatre** that has made its premises available as a venue, the same **Roberto Piumini** will be offering a performance of “*Alzati, Martin! Ballata di Martin Luther King*”, to the city’s children and young people (recommended age: 10 and over). Tickets can be booked directly on the theatre’s website (<https://www.miela.it/spettacoli/139033/>).

Ahead of the Congress, **the exhibition ‘Jella Lepman - Let us begin with children. Books as bridges’**, promoted by IBBY Italia, will be inaugurated **on Wednesday 28 August at 5 pm in Sala Veruda**. Thanks to the Goethe-Institut in Rome, this event will also feature a reading by Locomotavia Audiolibri of “*The Animals’ Conference*” by Erich Kästner, a novel born from an idea by Jella Lepman and largely written at the first premises of the Jugendbibliothek in Munich. On the evening of Thursday 29 August, the Friuli Venezia Giulia Regional Administration will be hosting a welcome concert: at 9.30 pm in the Miela Theatre, conference participants will be able to enjoy a **tribute to Ennio Morricone**.

The complete Congress programme is available at www.ibbycongress2024.org.
Press info: Fabiana Martini +39 328 1884540