

Norway as Guest of Honour at Bologna Children's Book Fair 2026

Norway is honoured to be Guest of Honour at BCBF 2026, the world's leading meeting place for children's and young adult literature. This unique role gives an exceptional opportunity to share the richness, diversity, and artistic strength of Norwegian stories and illustration with an international audience.

A World of Stories, Pictures and Imagination

At the heart the Norwegian Guest of Honour programme lies the question "What if?"; a simple phrase that opens up a whole world of imagination, curiosity, and courage and that invites us to turn familiar ideas on their head:

What if up were down?

What if outside were inside?

What if I were you?

This reflects a fundamental spirit in Norwegian literature and illustration for children and young people: a drive to question, explore and imagine without limits. The approach reflects values that are deeply rooted in Norwegian society: democracy, freedom of expression, equality and trust. The literature is founded on the belief that children are independent individuals with their own thoughts, feelings and perspectives – and that they deserve artistic expressions that take them seriously.

Norwegian children's and YA literature is bold, creative and honest. Authors and illustrators play with form and content, break boundaries, and confront both humour and seriousness with equal openness. The literature is rooted in a strong tradition of engaging young readers with themes of identity, belonging, curiosity and the natural world. It doesn't tell children what to think – it invites them to ask "What if...?", and to explore answers for themselves.

NORLA's programme

NORLA is developing both a professional and a literary programme to be presented in Bologna in April 2026.

At the BCBF grounds, NORLA and its collaborators will present an extensive rich **programme for industry professionals**, featuring themes such as inspiring children to read, reading literacy, translation, Sámi literature and illustration. The programme will take place both on the fair's official stages and at Norway Café, the stage located within the Norwegian stand.

NORLA is also delighted to introduce all nine authors and illustrators participating in *New Voices*, a talent development programme launched in the lead-up to Bologna 2026.

Across the city of Bologna, there will be a wide-ranging **literary programme** open to the public and presented in Italian. NORLA will bring 23 authors and illustrators to take part, among them Maria Parr, Øyvind Torseter, Stian Hole and Maja Lunde. The events will take place at Salaborsa and its branches, as well as MAMbo, Cineteca di Bologna and KiloWatt.

Exhibitions

Several exhibitions will take place during the fair

- What If - the main Norwegian illustration exhibition at the BCBF fairgrounds - showcases works by 49 Norwegian illustrators. The selection has been curated by a jury of illustrators chaired by Bologna Ragazzi Award winner Øyvind Torseter. Daily guided tours lead by Norwegian illustrators will take place throughout the fair.
- At the Scuderie at Salaborsa, a smaller exhibition will be on display, featuring one illustration by each of the 49 artists included in the main exhibition.
- At Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna (MAMbo) an exhibition will highlight the work of authors and illustrators Kari Stai, Kristin Roskifte and Bologna Ragazzi Award winner Stian Hole. The exhibition will be accompanied by workshops with the artists, which MAMbo will continue to run during the month following BCBF.
- Grafill - the Norwegian organisation for visual communication - will present the award-winning titles from the 2025 editions of the competitions Most Beautiful Books and Most beautiful Illustrated Books. A total of 52 books will be showcased, offering an outstanding overview of the year's finest Norwegian achievements in book design and illustration. The exhibition will be on display at the fair.

Special Events

During BCBF Norway will host three separate events in Bologna, for Italian students studying the Norwegian language, literary translators of Norwegian to Italian and Italian booksellers. These events are by invitation.

The complete programme is available at bologna2026.com

The BCBF 2026 Guest of Honour project is carried out by NORLA - Norwegian Literature Abroad.

Partners

The project conducted by NORLA and funded by The Norwegian Ministry of Culture and Equality, The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and also with the support of The Norwegian Publishers' Association, Norwegian Writers for Children and The Norwegian Non-Fiction Writers and Translators Association.

About NORLA - Norwegian Literature Abroad

NORLA works to advance the export of Norwegian literature through active promotion and by offering a range of funding schemes for the translation of books from Norway. Financed by the Norwegian Ministry of Culture, the organisation disseminates information about books and authors from Norway internationally.

NORLA was founded in 1978 and since 2004 has contributed to the translation of more than 9,000 Norwegian books into no less than 81 languages. NORLA was responsible for organising and delivering Norway's Guest of Honour presentation at the Frankfurt Book Fair 2019, working in close collaboration with the Norwegian and German book industries, as well as foundations, organisations and institutions from both the private and public sectors.

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