

by Laurian Davies MBE, International Business Manager, UKFT (UK Fashion & Textile Association)

Pitti Bimbo, the international junior fashion and accessories exhibition, is held in January and June at the ancient and splendid 16th Century Fortezza da Basso. Strategically located in the historic city centre, near the Santa Maria Novella main railway station, the original buildings have been sympathetically restored, new pavilions have been added in recent years, and it is now the principal congress and exhibition venue for Florence and Central Italy – see <http://www.firenzefiera.it/en/our-venues/fortezza-da-basso>

For the fourth season in recent years, UKFT has had Tradeshow Access Programme (TAP) grants (See Note ¹ below) from the DIT (Department for International Trade) for eligible (see Note ² below) UK designers and brands exhibiting at Pitti Bimbo. At this edition of the show, a record 13 UK exhibitors showing, amongst other things, accessories, fashion collections, ethical babywear, upmarket party dresses and changing bags were approved for TAP grants.

The show is both child-friendly (children under 12 are not allowed on-site - instead there is a nursery and children's play area), and traveller-friendly (a capacious baggage store and cloakroom make it easy for buyers to get to work as soon as they arrive at the show). There is considerable free parking for buyers, and a series of free special buses bring in buyers from all the major Italian cities.

It's a really international show in terms of buyers. In June 2019 there were 10,000 visitors overall (this number includes agents, and Press) this includes 5,100 buyers from stores, shops, boutiques and online retailers in almost 80 countries. Buyer numbers were slightly down; given the economic climate this was anticipated.

The largest number of buyers from outside Italy came from Russia, followed by Spain, UK, Germany, Turkey, Belgium, France, China, Netherlands, Ukraine, Greece, USA, South Korea, Portugal, Kuwait, Poland, Japan, Austria, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

Pitti Bimbo is an excellent shop window, and as usual buying contingents came from prestigious retailers all over the world, including this season LG Little Bergdorf Goodman (New York), Smallable (France), Bosco de Cilegi (Moscow), Karrusella (Copenhagen), and Hankyu (Tokyo).

In total there were over 500 exhibitors. Again a very international crowd...the largest number from Italy, with large groups from Spain and France; 42 designers and brands were from the UK, 23 from the Netherlands and an increase in brands from the USA at 24.

UKFT does not block book space at this exhibition, but each UK brand (having first visited the show to see where they would best fit in) applies for space to the organisers and pays for it, at the same time applying to UKFT for a TAP grant.

Pitti Bimbo is spread over many different halls and buildings on the exhibition site, and includes exclusive individual private show rooms and chalets in which large brands stage their own mini-exhibitions. Emporio Armani chose a spectacular private roof-top showroom at Pitti Bimbo for the launch of their Junior ranges (Boys and Girls, 0 to 16 years). Dixie Kid, Minbanda and Sarabanda, Monnalisa and MC2 St Barth also choose the private showroom approach at Pitti Bimbo. Brands such as Alberta Ferretti, Dolce & Gabbana, Custo Barcelona and Twinset take large buildings or rooms within the fairground to put on their own exhibitions

June 19 saw a big change in the show layout. A new section, called **The Kid's Lab** was created on the top floor of the Central Pavilion; this brings together **KidzFIZZ, The Nest, Ecoethic, Kid's Evolution and #ACTIVELAB**. It was air conditioned, with a restaurant, and although there was initially some confusion amongst visitors, bringing these sections together made a lot of sense.

KidzFIZZ - The Pitti Bimbo concept lab for the most creative collections, such as Arsene et les Pipilettes, The Bonnie Mob (UK), Frugi (UK), Holly Hastie (UK), Mini Rodini, Oh Baby!, Donsje Amsterdam, Holly Hastie (UK), Dotty Dungarees (UK),

The Nest: – Small independent brands and up and coming collections; the section was much smaller this season. Brands such as Hannah & Tiff (UK), Ari London (UK).

Ecoethic

A small selection of ethical and responsible kidswear brands such as Bebe Bombom, Mini la Mode, Mori, and Kidsbury (all UK)

Kid's Evolution – the Pitti Bimbo area in which they highlight new and unusual brands such as Arthur Sleep (luxury slippers from the UK)

#ACTIVELAB:

Connecting the universes of sport and street, it include Loud Apparel (UK), It's in my Jeans (UK), Zombie Dash, Sproet & Sproet, Tiba + Marl (UK), Bella +Frank (UK).

Pitti Bimbo Central Pavilion, Lower Floor:

Prestigious international brands such as Aigner, Bardot Junior, Derhy Kids, Kissy Kissy, Michael Kors, Petit Bateau, Pretty Ballerinas (UK)

Pitti Bimbo Fashion at Work - Central Pavilion, Ground Floor:

Internationally known childrenswear brands and marques e.g.: David Charles (UK), Karl Lagerfeld, Special Day, Byblos, Tartine et Chocolat, Angel's Face (UK)

Pitti Bimbo Editorials – two large walls on the Lower Level of the Central Pavilion showcasing a sophisticated selection of objects and images supplied by the exhibitors. An area for inspiration.

Fancy Room: – Central Pavilion Lower Floor

100% Lifestyle design and accessories, from gadgets to technology. Brands e.g., Cute Cute, Nibbling, Rockahula Kids (all UK). Many brands here show through their agents or distributors.

Apartment - Lyceum 24 exhibitors (7 from the UK)

Luxury contemporary tailoring and sophisticated dressing for exclusive boutiques. Brands e.g.: Caramel, Hucklebones, Jem + Bea, Raspberry Plum Ltd, Belle Enfant (all UK)

Sport Generation - Cavaniglia Pavilion - Brands e.g. Chipie Shoes, Fabric Flavours (UK) , Sunuva (UK) Naf Naf, Moschino Baby Kid Teen Shoes, Minoti (UK), Emu Australia, Tom Joule (UK)

Superstreet – Padiglione della Ghiaia denim, street and urbanwear Brands: Blue Seven, Guess Kids, Petrol Industries, Odra, Parental Advisory, Someone Kids, Wheat

Pitti Bimbo 89 was a very successful event for most of the British exhibitors, many of whom were there for the first time. It is extremely important for an exhibitor not to rely solely on the promotional efforts made by Pitti Bimbo, and on its' international reputation to attract buyers to the show. They must make efforts themselves to let buyers know that they will be at the exhibition. Formal invitations are not expected these days, but interesting and thoughtful emails (including embedded thumbnail images) building up to the show, starting off with news of a general location and building up to a stand number really do encourage buyers to visit a specific stand. UKFT can help with this.

What did a selection of the British exhibitors say about the show?

“We made really good contacts” A babywear and layette company

A regular exhibitor of baby and party wear, and a seasoned exporter said “everyone keeps telling us that the tradeshow scene is dead, but we would disagree. We think we know all the major players in the market, but we always meet really interesting and solid new retailers at Pitti Bimbo, which is why we keep coming back!”

“To showcase in front of superior buyers is invaluable, both in terms of direct orders, and for brand exposure for future seasons” Daywear and party wear

“We made contact with a key European store, which would be a perfect fit for us, as well as meeting some Spanish and Italian stores. We also had some good magazine contacts that should improve awareness of our brand worldwide” Knits and wovens for babies and toddlers

Another regular Pitti Bimbo exhibitor said of the January show, and echoed these thoughts this season, “We made the decision to move from one section to a completely different one, which we felt would have more brand adjacencies for us. It was the right thing to do, and it just goes to show that you should always be aware of the way that buyer traffic is changing within a large exhibition – don’t just stick to one area because the organisers put you there – walk the show with your eyes open!”

The Brits in Florence group of 42 companies was promoted by UKFT through targeted mailings of the exhibitor list and a link to the Brits in Florence Pitti Bimbo video of images from the participating companies See <https://www.ukft.org/export/export-essentials/brits-around-the-world/event/pitti-bimbo-childrenswear/>

Dates for the next event are 16 – 18 January 2020. Pitti Bimbo is a “juried” show - this means that each brand is selected, and the organisers have to really want you there. To get space you will need to make a strong application which showcases your brand or collection, and your company. To apply for a stand, apply direct to the Technical Committee of Pitti Bimbo email: ct.bimbo@pittimmagine.com

Competition for certain areas is stiff, and not every company which applies is accepted. If you are new to the show, we can help you through the application process, with notes on how the Pitti Bimbo show and the application process works, and support all the way through to your show debut.

If you are planning to show for the first time, please email Laurian Davies Laurian.davies@ukft.org or call 020 7843 9460.

To apply for a TAP reimbursement grant to help with your costs for Pitti Bimbo, please email Laurian Davies for the grant application forms Laurian.davies@ukft.org. This must be done at least 3 months in advance of the next exhibition.

Notes:

1. The **DIT TAP grant**. The Tradeshow Access Programme is funded by the Department for International Trade, and grants for the fashion and textile sector are administered by UKFT. The grant for this exhibition was £1200 per UK-based company, payable as a reimbursement on proof of payment after the event. TAP grants are available exclusively through UKFT, and applications should be made as soon as a company begins the process of applying for a stand. A company is entitled to 6 TAP grants in the lifetime of the company.
2. **TAP grants** are available to UK-based SMEs. The DIT Definition of an SME (Small or Medium Sized Enterprise) in summary:-
 - a) Has fewer than 250 employees
 - b) Has an annual turnover not exceeding 50m Euros, or an annual balance sheet total not exceeding 43m Euros
3. NB. DIT reserves the right to review the eligibility of businesses that are distinct and independently operated, but are part of or owned by an organisation itself larger than an SME.
3. **UKFT (UK Fashion & Textile Association)** is the trade association for the UK fashion and textile industries. UKFT is financed by the industry, and is the largest industry sector user of TAP grants from DIT, with the highest ROI per £1 of government money spent on the TAP scheme.

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