

# EUROPEAN SEMINAR: CIRCUS ARTS, A TOOL FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION

Brussels, 1 - 2 July 2014



## Caravan - European network of social and youth circus organisations

Caravan is a network gathering 12 circus organisations from 12 different countries in Europe. From Romania to Ireland, from Finland to Spain and from Russia to France, Czech Republic, Sweden, Luxembourg, Belgium, United Kingdom or The Netherlands, Caravan has members all around Europe.

Caravan promotes circus arts to create positive personal, community and social change.



## From the Seminar to the Guidebook on social circus

The European seminar: circus arts, a tool for social inclusion aimed at promoting social circus in Europe and beyond. The objective was to showcase the result of the European project called Circus Trans Formation, which led to the creation of the first European programme for social circus trainers.

The Guidebook for Social Circus trainers was presented during a press conference at Brussels Press Club Europe on 2 July 2014. The guidebook will be soon available on the Caravan's website.



With the financial support of



## Caravan researches on social circus

Caravan has been promoting and developing the social circus field for several years. Since 2011, 2 large scale researches have been carried out in partnership with 2 universities and 8 Caravan members. Thanks to the financial support of the European Commission, those two projects have led to a better recognition of circus arts as an outreach tool for social inclusion.

For more info, look up on the Caravan's website - publication :

- [Framework of competences](#)
- [Circus Trans Formation](#)

# European seminar - international speakers!

During 2 days, professionals and amateurs in circus arts, coordinators of European networks along with local, national and European political representatives and university researchers exchanged views on how further develop the social circus sector in order to increase its benefits for the young people with fewer opportunities in Europe and beyond.

More than 15 countries were represented, among which France, Finland, Romania, Czech Republic, Cambodia, Afghanistan, Madagascar, Ethiopia and Canada,...

Round tables, press conference, workshops, informal networking and exchanges in a friendly atmosphere and a social circus show were the ingredients of this European social circus seminar!

European seminar Circus arts, a tool for social inclusion 1-2 July 2014 - Brussels		
<p><b>Tuesday 1 July</b> <i>Place: Ecole de Cirque de Bruxelles (11, rue Picard, 1000-Brussels)</i> <i>Ringmaster - Pierre Viatour</i></p> <p><b>09h00-09h30</b> Registration, Coffee and Welcome <b>09h30-09h45</b> Opening speech <b>Vincent Wauters</b>, Director, Ecole de Cirque de Bruxelles</p> <p><b>09h45-11h30</b> <u>Working session and exchange of good practices:</u> Caravan members' experiences using circus as a tool for social inclusion</p> <p><b>11h30-12h00</b> Coffee break <b>12h00-13h30</b> <u>Roundtable followed by open discussion on the needs for social circus:</u> Between the social work and the circus field: which interactions for which needs? Moderator : <b>Stephen Cadwell</b> <b>David Mason</b>, MMCC - International, Afghanistan <b>Virginie Lavenant</b>, Director, Chapito Metisy, Madagascar <b>Lisa Jorgensen</b>, Etnoartes Asociacion Civil, Peru <b>Delphine Biquet</b>, Researcher, Belgium</p> <p><b>13h30-15h00</b> Lunch</p> <p><b>15h00-16h45</b> <u>Roundtable followed by open discussion on the impact of social circus in Europe and beyond:</u> Cross sectoral studies between field work and university research Moderator : <b>Stephen Cadwell</b> <b>Riikka Åstrand</b>, Researcher, Finland <b>Ella Berkovich</b>, Collectif clowns d'ailleurs et d'ici, Cambodia <b>Steven Desanghere</b>, Circusplaneet, Belgium <b>René Hildesheim</b>, Mr Poehaa, Holland <b>Giorgia Giunta</b>, Fekat Circus, Ethiopia</p> <p><b>16h45-17h30</b> "Apéro sur un fil": Tighrope workshop <b>17h30-18h00</b> Surprise <b>18h30-20h00</b> Dinner : Moroccan specialities</p>	<p><b>Wednesday 2 July</b></p> <p><b>09h20-10h15</b> Walk through the European district <i>Meeting outside the Metro station "Trone" (Luxembourg street) at 9h20</i></p> <p><b>10h15-12h30</b> <u>Press conference :</u> Presentation of <b>Circus Trans Formation</b> project at the <i>Press Club (95 rue Froissart, 1040 Brussels)</i> <b>Eleférios Kechagioglou</b>, President of Caravan <b>Piia Karkkola</b>, Sorin Sirkus <b>Laurent Beauthier</b>, Development manager of Caravan</p> <p><b>12h30-14h30</b> Lunch <i>Place: Ecole de Cirque de Bruxelles (11, rue Picard, 1000-Brussels)</i></p> <p><b>14h30-15h00</b> <u>Presentation of the Curriculum for social circus trainers</u> <b>Adeline Dubois</b>, pedagogical coordinator of Circus Trans Formation</p> <p><b>15h00-16h30</b> <u>Round tables:</u> The challenges for the development of training programmes and the trainers' professionalisation <b>Karine Lavoie</b>, Senior advisor, Cirque du Soleil <b>Katerina Flora</b>, pedagogical coordinator, Le Plus Petit Cirque du Monde</p> <p><b>16h30-17h00</b> Closing speech</p> <p><b>17h00-18h00</b> Last drink at the Farmhouse <b>Contact: info@caravancircusnetwork.eu</b></p>	

# Summary of the presentations

Tuesday 1 July at Ecole de Cirque de Bruxelles

## Caravan member's experiences using circus as a tool for social inclusion

- *Henny Diebels, Circus Elleboog, Amsterdam, The Netherlands*

Circus Elleboog was created in 1949 and, since then, has been working on social circus. Its motto is: « Give children a safe environment where trust, respect and encouragement are the ingredients ». Circus Elleboog is located in a area where there are lower-class children. Circus Elleboog offers activities for children from various backgrounds, disabled people, abused women and homeless youngsters.

Example of social circus project: a school project with youngsters who experienced social exclusion. The project helped them to break barriers, try new thing, collaborate with others. It led to greater self-confidence in physical and emotional aspects.

The Circus Trans Formation national training session of Circus Elleboog took place in a refugee camp.

[www.elleboog.nl](http://www.elleboog.nl)



- *Adrien Godard, Le Plus Petit Cirque du Monde, Bagneux/Paris, France*

Le Plus Petit Cirque du Monde (PPCM) was created in 1992 by Daniel Forget who is today the President. To create the PPCM, Daniel was helped by the people of the neighborhood of Les Blagis, which is a disadvantaged area. It is a human project linked to the territory. PPCM's motto is : « A tool to make people actors of their own life ». They want to meet their target public expectations and broadened their horizons by including to the circus activities, hip-hop, free running, slack line, freestyle foot,...



PPCM developed social circus actions in schools. The objectives are to give access to arts and culture during school time for children and youngsters from the neighborhood who have usually no activities outside school. Besides, there are also activities after the school time aiming at boosting the self development of the young people who are facing social difficulties (school failure, ...).

<http://www.lepluspetitcirquedumonde.fr>



- [Taina Kopra, director of Sorin Circus, Tampere, Finland](#)

Sorin Sirkus was founded in 1985. It is nominated as « national development and service centre for youth work » by the Ministry of Education and Culture. Among Sorin Sirkus's activities, there are basic education in circus arts, social circus actions, courses (summer camp, circus for babies,...), performing group (23 artists chosen by the director).

Sorin Sirkus wants to highlight: people are equals, help participants to find their own strengths, encourage them to excel and show them that they are cared about.

Sorin Sirkus started social circus activities in 2009. They got involved in 2 European Social Fund projects coordinated by Tampere university (« Social Circus » from 2009 to 2011 and « Effective Circus » from 2011 to 2014). It was also part of the the European projects led by Caravan.



Social circus activities are targeting preschool groups, families with special support, occupational therapy, asperger class, special education classes, migrant classes, drug rehabilitation group, prisoners, etc.

[www.sorinsirkus.fi](http://www.sorinsirkus.fi)



- [Will Chamberlain, director of Belfast Community Circus School, Belfast, UK](#)

Belfast Community Circus School (BCCS) was established in 1985 thanks to the enthusiasm and generosity of Donal McKendry and Mike Moloney who found themselves introducing community circus to Northern Ireland during a time when there was a desperate need for positive shared experiences for young people for different communities.

BCCS acts not only as a vehicle for teaching children and young people in some of the most needy communities in Northern Ireland, but also as a training school for professional teachers and performers of circus arts. In addition, the Circus acts as a promoter for performers, in the form of Premiere Circus, and as a venue to host visiting and indigenous circus productions.

One example of social circus project:

This was a project made in the framework of a TV programme. They had the support of a psychologist. They didn't want to only focus on the time they had with the young people during the circus workshops but they also wanted to get deep into their lives, and understand what affected their lives.

[www.belfastcircus.org](http://www.belfastcircus.org)




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**For more information on the different projects organized by the members of Caravan, please visit Caravan's website and click on the links of each member.**

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## Round table I: The needs for social circus - between the social work and the circus field - which links for which needs ?

Moderator: Stephen Cadwell

Speakers: Delphine Biquet, Lisa Jorgensen, Virginie Lavenant, David Mason.

### • *Delphine Biquet, Performing arts as vehicle for youth empowerment, Palestine.*

In the framework of her Master's thesis, Delphine explored the topic of « circus arts as a tool for youth empowerment ». She visited the Palestinian Circus School, which was created in 2006. The results of her findings proved the empowerment benefits of social circus which is at the crossroads between performing arts and social intervention. It has artistic objectives along with social and educational objectives.

In the Palestinian context, social circus:

- is considered as a constructive hobby;
- brings hope and fosters self confidence;
- is a federating project;
- helps cultural resistance against the occupation;
- enhances a gradual social change in a traditional society.

For a full version of Delphine's thesis, please click on : [www.palcircus.ps/en/content/introduction](http://www.palcircus.ps/en/content/introduction) .

Contact details: [biquetdelphine@gmail.com](mailto:biquetdelphine@gmail.com).



### • *Lisa Jorgensen, Etnoartes, Peru*

Etnoartes is Peruvian non-profit organisation focusing on Education and Culture. It was created in 2005. Peru is facing various social challenges such as the consequences of the conquests, genocide and subsequent marginalization of native and mestizo population.



One of the projects of Etnoartes is called « integral circus development program for youth at risk in the city of Lima ». It addresses:

- Identity : focus on Peruvian cultures (dance, drama,...)
- Skill development (acrobatics,...)
- Alienation issues: Circus serves as a place to hear and to be heard and provides circles of friendship
- Opportunities to work

[www.circoetno.com](http://www.circoetno.com)

- [Virginie Lavenant, L'Aléa des possibles, Madagascar](#)

L'Aléa des possibles is a French association created in 2004 by Virginie Lavenant. It has been established in Madagascar since 2007. The main activities are focussing on artistic education, teaching, creation and dissemination of circus arts. The objective of the association is to work on the human interconnections through the promotion of the world artistic and cultural diversity.

Festival « Zegny Zo », 2009

For more info, please visit : [www.aleadespossibles.fr](http://www.aleadespossibles.fr) or contact : [adpvirginie@gmail.com](mailto:adpvirginie@gmail.com).



- [David Mason, Mobile Mini Circus for Children, Afghanistan](#)



Mobile Mini Circus for Children (MMCC) was launched in 2002. The first motivation for the MMCC's co-directors (David Mason and Berit Muhlhausen) was to radically change the life of the children in Afghanistan, to offer them a better, more joyful, positive, social life experience and give them the childhood they had been deprived of after so many decades of war. The methodology used is actually to follow children's desires.

To get a full overview of David's presentation, please follow this link: <http://afghanmmcc.org/info.pdf>

Here are links to watch some MMCC's projects:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BBYEEt3upyQ>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sUTE5ob-6SQ>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FoazD39L9CY>

- [Questions from the audience](#)

*Here is one question answered among others*

**Question:** Coming from not a circus background, would you now be as much happy working with another vehicle?

**David Mason:** « There are different definitions of social circus. It's not *what* we do but *how* we do it. We do things *socialcircusly*. If you do thing *socialcircusly*, the same about singing, acting, etc... it can be social circus if you make it big and attractive. It's more an adjective to say magical, big and attractive! So everything can become social circus if you do it with this spirit! »

## Round table II: The impact of social circus - Cross sectoral studies between field work and university research

Moderator: Stephen Cadwell

Speakers: Ella Berkovich, Riikka Åstrand, Giorgia Giunta, Steven Desanghere, Rene Hildesheim

- [Ella Berkovich, Collectif Clowns d'Ailleurs et d'Ici/Phare Ponleu Selpak, France/Cambodia](#)

Phare Ponleu Selpak (PPS) is a Cambodian association using arts to answer children psycho-social needs. PPS' story, which means « the brightness of the arts », started in 1986 in a refugee camp on the Thai boarder.



PPS' actions are focused on 3 main fields:

- artistic and cultural activities;
- social support; and
- education.

PPS believes in the power of the arts as a tool for human development and social change. Focusing on arts, PPS intends to meet children social needs and to promote the Khmer culture by Khmers themselves. Everyday, PPS welcome around 1400 children.

Video on PPS : [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_zmP8rZJjAQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_zmP8rZJjAQ)

Video on Chandann: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fd8p2Xd144Q>

[www.phareps.org](http://www.phareps.org)

- [Riikka Åstrand, researcher, Finland](#)

Her study is called « I would become a hooligan if I hadn't join a circus ». Riikka interviewed people who participated in the activities of the Circus school of Suvela, near Helsinki, Finland. It is a complicated town with people with a lot of problems (alcohol, etc...). The circus school was founded in 1990 by a locally active person. What circus has done for the people attending its activities?

There are risk factors and protecting factors:

- Home, school and unorganized free time can be risk factors
- Circus turned out to be a positive factor

Why circus became a protecting factors ?

1. Social support
2. Support for problems at home
3. Positive effects at school
4. Support for teenage problems
5. Learning life skills

All the people interviewed became active. Everybody could join because it was cheap, accessible and no need for parental support. Circus makes it possible because there are a lot of different disciplines.

- [Giorgia Giunta, Fekat Circus, Ethiopia](#)

Fekat Circus was created by a group of young Ethiopian circus artists in Addis Ababa in 2004. Its intentions are to improve Ethiopian circus artists' living conditions by promoting circus arts, thereby acting as agents of social and physical development of the local community. Today it has 21 employees, most of them are former street children. Fekat Circus works with almost 60 children. It developed projects for young people and people with difficulties. Fekat Circus also sets awareness raising campaigns and promotes female education.

The story of Brahanu

Brahanu escaped from his family and lived in the street. He asked to live in a prison and he was accepted. Then he lived with an NGO. He was kicked out from a school where he used to live. He then knocked the door of Fekat. He gained confidence and self-esteem. He developed mental agility and concentration. He belongs now to a group, spreads joy and supports others. He found a role, a position.



[www.fekatcircus.com](http://www.fekatcircus.com)

- [Steven Desanghere, Circusplaneet, Belgium](#)

Circusplaneet is a circus school located in Ghent, Belgium. There are about 200 000 inhabitants including a lot of different nationalities.

Steven's words :

Diversity works! There is so much potential and energy! If you go to the schools, the children are begging to do circus or parkour. We wanted to make a contact between all the people that could be interested in working with circus. We felt the magic! Circus is a way of approaching kids -informal education. We also created open circus space. People from different nationalities don't talk to each other, they are afraid of each other. In this space, they realize that they can be together, that it is not dangerous. If you try hard to connect the kids, world will be better. Kids are teachers, heroes, and doing this you can create a revolution.

Video of a project led by Circusplaneet in the Ghent: <https://vimeo.com/99225000>

<http://www.circusplaneet.be>

- [René Hildesheim, Mr Poehaa, The Netherlands](#)

More than a long speech, images are meaningful. René showed a video of his project in Galilee. Here is the link : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5mFJxATzAE8>

[www.circusmrpoehaa-hildesheim.nl](http://www.circusmrpoehaa-hildesheim.nl)



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Wednesday 2 July

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## Press conference at the Brussels Press Club Europe

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- [Eleférios Kechagioglou, President of Caravan, director of Le Plus Petit Cirque du Monde](#)

Introduction on the values of social circus.

- [Piia Karkkola, Sorin Sirkus, Tampere, Finland](#)

Presentation of the research « Effective circus project » on the impact of social circus.

- ✦ Here is the link to the webpage presenting the project : <http://www.vaikuttavasirkus.fi/index.php?page=contact-information>
- ✦ Here is the link to the publications of the research: <http://www.vaikuttavasirkus.fi/index.php?page=publications>

- [Laurent Beauthier, Caravan, Brussels, Europe](#)

Presentation of the **Circus Trans Formation** project and of its result: « **A Guidebook for Social Circus Trainers** ».

- ✦ Here is the link to the presentation:  
[http://prezi.com/thxonyyibcm/?utm\\_campaign=share&utm\\_medium=copy](http://prezi.com/thxonyyibcm/?utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=copy)
- ✦ Here is the link to a description of Circus Trans Formation: <http://www.caravancircusnetwork.eu/assets/images/Circus%20Trans%20Formation/CTF-presentation%20paper-eng.pdf>

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## Presentation of the Guidebook for Social Circus Trainers at Ecole de Cirque de Bruxelles

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- [Adeline Dubois, pedagogical coordinator of Circus Trans Formation](#)

Adeline presented the 5 years of research, which led to the creation of the 1st European training programme for social circus trainers and, more specifically, the pedagogical development of Circus Trans Formation. The final outcome of this long research process is the publication of the **Guidebook for social circus trainers**. This guidebook represents a significant step forward in the field of training development for social circus.



## Round table : The challenges for the development of training programs and the trainer's professionalization

Moderators:

- Karine Lavoie, Cirque du Soleil, Montreal, Canada
- Katerina Flora, Le Plus Petit Cirque du Monde, Bagnaux/Paris, France

Here are some notes on the discussions that the participants had during the round table.

### **What are the challenges to create social circus training? To professionalize social circus ?**

The better you know about teaching skills, the more knowledge you have. There are a lack of goals and vision; a lack of qualified teachers, lack of recognition. Without the recognition, it is difficult to raise fund. There is a lack of visibility. It is not clear yet for the circus schools what could be the benefits for them.

### **Solutions**

- It would be great to have a guideline that would make the list of all the circus training programs and social circus training programs available, to have the name of the schools, projects, etc...
- A toolbox where everybody could drop their tools and share them.

### **Conclusion**

- Resources: material, money, space
- Teachers: theory/practice, training, distribution, motivate artists
- Professionalize: win, recognition, loose (heart opens), level/context
- Communicate with the outside world

### **Recommandations**

- Global campaign
- Endorsement (UNICEF, ONU)
- multimedia: documentation (films, internet, images) that goes outside the circus world and reach politicians, university,...
- Education in the universities, social workers,...



## Conclusion of the seminar

Moderator: Eleférios Kechagioglou

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All the participants were asked to give a short answer to 2 questions:

### 1. What is their conclusion on the seminar?

Social circus has a bright and international future - Social circus, a tool to reach one self - Soft revolution - New ideas, new projects, new people to create new possibilities and inspire our passion - Has been an intense experience (we need holidays) - To use social circus more seriously from tomorrow - Social circus has grown globally and its fantastic - It was fruitful and full of inspiration - Different people, different contexts, different periods, common belief - Today is happening and tomorrow is possible - The universality of social circus is now confirmed - Social circus has no borders - Exchange of experiences - If recognised and resourced, social circus can change the world for better! - The seminar revealed that international social circuses share a commonality and these gatherings are relevant and important - Beautiful meeting that creates a network - Celebrating the end of Circus Transformation process and opening up doors to new academic collaborations - The seminar allowed us to find new links, shared experiences, and how to connect it with the general circus and social sector - A continuous process into building a network and to make circus training recognised as a real profession - All the people have different context but the same motivation - Inspiration by meeting different realities and knowledge about every new kind of different projects - We have discovered a network of friends... a family for possible association, projects and development - Social Circus can be done in many ways and it works all over the world - We are at the beginning of the social and cultural revolution - Climbing from Mont-Blanc to Everest in the circus mountain range - Strength, inspirations, ideas, new inputs and envy to go on! - We are a smooth group, we recognize each other, we have a common work plan.

### 2. What would they do tomorrow, after this seminar?

Professionalization with heart - Keep on building and sleep - Start spreading social circus values - Rejuvenating - Spread the word, communicate better and more the impact of social circus - To find ways to continue connecting with social circus across the world - Think more « social-circusly » whatever you do - To start working for more visibility and knowledge of social circus - To be active in the field and to start a global campaign for the recognition of social circus - Continue work with renewed perspectives - Spread the word - Let's get involved and more ourselves - I'll perfect my methodology - Work from the start point to develop a common training project - To have annual meetings/seminars to keep contact, developing (together) and exchange experiences - Increase the awareness of social circus - I will start to study all these documents - To reach other mountains for the recognition and implementation of social circus - Worldwide network in the future and start a voluntary social circus to travel the world both performing and teaching - It would be great to continue organizing this kind of exchanges - Move, get in action and start to work on the new ideas I got during the conference - Action point: we will build and tell the story of social circus to the world - play, teach, learn, open - Keep on developing by networking and keep in touch with everybody - Social circus has universal influences - Start to work more on the visibility of social circus - Continue the exchanges in concrete to experiment.