

**SOCIAL**  
**EDUCATION**

**2014**  
**—**  
**2016**

# INTRO

Social Educircation is an international project for social circus trainers, funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union. The aim of the project is to improve the quality of teaching circus skills with a social relevance and enhancing the cooperation between the social work sector and contemporary circus.

There are seven partner organisations in the project, from seven different countries - Belgium, U.K., Germany, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Greece and Spain. Each country/organisation hosted a workshop in relevance to social circus, each one of them with a different, specific focus. Professional circus teachers and artists learned new skills and developed and shared existing skills, shared knowledge and experience within the network and beyond.



WORKSHOP TITLE:

# CIRCUS IN PRISON

HOST AND ORGANISER: Cirkus in Beweging

WORKSHOP LEADERS: WIM ORIS, physical theatre director and RIKA TAEYMANS, circus teacher with 2 years of experience inside the prison

June 2015, Leuven, Belgium

The benefits of practicing circus skills for prison inmates are self-explanatory to people into social circus: circus skills have the physicality of sports but are non-competitive. Coordination and balance develop, concentration capacities increase and so does self-confidence. And the most important aspect may be that prisoners are motivated and they gladly cooperate with each other: building a team is not at all a problem. Differences, grudges and tension dissolve in the pure joy of having fun together in a constructive way.

These benefits, however, were not that evident for the prison guards and the management in the WHAT prison of Leuven prior to the Educircation workshop, even though Cirkus in Beweging has been holding sessions there since September 2013 with the help and support of De Rode Antraciet, a non-profit organization bringing socio-cultural events to prisons and focusing on life after prison and social workers within the prison. It needed the presence of 12 international artists and a joint show with the prisoners for the staff and leadership to see the tip of the iceberg: how practicing circus can help prisoners move towards a future free of criminal record.

According to regulations, prisoners in Leuven are only allowed out of their cells 2 x 30 minutes a day. Together with Rode Antraciet and the prison social workers, Cirkus in Beweging managed to negotiate for an extension of that time. Meeting each other, learning together in a fun way brightens up any jailbird's day. For the duration of the circus sessions, they are able to forget about their existential crisis and all the problems around it. They feel self-identical and a part of something positive.

Prisoners have to be cooperative in order to be allowed any socio-cultural activities and also, they

can choose from a couple of activities. These preliminaries ensured that the participating prisoners were willing to take part. But some of things went a lot easier than anticipated. The constant presence of 12 artists from all over Europe have created an atmosphere where the prisoners opened up a lot more than at the usual weekly sessions. They were also open for acrobatics and yoga and there were practically no internal fights.

The last days of the workshop were about preparing and rehearsing for the performance, with collaboration in the focus of methodology. Leadership and social skills developed remarkably during the process. Participants gained real life experience of a group being greater than the sum of individuals. They achieved great things together: they entertained staff and fellow prisoners in a way that is not going to be forgotten for years.

The effects were to be seen straight away. Rika Taeymans, who keeps offering weekly circus sessions at the Hulp Gevangenis prison, gives account of very different attitudes - both among participating prisoners and the staff. Prison guards don't look at her with contempt or bewilderment any more, they are now aware that what she is doing is useful. She can now introduce activities which were 'touchy' before the Educircation experience: the inmates don't find it awkward any more to do exercises which require bodily contact, such as acrobalance or activities which require respect, silence and self-discipline, such as yoga. As for the overall results of the workshop in Leuven, lots of preconceptions changed: European participants' stereotypes of prison and especially prisoners, prison staff's prejudice about circus, prisoners' presumptions about themselves. A great deal of prisoners are victims themselves of some greater vice they were not wise enough to stay out of. They also want to have a nice time with nice people. The prison staff was amazed by the achievement these 'deviant' individuals made and the level of collaboration, motivation and commitment they showed. The group of circus artists persuaded the prison direction to purchase some juggling balls and now some prisoners practice in their rooms. Furthermore, the prisoners made some rolla-bollas themselves! And the prisoners, they discovered something very important about themselves: if they want, they can, and whatever it is that they can: they can do it peacefully and in cooperation. ●

*The most important thing I learned in my first social circus experience was to make it fun for the participants and for you. Play with them, discover things together, enjoy every smile and every sparkle in their eyes and everyone will have a wonderful experience.*

WORKSHOP TITLE:

# CIRCUS AT JEDLE

## (Social Circus Workshop for Children and Youth with Physical Disabilities)

HOST AND ORGANISER: Cirqueon (Zahrada, o.p.s.)

WORKSHOP LEADERS: ADAM JARCHOVSKÝ and KATKA KLUSÁKOVÁ, head teachers of youth and social circus department of Cirqueon

September 2015, Prague, Czech Republic

Circus has always brought together clumsy clowns, acrobats of feline flexibility and jugglers with swift reflexes. It has a tradition of integration and openness as to the acceptance and inclusion of differences. In the circus, everyone has their own place and becomes indispensable. This is why social circus can be effective and this was the truth in focus for the organisers of the Prague edition of the social Educircation project, a workshop for disabled youth.

Cirqueon, the host organisation, has done considerable social circus work in the past five years with psychiatric patients and blind people, but haven't had exquisite experience in working with the physically disabled prior to this workshop. Having a team of 14 experienced participants from Educircation partner countries provided a great opportunity to dive into areas of social circus relatively new to the local environment. The European workshop induced relevant steps towards a better established place for social circus in the Czech Republic.

The Social Educircation team worked with a group of children and youth at Jedličkův ústav a školy, Jedle for short, Prague school for children with physical disabilities. By creating a supportive and emotionally safe environment full of challenges and by concentrating on the process of learning in a fun way, the aim was first of all to achieve a feeling of success for the children, the development of a positive self-image. Furthermore, the participants wished to enable them to see the benefits of patience and perseverance, of learning how to learn and to increase their ability to overcome obstacles and to cooperate. This kind of development brings forth the type of attitudes, communication skills, assertiveness, creativity amongst many other skills that any system of education strives to achieve.

As working with physically disabled people was relatively new to all Educircation participants, there were some reasonable concerns at the beginning about the risk of injuries. However, the variety of techniques and exercises tried out was far wider than expected. A few of the children's teachers and physiotherapists were of course present at the sessions, and their expertise helped try things in a professionally

safe way. As the workshop proceeded, the importance of following the pace and rhythm of the target group and listen to its needs became more and more obvious. The work pace had to be adjusted to a slower speed than expected but it helped the participants understand how to best respond to a group's needs.

Children at the Jedle were lucky to have the international team there, because it made it possible to give them one-on-one attention most of the time, which brought amazing results very quickly. Language barriers often encouraged searching for other means of communication and stimulated creative interaction.

Scenes were set up for juggling, balancing, floor and aerial acrobatics, and clowns and magicians were moving around these spots, observing. Whenever a kid was having hardships with learning circus techniques, they were taught a clown number or a magic trick. Sessions were also spotted with group activities for the children to rejoice in a quick game or song together with their peers, teachers and the circus people. These nuanced added greatly to the general supportive and friendly atmosphere and enabled kids to feel successful.

Circus is a great means to train physical skills - juggling is proven to improve motoric abilities, equilibrastics develops the sense of balance, partner acrobatics builds trust, etc. All circus skills are easily adaptable to working with people with physical disabilities. At the sessions, these notions became apparent reality. Children simply loved hanging freely in aerial props. With the help of their physiotherapists, it was possible to get wheelchair users into rehabilitative positions in the silks that were normally not doable with them. Another favourite at the sessions was the shuffling board, a special juggling prop developed by American juggler Craig Quat to aid people with special needs in juggling training. This prop made it possible for children with hemiparesis to learn the basics of juggling, indicating vast improvement of motoric coordination.

The school physiotherapists mentioned that without realising it, the children engaged happily in doing types of exercises they were reluctant to practice otherwise - regular, must-do exercises at the institute, aimed to develop their motoric skills were dull for them and often connected to a feeling of shame and low self-esteem. Their progress was far more significant when they trained themselves through circus skills. Jedle physiotherapists are now considering obtaining some circus equipment (shuffle boards, silks) for the school to use in therapeutic sessions.

The workshop was an eye-opening experience for everybody. Common realisation was that play itself and chance to learn something new and to show it to the teachers, parents and classmates were more important than the actual circus techniques. The children had a great time together and improved their social, personal and motor skills. Participants can now better imagine integrating people with disabilities in their regular classes back in their home countries, or launching a circus project for this specific target group. Cirqueon is negotiating with Jedle about possible ways to follow up. An option is to run a similar workshop next year, but Cirqueon aims towards long term cooperation. A special teachers' training course for the school professionals is underway about the use of circus disciplines in daily school activities, e.g. P.E. and arts classes, physiotherapy sessions and free time activities. ●



[youtu.be/ocG8uRe-AKs](https://youtu.be/ocG8uRe-AKs)

WORKSHOP TITLE:

# CIRCLUSION

## The Artist in the Centre of Social Circus (making a circus performance about migration)

HOST AND ORGANISER: Kids in Action

WORKSHOP LEADER: MARIANTHI MOTA

12-17 October 2015, Thessaloniki, Greece

How to make a circus performance with a social message? Circus performances can be, and are more than entertainment. These were in focus of the workshop organised and hosted by Kids in Action in Thessaloniki. Instead of brainstorming and rehearsing for the performance as usual, artists were led to the stage through a series of experiences that brought them awareness of their own social sensitivity and awareness of the messages their bodies can carry.

The participants from the local community and the partner organizations of the Social Educircation network co-existed and cooperated for 5 days and co-created a performance touching the sensitive issue of migration. The result, a 35-minute performance loaded with emotions, turned out to be a true representation in circus language of what it means to be a refugee.

The leader of the workshop, Marianthi Mota has chosen three methods to address the issue. Participants improved their body awareness through the method of sensorial bodywork, a movement technique developed by Danis Bois. This pedagogical and therapeutic discipline of preventive and curative treatment enables people to develop perceptual, emotional and cognitive abilities through movement and to feel more accomplished. The key to Sensorial Bodywork & Movement Therapy is slowness. There is power in slowness, through it, one can fully understand the implications of a movement. It helps us to realise truths about ourselves. Through the art of sensorial motion, the body learns how to be more in tune, more expressive and how to be completely present.

Human rights education methods helped acquire raised social awareness through experiential exercises. One of the exercises of the greatest effect was 'Passages', a 3-hour-long role-play exercise simulating a refugee journey, the description of which can be found in the UNHCR manual for the education of aid workers. Getting deep into their

roles of refugee families, participants had to split with each other under the sounds of bombing only to find each other again seeking for a temporal shelter. Border crossing and asking for asylum were also parts of this procedure. Naturally, such an exercise can only scratch the surface of what it means and feels like to actually be going through such a horrific scenario, but that was enough to reel an avalanche of emotions in the participants, making it a deeply meaningful experience, sensitising them for the creation.

Circus pedagogy uses circus skills to teach personal and life skills. This working method is rather about developing trained individuals' personalities, helping them to master the so called key competences (e.g. ability to learn, effective communication, effective teamwork, creative problem-solving) as well as teaching them principles, rules and social values.

But participants were not preoccupied merely with isolated preparation. As soon as the second day of the workshop, participants visited a UNHCR refugee camp set on the Greek-Macedonian border, 1.5-hour ride from Thessaloniki. This was a strong real-life experience for all participants. So powerful was the experience that some of them wrote about it or conducted interviews on site.

"What is one supposed to feel in that situation? Guilty? Sad? Depressed? Embarrassed? Angry? Helpless? Curious? Nosey? Unsure of where to look or what to say? Well, I felt all of that and more. I wanted to know everything, to ask questions, to know straight from the people not the press what has been happening to them..." /Marada Manussen, UK/

The refugee crisis was hot on the news all day every day during the workshop. No wonder it attracted the attention of the media so much: e-magazines as well as a number of printed newspapers covered on it, some 6 radio stations and 3 TV channels presented interviews with the organisers and the participants, showing extracts from the creation process and the performance.

The storyline of the show showed the effect of the Passages experience. Performers put themselves in the roles of families in war-stricken areas, a certain circus discipline being the trait, the attribute of that family. In the opening scene, these families, all going about their aerial or juggling businesses are struck by a bomb attack...

The show was performed twice on the last day of the programme. In the morning, the show premiered in front of 80 local primary school children. The extensive applaud attested a good circus show, the bewildered and concerned faces showed that children were seriously touched. The evening show hosted almost 300 people. Reactions of this show definitely echoed a twofold effect similar to the first performance. People were clapping enthusiastically at times, crying and shivering at other times. The performance was a success beyond expectation. ●



[youtu.be/jr2SMbeN4tk](https://youtu.be/jr2SMbeN4tk)

WORKSHOP TITLE:

# VOICE AS A THERAPEUTIC TOOL FOR GYPSY WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

HOST AND ORGANISER: Associació Valenciana de Circ

17-24 January 2016, Alboraya, Valencia, Spain

Voice is one of the most important and powerful tools for teachers and facilitators. The workshop in Valencia under the aegis of the Social EduCircation project focused on the use of the voice as in the work with specific social groups.

Host and organiser, Valencian Circus Association, has reasonable experience in social circus on many levels, they also collaborate with the local council in the areas of social care and family. They had established contact with the target group of this project - gypsy women from the local segregation, however, they have not worked with these members of the community before. When planning this workshop, the Association could make use of much of the knowledge previously acquired at the different workshops of the Educircation project.

The main, long-term objective of the Association is the social integration of the Gypsy women in the 'El Cabanyal' neighborhood in Valencia, who are in poor economic, social and often psychological situations. The Association aims to empower them to be able to live their potentials. This, of course, requires collaboration with local organizations that have been working with these women for a long time. The Voice Workshop was designed to achieve some of the smaller goals in service of this main one.

Music, singing and percussion are a part of the circus phenomenon. Furthermore, the therapeutic effects they can have are long well-known. Singing is a valid tool for creating or enhancing group cohesion and cooperation. Rhythm can be a means to express emotions and liberate energy. With this workshop, the organisers aimed to achieve objectives such as inclusion, confidence in others and oneself, socialization, corporal contact, physical and vocal opening, relaxation and increasing self-esteem, in order to improve the level of interaction within the gypsy community. The workshop definitely was a move in this direction, however, there is need for further engagement for the effects to take root.

*Social Circus is becoming more and more not just an idea, but a movement. A movement of developing certain ideas & skills in a community, society, the world. These ideas & skills are inclusive, helping groups of people who may or may not suffer under the circumstances of a society, learn awareness and try to create a friendly and fair environment with a good code of ethics. The Circus is the perfect base for it, because you work with your body, soul and mind all at the same time and through that strengthen yourself as an individual and also as part of a group.*

Regarding the methodological approach, participation was the main principle, co-creation and common input being the defining element of the participants' experience. Hence, importance of sharing sensations and feelings, looking after each other and sharing knowledge and experience were in focus. Special emphasis was put on the practice of active listening. Humour and flexibility were the tools to create confidence and to be able to withdraw the group from some of their non-productive inhibitions.

Rather than establishing a hierarchic system, there was a practice of reciprocity by positioning the women as carriers of knowledge, using their rhythms and songs as well as those of the tutors. This helped them to open up, to expose themselves in situations outside their comfort zones. According to the accounts of the participating Gypsy women, they acquired an enjoyable, memorable experience. „I hope that gypsy women felt equal. At least it was a good first step, we planted a seed. They felt connection, starting to dare to open up in unknown groups” - says one of the organisers.

There is a demand for follow-ups, and long-term engagement is the key to lasting results. A major concern when planning the future is to be more prepared about the fact that these women are mothers and don't have any other options than being with their babies and toddlers most of the time. Either care should be organised better for the kids or they should be integrated in the workshops.

The activities and methods implied throughout the workshop can be adapted to different groups, joint to other circus or dramatic activities making people more conscious about their voice and the use of it.

The workshop drew the attention of psychologists, physiotherapists and social workers and circus organisations across the country. This will help in the dissemination of results considerably, moving forward the case of social circus in Spain. ●



[youtu.be/rrM9wFSKDR4](https://youtu.be/rrM9wFSKDR4)

WORKSHOP TITLE:

# SOCIAL CIRCUS TRAINERS' TRAINING with the Support of Cirque du Soleil

**HOST AND ORGANISER:** Hungarian Juggling Association (Magyar Zsonglőr Egyesület)

**WORKSHOP LEADER:** Dorothee Rohrer

1-5 February 2016, Budapest, Hungary

Practicing Social Circus is a big responsibility as a circus professional is dealing with vulnerable groups in the hope of having a positive effect on its members lives. Social circus sessions tend to be emotionally and otherwise intense, yet trainers rarely get the chance to look at the greater picture. The trainer's training supported by Cirque de Soleil in Budapest gave a great opportunity to do exactly that: to become aware of one's responsibilities and ethical standpoint regarding such a work, as well as one's personal and vocational limits of competence.

Organiser Hungarian Juggling Association has been looking forward to invite professionals proposed by Cirque de Soleil. Next to creating some of the most amazing shows on Earth, they have a well-established social circus branch: Cirque du Monde. They don't often come to Europe and to make the most of the planned visit, it had been their special request to open the training to a larger Eastern-European vocational audience. Cirque du Monde had been planning to work together with Polish organisation Fundacja Miasto Projekt, the work of which they have been following and deemed excellent, just like they are familiar with and impressed by the work of HJA and Social Educircation. The three new countries joining this workshop were Poland, Slovakia and Turkey.

This organisational setup is unique within the Social Educircation project, and has brought some considerable benefits for all participants. First of all, the fact that the hosts only had to worry about organisational tasks as the content was delivered by Cirque du Monde, allowed for excellent quality management and organisation. Secondly, it was hard to decide whether the workshop should be hosted by the Hungarians or the Poles. In the end, organisers decided to have the workshop in two tranches: five days in Hungary and five in Poland. This allowed for more exhaustive vocational content. The first workshop was a part of the Social Educircation project, the second one not, but all participants had to agree beforehand that they would participate in both, to

keep the process integrated. Thus, the effect of this workshop reached far beyond the Educircation project.

All participants, with considerable experience in social circus, have agreed that the clarification that Cirque du Monde's training brought them was indispensable. Considering and clarifying for themselves where the limits of their competencies and responsibilities lie, was very useful for all the participants. It is scientifically proven that circus can help all sorts of learning and physical disadvantages as well as issues of identity, motivation and inclusion. But what can or should a social circus trainer change? Should they be working with problems directly or should they rather just let the effects and benefits trickle down in an undirected way? In which cases is it necessary for a social/health worker to be present at the sessions? Is there any case where that is not essential? Who should be in charge of discipline: the circus trainer or the social worker?

Although there was unequivocal understanding about the necessity of professional background work in all cases, carried out by a social worker or health specialist who knows the group, the trainer Dorothee Rohrer, through engaging exercises, facilitated participants to realize that everyone's limits are different in these areas and that it is very important to make them clear and to communicate openly about them with the collaborating social worker. Dorothee introduced several exercises to promote participants discover their own ethical structure in detail and to realise how much of it they have been implying in their social circus work. An important precondition for quality work is the clarity of rules. It is only possible to create clear and fitting rules if one is conscious about one's ethical values and their relativity.

It is important to highlight two other network aspects of this workshop. Firstly, the training was set at the training centre of the Hungarian National Circus Company. Current leader of the renowned institute sees the importance of modernisation; methods, style and structure are all being reformed in a quest to say goodbye to all obsolete elements. The cooperation with the Hungarian Juggling Association started a few years ago and there is growing trust and openness towards the ideas of the Association. Overseeing a high-quality training as this one at the compounds made National Circus teachers see the importance and relevance of social circus. The director of the National Circus and the president of the HJA have recently represented the circus sector at the Conference 'Future of Circus' at the European Parliament in Brussels. Straight after the training, the participating Visegrád countries submitted an application to Visegrad Fund, which allocated subsistent financial support for the organisation of the second part of the workshop in Poland as well as costs for participants. Social circus is definitely coming up in the region. ●

*It was amazing to see how self confidence of each of the participants grew day by day.*



WORKSHOP TITLE:

# CIRCUS WITH ETHNIC MINORITY CHILDREN

**HOST AND ORGANISER:** The Invisible Circus  
(resp. person: Marada Manussen)

**WORKSHOP LEADER:** Holly Stoppit

4-6 April 2016, Bristol, United Kingdom

The Bristol workshop of the Social Educircation project, hosted and organised by Invisible Circus, focused on working with ethnic minority children. Felix Road Adventure Playground, located in a diverse ward with many different cultures, ethnicities and socio-economic backgrounds, is an open, free space for children aged 5-15 to play. The intense five-day workshop culminated in a hilarious show on site, based on the ideas of the children from the Adventure Playground.

Invisible Circus has been around in Bristol for almost 15 years, thrilling and mesmerising thousands of people with their clandestine site-specific mega-shows as well as their intricate small-scale performances. Their activities are diverse: the Social Circus wing of the Invisible Circus, Invisible Youth, was the working group for this workshop.

Invited workshop tutor Holly Stoppit, facilitator, teacher, director, drama-therapist, improviser with a life-time's experience in social circus, community and professional theatre, brewed her methodological approach for the workshop using Nonviolent Communication, theatre, mindfulness, dance-movement and something she refers to as 'clown-o-therapy'.

Every day started with a training session for the participants, and in the afternoons they worked with the young people of Felix Road Adventure Playground. The number of children and facilitators taking part was almost equal, and the kids benefited greatly from having one-on-one attention. They were also motivated and focused on the show, and discipline was less of an issue here than in similar situations normally. This, apart from getting lots of direct attention, is due to the implication of Nonviolent Communication, a fresh method in Holly Stoppit's arsenal. The kids were asked to make up their own Golden Rules on the first day and, not unexpectedly, they abided by the rules of their own making to a much greater extent than imposed ones. Thus, a major aim of the workshop, which was to find positive ways of dealing with behavioural issues through connecting with the children, was perfectly met.

The children felt total ownership towards the show in progress. Having to create a show in five days did put considerable pressure on everyone, especially our European participants, but in the end it helped to bring out the best of everyone. The excitement on the day of the performance was huge. All local radios heralded about it and the families and friends of the performing children were invited. No wonder the huge success: the team put together an engaging, processive circus-theatre show with quality dramaturgy. The story of the mighty queen, who decided to imprison everyone who dared to laugh, because she felt belittled by people laughing at her sneezing, and softens in the end and joins the jolly circus crowd to have fun.

These children, most of whom come from troubled backgrounds, gained so much from being part of a creation process like this. They experienced the joy of collaboration, they saw a direct result of their creativity and endurance, and they gained confidence from a well-deserved success. Such enhancement of self-awareness opens many possibilities for them and has a positive effect on their learning, their social lives and their inclusion. Using circus to discover positive role models helped them realize the value of developing a skill and the gifts that learning and succeeding bring, and their families felt part of it, too. ●

*Circus is traditionally a place where everyone can find a place where they fit and belong, it is a place where those who felt different could find a place where their differences were celebrated and i think this is a tradition which also exists in social circus. Through circus disciplines which are easily accessible, irrelevant of the previous experience of the participant, everyone can find a place where they can experience success in their learning and experience a boost in self confidence and self esteem.*



WORKSHOP TITLE:

# CIRCUS WITH REFUGEE CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS

HOST AND ORGANISER: Cabuwazi

WORKSHOP LEADER: TOBIAS LIPPEK, theatre and circus artist, co-manager of Altglienicke CABUWAZI site, degree in social work in process; ALEXANDRA LEPIORZ-PARRA, mask theatre and shadow Theatre artist, CABUWAZI project manager and circus trainer; GEORGE WILLIAMS, theatre and circus artist, CABUWAZI circus trainer and project manager

4-6 April 2016, Bristol, United Kingdom

For over 20 years, CABUWAZI has been working with at-risk children and young people in countless circus projects in Berlin, Germany and around the world. The organisation is built on the philosophy that the circus is a place where self-confidence is nurtured, potential is fulfilled, social and cultural barriers are overcome and social and artistic competencies are developed. Over the past 2 years in light of the current refugee situation in Europe and beyond, Cabuwazi initiated a number of different projects for children and young people who had recently arrived in Berlin. Alongside other refugee projects, the project „Cabuwazi Beyond Borders“ offers regular circus courses and project weeks in refugee centres and on some of the CABUWAZI circus sites in Berlin. The Beyond Borders project gives refugee children and youth the chance to gain a unique insight into the world of circus arts, whilst discovering their own personal strengths, experiencing positive social cooperation with others and creating a positive connection to their new surroundings. Beyond Borders cooperates with many local schools and public spaces around the refugee housing to foremove integration of those arriving from different parts of the world.

Circus is a medium that reaches beyond physical and psychological borders and offers people the chance to express themselves through art. Offering the refugee children and teenagers this opportunity through the creation of a circus performance was one of the major aims of the Educircation workshop in Berlin. Circus can also become a tool for trauma processing, for building self-confidence and for the integration to a new culture. Furthermore, circus provides a unique way to bring together the local community and those arriving as new members of the community. The workshop supported one on-going CABUWAZI cooperation with the 1 refugee centre and was the beginning of a new cooperation with a further refugee centre.

Cabuwazi was looking forward to the Educircation participants' input and feedback on the topic of working with young refugees and also to their participation in the organisation and implementation of

the above mentioned show. As for the nature of the work, the team had to deal with a constantly changing, rather complicated and problematic situation. For example, organisers only knew in advance that they would be working with children and youth not yet enrolled at a school in Germany, but till the first day of the workshop, they did not know how many children they would actually be dealing with. Regular contact with cooperation partners was a must.

Another challenging factor was that many of the refugee families had not yet had contact with circus and trainers are often confronted with a certain level of scepticism. Parents are sometimes reluctant to allow their children to take part in projects they have little knowledge of themselves. It is of utmost importance in such situations to be sensitive to such cultural differences and approach the clients openly and with an accepting attitude, inviting but not forcing them to take part.

Alongside with connecting circus work with language learning, organisers collected a great number of non-verbal exercises to facilitate communication and tackle language barriers a challenge. It is also important to be aware of the fact that some of the youth taking part are likely to be traumatized and one must be sensitive to the effect this can have on the clients and also on the trainers.

During the 5 days of the workshop, participants trained with the children in the mornings and held evaluative feedback session in the afternoon, to refine the process. The training culminated in a circus performance at the circus site on the last day of the project.

On the final day of the project, participants, in costumes with painted faces and circus equipment in tow, created a magical trip for the children and their families to be welcomed onto the circus site. While families were waiting with tea and snacks, the final preparations were made for the presentation. The audience consisted of the families of the performing youth, staff within the Cabuwazi centres, local school classes and members of the general public.

The children got the opportunity to experience the world of circus as their own, with the lights and the music and a magical atmosphere, the showers of applause. After the performance the audience were invited to try the circus disciplines in an open workshop, taking place in the sun in front of the circus tent. This provided a great chance for members of the local community, the participants and the refugee children and their families to meet each other.

According to participant feedback, most of them acquired new skills during and all participants developed their existing skills and encountered new ideas and theories such as the importance of communication and a shared pedagogical framework within a large and diverse team, new insights into the life and situation of refugees and the impact circus work can have on their lives and the importance of trust and patience within this field of work. ●

*I realised that circus is the best way to communicate without speaking.*