

SEMINARS OF  
CIRCOSTRADA  
NETWORK

# EUROPEAN CAPITALS OF CULTURE AND CIRCUS ARTS #2



## HorsLesMurs

Coordinator of the network, HorsLesMurs is the French national resource center for street arts and circus arts. Founded in 1993 and funded by the ministry of Culture and Communication, it works for the development of these fields through activities of documentation, training, counselling, networking, research and publishing.



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• European Network  
Circus and Street Arts

Since 2003, CircoStrada Network works to develop and structure the fields of circus and street arts in Europe and beyond. With more than 70 members, it contributes to build a sustainable future for the sector by empowering cultural players through actions of observation and research, professional exchanges, advocacy, capacity-building and information.

Since 2011, CircoStrada Network, HorsLesMurs and Circo Circolo have been organising seminars to reflect on the integration of circus arts within European Capital of Culture programmes. A first publication was produced in 2013 to highlight their findings. Following the fourth conference that took place during the Biennale Internationale des Arts du Cirque in Marseille (France), the network produces a new publication, presenting additional findings and examples to better understand the challenges and potential of circus arts within ECoCs.

This report was written by Gérald Drubigny, Arts.Soft network, and the publication was coordinated by Anne-Louise Cottet.

## **EDITORIAL**

In 2011, in partnership with HorsLesMurs - the French national information centre for street arts and circus arts, and Dutch festival Circo Circolo, the European network Circostrada launched a first seminar on the incorporation of circus arts in European Capital of Culture (ECoC) programmes.

A second European seminar took place in April 2012 in Paris (France) just before the second international Fresh Circus conference. A third seminar was held in Aix-en-Provence (France) in February 2013, organised in close partnership with the regional agency - Arcade, the Pôle Cirque Méditerranée, and the Bois de l'Aune, pôle artistique et culturel de la Communauté du Pays d'Aix. It took place inside Cirque en Capitales, a Marseille-Provence 2013 festival.

The third seminar led to a publication produced by Daphné Tepper to capitalise on the experience and pave the way for the next steps.

The aim of these international seminars and publications is to discuss the participation of contemporary circus arts in European Capital of Culture programmes.

Their concrete objectives are to:

- Consider the place and role of contemporary circus in ECoC programmes;
- Share best practices;
- Advocate for the evolution of the place given to contemporary circus in ECoC programmes;
- Consider how contemporary circus contributes to the success of the programmes, and the benefits in terms of structuring and development of the sector;
- Provide the necessary conditions for in-depth consideration of further exchanges between cities;
- Give the opportunity to understand more about the aesthetics and characteristics of contemporary circus.

The programme of the fourth edition that took place in February 2015 aimed to enhance the exchange of best practices, passing on the teaching of the previous seminars and making recommendations for future ECoCs. Moreover, it was the opportunity to come back to a former ECoC for the first time and to witness the direct legacy of one of its flagship events, Cirque en Capitales, with the creation of the first Biennale Internationale des Arts du Cirque - Marseille Provence Alpes Côte d'Azur.

It was organised by Circostrada Network, HorsLesMurs and CircoCircolo, in partnership with the Pôle National des Arts du Cirque-Méditerranée and the MuCEM – Musée des civilisations de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée, bringing together 30 participants from 8 different countries, including circus stakeholders, European Capital of Culture teams and policymakers.

This second publication seeks to shed new light on the challenges and impacts of circus arts in European Capitals of Culture, and to present a series of examples of best practices, in order to better identify the key stages and considerations associated with the relationship between circus arts and territorial projects.

This publication is aimed at all circus professionals, ECoC teams and policymakers seeking to develop circus policy in their territory.

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# SETTING THE STAGE

## What is the programme of European Capitals of Culture?

European Capitals of Culture have existed since 1985. They started as an intergovernmental initiative and developed in 1991 into a full-fledged Community action overseen by formal selection and implementation rules.

**Extract of the introduction  
of Daphné Tepper in the publication  
«European Capitals of Culture  
and Circus Arts» (2013)**

which often impacts the local cultural and/or urban landscape, whether the city obtains the title or not.

### **Today the ECOC programme draws up a calendar of the countries eligible to apply for the title in different years**

The financial contribution coming from the EU for each Capital of Culture (the Melina Mercouri Prize) amounts to 1.5 million. Total budgets vary greatly and are co-funded by different public and private sources. Capital investments are often largely funded by European structural funds.

Over time, and following the evidence that an ECOC title could bring visibility, resources, and even social inclusion and economic growth to a city and its region, national selection processes have become more and more competitive. For several years now preparing a bid has been – for most cities – a challenge in itself: a project launched six years in advance of the actual activity year, and an endeavour

selection procedure with a panel of experts, and a monitoring process before, during and after the year<sup>1</sup>.

But the European Capital of Culture can also bring missed opportunities, and there are some examples of ECOC initiatives which have been undermined by failed political support, an incapacity to maintain planned budgets, or conflicts between

### **preparing a bid has been – for most cities – a challenge in itself**

the artistic teams and their political environments. The failure of ECOC teams to work in partnership with the local cultural sector or to build programmes that not only offer one-off artistic programmes but also invest in the future have been a source of frustration for many cultural operators. Assessing the success of an individual ECOC or of the ECOC programme as a whole since its creation is, however, a very challenging – and often subjective – exercise. EU evaluation criteria that were still quite vague deserved to be improved, and a new legal basis was adopted in April 2014 for the years 2020 - 2033.

**Daphné Tepper**  
**Project Director - European Skills Council  
for the Audiovisual and Live Performance  
sectors**

## Programme Changes for the 2020-2033 period

The current legal basis for the European Capital of Culture programmes was established by European Parliament and Council Decision <sup>2</sup> for the 2007 to 2019 period. A second decision confirmed interest

from Strasbourg and Brussels in ECoCs, with the aim of establishing stricter conditions for the 2020-2033 period <sup>3</sup>.

### Selection criteria

Split into categories, certain criteria must be observed in bids, with guarantees relating to know-how, management, fundraising, marketing and long-term communication. A bid strategy must be developed according to the size (small town or large metropolis), establishing the long-term durability of actions beyond the ECoC year itself, and boosting cultural

creativity and its relationship with economic and social sectors, urban development and the creation of flagship contemporary architectural heritage. The impact of the title should be highlighted in a precise assessment, using tried-and-tested indicators.

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### European dimension

Strengthening the European dimension will consist of presenting high-level cultural and artistic content, which will help promote the city's as well as Europe's influence around the world. It should be founded on the quest for intercultural dialogue and demonstrate

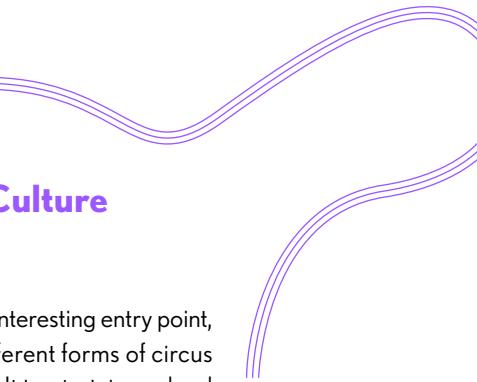
common aspects of our cultures, heritage and history. European and local artists shall be selected to promote cooperation between operators, including other ECoCs in a real transnational partnership.

### Social action

The relationship with social considerations should be clear when selecting cultural and artistic actions, promoting the help and involvement of local volunteers, the participation of civil society and the

voluntary sector, the presence of young people and involvement of schools, and amateur practice in all socio-cultural components. Particularly marginalised and minority populations could even be targeted. <sup>4</sup>

# CIRCUS ARTS AND EUROPEAN CAPITALS OF CULTURE: FUNDAMENTAL LESSONS



## Value of Circus Arts in a European Capital of Culture

### A political choice

Circus programmes fully meet the expectations of the European Commission. Although the discipline is increasingly performed on stage in theatres, its itinerant nature deserves special attention. Creative forces in local and European circus arts have been boosted by being included in one or more ECoC programmes. This has made useful and necessary contributions for segments of the community that are sometimes forgotten, as highlighted by Brussels. Circus is a form of artistic expression that can be suited to all audiences, including families, teenagers

and children. This makes it an interesting entry point, providing that a variety of different forms of circus and other arts are presented. It is a training school for individuals, whether spectators or apprentices. Circus contributes to an individual's social education and integration by giving them a taste for effort, familiarising them with risk, promoting team work and cohesion, showcasing beautiful gestures and seeking harmony. It's an excellent apprenticeship in European citizenship.

### From a local to European scale

Organisers have noticed that the creativity of circus as a performing art can generate significant local buy-in. Larger, multi-generational audiences can be encouraged by outreach work and the participation and involvement of local volunteers and enthusiasts. The impact of the discipline suggests that there are plenty of reasons to bank on the success of ECoC circus events, but some of them schedule little to no circus arts. For example, despite the strong presence of circus in **Lille 2004** and then **Lille 2000<sup>5</sup>** with its self-proclaimed International Neighbourhood Theatre "Le Prato", **Mons 2015<sup>6</sup>** does not seem to be drawing up experience in this field, by not selecting circus as an important focus in its programme, choosing instead options based on technological

innovation. However, a hybrid blend of circus and technology could be an interesting avenue to explore. This art form does lack visibility compared to disciplines such as music, theatre, fine art, film or the digital arts. Operation, production and dissemination costs can be high depending on the country of origin, particularly for French companies. Circus is not always part of the city's local traditions and development priorities. It is dependent on a deliberate decision by programme managers to launch the capital into the European sphere, by working to present a representative variety of the forms of artistic expression that exist on a continental scale. Let us hope that the European Commission will pay it increasing attention.

### Training as a tool for varied aesthetics

Circus is a well-rooted art form. In the Netherlands, establishing two circus schools has helped ensure the long-term future of the **Circo Circolo<sup>7</sup>** biennial. In return, the festival has supported and boosted the growth of these two higher education institutions. The influential relationship with programme managers and trainers could lead to their appearance in the **Leeuwarden 2018** ECoC programme<sup>8</sup> (see interview with Wim Claessen on p. 14).

Nevertheless, circus aesthetics are common yet diverse. According to Jean-Michel Guy<sup>9</sup>, researcher at the French Ministry of Culture, unity is achieved through a "plurality" of styles. The author refutes the notion of seeking to be "popular" in favour of "diversity". This is a European art form in its own right. Andrew Stirling<sup>10</sup> states that "the disparity of aesthetic forms" opens the door to ever-changing and durable forms of creation.

### **Opening into public space**

Circus is one of the art forms capable of investing the public space. **Piccadilly Circus Circus** in London in 2012 is a stand-out example. Never before had so many people discovered the urban landscape and architecture of this famous square in so

large and striking an event. Street arts and circus demonstrate their ability to bring community cultural experience to life.

**Street arts and circus demonstrate their ability to bring community cultural experience to life.**

## **Successfully Performing and Assessing a Circus Programme within a European Capital of Culture: Key Steps and Considerations**

### **The example of Marseille: long-term effects with local players**

In Marseille, associations like the Cité des arts de la rue, Lieux Publics, the IN SITU network, Karwan and theatres such as La Criée, Le Merlan, Le Gymnase, Le Théâtre Nono and Le Théâtre du Centaure company had already made sure that circus was often in the limelight. These actions contributed to the success of the **Cirque en Capitales**<sup>11</sup> circus project, supported by **Marseille-Provence 2013 (MP2013)**<sup>12</sup>. **Cirque en Capitales**, initiated by the nationally-recognised Pôle National des Arts

du Cirque-Méditerranée, brought together regional organisations and coordinated a successful programme as part of the ECoC year. Later in the document, there is a detailed presentation of the **Biennale Internationale des Arts du Cirque (BIAC)**, the long-term successor of **Cirque en Capitales**. Lille 2004 had already understood the importance of working well in advance, particularly with Le Prato. These are two examples of success.

### **The impact of circus in a European Capital of Culture**

Some ECoCs are large metropolitan areas, but others are small towns. In Portugal, there was a real buzz observed in the countryside around **Guimarães**, which was ECoC in 2012. Big tops are a cultural tool that promote a cultural trickle-down through society and bring together dispersed populations. It has the advantage of ploughing a cultural furrow specifically for local communities.

Another impact is the lasting establishment of the discipline in its diversity, its European dimension and its support for artistic creation, by ensuring the long-term future of a circus event. This is true for the **BIAC**, which was able to find the necessary funding from **Marseille Provence Métropole**, its primary funder, and its other partners, including the French government, in addition to private funds. It has brought together many European professionals and won over large audiences.

### **Assessment tools**

One might think that figures, percentages, pie charts and charts are only approximate. This is untrue. Surveys are scientific, relevant and reliable. Examples include the work carried out by **Linz 2009**<sup>13</sup> and **MP2013/Euréval**<sup>14</sup>. The tools cover a large spectrum with a focus on the city and its past or future heritage, highlighting the impact of the ECoC in figures and forecasting the future of its museums, theatres, musical institutions, universities, libraries, alternative scenes, technology and visual centres, etc. For **MP2013**, a full report was published, following on

from the Palmer/RAE Associates Report (2004)<sup>15</sup>, which called for detailed and meticulous assessments and reports. An assessment committee was created in 2010, three years before the event. Precise methodology ensured that the added value of the following aspects could be accurately measured: role of the ECoC in changes to the practices of local cultural players, influence on the city's attractiveness and image, economic and social impacts, access to culture and participation of local people.

### **Qualitative assessment**

**Glasgow 1990, Liverpool 2008** and other ECoCs<sup>16</sup> had already published useful results, which helped draw up a precise assessment grid for European experts. Analysis of the overall impact must also focus on programme content and its effects in the ECoC. When considering the frequency of events following on from ECoCs, one in two years can be a good option for fundraising, partnerships

and long-term dialogue with the audience, as is the case for the **BIAC** in Marseille.

Although assessment tools are seen to be improving, the question remains of developing both qualitative and quantitative assessments specifically for circus, in order to promote its positive impacts and contribution to the overall ECoC.

### **Funding issues**

Brussels provides substantial, yet limited, financial support. Other European programmes should be called upon, such as Interreg, the ERDF or Creative Europe, along with funding from other sectors, such as social, university, scientific or R&D fields. These composite funding plans will win over elected representatives, potential partner institutions and decision-making leaders, and will be key in obtaining combined public/private funding. Nevertheless, the financial crisis is in full swing, including in countries renowned for stability in the allocation of financial support. In a liberal globalised society, particularly during the current crisis, cultural budgets have been the first to be hit right across Europe. It is now impor-

tant for professionals to trial and come up with new funding procedures, such as sponsoring, patronage, foundations, crowdfunding, serial investors, etc. It is time to turn words into action and to finally create an ecosystem of cultural entrepreneurship, inventing a genuine economy involving European circus networks, ECoCs and foreign producers.

Strong partnerships will be the backbone of ECoC circus action, with a focus on the long-term future with specific venues dedicated to circus.

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**Strong partnerships will be the backbone of ECoC circus action**

# RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN CIRCUS AND TERRITORIES: EXAMPLES OF BEST PRACTICES

The concept of a European Capital of Culture was thought up and created by Jack Lang and Melina Mercouri, two leading cultural politicians in Europe. However, by reading over the two European decisions, we can see how its objectives have changed over time. An ECoC is now a sort of catalyst for social and economic links between Europeans. It must be seen as a showcase for European cultural wealth.

Whatever the size and shape of a village, region, town or metropolis, regardless of whether or not it is an ECoC, the choice of programming circus events will depend on the desire and capacity of the artistic director, project managers and teams to support and promote the discipline. Four experiences will be shared below, with the aim of highlighting their underlying ambition and demonstrating their determination. It is also interesting to observe the attitude of two future ECoCs, their current relationship to circus and the main programme focus in their city.

## Marseille, France: Ensuring a Long-term Future From Cirque en Capitales in Marseille-Provence 2013 to the Biennale Internationale des Arts du Cirque – Marseille Provence Alpes Côte d'Azur

**Cirque en Capitales** was a key moment in **Marseille Provence 2013**, bringing together local partners from Arles to Martigues, with talent and diplomacy, and showcasing current circus crea-

tion. Thanks to the Pôle Cirque Méditerranée, the **Biennale Internationale des Arts du Cirque (BIAC)**<sup>17</sup> took place in January and February 2015, in 45 different event venues. This successful first event is set to be continued by a recurring festival every two years. It helps support new creation in circus arts and

the key factor in winning over the public, with performances that are moving away from circular layouts in favour of front-on set-ups, due to financial reasons, an increasing lack of public spaces designed for big tops, and new forms of artistic design. Theatrical performance rather than travelling shows has also grown in the world of circus. The festival was designed to present the current state of contemporary circus in all its diversity, letting big tops return once more to centre stage.

The results of the **BIAC** initiative speak for themselves, with 1 month of circus events, 6 big tops, 45 venues in 23 towns/cities, 25 creations, 60 companies, 300 artists, 155 technicians, and 269 shows in the PACA region, including 120 in Marseille

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boost the European dimension of its audience by the simple fact that the area itself (23 towns/cities) is a place where multiple cultures are represented, coming together to form one diverse, mixed and open cultural melting pot. The festival also benefited from presenting this art form in the city centre, with an encampment of big tops set up in a magical location just outside the MuCEM, the Museum of European and Mediterranean Civilisations<sup>18</sup>.

The **BIAC** has become a sort of "(magic) mirror" for creativity across the globe. Creative diversity is

Unfortunately, the cost of tickets was high, unlike in **Umeå** or **London**. Nevertheless, hopefully the **Biennale Internationale des Arts du Cirque** will be continued beyond 2015. It may be one of the responsibilities of an ECoC team to ensure the long-term future of events, since nothing is ever certain. The economic funding crisis and political instability

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**All of this goes to show that even actions developed with the greatest care are fragile and never truly secure.**

have affected Marseille and the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur Euro-Mediterranean region, as well as Europe as a whole. All of this goes to show that even actions developed with the greatest care are fragile and never truly secure.

The involvement of ECoCs may be the push needed to ensure a permanent circus presence in this European city. The Biennale team's much-cited leitmotiv is to "Make circus a major art form!"  
What else?

## **Umeå, Sweden: Circus in the Baltic! The Emergence of Nycirkusfestival in Umeå 2014**

By being awarded the title of European Capital of Culture, Sweden seizes the opportunity to make the city of **Umeå**<sup>19</sup>, an example of social cultural action. With just 200,000 residents, it is only Sweden's 12<sup>th</sup> largest city, far behind Stockholm, Göteborg or Malmö. The choice of the capital of Norrland as ECoC is quite a special case. This 'City of Birches' is located in the heart of the 'Great North', on the mouth of the Ume River off the coast of the Gulf of Bothnia. It lies opposite Finland, just a stone's throw away from Lapland and not far from the midnight sun. The 36,000 students make for a young, cultured capital, the northernmost EcoC so far. The theme of the year was "Curiosity and Passion - the Art of Co-Creation", with a rich and varied programme, designed around the eight seasons of the indigenous Scandinavian Sami people from the region of Sápmi: deep winter, early spring, true spring, early summer, summer, early autumn, true autumn and early winter.

Circus played an important role in the Umeå 2014 programme. In Sweden, the Cie Cirkus Cirkör in Stockholm has an established reputation and the DOCH School of Dance and Circus offers top-level instruction, particularly technical training. Outside of Stockholm, circus remains a young artistic discipline that needs to be promoted to audiences that have yet to be convinced. Meta Tunell, Programme Manager for Umeå Teaterforening, the Umeå theatre association that organised **Nycirkusfestival**, scheduled a top-quality selection of companies, shows, actions and seminars, and was an important driving figure behind **Nycirkusfestival**<sup>20</sup>. The event buzzwords were HQ (high quality) and HD (high diversity), with special attention paid to promoting equality between men and women. Talent also played an important role, obviously, but Meta Tunell is still looking for female artists or circus companies that strike a genuine balance between men and women.

In particular, the **Nycirkusfestival** was supported by a local newspaper and carried out in partnership with Umeå 2014. Four free workshops with a social dimension were open to all and set the tone for the festival. A circus school was open 8 hours per day for a week. Five free seminars were organised and open to all.

The eclectic and top-quality programme included free juggling in the street. It opened with La Meute, a French acrobatic collective, followed by *Family Party*, a grassroots show that attracted 4,000 spectators, *La Soirée*, a British take on a cabaret variety show, *Rosa Brus* and *Glitch* by Swedish artists Moa Lichtenstein and Jonatan Krogh, *Flown* by British group Pirates of the Carabina, and *Bench, Knee Deep* by the Australian Casus Company, *L'après-midi d'un Foehn* by and with Phia Ménard, Maromas from Italy, and *Akkrobatik Pole Dance* by the Finish company of the same name. There were 32 shows, 10 days of circus, 9 companies, 8 workshops, 6 street events and 5 seminars open to all, with 7,700 paying spectators and 5,900 spectators at free events - a total of 13,600 people and €50,000 profit poured back into circus.

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The impact on the city has already been exceptional and Programme Manager Meta Tunell has not yet finished her evaluation. She already has the deep-seated conviction that the companies chosen must be asked to become active partners, so that they can become involved in the concept and take part in the project from the offset. The imagination of circus folk can only boost the project of an ECoC, that has deliberately chosen to pursue long-term circus policy in the city, making it free of charge where possible.  
Komplimanger!

## London, UK: Piccadilly Circus Circus - a Circus Like No Other! An Extraordinary Event as Part of the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad

**Crying Out Loud (COL)**<sup>21</sup> was asked by the 2012 Olympic Games Organising Committee and the **City of London** to produce a "**Surprise**" event, which was the theme selected by the Mayor of London. COL came up with an incredible circus festival right in the heart of the City of Westminster! It was supported by a team of highly talented and contemporary musicians, Street Furniture Music. The show was streamed online via a BBC platform and the COL website shows pictures and figures.

The adventure began well in advance. The idea of transforming the centre of London into a pedestrian festival had been rooted in a visibility study two

years before the 2012 Olympics.

London's flamboyant Mayor, Boris Johnson, first turned down the project, before rallying to popular opinion, quickly becoming one of the most ardent supporters of what would later become **Piccadilly Circus Circus**.

It was clear that the agreement, and above all, the active political support of the Mayor and Leader of Westminster City Council was needed.

Crying Out Loud soon felt that its project could be accepted. A similar operation had already taken place when an elephant parade had stopped traffic for a few hours, but double decker buses continued to circulate. But here, all access routes to London city centre needed to be blocked from Friday 4 am to Monday 5 am, especially the five roads leading into Piccadilly Circus! A mock-up was produced, presenting all disciplines of circus arts to prove that it was possible.

The project creators succeeded in attracting tremendous crowds for **Piccadilly Circus Circus** in one of the largest squares on the planet, right on a large junction with major transport routes, including Regent Street, one of the busiest roads in the world.

Traffic was stopped for the first time since 1945 for a period of time that seemed both endless and all too short. The location is a symbolic pillar of London heritage, an iconic square whose primary function as an urban intersection was twisted to give new meaning. This unprecedented and popular success left its mark on residents' mind-sets, opening doors to future political decisions for social and cultural action. People shared in living art for a moment in time, just by walking along a busy route. They saw artists using trampolines and high wires to walk along the walls of buildings, offering a new perspective on architecture on both sides of the street. Mass participation was made possible by somehow opening up symbolic locations - the event was not only for intellectuals and culture amateurs. **COL**'s resounding success was due to its willingness to present both foreign and British artists with recognised artistic quality.

Communication was a tricky issue and event publicity was closely monitored. The police banned event advertising due to the threat of terrorism. The organisers also insisted on offering free and unrestricted access to the entire population by making it a "surprise". The use of social networks, teasers, TV adverts, e-mails and texts to flood people with information the night before helped advertise the event in just a few hours, which was the key to the event's success. 40,000 maps were handed out, showing pedestrian routes and precise show times. With 247

artists, 15 stages, 33 companies,

48 events, 70 countries, 143

shows and 250,000 spectators,

the event was a total success and

a model initiative in terms of its

scale and ambition! Nevertheless,

one might wonder whether the

size of the event is a stumbling block to its possible and desirable duplication in the long term. Can such a one-off happening generate offshoots or follow-up events?

Splendid! What's next?

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## Pilsen, Czech Republic: Circus Culture in Pilsen 2015 – The New Circus Season, One of the Capital's Flagship Projects

**Pilsen** is both Capital of Beer and European Capital of Culture 2015<sup>22</sup>. Petr Forman, ECoC Artistic Director, is a recognised specialist in contemporary circus and has naturally made space for the discipline throughout the entire programme. **Pilsen** has become a hub for circus arts. For the Czech Republic's 4<sup>th</sup> largest city and its 175,000 residents, Petr Forman has announced that 2015 will be the "Year of Circus", confirming the ambition of making contemporary circus one of the flagship components of the 2015 ECoC.

The circus programme touches on a series of multifaceted themes, the first of which consisted of

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bringing over and presenting a carrousel - the famous "Manège Carré Sénart" Carrousel by François Delarozière. This was made possible thanks to collaboration with Jean-Michel Puiffe, Director of the Scène Nationale de Sé-

nart, a "new town" on the outskirts of Paris, designed around political choices for urban planning, with a focus on culture, art and social work. 200,000 visitors came to see the Carrousel in the Czech Republic's second city! It was a resounding success, highlighting the grassroots, family-friendly and democratic nature of the ECoC.

David Dimitri, a Swiss tightrope walker, was selected for the opening ceremony, walking across Main Square 60 m in the air. This is a symbolic inaugural action, demonstrating a desire to showcase contemporary circus as a key tool for bringing together

culture and spectacular showmanship, turning him into somewhat of a social and cultural 'smuggler', both an acrobat and a poet, funny and serious. The show was aimed at all types of people, including the elderly, young people and children, representing different social and cultural backgrounds, a variety of ideologies and communities.

This was followed by an ambitious and grassroots programme, including the Cirque Trottola and the Petit Théâtre, Baraque Matamore, MagdaClan, Aladdin, Psirk, Bêtes de foire, Cirque Aïtal, Cyrk La Putyka, Dae Men, Akoreacro and more...

A total of nine companies were represented and the high proportion of French artists is, as Petr Forman explains, the result of a strong societal support for cultural and artistic policy with a longstanding and clear political drive by the public authorities to recognise and make room for circus and street arts, offering them a similar standing to other artistic disciplines.

The Czech Republic is also a favourable, cultured and supportive location for circus artists, in proportion to its size and number of inhabitants. The Cirqueon Centre for Contemporary Circus is open to all and gives juggling and air acrobatics lessons.

The **Pilsen 2015** circus programme draws on the fundamental values of Czech culture, and so in all likelihood, will have a longer-term role to play in promoting social and cultural bonding.

Co víc si přát? = What more could we ask for?

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### The circus programme touches on a series of multifaceted themes

## **Looking Forward to the Future European Capitals of Culture: Århus 2017 and Leeuwarden - Fryslân 2018**

In less than two years, Denmark's second biggest city, this fiery and bustling metropolis on the country's mainland peninsula, and its very young population, will become an ECoC<sup>23</sup>, covering not only **Århus**, but also the whole Jutland Central Denmark Region, representing a total of 18 towns and cities. The first director of the Danish ECoC was Trevor Davies, well known on the European Culture scene and Co-Director of the Københavns Internationale Teater. He presented and won the bid on behalf of Jutland's largest city. Rebecca Matthews and Juliana Engberg are now Executive Manager and Programme Manager respectively. They are working on the design of a "soft city" and "smart city", for a smarter, more sensitive region that seeks to promote the well-being of city residents. "Rethink" is the theme or "mantra" of Århus 2017, and is a way of considering

how to connect traditional heritage to present-day culture. An ambitious project of new art forums is set to come into existence following the year's opening ceremony, which will take place during a one-day event on a meandering journey down to the Port of Århus. Twelve events, entitled «Full Moon» will then take place across 2017. It would seem that sustainability, team spirit, solidarity and the quest for harmony are at the heart of the project. The municipality would like to create large urban project sites as part of the Capital's «cultural laboratory», and in particular, to transform some difficult neighbourhoods, such as the so-called «Ghetto».

The general framework of activities is still being developed. In this work in progress, Århus 2017 shows a vivid interest in circus, which may be present in certain events across the capital. The team is convinced of the possible social impact of circus and the role it can play in reaching out to different communities, and is considering if it could be linked to urban and social projects.

**Leeuwarden**<sup>24</sup> is a city with 100,000 inhabitants. It is located in the province of Friesland in the northern Netherlands and has now won the chance to join the ranks of the ECoCs. Lieven Bertels, ECoC Artistic Director, was Director of the famous **Sydney Festival**, whose circus programme is renowned for its size. He has also worked on the equally well-known **Holland Festival**. In 2018, the province of Friesland will be present on a European scale with at least 40 major cultural events. The bid was of excellent quality, featuring top-quality shows, numerous performances and an openness to other Asian, African and American cultures. European Commission experts have said that they are enthusiastic. The theme is in Frisian - "lepen Mienskip", which means "open" and "community spirit". Ton F. van Dijk, a children's radio presenter, is involved in the project. His speciality is the strategy for change and mankind. He has been entrusted with project development.

Concerning the incorporation of Circus in the ECoC, Immie Jonkman, Cultural Producer / Programme Manager at the Royal Friesian, tells us: *«Leeuwarden - Fryslân 2018 is still working on the programme, and therefore still working on how exactly circus acts will be featured in 2018. But there will be circus, for example in the project called Adje Lambertz, which is all about children and celebrating diversity. Circus is one of the means by which the children will be developing their own programme. They will be working together with the circus schools and a variety of circuses. They will also be cooperating with a regional festival that is developing into a circus-festival, by working on new European circus connections. Incorporating circus in the programme is a logical step. Modern circus is a beautiful way of expressing emotions and crossing bridges without too many words. The beauty of circus is in telling a story in a poetic way that is understandable for all people of all ages and all backgrounds.»*

**« Modern circus is a beautiful way of expressing emotions and crossing bridges without too many words. »**

**Immie Jonkman**

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### **"Rethink" is the theme or "mantra" of Århus 2017**

## PERSPECTIVES / POINTS OF VIEW

### Training and creation, a key relationship for the development of circus policy in ECoCs. Interview with Wim Claessen

Wim Claessen is a Circus Arts Consultant in the Netherlands and a member of Circostrelada network. His expertise is recognised by European professionals and artistic networks, specifically circus networks. The designer, founder and artistic director of Circo Circolo <sup>25</sup> is currently focusing on the training of circus artists, and remains one of the leading advocates of European contemporary circus.

Gérald Drubigny: Wim Claessen, tell us about the relationship between circus training and the Circo Circolo festival.

**Wim Claessen:** In 2003, I decided to try to promote cooperation between university-level circus training and a festival with an international programme. It seemed obvious to me that training needed to be carried out in close collaboration with shows, which is the primary means of developing new talent in circus culture. During a professional debate at the Janvier dans les Etoiles festival in La Seyne-sur-Mer, someone asked me why there was so little circus in the Netherlands. This question pushed me to action, and the results were very conclusive. The festival worked alongside a circus school from the very first day and all the students work in the festival, which is part of their curriculum. Our primary objectives are met. In the Netherlands, circus is now very present with new, younger companies that are working across Europe, such as the BOOST circus workshop and the TENT, B-side and B4 companies.

**G.D.: We understand the nature of your project. Young people are the cornerstone of your activity. But what disciplines and content are included in the training and how are you making space for future circus artists?**

**W.C.:** Circus arts training starts by making circus accessible to younger audiences. This is the first link in the chain of "education - creation - production - distribution - representation". Without specially adapting circus to young audiences, circus development is impossible and the festival therefore launched collaboration with circuses aimed at Dutch children. The quality of this cooperation has gone up a notch with each Circo Circolo festival. The cooperation with circuses for children, circus training and the circus festival receive financial support from national culture funds. University-level circus training in the Netherlands lasts four years. In a short period of time, two programmes have been put in place at the Codarts Academy in Rotterdam and the Fontys ACAPA Academy in Tilburg, thanks to funding from the Ministry of Education and Culture. Both institutions offer comprehensive training for circus artists. In the Tilburg training programme, there are plans to offer training for circus instructors. Special attention is paid to theatrical and performance arts training. The two institutions work together and teachers work in both academies. During their studies, students carry out common projects.

**G.D.: What are the effects of this circus policy in the Netherlands?**

**W.C.:** There is real coherence across the circus arts scene thanks to this top-quality collaboration. It could be a source of inspiration for ECoCs wishing to focus their action on developing circus policy. Putting on a festival means creating a new festival every time. We make sure to cooperate with grassroots action, carrying out "social" circus. We talk a lot about the content, commercial conditions for shows and funding issues. National television is paying increasing attention to this development. The tide is also turning towards formal recognition of contemporary circus by the Dutch Council for Culture, an advisory body under the Ministry of Culture. We're all contributing to a real circus policy in this country.

Dank je wel! Thank you!

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**There is real coherence across the circus arts scene thanks to this top-quality collaboration. It could be a source of inspiration for ECoCs wishing to focus their action on developing circus policy.**

## Cultural Action Without Borders: Cultural Diplomacy in Europe. Gérald Drubigny shares his thoughts

### Influence, exception, and unique or multiple culture(s)

Cultural diplomats in Europe are above all agents seeking to "introduce" their own country's culture to others. Their mission is to make their country shine and to pass on their codes, including their language and music, whether Latin, Slav, English, Arabic, Scandinavian, Nordic or anything else! Is linguistic influence determined by culture, or merely the side effect of a language associated with the world of business? Do we need to prove that heritage and creation are also influential factors? National cultural centres or institutes have been and are still good diplomatic tools, for example, the British Council, Società Dante Alighieri, Instituto Cervantes, Goethe Institut, Institut français, etc.

Since 2011, increasing influence from BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa), Muslim countries, and very soon Africa, have forced the leaders of Old Europe to offer alternative cultural diplomacy in the light of this globalisation. Emancipative culture seems to be a tool against obscurantism, sectarianism and totalitarianism in all their forms. The arts, especially circus arts, are a universal way of communicating European culture and promoting human values.

They are both useful and necessary for our diplomacy.

### The utility of circus in ECoCs: a European (multi)cultural exception?

European cultural diplomats must consider consolidating communication between their academics and artists, in order to establish a common platform for culture, art and scientific technology.

Are we really stronger together? We need to bring our best ideas and our artists' imagination together, with the aim of strengthening our community well-being, identity, unique features, complementary passions and creativity. Our job is to rise up together above the global crowd, changing the image of our cities, regions and countries, and helping Europeans to share this seemingly utopic, but nonetheless essential way of life. Access to our national and common cultures for as many people as possible is a fundamental value. Culture is not a "saleable" or "bankable" product (what an awful word!). A work of art is a "cultural exception". Bringing together works within a specific temporal and urban context is a means of creating the glue that holds our concept of civilisation together.

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**With its artistic, accessible and itinerant nature, circus is itself an example of the founding European value of artistic and cultural sharing.**

This is what gives meaning to this extraordinary idea of a European Capital of Culture. This is what helps us understand the political determination of the European Parliament in Strasbourg, the European Council and the European Commission, responsible for implementing this vital scheme.

With its artistic, accessible and itinerant nature, circus is itself an example of the founding European value of artistic and cultural sharing.

Welcome to the circus in its quest for a multiculturalism that can celebrate its diversity.

Welcome to the big top.

Welcome to the stage.

Service: ECoC!

Labeled «Europe».

We're here to support your ECoC!

Gérald Drubigny  
Arts.Soft network  
[arts.soft.free.fr](http://arts.soft.free.fr)

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