

Circostrada Network

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European Charter for Hosting Circuses in Towns



Hors les murs

European Charter for Hosting Circuses in Towns

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HorsLesMurs

HorsLesMurs is the French national information centre for street arts and circus arts. It pilots the Circostrada Network, European platform for the street arts and circus dedicated to information, observation and professional exchanges.



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Preamble

The European Parliament recognised circus as forming part of European culture in 2005.

The European Charter for Hosting Circuses in Towns was inspired by a project previously implemented in France: the Charter "Establishment for the Circus". This was signed in May, 2001 by the Ministry of culture and several organisations, representative associations of local government and professional trade unions, who committed to distributing and promoting it amongst its members in order to support and develop the hosting of circuses throughout the national territory. A similar project was implemented in Spain in 2007, by the APCC - Catalan Association of Circus Professionals, as the "Collaboration Charter for Circus on Big Tops Tours".

The European Circus Charter has been developed with the aim of promoting circus arts in public spaces throughout Europe, by suggesting good practices to which signatories – circuses, local governments and other hosting entities – may willingly commit themselves. A series of elements required by both parties are set out, and may be used as a methodology to assist with the touring of tented performances.

The document is a general advocacy document that may be adapted to each country's specific working conditions: national working groups may be created to:

- ▶ *decide the content of their country's Charter. Some paragraphs - in italics - were identified as optional in the European text, and may be excluded from the country Charter: a corresponding version, without undesired italics, may be requested to the European project Coordinator*
- ▶ *decide on the implementation process of the country Charter: promotion actions for recognition and endorsement of the Charter at national level, possible signature / compliance procedure for local authorities and circuses, follow up on the use and application of the Charter's principles*
- ▶ *if need be, design locally needed appendices to the European text, such as references to local regulations, requested administrative authorisations, licenses or certificates*
- ▶ *if need be, design template documents to be also included as appendices in the country Charter: application forms, formal agreement between the hosting entity and the circus, etc.*

The project has been carried out by a European working group in 2010 and 2011, and is coordinated by the Circos-trada Network.

Introduction

1. Circus arts today

Circus has enriched Europe's cultural heritage since it was founded in London in 1768, before swiftly spreading to Dublin, Paris and then throughout the world... Since this time circus, in both its classical and contemporary expressions, out-doors and indoors, performed in a variety of scales and formats, has developed as a thriving evolving art form. Circus offers an engaging combination of aesthetics, as evidenced by the increase in interest by audience attendance and by promoters.

The ensemble of artistic skills contained within circus provides a framework for innovation and international collaborations, often resulting in large-scale international productions. Circus is a sector that creates structured forms of employment, assisted by numerous schools, high-level often accredited training programmes in professional training centres, firms and artistic companies. It is also a popular recreational practice, as seen in the proliferation of amateur clubs.

Whilst circus comes in a variety of genres each with different artistic and economic motivations, all forms share in the desire to perform to a wide audience base. Touring from the city centre to its surrounding areas, and into the rural areas, the circus – as well as other travelling art forms – brings performances and events directly to the public, at times to areas with no formal venues, often offering the only live performance that audiences will view that year.

General recommendations

Circus is a part of European culture, and as such ought to be included in local governments' cultural or events policies. Hosting circuses should be considered an opportunity for collaboration between cultural, social and events departments in towns, and should be made a shared experience.

Playing a proactive role in the cultural life of each area, local authorities are likely to be interested in the provision of arts performances and participatory experiences that contribute to the enlivening of their locality and assist with the social cohesion of their residents.

It is important that local authorities:

- ▶ identify the existing sites that may be suitable for performances and that may be made available
- ▶ take into account the requirements that circus have for suitable performance sites when developing new public recreational facilities or via the conversion of one or several spaces within their locality
- ▶ ensure circuses are able to perform at these sites on a regular basis, thus both protecting the cultural inheritance of circus and all the while encouraging artistic renewal by being open to new shows and performances
- ▶ consider removal of fees for the use of performance sites
- ▶ develop an active policy of cultural exchanges between local arts or social projects and the hosted circus

2. Objectives of the European Circus Charter

This Charter has the following objectives:

- ▶ to respond to the public's engagement with the art form by making circus accessible to all, whatever the age, and the social, economic, cultural or language origins
- ▶ to increase awareness and recognition of circus arts both at national and local level
- ▶ to promote circus arts in public spaces, to open up new spaces for circus companies
- ▶ to promote a cultural exchange between the circus companies and the towns
- ▶ to improve the facilities provided and more generally the hosting conditions for circuses
- ▶ to encourage discussion and trust-based collaboration between local authorities and other hosting entities and the circus professions
- ▶ to promote a "make things possible" philosophy, within the frame of a shared concern for the safety of the public

How to host a circus?

Recommendations

The hosting procedure governs relations between the local authorities, or any hosting entity (such as private site owners), and the circus company. It serves as a reference for both parties and allows them to effectively manage the event of the circus visit to the location.

1. Hosting procedure

THE CIRCUS COMMITMENTS

1.1 – Application by the circus

Ideally at least two months prior to its first performance date, the circus will supply the local authorities with complete and precise details relating to their hosting needs. The details will include:

- ▶ contact person with their telephone number
- ▶ presentation of the circus company, plus a memo describing the show
- ▶ requested dates
- ▶ required regulatory documentation and technical details relating to the tent, and any animals touring with the company
- ▶ technical details relating to the circus tent (size, seating capacity, amount of time needed for instalment and removal, layout), vehicle convoy and supplementary installations like on-site accomodation
- ▶ if need be, further information regarding the companies' specific needs (materials, configuration of the space, network access, etc.)
- ▶ proof of multi-risk liability insurance
- ▶ the list of documents and information expected from the local authority, relating to the installation (layout descriptive, networks, etc.) or the stay (doctor, vet and doctor on duty, etc.)

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES

1.2 – Acceptance by local authorities

The local authorities and services involved will review all professional requests based on their technical needs *as well as their cultural value*, communicating their response no later than one month after receiving the file, in order to allow ample time for circuses to schedule their tours.

Representative

The local authorities will designate a specific representative, reachable through an assigned phone number and available during the installation period. This person will be in charge of:

- ▶ informing the circus company of the answer to its application
- ▶ communicating all information necessary to insure the circus are adequately accommodated, including the living wagons if need be
- ▶ facilitating administrative procedures (authorisations, traffic and parking regulation, etc.) and technical details (providing for security barriers, etc.) as an intermediary to the relevant municipal services
- ▶ acting as an intermediary to the local associations and the neighbourhood inhabitants

Letter of authorisation

The letter of authorisation issued by the local authorities will include:

- ▶ the name of the representative in charge of the file among the local authorities, with their telephone number
- ▶ the performance dates
- ▶ the site and location
- ▶ any information specifically needed for the circus' installation (electricity, gas, telecommunications, water distribution, waste treatment/sorting policy, technical services, material supplies, postings and publicity)
- ▶ any information requested by the circus that may be useful to their stay, as the circus company members should be considered as temporary inhabitants of the town

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES

- ▶ the amount of possible fees involved for using the space as well as any necessary deposit or bond, plus details of how the desposit or bond will be refunded, within a reasonable time (see Formal Agreement)
- All refusals will be expressed in writing, and the reasons for refusal will be clearly detailed.

1.3 – Formal agreement

With the objective of a trust-based collaboration within a partnership, the local authorities and the circus may formalise an agreement, that may detail commitments by both parties to all relevant technical and organisational aspects mentioned in this document.

Promoting a cultural exchange

Both the local authority and the circus may offer and suggest cultural projects. The partnership could involve a special event to mark the circus' arrival, or it could be included in a regularly occurring festival or event. In order to achieve this aim, the circus companies will inform the host of their ability and ambitions to be involved in cultural projects.

Some examples of potential activities:

- ▶ the town may enter in a partnership with the circus for the show's tour and/or presentation (tour promotion and organisation, co-production, etc.)
- ▶ the town may request the artists' presence to participate in raising awareness of the circus arts (workshops, gatherings, open rehearsals, interventions within educational structures or the neighbourhood, etc.)
- ▶ as part of an official project, the town may put the circus in contact with interested institutions or associations (structures or events specifically for the circus arts, performance establishments, libraries, conservatories, schools, art schools, cultural activity centres, youth and culture centres, municipal centres, etc.)
- ▶ as part of developing a specific project (residency, conversion of a space, educational act, neighbourhood events, etc.) the town may put the circus in contact with other local governments

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES

The performance site fees and other taxes

The local authorities should consider waving any fees for use of the performance sites, municipal equipment, or other services made available to the circus, taking into account the cultural value and services provided by the circus. In case any fees or a deposit are requested by the hosting entity, their amount should be reasonable.

In the case that performance site fees would apply, this should be formalised clearly by the local authority. The amount of performance site fees will be based on the number of actual performance days. The local authority should exclude fees for the days needed by the circus for installation and removal. The town may request that a fraction of the performance site fees should be paid by the circus upon reserving the site. The remaining balance would then be paid upon arrival or after the last performance.

2. Location

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES

The host will provide the circus companies with a performance site that is satisfactory. Ideally the performance site must be recognised, by municipal services and the public, as a space conducive to cultural events.

If a new site is being made available, the local authority should participate in advertising / communicating. When possible, the local authority should create a site description, including all technical specifics relating of the site.

2.1 – The overall state and configuration of the site

The priority is to be able to install the circus tent under safe conditions. Ideally, the site should include:

- ▶ an area free of trees, street lamps, stone obstructions, cumbersome pillars, or immovable metallic structures
- ▶ a water source available at the edge of the site, sewage disposal, plus the capability of expelling rainwater
- ▶ electricity

The site must have escapes routes, and have no immediate flight routes within its direct environment.

2.2 – Quality of the ground

The ground should allow the circulation of heavy trucks without causing damage to the terrain.

If the site has not previously hosted a performance involving the installation of a structure (seating, circus tents...), a study of the stability of the ground should be carried out beforehand.

At time, the ground may not have a covering (soil, grass). It is preferable that the ground be level, and have a certain compactness in depth. There may be a ground covering of many different kinds: everyday material, asphalt, gravel, etc. It is important to know that asphalt coverings will be damaged if anchors are needed to install the circus tent. Other anchoring systems are available that do not damage the surface, and as an alternative may be furnished by the circus or by the town. These include hidden or portable systems such as the "anchor well" or "mono-blocks", made of cast-iron or concrete. Also, at times circus trucks may be used to tie up the tent.

2.3 – Access to the host area

Where necessary, the local authority will provide assistance to ensure adequate access to the site.

There should be an agreed access and parking plan for the vehicles involved in the circus and its performance. This needs to include ample rotation room for long sized vehicles with trailers and at least two site entrances, on opposite sides if possible, to allow access to emergency vehicles.

3. Installation

During the circus' installation, local and town services will have to work in close cooperation with the circus.

A site visit may have been organised prior to the circus arrival; if not, the local authorities' representative in charge of the file should meet with a representative of the circus on or shortly after arrival, or at least before tent erection. An inventory of fixtures will be filled out in the presence of both partners.

3.1 – Information on existing networks and access to networks

When not included in the letter of authorisation or the formal agreement, a detailed layout descriptive, including any possible buried structures (cables, pipes) or equipment (electrical facilities, transformers or any other underground installation) should be provided by the local authorities. This document will serve as a guarantee for the security of the technicians working to install the circus tent, and will also exonerate the town of liability should a network be damaged during instalment.

The local authority:

- ▶ will provide access to networks, with water sources, electrical sources (two or three different ones preferably), as well as evacuation capabilities for used water, floodwater, and runoff water
- ▶ facilitate direct contact with all relevant network services

3.2 – Facilities at the hosting area

Configuration and cleanliness of the site:

- ▶ a container for refusal should be installed prior to the circus' arrival, and the waste must be removed daily (unless the circus is able to undertake this itself)
- ▶ set, portable or towed shower facilities may be installed

Security of the hosting area: when barriers are needed, the local government should provide them upon the circus' arrival, so as to:

- ▶ allow the public to find its way to the circus tent
- ▶ define the security areas and distinguish the circus and town's liabilities

unless the circus is able to provide for them itself.

3.3 – Access to the host area

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES

If need be, an official order issued by the responsible authority should regulate parking around the site area, including necessary temporary modifications of the town's parking to allow the convoy to reach the host area, and taking into account the time needed to install and remove the circus tent.

THE CIRCUS COMMITMENTS

The circus commits itself to respecting and maintaining the performance site and environment. The circus will respect all regulatory measures and individual decisions made by the local authorities that relate to the stay.

The circus will contribute to the security of the hosting area by delineating the installation area and other private areas, *with necessary physical borders and signs forbidding public entry.*

4. The performance

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES

The town and the circus should agree on marketing activities, taking into account the possible specificities of classical circuses advertising campaigns.

The town should facilitate informing residents, cultural centres, associations, educational institutions and the press of the circus' arrival. Ideally it should offer use of its publicity mater (town billboards, newsletters...) and facilitate the distribution of the circus' marketing documentation.

THE CIRCUS COMMITMENTS

The circus will respect all legislative, regulatory, national and local measures regarding distribution and display of publicity. It commits itself to remove, directly after the last performance, all advertising material it may have installed itself. The circus will present a performance that is representative of what is depicted in its sales documentation.

The circus will respect all relevant legislation regarding labour and social codes as well as regulations relating to animals, and will take all necessary precautions regarding the security of goods and people during the performance.

Working group members

The European Circus Charter was written in 2010-2011 by the members of the European working group. They are professionals from the circus arts field, representatives of associations, institutions and local authorities. This includes representatives of various European areas, so that different stakes and environments could be taken into account.

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