

*Social Circus Without Borders Project implemented by Visegrad Standard Grant*

Social Circus Without Borders Project Supported by Visegrad Fund



Social Circus Without Borders was a project between all 4V countries focused on methods of social circus. Social circus, as an innovative approach based on the circus art, aims to assist personal and social development of disadvantaged or disabled people. **Project members participated in 4 trainings** (in 2016 and in 2017) in 4V countries, led by invited experts, in order to gain knowledge and increase their skills required for social circus work.

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**The first training** took place in Łódź, Poland, in September 2016, and was hosted by Project Leader – Fundacja Miasto Projekt. Project expert was Dorothee Rohrer from Switzerland, trainer and artist from Cirque du Soleil and Cirque du Monde, a social circus project of Cirque du Soleil. Dorothee Rohrer is qualified to carry out teacher trainings for social circus methodology. Dorothee has great experience in social circus work, she worked around the world with different social groups, e.g. difficult youth from favelas, economic exclusion groups from small villages in South America, difficult youth and foreigners in Canada...

It was a 5-day training for project members (4 Polish, 2 Czech, 3 Hungarian, 1 Slovak) and for circus trainers from other countries (2 English, 4 Greek, 1 Spanish, and 1 German). (18 people total).

Participants from other countries are members of allied organizations around Europe that develop social circus. Training was organized in Centrum Dialogu, a museum and house of culture in Łódź.

Training took place every day for 7 hours, from 9 am to 6 pm, with 1.5-hour lunch break, for 5 days which equals 35 hours total.

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During the training, participants learned how to work with different social groups. We talked about ethical issues, moral issues, group problems that the social circus trainer might encounter at work, together we looked for solutions.

In addition to day-to-day training, the participants visited the city, attended a meeting with local cultural, arts, education, and media centres.





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**The second training** took place in October 2016 in Bratislava, Slovakia, organized by project partner Cirkuskus. Project expert was Rika Taymans. She is a circus educator and trainer from Belgium. She has developed an exercise method for parents and infants/toddlers called Circomotoriek, based on Veronica Sherborn's method. To accompany the physical activities, she tells inspiring stories for children and parents to play with. Both parents and children learn a lot and have great fun.

Training was about discovering a method called “Circomotoriek”, developed by Rika Taeymans based on Veronica Sherborn's method. Cirkomotoriek is an exercise method for parents and infants/toddlers: concentration, strength, coordination, balance and collaboration are being worked on through the fantasy games and acrobatic tricks. To accompany the physical activities, Rika tells inspiring stories for children and parents to play with.



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People from 4 Visegrad countries took part in the workshop: Slovakia (hosting organization), Poland, Czech Rep., Hungary, 20 people total. The participants are involved in circus organizations, having teacher diploma, or experience with working with groups, and love to work with young children and parents.



CirKusKus cooperated with “Academia Universum” to host the workshop in a capoeira gym equipped with tatami mats, changing rooms, and cafeteria. Training took 3 days (8 hours per day, with 1 hour lunch break).

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The workshop was organized to explain the method and to try out moves first, and then a group of 4-7 year old children joined to play with us, and then with parents. We tried to manage the same number of children as the adult group. Each session with children lasted about 1-1.5 hour. After each session with the kids, we had time to talk about what happened, what we observed and felt.

All the participants loved the workshops, Rika is a prepared and experienced trainer who introduced us to a method where playing together does miracles to the development of the children, and to the development of relationship with their parents.



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**The third training** was organized by Hungarian Juggling Association in Inspiral – Circus Space in Budapest, Hungary. This time topic of the training was: Aerials in social circus work. By “aerial” we mean all circus disciplines based on acrobatic techniques performed with trapeze, silks, hoop, or other props which are suspended in the air. Aerial techniques also serve to develop participant skills in social circus workshops. This area is not well developed in the Visegrad countries due to lack of adequate space, equipment, or mattresses, so this training was really important for all project partners.

Isebel van Maele teaches since 1993 and is a member of pedagogical staff at Circus in Beweging in Leuven, Belgium. She finished Ecole de Cirque de Bruxelles and she is a trainer there and in Leuven. She also coordinate Flemish Basic Circus Trainer Program (BIC). She is also a co-author of the book “Circus in school” and writer of “The Guidelines for Trainers Development” program Youth Circus. She was a trainer of many international and national social circus projects and workshops.

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Participants from all 4 partner countries took part in this training, with total of 18 people. Training took 3 days (8 hours per day, with 1 hour lunch break). During training, participants learned basic and intermediate moves and positions on trapeze, silks, and hoops, as well as safety aspects. Isabel presented methodology - exercises and their impact in social circus work. Participants also took part in creative work and discussions about aerials in social work. Apart from training, participants could observe social circus workshops led in Inspiral circus space and meet social circus workers in Budapest.



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**The fourth training** was organized by Zachrada Organization in Cirqueon – circus space in Prague, Czech Republic, in February 2017. Trainer was Craig Quat - known within juggling and clinical industries

as a renowned theorist and world practitioner of social circus, which promotes inclusion. He investigates developmental effects of juggling in education, by focusing on adaptive educational methods in order to promote and support greater inclusivity in circus art. He is recognized for developing the specialized equipment, known as Quat Props, which makes juggling more accessible to people of all abilities, ages, and backgrounds. His unique learning style contributes to many progressions over traditional methods of instruction to enhance the overall quality of learning for everyone. His method was not known in Visegrad countries at all, that is why project partners decide to educate social circus trainers in their countries, and to develop this method in Visegrad countries. Participants from all 4 partner countries took part in this training, 18 people total.

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Training took 3 days (8 hours per day, with 1 hour lunch break). Participants focused on different aspects of Craig Quat's method, such as: functional juggling, divergent learning, baseline connection through activity between teacher-student, Juggle-Board training – different methods, discussion, pathways to teach, safety and good atmosphere, facilitations for people with different disabilities and many other. Last day of training saw participants going to a special school to lead workshops for children with different disabilities. Apart from training hours, participants could observe social circus workshops in Cirqueon and had a possibility to talk to Czech social circus trainers and social workers.



### Summary:

The project respond on requests of all partners and it consolidated cooperation between partners. It was also a star-up project for a future cooperation. Now we work on common politics in develop of social circus in Visegrad countries in cooperation with other European Countries.