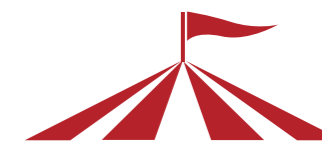




2021  
2025

STRATEGIC  
PLAN



# INTRODUCTION

***Dear members, partners and friends,***

*This global crisis we are all experiencing has shone light on some key aspects of the circus that make it so remarkable; its adaptability and strength; its strong sense of community and its ethos of turning obstacles into opportunities. Circus continues to adapt to a changing world and, now more than ever, youth and social circus is needed for the recovery of our young people and communities. We need to provide and re-build spaces for them to recover self-confidence, to let their imaginations and creativity blossom and learn about tolerance, respect, perseverance, and hope.*

*As we enter the second year of the pandemic, the resilience, determination, creativity and innovation by Caravan and our members has paved the way for this new Strategic Plan which we are now proud to present to you. This plan is result of a collective journey involving hours of discussion, planning, and exchange. It has its roots in 12 years of cooperation and expertise, and its vision towards the future. It reaffirms our membership's desire to be a tight-knit network with highly involved members who know and trust each other, and feel connected, like a strong family unit.*

*This Strategic Plan consists of four key strategic objectives with an overarching theme of sustainability - without which none of these objectives can be implemented. It is a living document! It belongs to our members and will be led by them through annual work plans, with the support of our Coordination Team and Caravan Board.*

*On behalf of the whole board, I would like to thank the fantastic Caravan Team, Camille and Will, and our former employees, Ophélie, Susan, Laurent, and François, as well as all current and former board members for all the hard-work, vision and heart they have given to Caravan. With hope and determination, we enter the next phase of Caravan's journey with this plan as our springboard into the future, and our members as the springs to launch us towards success.*

Best wishes,

**Ulla Hokkanen**  
President, on behalf of the Board

2025

2024

2023

2022

2021

**Our Vision :** Changing lives through circus!

**Our Mission :** To use circus arts to create positive personal, community and social change

**Our values and guiding principles**

**Objective 1 :**  
A **community** - for building capacity, solidarity and mutual members

**Objective 2 :**  
An **Expert** - in developping and delivering quality in youth and circus education

**Objective 3 :**  
A **catalyst** - for participation and youth leadership

**Objective 4 :**  
An **advocate** - for a more fare, sustainable, recognized sector

**Caravan's sustainability** - human resources, monitoring & evaluation, funding, Evironment

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# I. OUR ORIGIN, VISION AND MISSION

Caravan is an international youth and social circus network of 35 circus schools from across Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and Asia, that advocates for the positive impact of youth and social circus. The network was established in 2008 by 6 European circus schools, with a common goal to use youth and social circus as an educational tool and to dedicate this work to groups from disadvantaged backgrounds with specific needs.

## What is our Vision?

Changing lives through circus!

## What is our Mission?

To use circus arts to create positive personal, community and social change.

**30**  
years of  
social circus

Started more than 30 years ago in Europe as a pilot experience, **youth and social** circus spread and proved its value all over the world.

This pedagogic approach uses circus arts as an innovative tool to contribute to the personal development of its participants by developing personal skills such as open-mindedness, self-esteem, tolerance, respect, responsibility, autonomy, perseverance and self-confidence. In that framework, circus arts are also considered as a powerful instrument fostering social inclusion for people with fewer opportunities and/or special needs, and towards those marginalised by society. Unlike professional schools, youth and social circus schools focus on the pedagogy rather than on reaching a high level of technical ability.

Youth and social circus contribute to the creation of true group cohesion by promoting the inclusion of all participants. It encourages individuality and fosters social connection, enabling members to develop interpersonal skills and human values

# WHAT WE WILL SEEK TO ACHIEVE IN THE COMING 5 YEARS



A **Community** – for building capacity, solidarity and mutual aid

An **Expert** – in developing and delivering quality in youth and circus education

A **Catalyst** – for participation and youth leadership

An **Advocate** – for a more fair, sustainable, recognized sector

## CARAVAN AS A COMMUNITY

“We aim to strengthen our network by facilitating an environment to exchange information and good practices.”



Caravan network is a human and friendly network which only exists by and for its Members. It is a place where younger organisations can learn from the experience of older organisations and 'older' organisations can learn from new innovations.

Caravan is all about creating such spaces to exchange, share, and brainstorm together in order to implement Caravan's vision, mission and objectives. Today's world is uncertain and forces us to remain mindful of unexpected challenges in order to constantly adapt ourselves. The 2020 Covid-19 pandemic has been a very informative period for Caravan, among others, in terms of internal communication. Caravan wishes to learn from 2020 to ensure safe and friendly spaces, no matter if they are in person or online.



## 1 Ensure qualitative and balanced growth worldwide

Based on two years of discussions, Caravan set up a working group and began restructuring its' membership in 2020 which led to a system with only one category of 'Member'. All Members are now equal in benefits and responsibilities. They can come from all around the world as long as their mandate is focused on Youth and social circus, and they share Caravan's vision, mission and objectives. This way, Caravan wishes to remain a living network with highly involved members who know and trust each other, and feel connected, like a strong family unit. This unit is surrounded by a group of 'Friends' who are allied with Caravan and its' vision, and to support and be connected with its' mission. These changes have been applied as of January 1st, 2021.

As a consequence, Caravan's expansion for the coming 5 years will not be about getting bigger in terms of number but ensuring a qualitative growth.

## 2 Encourage peer-to-peer exchanges

Caravan wishes to be seen as a friendly, human and supportive network, even more in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic and its' impact in the short and long term. Whether we can travel or not, we want to remain close to each other, to have spaces to exchange practices, challenges, and questions and to show solidarity. The "Caravan family" online talks would be designed to create such space for conversation outside of General assembly meetings and specific project discussions. They will aim at building resilience and support informal learning via the sharing of good practices and experiences between peers.

They will be organized on a regular basis by the Caravan coordination team and will be moderated each time by a different member who will suggest the theme.

3

## Discuss thematic focus through Working groups

Further addressing the need for more sharing of experience and collective brainstorming, specific challenges have been discussed during previous General assembly meetings. As has previously been the case, some of these were further debated through ad hoc working groups among network Members in order to suggest concrete actions. Such working groups (informal and limited in time) coordinated by Caravan coordination team should be encouraged as it contributes to more transparency and good governance within Caravan.

Potential theme to be further explored: environmental sustainability, communication, personal and organisational resilience, leading change, youth leadership, mental well-being.

4

## Offer peer to peer bilateral mentorship

Each new Caravan Member would be offered (not mandatory) to be coupled with an existing Member for its first year of membership. This privileged relation could smooth new members' integration and implication into our network.

5

## Explore management & leadership support

Considering the evolution of our working field, as well as the larger context of subsidies, public funding, development of technologies, we feel there is a real need to strengthen circus organisations managers to envision the strategic development of their institution. Various discussions in that direction took place among Caravan members during the past two years. Caravan members could benefit from a global capacity building

program on such skills, using peer-to-peer learning approach within the youth and social circus field but also learning from external professionals and from other networks/organisations with similar needs. In that sense, Caravan will aim to follow up on these previous brainstorming sessions in order to further consider building such programs through pilot activities.



## 6 Safeguard and sustain internal good governance

Statutory meetings are good governance and democratic cornerstones for Caravan. They are important to monitor projects implementation, budget and financial management and overall, our Strategic plan's implementation. Additionally, there is scope for brainstorming on Caravan's vision and next steps.

### a. General assembly meetings

Caravan General assembly will keep meeting twice (2) a year (Spring & Autumn). For environmental and financial reasons, one of the meetings will be held entirely online while the other one will take place in-person and be hosted by one of Caravan members. This balance will allow Caravan to strengthen the level of attendance and thus good governance. A half or full day public event (workshop, conference...) will be organized next to each in-person meeting in order to strengthen Caravan's advocacy component and external networking (see objective 4). Friends of Caravan will be invited to attend some parts of General assembly meetings

### b. Board meetings

Caravan Board of directors will meet on an average of seven (7) times a year in order to ensure adequate and effective coordination with Caravan coordination team. For environmental and financial reasons, half of the meetings will take place online while the others will be hosted by Caravan members, preferably next to project activities or specific events already taking place.

## 7 Strengthen the bilateral and multilateral projects between members and beyond

The added value of our Network is not only to build projects together with our Members, but also to use Caravan as a safe space to initiate new dynamics and ideas. Caravan wishes to encourage its members to develop bilateral & multilateral projects between them as well as with youth organizations in Europe and beyond.



## CARAVAN AS AN EXPERT

“We aim to develop and implement circus pedagogy & education around the world.”



The professionalisation of the youth and social circus sector lies at the heart of Caravan's mission. Caravan has been working since its creation to ensure better recognition of pedagogical, social, artistic and administrative competencies of the young people involved in youth and social circus organisations. For this purpose, Caravan is simultaneously strengthening both formal and non-formal education opportunities based on long-term research led by its members.

## 1 Sustain & strengthen “Circus Trans-Formation” training for trainers’ program

« Circus Trans-Formation » (hereinafter called “CTF”) training for trainers has now gained a solid recognition in the youth and social circus field. Based on non-formal education approach, CTF provides ongoing training in social circus through a cycle of 4 modules in 4 different international circus schools.

This training for trainers is delivered on the basis of the Guidebook for social circus trainers. This Guidebook is the result of a 5 year European-funded research project, working with 2 universities and 8 Caravan members. It aims to provide the social circus sector with a 20-day training program for social circus trainers. As of today, this Guidebook is available in French and English.

The first cycle took place in 2015/2016 and six editions have been organized since then, leading to continual improvement. A first evaluation took place in 2018 in the framework of the “Extending CTF” project.

Caravan will strive to build new capacities within the network on delivering the training, while ensuring its excellent implementation. A second evaluation of the program and an update of the Guidebook will take place before launching a new cycle. Additionally, exploring new activities such as refresher training for ex- CTF trainers and/or additional optional modules focused on specific target audiences (e.g., migrants & refugees or persons with disabilities) will be explored.

The perpetuation and improvement of this non-formal education program will allow us to increase the number of young circus trainers equipped with specific competences to improve the social inclusion of all young people.

## 2 Disseminate Caravan’s non formal education expertise beyond our network

Caravan continues ensuring the qualitative development of the Youth and social circus sector at the local, national and international level thanks to the development of non-formal learning tools. Hence, Caravan is willing to further develop innovative ways to disseminate best practices strengthened in the framework of CTF and other capacity building programs.

Caravan will ensure such transfer of competences through different channels such as: adaptation of the CTF training to new target groups such as artists, social workers and educators, translation of the guidebook in other languages (e.g., Spanish), tutorial videos and other online tools based on the guidebook.



### 3 Address circus trainers specific pedagogical needs in intercultural contexts

If Caravan was originally created by 8 European circus schools, it is today an international network experiencing and learning from many varied socio-cultural and geopolitical contexts. In this framework, Caravan wishes to take the best of all such realities to keep strengthening capacity building of circus trainers through combining non formal education and circus pedagogy.

#### a. Working with refugees and newly arrived migrants

Started late 2019 and running until summer 2022, “Circus as intercultural encounter” is a new initiative which seeks to promote intercultural dialogue and strengthen knowledge and acceptance of diversity in society by advancing the capacity of social circus trainers.

To this end, six Caravan members and one university, together with Caravan coordination team, are working to develop and disseminate a new training programme and guidebook to specialist trainees in facilitating circus workshops with refugees and newly arrived migrants. This training programme builds on CTF’s achievements and field research to include innovative skills and practices of intercultural dialogue necessary for effective anti-racism and social inclusion interventions. This program will then be included within the framework of existing training programmes, in particular Caravan’s CTF training for trainers. This project is funded by Anefore, the Luxembourg Erasmus + National Agency.

#### b. Working in highly intercultural environment

“Circus overseas” is a new project gathering 6 members from Europe, South Africa, Cambodia and Palestine. Funded by the EACEA, this project deepens the sharing of experiences at local and international level thanks to a combination of non-formal education and circus to foster creativity and intercultural dialogue. It is structured as a capacity building program with a series of 4 training activities which aim at improving several crucial aspects of circus trainers daily work from the perspective of using social circus as a tool for inclusion and empowerment of our youngsters, workers and members. Starting in 2021, it will run for 2 years. All pedagogical and communication tools developed in this framework will be disseminated to all members and beyond.



### 4 Contribute to the formal recognition of competences within the youth and social circus sector

Caravan is working towards a better recognition of the competences of youth and social circus trainers through formal education systems such as higher education and university institutions in order to reinforce youth employability and their integration into the labour market.

Circus ++ is a three-year project (2019-2022) in which universities and circus schools from five partner countries are developing a curriculum for the first Europe-wide training programme in youth and social circus pedagogy. This project will enable the formal recognition of competences acquired through non formal education as well as through their field experience hence offering better opportunities for the young people to access the labour market. This project is funded by the Finnish Erasmus + National Agency.

## CARAVAN AS A CATALYST

“We aim to offer to the young people of today an enabling environment to create an equal and sustainable world of tomorrow.”





## 1 Bolster circus as an engaging tool for youth involvement in their local communities and beyond borders

Because youth and social circus are precisely about empowerment, Caravan wishes to create spaces and encourage mobilities where young people can discuss, exchange and build on what they've learned through circus arts to further become an integrated and proactive member of their local community.

Such spaces will take various forms (youth festivals, youth exchanges, workshops, conferences...) but thanks to the support of Caravan Youth advisory board/council, they will all be prepared and implemented with a youth-led, participatory approach. They will aim to maximise opportunities and pathways for young people to develop leadership and communication skills as well as their sense of reflection. They will also favour intercultural learning, respect for diversity and the values of solidarity.

Additionally, Caravan has been supporting volunteering for many years now (mainly under the European Voluntary Corps scheme developed by the European Union) and will keep encouraging its members to welcome young volunteers every year who will be become engaged citizens in tomorrow's society.

Caravan members are essential fertile grounds for each of the communities they are involved with. They help deepen the feeling of belonging within society through personal, civic and social competences, which enables young people to empower themselves and become vocal at their local, national, European and even international level.

Caravan wishes to develop and build youth circus for young people, sharing best practice in this area and building Caravan members' capacity to have meaningful and practical actions in their circus schools.

In line with our 2019 report, Caravan sees this third objective as a process and commits to further explore the three (3) following areas in a youth-led participatory approach. In order to do so, a Youth advisory board/Council composed of at least ten (10) young people from various Caravan members will be set up to ensure such transversal youth-led approach in developing and implementing activities.

Defining "young" can be challenging as many definitions coexist but for the sake of clarity, Caravan is using the definition of the European Union Strategy for Youth where "youth" includes teenagers and young adults aged between 13 and 30 years.

## 2 Encourage youth participation and leadership within Caravan members circus schools

Ensuring a genuine participation of the youth is a process, and process takes time. As Caravan strongly believes in peer-to-peer and bottom-up approaches, we wish to suggest activities (Caravan family talks, workshops during general assembly meetings, ...) to learn more from our members who are already testing and experiencing such approaches. Additional research and/or trainings could also be envisioned at a later stage if necessary. This sharing of good practices and lessons learned will improve our collective understanding of youth participation and stimulate pilot activities within our members' circus schools but also between a limited between our members.



## 3 Explore Youth participation and leadership within Caravan governance structure

Involving young people in matters affecting them can be extremely valuable for a network whose member organisations mainly work with young people. This third area will aim at creating a space for conversation among Caravan members to reflect on our own governance as a network and explore ways to further involve youth in our decision-making processes. Supported by the Youth advisory group, an ad-hoc working group could be set up and suggest concrete pilot actions on the basis of existing good practices within our Members (previously shared thanks to point 2).

## CARAVAN AS AN ADVOCATE

“We aim to build on project outcomes to raise awareness about the world-wide positive impact of youth and social circus.”



Caravan's raison d'être is to better highlight the role of youth and social circus as a tool to fight discrimination and the marginalization of youth and vulnerable groups. Caravan aims to contribute to the development of policy affecting youth and helping marginalised people have their voices heard. Caravan does not intend to become a Network dedicated exclusively to advocacy activities, but we believe it is essential, in today's societies, to be more vocal, as a diverse and united Network, and bring forward our vision.



## ① Ensure a coherent identity and voice for our Network

Wishing to be more vocal implies to make sure our voices are representing our diversity but are gathered around Caravan's vision, mission & objectives. Caravan will work towards clearer guidelines and tools to be used by Caravan members in the shape of a visibility toolbox. Caravan would also like to explore other ideas such as a video material or infographics.

## ② Increase the exposure of Caravan's project results

We believe Caravan's project outputs and outcomes must continue to be highlighted in order to strengthen their impact and reach, therefore strengthening Caravan's legitimacy within the youth and social circus community. In that sense, Caravan will keep publishing annual reports, regular newsletters and will remain active on social media.

## ③ Build on Caravan project outcomes to raise awareness & advocate beyond our Network

Caravan has built a strong legitimacy over the years in youth and social circus field, but also broadly within the contemporary circus scene, bringing its expertise and raising awareness towards stakeholders not yet aware of the powerful impacts of youth and social circus. Similarly, Caravan has started to extend its partnerships with social workers and wishes to strengthen such approach in the coming years.

When it comes to advocacy, Caravan will strive to strengthen its collaboration with relevant advocacy groups within Europe and beyond. In such dynamics, the role of Caravan can be essential to contribute to the development of policy affecting youth and helping people's voices be better heard.

Raising awareness is also essential to ensure Caravan's financial sustainability. In that sense, Caravan will organise public events (next to general assembly or project meetings) to create more opportunities for its Board members to regularly meet with relevant politicians and financial partners working at local, national, European and international levels on youth policies.

## 4 Boost our members' capacities in terms of external communication & advocacy

In connection with Objective 1, Caravan wishes to further support its Members which express the need to strengthen their communication and advocacy skills. Within the past years, Caravan teamed up with dynamic partners which could act as resource persons for its Members. In that regard, Caravan will keep looking for more partnerships, in particular with communication schools and universities, as well as communication agencies. Additionally, Caravan coordination team will dedicate time to occasionally support members which express such needs. It could take the shape of voluntary support but also of short-term discounted consultant contract for longer projects.



WHAT DO  
WE NEED TO  
IMPLEMENT  
THIS  
STRATEGIC  
PLAN?



Our 4 key objectives for the upcoming 2021-2025 period can only be successfully implemented if Caravan's sustainability is ensured in a way that equips our Network to address tomorrow's challenges and opportunities.

## I. PLACE ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AT THE CORE OF OUR APPROACH

We strongly believe that environmental sustainability must be the cornerstone of our intervention logic. As an international Network, it represents a real challenge and has been part of our discussions for a few years now. Several initiatives have already been taken, among them:

- While encouraging online versions, printing our annual reports, leaflets and other paper-based tools using vegetable-based inks on recycled paper in limited quantity
- Holding statutory meetings in person next to project activities to avoid duplicating travels
- Zero waste approach for catering during project activities and statutory meetings
- Developing and encouraging online meetings alternating with in-person meetings

The Covid-19 pandemic, by drastically limiting our freedom of movement, forced us to create and experience new ways of working online across borders that resonates with our current discussions.

In the coming months, Caravan will explore the possibility to set up a working group (see objective 1.3) to further brainstorm and suggest concrete activities (such as for instance transportation guidelines including financial incentives for environmentally friendly transportation) to be implemented and improved on a regular basis.

## II. ENSURE CONTINUOUS AND COMPLEMENTARY HUMAN RESOURCES

All these projects and activities represent many human beings engaged behind the scenes. They function thanks to the energy and wonderful commitment of our members and Board but would not be successful without Caravan's responsive and efficient coordination team to support, coordinate and boost every step of the journey.



Today is a crucial time for Caravan as our Network has never had so many projects running in parallel, on top of communication (both external and internal), strategic thinking and fundraising. At the heart of such a promising multiplication of opportunities lies the responsibility to ensure strong and sustainable human resources.

Our development manager and projects & communication assistant, both currently part-time, must have their position secured for the coming five years with the possibility of increasing short term our assistant's working time. Ultimately, Caravan will strive for the possibility to move from one projects and communication assistant to two part time employees (projects officer and communication officer), supporting our Development manager. This way, our Development manager could focus on strategic development and fundraising for our network.

### III. MONITOR AND EVALUATE OUR ACTIVITIES EFFICIENTLY

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In order to ensure coherence and continuous improvement, it is crucial to keep monitoring and evaluating our activities, both in a quantitative and qualitative way. In coordination with donors' expectations, Caravan will base its approach on the following key methodologies and questions.

#### Monitoring:

- **Results monitoring** focuses on the effects and impact of the project/activity to determine whether it is on track to achieve the planned results (outputs, outcomes and impact) and whether it has unintended effects (positive or negative).
- **Context monitoring** is about the project environment, including assumptions and factors that may affect the completion of the project, but also the unexpected. It includes monitoring the local situation as well as the broader context - political, institutional, regulatory and funding - in which the project is carried out.

- **Financial monitoring** guarantees the accounts by contribution and by activity in predefined categories of expenditure.
- **Organizational monitoring** focuses on sustainability, institutional development and capacity building within the framework of the project / activity and at the level of partners.
- **Process monitoring** assesses the use of inputs and resources, the progress of activities and the achievement of products. It is used to analyse "how" the activities are carried out - their efficiency in terms of meeting deadlines and using resources.
- **Beneficiary monitoring** focuses on the perception of beneficiaries of the project / activity. It measures satisfaction and identifies complaints from beneficiaries, in particular regarding their participation, the way they are treated, access to resources and changes made.



We will ask ourselves the following questions **to evaluate** :



### Relevance:

- Is the strategy adapted to the needs of the context and the target groups?
- Were the planned actions appropriate to achieve the objectives set?

### Effectiveness:

- To what extent have the results been achieved?
- What was done compared to what was planned?

### Efficiency:

- What is the cost-effectiveness relationship of the project in terms of resources invested and expected results?
- Which are the measures taken which have made it possible to optimize resources (planning, management, partnerships, distribution, monitoring, etc.)?

### Impact:

- What are the expected, unexpected, positive or negative effects caused by the project?
- What is the difference between the situation before the intervention and the current situation?

### Durability:

- How can the results and effects be sustained?
- Is there ownership of the activities carried out by the beneficiaries?
- Can the action be autonomous? Replicated?





## IV. EXPLORE AND SUSTAIN DIVERSIFIED SOURCES OF FUNDING

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Caravan's growing number of projects is made possible thanks to a great optimization of our membership fees and a strong recognition gradually gained from the European Union, and more specifically the Education, Audio-visual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) with its Erasmus + program. This renewed support is crucial and reaffirms the relevance of our activities.

In the framework of this 5-year strategic plan, we will both ensure the continuity of such European funding while exploring opportunities with other relevant stakeholders, both public and private. Such diversification of funding is crucial to make sure our financial capacity matches our human resources and activities strategy in the long-term approach.



Caravan activities receive an on-going support from the European Commission.

The content of this publicatin is the sole responsibility of CARAVAN and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission.

CARAVAN aims at being environmental friendly!  
This strategic plan has been printed in a very limited number of copies, on 100% recycled paper using vegetable-based inks.

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