



# CASA

MULTIMEDIA MARKET GUIDE

FINLAND

CIRCUS AND STREET ARTS CIRCUITS

# CASA

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# SHORT HISTORY AND OVERVIEW OF THE STREET ARTS AND CIRCUS

Circus in Finland began when a French equestrian circus group performed in Turku in 1802. In successive decades Finland became a fixture on international circus tours as groups passed through on their way to St Petersburg from Stockholm.


The first Finnish circus troupe started performing in 1896. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, circus acts were often performed as part of touring funfairs, but long distances, hard winters and the high entertainment taxes that were levied on circus hindered sustainable circus activity.

The second awakening of circus began in the 1970s. The founding of our biggest touring tented circus, Sirkus Finlandia, in 1976 revived a long-lost Finnish circus tradition, and youth circuses were also established in the same decade. Since then, a huge rise in the amount of children and youth engaged in circus as a hobby has fed a new generation of performers and spectators. Today there are more than 8,000 amateurs in 44 youth circus schools and clubs all around the country. High quality youth circus education is widely available, and is designed to provide a solid footing for professionalism in the art field.

Contemporary circus art began to develop in Finland in the 1990s. Today we have around twenty full-time contemporary circus companies and around the same number of solo artists, duos, collectives and working groups. There are an estimated 250 circus professionals working in Finland, both performing and teaching circus skills. Circus is being taught in two educational institutes.

One important step in the development of the art form in Finland was the opening of Cirko, a venue and residency centre for contemporary circus, in Helsinki in 2011. The association Cirko – Center for New Circus had been established already in 2002.





One important step in the development of the art form in Finland was founding of The Association Cirko – Center for New Circus in 2002. In 2004–2006 Cirko carried out a development project for new circus with the funding from Finnish Cultural Foundation. In 2006 Cirko was divided into two so that the tasks of documenting, developing and promoting circus arts became the responsibility of CircusInfo Finland and Cirko continued as a production center. The opening of Cirko venue and residency center for contemporary circus in Helsinki in 2011 was a major step forward.

Street arts sector in Finland remains still quite small and unorganized. Outdoor performances can be seen at summer festivals in Finnish cities and villages but a short summertime and unpredictable weather conditions have hindered the growth of the sector.

During the last 200 years, circus has grown to become a respected, active and independent art form. The Finnish government has systematically supported circus arts over the last decade. Circus has received state financial support since 2009, and the amount of support has increased from 100,000 Euro (2009) to 520,000 Euro (2014). Compared to the state support received by theatre and music the support for circus is still very small-scale. In 2014 circus art was finally accepted into the law for theatres and orchestras but yet there are still no circus organisations that would receive legislated funding from the government.

# PUBLIC POLICIES AND SUPPORT SCHEMES

The Ministry of Education and Culture is responsible for strategic development in the cultural sector. The Ministry creates overall conditions for culture and participation in culture, drafts cultural legislation, and prepares relevant budget proposals.

As part of the government, the Ministry develops cultural policy and administers international cooperation in the field. Matters relating to the promotion of arts and culture come under the Department for Cultural, Sport and Youth Policy.

The Arts Promotion Centre Finland is an expert agency under the Ministry of Education and Culture. Its task is to promote the arts on both the national and international levels, as well as to promote aspects of culture.

The Central Arts Council serves as an advisory body to the Ministry of Education and Culture in policymaking regarding the arts.

The national arts councils make decisions regarding the awarding of state artist grants, as well as other grants and awards for artists, artist groups and organisations. The Central Arts Council decides the number of national arts councils, their names and their roles. For regional development, there are regional arts councils.

The cultural sector at the Ministry of Education and Culture comprises national cultural and art institutions, such as:

- publicly subsidised museums, theatres and orchestras
- local cultural services
- subsidised associations
- other organisational and civic activity in arts and culture
- cultural exportation

The government steers the implementation of cultural policy by means of legislation, the government programme and other policy instruments. The foremost policy areas for the Ministry are arts and artists, cultural heritage, libraries, cultural exportation, copyright and audiovisual culture. In addition, cultural policy addresses the implementation of integrated themes that cross sectoral boundaries, such as architecture, creativity and innovation, regional development, children and young people, health and well-being, immigration and the promotion of multiculturalism.

The major role in financing the arts and culture in Finland is played by municipalities and the state. The main policy domains financed by these two levels of government are:

- artistic creation (arts education, support to artistic work)
- cultural and art institutions (most importantly libraries, theatres, orchestras and museums)
- maintenance of cultural heritage

In the 2015 government budget, the total funding for culture was EUR 463 million. State funding for culture is mostly the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Culture. Most of the allocations to culture in the administrative section of the Ministry are directed at national art culture institutions and municipalities as statutory and discretionary state subsidies. A substantial part of the financial support granted by the Ministry for culture comes from the proceeds of Veikkaus, the Finnish national lottery.

Creativity is promoted by means of an artist grant scheme, which includes grants awarded by the arts councils and copyright remunerations distributed by copyright organisations. Discretionary grants are allocated for art promotion through associations representing different art forms, art and cultural centres, and art information centres.

The role of private foundations is getting more important in financing the arts and culture sector. Foundations like The Finnish Cultural Foundation, Kone foundation, Jenny and Antti Wihuri Foundation and The Alfred Kordelin Foundation award grants for individuals or groups to support artistic work and projects.

In addition, funding for culture is received from European Union and Nordic funds and programmes.



## MINNA SIRNÖ, DIRECTOR, ARTS PROMOTION CENTRE FINLAND

Circus as an independent art form is quite a new concept in state legislation and budgeting, even though there has previously been state support for circus under the category of dance. Due to its short history as an independent art form there's still a huge lack of permanent structures, of infrastructure, and of support for touring within Finland. Again because of its short history as an independent art form, state support and grants for circus are not yet as high as they might be when compared to other performing arts that have a longer history of state support. And unfortunately in Finland it's not yet possible to get an academic education in circus art. Another important challenge is to create permanent structures and long-term (3-5 year) funding for the circus arts.





# FESTIVALS AND VENUES

## PROGRAMMING CIRCUS AND STREET ARTS

There are currently three annual professional circus festivals in Finland whose programmes focus on contemporary circus, as well as some others that include a smaller amount of circus or street arts.

Some examples:

### 5-3-1 New Juggling Festival

The oldest of the circus festivals is the 5-3-1 Festival of new juggling, which was founded in Helsinki in 1998. Over its almost two decades the international festival has developed into an important three-day event in the experimental juggling field.

[www.531festival.com](http://www.531festival.com)

### Circus Ruska Festival

Circus Ruska Festival, which began in 2005 in Tampere, is an international contemporary circus festival which focuses on both domestic and international performances. Since 2015 Circus Ruska Festival has been organised in connection with Tampere Theatre Festival.

[www.circusruska.com](http://www.circusruska.com)

### Cirko Festival

Finland's biggest annual circus festival, Cirko Festival started in 2006. This one-week contemporary circus festival presents new Finnish and international performances in Helsinki.

[www.cirko.fi](http://www.cirko.fi)

## Helsinki Festival and Jyväskylä Festival

These general (cross art form) festivals usually include circus and street arts in their programmes. Helsinki Festival has the most international outlook. Jyväskylä Festival's programme includes domestic groups and especially international clown or non-verbal performances.

[www.helsinginjuhlaviikot.fi](http://www.helsinginjuhlaviikot.fi)

[www.jyvaskylankesa.fi](http://www.jyvaskylankesa.fi)

## Venues

Contemporary circus venues in Finland are mainly in the capital area, e.g. the City of Helsinki's cultural centres and theatres. The national circus centre Cirko has organised year-round performances since its opening in spring 2011. Outside the capital area contemporary circus can be seen especially in larger cities such as Turku, Tampere and Oulu. New venues have also sprung up in the north of the country, e.g. in Rovaniemi on the Arctic Circle.

## Tented Circuses

Sirkus Finlandia, traditional circus' biggest representative, makes an annual seven-month tour around the whole country and is watched by a total of 220,000 spectators each year. In addition there are three small tented circuses – Caliba, Florentino and Tähti – and funfairs which also tour the country.

## Other festivals and venues that include circus and street arts in their programmes:

**Silence Festival**

[hiljaisuusfestivaali.info](http://hiljaisuusfestivaali.info)

**Flow-Circus**

[www.flowprod.fi](http://www.flowprod.fi)

**Red Pearl Women's**

**Clown Festival**

[www.hurjaruuth.fi/en/festivals/](http://www.hurjaruuth.fi/en/festivals/)

[red-pearl-womens-clown-festival](http://red-pearl-womens-clown-festival)

**URB Festival of Urban Art**

[www.urb.fi](http://www.urb.fi)

**Theatre Union**

[www.teatteriunion.fi](http://www.teatteriunion.fi)

**City of Helsinki's cultural  
centres and theatres**

[www.hel.fi/www/kulke/en](http://www.hel.fi/www/kulke/en)

**Institutional theatres**

[www.tinfo.fi/en](http://www.tinfo.fi/en)

**Verkatehdas**

[www.verkatehdas.fi](http://www.verkatehdas.fi)

**Theatre festivals  
for young audiences**

[www.lastenteatteri.fi/katsojille/  
kotimaiset-festivaalit](http://www.lastenteatteri.fi/katsojille/kotimaiset-festivaalit)



## SAKARI MÄNNISTÖ, ARTIST, SILENCE FESTIVAL

The biggest challenges for contemporary circus in Finland are that there aren't many places to perform, and not many people are in the habit of going to see contemporary circus. Touring theatres don't exist and the cost of giving a single performance is too high. Finnish contemporary circus is often marketed as our biggest cultural export, yet somehow it still seems to be considered a curiosity; it exists and it's good, but not many people know what it is and not many people actually go and see the performances. Silence festival struggles with the fact that small and mid-scale events are impossible to sustain with ticket sales alone. Organising costs are too high, venues too small, and there simply aren't

enough people to buy tickets. Also, when we are still trying to bring in new audiences every year the ticket prices can't be astronomical. The potential for us is in the festival's exceptional location and high quality program: it could really be a big destination for cultural tourism! Our mission is to sustain, increase and develop Finnish circus and the performing arts field. We do this by inviting professional domestic and foreign artists to perform in our festival, by forging new connections with artists from different disciplines, and by encouraging artists to challenge their usual ways of working. Another mission is to increase the recognition of contemporary circus in Finland – to make more people familiar with the art form. This we do through promotion, documentation and collaboration.

# CIRCUS AND STREET ARTS COMPANIES CURRENTLY WORKING IN THE COUNTRY

According to a survey on education and labour in the circus field in Finland, which was carried out by the Circus Information Centre in 2010, around 250 circus artists and teachers are working in the field. Most of these people are engaged in artistic work or are pedagogues in youth circuses around the country. In addition to these, there are an estimated 100 circus and variety artists who mainly do corporate gigs.

Contemporary circus art began to develop in Finland in the 1990s, and around twenty full-time professional contemporary companies have been established since the turn of the century. The field is also enriched by a number of collectives, performance projects and shows by solo artists.

Internationally, the best-known Finnish circus companies are the country's oldest, Circo Aereo, together with WHS and Race Horse Company. Other distinctive and influential Finnish contemporary circus companies include Agit-Cirk, Taikateatteri 13, Kallo Collective, Nuua, Ilmatila, Clunker Circus, Zero Gravity Company, Cross Art Collective Piste, and Sirkus Aikamoinen, as well as interesting newcomers Blind Gut Company and Metsä - The Forest Project.

## Circo Aereo

Circo Aereo is well known for its experimental and groundbreaking work. The group was formed by circus artists Maksim Komaro and Jani Nuutinen in 1996, and is currently registered in Finland and France. Circo Aereo's artistic profile is based on a strong awareness of the traditions of circus and other art forms, in combination with fresh directions and a commitment to free-flowing creativity. In Circo Aereo's works circus art is combined with other art fields in an open and highly artistic way.

The group has performed in over twenty European countries, as well as in Asia and the Middle East, and has undertaken several tours in the USA. The group participates in numerous domestic and international co-productions. It gives annually around 100–150 performances outside of Finland.

[www.circoareo.net](http://www.circoareo.net)

## WHS

WHS's works show circus as a modern, independent and constantly changing form of expression, complemented by other methods such as projected video. WHS's works have not just been at the cutting edge of contemporary circus, but have also renewed the theatre field and played a vital role in improving the status of Finnish circus. Juggler Ville Walo, conjurer and video artist Kalle Nio, and costume designer and scenographer Anne Jämsä founded the group in 2001. It tours continuously abroad and has performed in around 30 countries in Europe, Asia, and North and South America. Since 2015, WHS works in Teatteri Union, an old cinema theatre in the centre of Helsinki.

[www.w-h-s.fi](http://www.w-h-s.fi)

[www.teatteriunion.fi](http://www.teatteriunion.fi)

## Race Horse Company

Race Horse Company is a circus company that was founded in 2008 by three Finnish acrobats – Petri Tuominen, Rauli Kosonen and Kalle Lehto. The company focuses on finding new ways to see, produce and make circus art. They approach their work with intensity, raw movement and stunning acrobatic skills, without forgetting about laughter and simple, pure enthusiasm. Race Horse Company has toured extensively in Europe, Australia, Asia and North America. Their latest big production *Super Sunday* premiered in 2014.

[www.racehorsecompany.fi](http://www.racehorsecompany.fi)

## KALLE NIO, ARTIST, WHS

The biggest challenge is the lack of a market. There are really not that many theatres buying performances outside of their normal repertoire, and the touring possibilities in Finland are very limited. The most important step would be to open the city theatres and develop a touring circuit. That would be beneficial for the art but also bring new audiences to theatres. In Finland the theatre houses are for dramatic theatre, the music venues are for music, the dance venues for dance. It is important for the development of all the arts – and for their audiences – to break these boxes. Circus has traditionally been a space where anything can happen and different things mix, so circus can play a key role in opening the eyes of audiences and professionals to the fact that labelling things isn't really that important. The most interesting things in art always happen in the gaps between the different forms.



# EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Professional education in circus was first offered in 1994 through the Arts Academy at Turku University of Applied Sciences. Nowadays the university produces both performers and pedagogues. Higher education in the circus field provides a complement to upper secondary-level training at Salpaus Further Education in Lahti, which was founded in 2000. Every second year approximately 30 students are graduated in total from these two institutions. There are plans to create an International Bachelor's degree in Circus Art through the Theatre Academy of the University of the Arts Helsinki.

## Salpaus Further Education, Lahti

Secondary-level circus artist training began in Lahti in 1998 and became a three-year education in 2002. The programme was properly established in 2006. The aim of this three-year education is to teach the diverse skills that will allow graduates to work as circus artists. The programme is international and taught in English and Finnish. In 2014 the institution got a new training space and venue equipped for circus in the city of Lahti.

[www.salpaus.fi](http://www.salpaus.fi)

## Arts Academy at Turku University of Applied Sciences

Circus training began in Turku in 1994. The current four-year education is an independent part of the performing arts training programme. The aim of the artistic pedagogical training is to enable graduates to work as circus performers or teachers.

[www.turkuamk.fi](http://www.turkuamk.fi)

## Youth circuses

The first Finnish youth circus was established in 1972. Since then the rapidly growing interest in circus as a hobby for children and young people has blossomed into a country-wide network of youth circus



schools and clubs, which nowadays also offer courses for adults. All in all, the wide range of youth circus activities available has created a solid base for the development of the circus field in Finland.

The Finnish Youth Circus Association was founded in 1991. Its members are youth circuses from around Finland. Today (2015) the association has 44 member circuses and they have around 8,000 amateurs training circus as a hobby. The association organises training, events and camps for its members. Additionally it strives to raise the profile of circus as a hobby, to make it easier for people to take part in circus training, and to raise the standard of training in Finland. The association also publishes a magazine and is connected internationally.

[www.sns.fi](http://www.sns.fi)

## Extracurricular art education

The Ministry of Education and Culture supports basic education in circus arts, which is given in four cities in Finland (Helsinki, Espoo, Tampere and Lappeenranta). For more information on basic education in the arts please visit The Finnish National Board of Education website at:

[www.oph.fi/english/education/basic\\_education\\_in\\_the\\_arts](http://www.oph.fi/english/education/basic_education_in_the_arts)



TAINA KOPRA,  
DIRECTOR, SORINI SIRKUS

The most important challenge for a youth circus school is to get enough teachers with good pedagogical education and qualifications (in the youth, social or artistic fields). The need to use circus as a tool to address social problems is also growing in Finland. The most important task of the field is to create bachelor and masters degree studies for circus artists in University of The Arts Helsinki.







# CREATION AND RESIDENCY CENTRES

## Cirko – Centre for New Circus, Helsinki

Since 2002, Cirko – Centre for New Circus has been working to promote and develop contemporary Finnish circus. In 2011 the Cirko circus building opened in Helsinki's Suvilahti – 1,400 square metres of office and performance space, custom-made for contemporary circus. Cirko offers the public high quality and interesting contemporary circus, with its performances attracting more than 10,000 visitors a year. Cirko also provides circus professionals with a first-class working environment: around twenty professional groups practice at Cirko's rehearsal spaces each year.

Cirko center runs a year-round residency programme which encourages and helps emerging and young circus artists to develop new contemporary circus works. Cirko conducts the Nordic region's largest annual festival of contemporary circus, Cirko Festival, each May, which also serves as a platform for Finnish contemporary circus showcases. Cirko is internationally active in the field of contemporary circus through various networks.

[www.cirko.fi](http://www.cirko.fi)

## Circus and arts space Sipola, Rovaniemi

The circus and cross-art space Sipola opened in Rovaniemi in Northern Finland in January 2015. The space is an old industrial hall which has been cleaned, repainted, and fitted for circus rigging. The main tenants of the space are the circus company Agit-Cirk and a second company called The Cross Art Collective Piste. So far the main purpose of Sipola has been to provide these two companies with space for rehearsal, storage, set building/design, and teaching. During the first year over fifteen different productions were rehearsed in Sipola, in addition to weekly circus classes held for both young people and adults. Many different sets have also been designed and created in the space.

The space itself is 15m x 9.5m x 5.5m. The open rehearsal space is about 9.5m x 9.5m. There are multiple rigging points for aerial, and also some for tightwire. Even though the space is in Lapland it is still fairly warm – it has underfloor heating, radiators, and is quite well insulated with double glazing. Both companies have storage rooms of 12m x 2m. There's also a kitchenette and a shower, and one can drive a big van into the space if one needs to

The space is designed for practicing and creation, as well as a base for teaching. Secondary goal has been to have artists visit Rovaniemi to rehearse and perform, as Finland is short on spaces for both. Because there is hardly any touring in the country, and most of the shows are either created in a couple living rooms or in a single space one of the goals behind opening Sipola was to invite collaborators to work and create performances, with the long-term aim of exchanging performances between cities. Sipola also collaborates with the annual Silence festival, based 160km away in Kittilä. Some companies performing there will have a residency season in Sipola in the run-up to the festival. Sipola is still looking for the funding as it is difficult to find financial support for these kind of initiatives.

The space is unique in Rovaniemi, but also in Finland. It creates possibilities for so called 'free field' organisations to actually function, to be able to create performances. The performing arts don't have a strong residency culture in Finland, let alone Rovaniemi. Even within its first year of functioning Sipola has proven its worth: promoting new creations and new collaborations, it has become a significant help to and asset for local organisations.

The dream of the people behind Sipola is to have a practical, functional space with everything that is needed for a successful residency for companies from Finland or abroad – including themselves.

[www.agitcirk.com/fin/en](http://www.agitcirk.com/fin/en)

[www.pistery.org/english](http://www.pistery.org/english)



## RIKU LIEVONEN, MANAGING DIRECTOR, CIRKO

We have only a few organisations and venues who programme and present circus in Finland. For many audiences, it's simply not easy to see circus. The lack of touring resources and the large distances between venues are not the only reasons. The most important challenge is to change the mental landscape. Many theatres and venues could present more circus, if they only had better knowledge and an understanding of the nature of the art form. Other challenges are to develop better working conditions for circus artists and companies; to create new platforms to present their performances; to remove barriers between professionals in circus and the other performing arts (e.g. theatre directors); and to strengthen audience engagement.





# ADVOCACY AGENCIES AND PROFESSIONAL INFORMATION PROVIDERS

There are three essential organisations providing advocacy and information on Finnish professional circus. CircusInfo Finland is both the physical and online contact point for any kind of information on Finnish circus. Information and training concerning youth circus, social circus, and circus teachers and instructors is provided by the Finnish Youth Circus Association. The Union of Dance and Circus Artists Finland and its umbrella organisation The Trade Union for Theatre and Media Finland (Teme) advises on all matters related to employment.

## CircusInfo Finland

CircusInfo Finland was established in 2006 to serve the interests of the Finnish circus field. It supports the artistic and cultural development of Finnish circus art through its strong networks and promotional activities both in Finland and abroad, and organises workshops and provides mentoring for circus professionals. CircusInfo also organises Finnish circus showcase events with networking opportunities for professionals, and presents Finnish circus in international performing arts fairs, seminars and gatherings. CircusInfo Finland receives yearly funding from the Ministry of Education and Culture.

CircusInfo Finland also collects information on Finnish circus. It maintains an online database on professional Finnish circus artists, performances and companies in both Finnish and English. It compiles statistics and reports related to activity in the circus field to aid political decision-making, and collects a reference library on Finnish and foreign circus literature, including performance files, newspaper clippings and video materials.

CircusInfo Finland also coordinates the Baltic Nordic Circus Network (BNCN), which is a collaborative network of fourteen circus arts organisations in the Baltic and Nordic countries.

The network aims to strengthen regional collaboration and to develop the circus field in the Baltic Sea region, for example by arranging workshops and meetings for artists and other circus professionals from the area.

[www.sirkusinfo.fi](http://www.sirkusinfo.fi)

## The Finnish Youth Circus Association

The Finnish Youth Circus Association (FYCA) was founded in 1991 for promoting amateur youth circus activities. It organises training, events and camps mainly for circus amateurs, but the association also provides training for circus teachers and instructors. Since 2015, the association has convened a social circus committee to share thoughts concerning the future of social circus in Finland. The association publishes a printed circus magazine, *Sirkuspyramidi*, which is published quarterly in Finnish.

[www.sns.fi](http://www.sns.fi)

## The Union of Dance and Circus Artists Finland

Since 2005 circus artists have been able to join the Union of Dance and Circus Artists Finland. This organisation is part of the Trade Union for Theatre and Media Finland (Teme) together with six other unions working in the fields of performing arts, television and film.

The Union advises and provides information on all matters related to employment. It negotiates collective labour agreements and sees that the provisions of contracts are complied with. The Union also provides legal services, unemployment benefits, help with job applications, and help in matters related to copyright.

The Union actively cooperates with the most important organisations in the field of culture in Finland and publishes a printed magazine called *Liitos*. The magazine is published quarterly in Finnish, and focuses on the professional realities of dance and circus artists, teachers and choreographers.

[www.teme.fi/stst](http://www.teme.fi/stst)



## LOTTA NEVALAINEN, INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS MANAGER, CIRCUSINFO

In my opinion the most important challenge for circus in Finland is the lack of structures related to performing, touring and rehearsing on the national level, as well as general financial instability and a lack of travel support for domestic and international mobility. Even though Finnish circus is doing well internationally it is still quite an unknown genre for the general public in Finland. The absence of a national touring network and of suitable performance spaces restricts the development of the Finnish circus field.



# CASE STUDIES OF THREE SUCCESSFUL AUDIENCE AND MARKET DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

## Flow Circus

**F**low Circus is a series of visiting contemporary circus performances organised by a dynamic dance production company run by artistic professor and dance artist Pirjo Yli-Maunula, based in Northern Finland in the city of Oulu. Flow Circus has succeeded in fostering an impressive collaboration network of local venues and festivals, programming circus throughout. Flow Circus has also succeeded in building new enthusiastic audiences for contemporary circus in the area.

The Flow Circus series is curated by Yli-Maunula and stretches around the year, including both Finnish and international visiting circus performances for all audiences. Collaborative partners include the cultural centre Valve, Oulu Theatre Festival for Young Audiences, Oulu Music Festival, Oulu August Festival, and Full Moon Dance Festival. Yli-Maunula has negotiated different partnership agreements with each festival and venue to suit the requirements of each. The collaboration model of Flow Circus enables festivals, venues and the production company to share in the economic risks of staging work, as well as the benefits of marketing and audience development.

[www.flowprod.fi/en](http://www.flowprod.fi/en)

## Baltic Nordic Circus Network

The Baltic Nordic Circus Network was established to develop the circus art field in the Baltic and Nordic countries through capacity building workshops for professionals and the promotion of circus art from the region. The Network started in 2014 and today has fourteen member organisations from six Baltic and Nordic countries. It is coordinated by CircusInfo Finland.

The network has strengthened collaboration among circus organisations and brought together circus artists, critical writers and journalists, producers, and the key developers in the region.

The network activities are based on the needs of the circus community in the Baltic and Nordic countries. The network organises regional meetings for circus professionals and workshops for circus artists, for young circus teachers, for circus riggers and technicians responsible for safety, and for critical writers and journalists on writing about circus art. Through 2016, the network will carry out a series of workshops for circus producers and seminars for key developers and international stakeholders.

[www.balticnordiccircus.com](http://www.balticnordiccircus.com)

## Za'atri circus school in Jordan

In spring 2013, Sirkus Magenta started a circus school in the Za'atri refugee camp in Jordan in cooperation with Finn Church Aid (FCA). FCA has a wide experience of projects in developing countries all around the world.



Za'atri, located in northern Jordan, is one of the world's largest refugee camps with over 100,000 inhabitants of which about 80% are under 18 years old. With circus, FCA wanted to provide psycho-social support for young people between the ages of 14-24. With barely anything to do in the camp, the traumatised youngsters and young adults are at risk of social exclusion and even radicalisation. Circus provides participants with an outlet for physical energy and self-expression as well as a haven of joy and laughter.

During the first eight months of 2013, Magenta's circus trainers stayed in the camp laying the foundations of the school and training the local Syrian refugees as circus teachers. Now the circus school is vibrant and fairly self-sustaining with two female and two male Syrian trainers and over 50 students.

Here is one of the female trainers, Mona's, feelings on how circus has supported the female participants: "When the students first came here their psychological state was very bad. They used to always be afraid of getting hurt or having to face airstrikes. They were scared when planes flew over the camp. These girls had to witness war. They had to see rockets and burning bodies. They had to see blood. At the circus the girls make new friends. When we're at the circus, our minds are free of bad thoughts. We can laugh, and tell stories through clowning. In the future, if god allows it, I will be the director of a circus in Syria."

Here is a male trainer, Anwar's, account: "I was lost before I met Magenta. I started to see that circus is not just about tricks. It is a way to connect to the heart. What Mika, Topi, Slava, Antti and Kamil taught me is life – how to deal with life. They made my mind, my technique, everything around me. With Sirkus Magenta I felt myself alive. They made me forget the war, the situation in Syria. In the end they made me another person.

Now, nine months later I am a circus teacher. I can teach like Topi. I can love like Mika. I can be patient like Antti. I can joke like Slava. I can look and understand like Kamil and I can share like the girl teachers. Magenta made me. Magenta changed my life. Now I can fly."

Sirkus Magenta is a social circus association working with various groups at risk of social exclusion in Finland and internationally. They also work with circus as a recreational activity for families and adults in the Helsinki region.

[www.sirkusmagenta.fi](http://www.sirkusmagenta.fi)







**CASA** is a new European support programme designed by five arts organisations to equip professionals from the contemporary circus and outdoor creation sectors to work and cooperate internationally, raising their ambition and capacity to work at international level.

This brochure focuses on the particular cultural context providing information and analysis of cultural policies, cultural infrastructures and local artistic realities.

[www.casa-circuits.eu](http://www.casa-circuits.eu)

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