



**DEVELOPED SKILLS
& PROSPECTS**
**for a better support
of emerging circus artists**

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Methodological framework

The methodological framework was designed along two axes related to the double temporality of the project: a longitudinal follow-up and an ad-hoc follow-up according to the project events ("Joint staff training activities", "Collective Labs", "Artistic team workshops" and "Transnational meetings").

During the course of the project two groups of stakeholders were consulted:

- The artists-project leaders involved in the project
 - The support staff of cultural operators involved in the project
1. The chosen methodological tools aimed to identify the skills of artists-project leaders and of the support staff accompanying them within cultural structures.
 2. "Skills" are both individual and collective as they require, in certain activities, learning and coordination to produce a common result or to co-construct solutions (Retour and Krohmer, 2006).
 3. The methodology is mainly qualitative (observations, group interviews) in an action-research approach as the evaluator participated in part in the work and was called upon to moderate/facilitate some discussions or work sessions. The main focus is on the discourses and practices of the stakeholders, their perception and experience of the project.
 4. Quantitative tools (questionnaires) were used from time to time to evaluate the impacts of the project or to measure indicators, particularly in terms of skills developed by the cultural operators' staff who supported emerging artists within the framework of the project.
 5. A large part of the evaluation is based on the contribution of the stakeholders, thus implying a methodological bias that will be taken into account in the analysis. Furthermore, the subjectivity of certain materials (produced by the stakeholders themselves) will lead to the production of a contextualized analysis whose conclusions cannot be generalized.

Longitudinal follow-up

- Follow-up by self-evaluation questionnaires

The definition of the term "competence" used in the questionnaires is as follows: "[...] the vast majority of authors agree that "competencies" are the abilities of each individual to use a set of resources to deal with a complex situation or task with maximum efficiency" (Dolz and Ollagnier, 2002).

Ad hoc follow-up of activities

- Observation
- Focus Group

The focus groups made it possible to collectively put into words a number of skills (identified, acquired or in the process of being acquired). In addition, this follow-up was also made according to the following lines:

- Drawing up an assessment of the activity and considering the evolution of each participant within the project.
- Evaluating the participants' perception of the achievement (totally or partially) of the activity's objectives
- Evaluate the participants' perception of the relevance of the activity in regard to its objectives

N.B.

The analysis, in a sociological orientation, is particularly interested in the processes of professionalization and identification (Cordier, Salaméro, Dumont, Sizorn: 2018) with the role of project leader. Attention will also be paid to the training context with the aim of defining the profession of 'artist-project leader' and identifying some of its competences. The analysis also takes into consideration the organization of the labor market on a European scale (Bessone: 2018).

All of the competencies named in this document are drawn from the analysis of the data collected throughout the project via these tools.

Skills developed by the artists-project leaders

The artists-project leaders are the members of the 5 selected emerging European circus companies who participated in the circusnext+ project.

Identification of key competencies

- **Work organization skills**

Organize creative work and teamwork with an overall, long-term vision of the company's work.

Take into account workloads, rhythms, physical, mental and social well-being.

Understand the challenges of sustainability in a broad sense.

- **Artistic development skills**

Build a coherent project and identify the right artistic collaborators.

Develop a project in several dimensions (creation, side activities) and develop an ability to adapt to different audiences and creative contexts.

- **Professional development skills**

Develop an action plan for the company in the medium and long term.

Set up collective work tools (if necessary) to share responsibilities.

Set up tools to evaluate activities.

- **Communication skills for an artistic project**

Share the artistic vision of a project with colleagues and the outside world (cultural operators, funders, cultural policy-makers, etc.)

Set up creative communication tools for the project.

Express one's needs (artistic, logistical, technical, financial, etc.).

Examples of tools for skills development

From the Collective lab and Artistic team workshops

Project mind map

Feedback method

Exchange of processes / creation protocols

Transmission of creative materials in a workshop

Pitch

Action plan

Method to evaluate activities

Workload assessment

Narratives

A European toolbox

“During the labs we met other artists, European partners. It is really the + of the project circusnext+. We met other realities and opened our mind to other ways of considering a creation and structuring an artistic company (according to the realities of each country).

circusnext+ is a lot of information and really practical and helpful tools that we can use in our company to help the administrative work go smoother. We will see in the future but now we know we have many tools in our toolbox.”

« Pendant les labs, nous avons rencontré d'autres artistes, des partenaires européens. C'est vraiment le + du projet circusnext+. Nous avons rencontré d'autres réalités et ouvert notre esprit sur d'autres façons d'envisager une création et la structuration de compagnie (en fonction des réalités de chaque pays).

circusnext+ c'est beaucoup d'informations et d'outils vraiment pratiques et utiles que nous pouvons commencer à intégrer dans notre compagnie pour aider le travail administratif à être plus fluide. Nous verrons à l'avenir, mais nous savons que nous avons maintenant de nombreux outils dans notre boîte à outils. »

Building confidence

“As the labs went on, I gained confidence in my work and in my universe. circusnext+ gave me confidence in myself, confidence in the quality of our project and confidence in our artistic line. The project united us and helped us define our universe; because we were constantly confronted with the universes of other companies, we were able to assert our own identity and desires and it was very pleasant. This confidence was brought by the different people we met, the mentors, the speakers, the partners, the other artists. We were in a safe and benevolent place.”

« Au fil des laboratoires, j'ai pris confiance en mon travail et en mon univers. circusnext+ m'a donné confiance en moi, confiance en la qualité de notre projet et en notre ligne artistique. Le projet nous a soudés et nous a aidés à définir notre univers ; comme nous étions constamment confrontés aux univers des autres compagnies, nous avons pu affirmer notre propre identité et nos propres envies et c'était très agréable. Cette confiance a été apportée par les différentes personnes que nous avons rencontrées, les mentors, les intervenants, les partenaires, les autres artistes). Nous étions dans un lieu sûr et bienveillant. »

Skills developed by cultural operators' staff accompanying the artists

Staff accompanying the artists are from the 5 partner cultural operators of the project.

Identification of key competencies

- **Interpersonal skills**

Establish a climate of trust, develop listening skills and understand the artists' work context. Directing the artists to the right people to address. Facilitating meetings, guiding without interfering. Being able to understand a complex situation, addressing the right people to find solutions by delegating certain tasks.

- **Technical skills to support artistic creation**

Develop listening skills, knowledge of the cultural context, aesthetic issues, contemporary art and the history of circus to be able to produce constructive feedback. To direct towards artistic collaborators.

- **Skills in the field of prevention**

Prevent physical and psychosocial risks and set up a prevention plan for professional risks / ensure the safety of the spaces. Identify a situation of fatigue or stress that is problematic / dangerous for the artist.

- **Project monitoring skills**

Develop tools for long-term partnerships with artistic teams. To better understand the stakes of the artistic project by encouraging discussion within a given framework in order to better communicate on the projects. Set up monitoring tools.

Examples of tools for skills development

From the Staff workshops and Artistic team workshops

Discussion between partners of a same project, pooling of skills in terms of support

Follow-up of artistic residencies: check up at the beginning, mid-term and final assessment

Co-presentation of a supported project by artists and cultural operators

Attendance of rehearsals (without feedback)

Formalized feedback session

Narratives

New definitions of accompaniment after the circusnext+ experience

“Being opened to the need of artists and give them tools and a network to develop their own skills and ability to manage their project to best express their creativity. Create empowerment.”

« Être ouvert aux besoins des artistes et leur donner des outils et un réseau pour développer leurs propres compétences et leur capacité à gérer leur projet afin d'exprimer au mieux leur créativité. Favoriser l'autonomie. »

“A process in which both artists and support staff engage together to find a way, in accordance with their values and needs, to make a project come to life (creation project, a community project, a company, etc..)”

« Un processus dans lequel les artistes et les équipes accompagnatrices s'engagent ensemble pour trouver un moyen, en accord avec leurs valeurs et leurs besoins, de donner vie à un projet (projet de création, projet communautaire, entreprise, etc.) »

“"Fellowship", meaning we all have the same goal and we all need to work, understand, support, communicate, guide, advise each other to get to that goal.”

« "Fellowship", c'est-à-dire que nous avons tous le même objectif et que nous devons tous travailler, comprendre, soutenir, communiquer, guider, se conseiller les uns les autres pour atteindre cet objectif. »

“A continuous dialogue with the artists to get tools that will enable us to understand what is useful to accompany them. This gives time to ask for what they need and time to develop a relationship and build trust.”

« Un dialogue continu avec les artistes pour obtenir des outils permettant de comprendre ce qui est utile pour les accompagner. Cela donne le temps de leur demander ce dont ils ont besoin, de développer la relation et d'établir la confiance. »

“Going together along the path to clear doubts and give strength and confidence.”

« Cheminer ensemble pour dissiper les doutes et donner force et confiance. »

“Sometimes support can be something that, from the outside, does not look like support... However, the important aspects are: listening to the needs, identifying the needs we see (which can sometimes be different from those expressed by the artists), analyzing the situation and deciding with my organization what we are able and willing to do according to the needs.”

« Parfois, soutenir peut même être quelque chose qui, de l'extérieur, ressemble à ne pas soutenir... Les aspects importants sont cependant les suivants : écouter les besoins, identifier les besoins que nous voyons (qui peuvent parfois être différents de ceux exprimés par les artistes), analyser la situation et décider avec ma structure de ce que nous sommes capables et prêts à fournir en fonction des besoins. »

“It is a common learning path, the idea to help artists in their complex path of creation, of entrepreneurship. It is a question of walking together and questioning each other about the events that arise during the journey to find solutions carried by the artist, to learn from these experiences.”

« C'est un parcours d'apprentissage commun, l'idée d'aider les artistes dans leur parcours complexe de création, d'entrepreneuriat. Il s'agit de cheminer ensemble et de s'interroger sur les événements qui surviennent pour trouver des solutions portées par l'artiste, pour apprendre de ces expériences. »

Conclusions and perspectives

An initial list of skills

This first analysis of the collected data made it possible to identify key skill areas for the two groups of stakeholders. This list of competencies is not exhaustive but could eventually be used to develop a professional reference framework for supporting artistic companies. Of course, beyond the notion of competence, many other factors should be taken into account when reflecting on a support scheme for emerging artists.

The importance of exchanging know-how

During the course of the project, all stakeholders valued exchange sessions during which they shared know-how, whether formally or informally. Dialogue and exchange, encouraged by the project activities, seemed fundamental. At last, it is interesting to underline that most of the skills discussed and worked on during the circusnext+ project are *soft skills*, i.e. skills that call on human qualities rather than technical ones.

The needs identified in continuing education

circusnext+ compensated for a lack of continuing education in the European contemporary circus field, whether it be for the artists who lead creation projects or for the cultural operators who accompany them.

Observation of the project's activities has highlighted the importance of the choice of training formats. The formalization of training sessions and discussions, particularly by designating a person in charge of developing content and moderating exchanges, encourages the development of skills.

The artists associated with the project also stress the need to include horizontality in the training formats to better take into account their realities.

Finally, still on the artists' side, the needs seem to focus on concrete tools, the need to invent common creative moments, the regularity of shared physical training and more time for peer discussions.

Synthesis tables

Competencies named by the two groups of stakeholders, from the Focus groups conducted at the end of the project.

Synthesis table of the skills of the artists-project leaders

Summary of the skills identified during the circusnext+ project by the artists-project leaders within the framework of the development of a contemporary circus show and the development of a professional company.

	1. Technical Skills <i>Skills related to know-how and closely connected to specific tasks</i>	2. Soft Skills <i>More general or more transversal skills called psycho-social skills. They refer to the ability to communicate and interact with others (Mamidenna : 2009)</i>	3. Skills to delegate <i>If possible due to the economic and social situation of companies</i>
PROJECT LEADERS			
ADMINISTRATION PRODUCTION ORGANIZATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manage a budget Design an action plan Evaluate the actions of the company Set objectives Develop in a sustainable way 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have a knowledge of contracts and their negotiations Be aware of economic and social changes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organize the production Organize a tour Negotiate contracts
HUMAN RESOURCES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a plan for physical sustainability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manage a team, finding the right collaborators Take care of colleagues and partners (rhythms, intensity of work) Evaluate psycho-social risks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work in collaboration with a physical trainer Identify company-related health practitioners

ARTISTS - CREATORS			
TECHNICAL	Create a technical rider (specifications document) for venues (diffusion or creation)	Be able to identify and communicate technical needs	Link with the local technical teams
WORK	Organize work protocols Adapt an artistic project to different situations Organize creative work	Have an awareness of a context	
ARTISTIC (general issues)	Give feedback Defend a vision and share it Gather resources around the project	Have a dialogue with other artistic teams Have a dialogue among an artistic team Have a knowledge of the contemporary artistic field Develop collective thinking	
ARTISTIC (specific issues)	Build an elaborate dramaturgy Build a scenario / storyboard	Share creation research materials Collaborate with other artists: light design, music design, costume design, others...	Design a scenography, lights, soundscape, etc. (external collaborations)

Synthesis table of the skills of the cultural operators' staff accompanying the artists

Summary of the skills identified by the support staff in the framework of the accompaniment of emerging circus artists during the circusnext + project

	1. Technical Skills <i>Skills related to know-how and closely connected to specific tasks</i>	2. Soft Skills <i>More general or more transversal skills called psycho-social skills. They refer to the ability to communicate and interact with others (Mamidenna : 2009)</i>	3. Skills to delegate <i>Skills not identified internally and identification of resource persons</i>
ADMINISTRATION / PRODUCTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manage a budget Organize the production Organize a tour Planning 	Guidance/ Facilitation	
COMMUNICATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop clear and effective communication Marketing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Benevolence Listening Develop a better communication with the artists on their projects 	
LEGAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advise on contract law Assist in drafting a contract 		According to the competences in the organization => possible legal advice to outsource

HEALTH	Ensure safe working spaces	Identify a situation of fatigue or stress that is problematic / dangerous for the artist Connect with appropriate health care practitioners	Physical and psychological care Risk prevention
HUMAN RESOURCES	Mentor on human resources Evaluate psycho-social and physical risks	Explain one's work and working conditions Networking Contact with community projects Being able to understand a complex situation and address the right people Develop a long-term relationship with artistic teams	Connect with other fields of society
TECHNICAL	Help with technical issues Ensure security	Identify specific needs	
ARTISTIC	Give feedback Have knowledge of the contemporary artistic field Have knowledge of the circus context (history, socio-economic aspect, cultural policies)	Develop and sharing cultural references	Connect with other artists

circusnext+, developed skills and prospects
Agathe Dumont, July 2021

Data collected by Agathe Dumont et Léana Valentini



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