Youth Participation Report: Summary

Research conducted in May 2019, mapping the current state of youth participation within the Caravan Youth and Social Circus Network.

Key Concepts

- Participation is “a process in which children and youth engage with other people around issues that concern their individual and collective life conditions”
- In EU Youth Strategy, a young person is between the ages of 13 and 30. We distinguish young circus members (13-18 years old) and young circus workers (18-30 years old).
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989): every child has a right to freely express their views in matters affecting them, and to have those views taken into account.

Results

- There is a big interest within the network. Members believe that young people should be listened to.
- In some organisations youth participation is a large part of daily activities.
- The most common way of participating is giving feedback to trainers, taking part in the creation of shows and volunteering.
- Young people are moderately involved in planning the activities in member organisations.
- There is a lack of time and financial resources.
- Participation in decision making is not as common: only 3 circus schools out of 18 have a young member in the board.

Best Practice

- Safe, trustful and transparent atmosphere that is open to change
- Clear goals, policies and guidelines to implement youth participation
- Starting slow, giving young people information and real agency and ensuring a follow-up
- Possible challenges: lack of time, resources and unfavourable attitudes of adults in the organisation

Youth Involvement at Caravan

- Most young people didn’t have a clear picture about Caravan’s activities. A solution could be to have more youth exchanges and meetings for young people.
- Participating in Caravan’s decision making didn’t interest the young people that were interviewed, Caravan was a very distant concept for them.

Next Steps for Caravan

- Implementing a Youth Participation Strategy
- Creating common guidelines of youth participation and distributing them to the whole network
- Later, getting young people involved in Caravan’s decision making

Conclusion

The results of the mapping research show that there is a lot of interest in youth participation, but members would need support in making changes in their practices. Youth participation at Caravan’s level is not yet realistic, but after a few years of groundwork it could be possible.