



European Crime Prevention Award
and
EUCPN Best Practice Conference 2011
Project Entry Form

The theme for this year's European Crime Prevention Award and EUCPN's Best Practice Conference is: ***"Sport, science and art in the prevention of crime among children and youth"***.

Because of the theme of the competition and general subject of the trio, projects should be linked with:

- activities of allowing young people avoiding the risks of crime or move away of it
- creating the system which allows juvenile to the creative development and which is choice to the juvenile delinquency
- education and related fields (i.e. sport, art, science) used in the crime prevention system

The list is not exhaustive. The projects may address any question relevant to this year's theme.

Please complete the attached form (the boxes are expandable). Note that the last point is for a one-page description of your project.

Entries should be in English, but may be accompanied by a version of the entry in the national language if wished. Each country may enter one project as its ECPA entry and up to two other projects to be presented at the conference. Projects should be submitted only through the National Representatives. The full ECPA rules can be found at www.eucpn.org

Deadline for entries is **October 15th, 2011**.

Send your entry or entries to: eucpn@mswia.gov.pl.

If you have any questions, please contact eucpn@mswia.gov.pl.



ECPA/BPC 2011

Please answer the following questions in English.

1. Is this your country's ECPA entry or is it an additional project? (Only one ECPA entry per country plus up to two other projects.)

Portugal ECPA Entry

2. What is the title of the project?

Magical Bag – Animation for social (re) integration

3. Please give a short general description of the project.

Chapitô is a NGOD whose main goal is social inclusion of underprivileged youngsters.

The **Animation in Action** project, developed by Chapitô for over 30 years with young offenders under legal custody, relates to a story – local / universal – including circus shows, "supporters" and "networks", youngsters born and growing up in poor environments, with limited social experience performing arts apprentices, artists, animators and specialists (in physical and manual issues and also in life matters).

Based on the continued reflection of the project **Animation in Action**, and taking into account its socio-historic course, we thought it would be interesting to create other levels of intervention in addition to those already applied. We decided to explore in a different way the work produced along the way in the workshops and other organized activities, creating a stronger proximity to the origin of the trainees. This is how the **Magical Bag** Project emerged.



Picture 1 - *Magical Bag* Project animation at Bairro da Ameixoeira (July 2011)



Picture 2 - *Magical Bag* Project animation at Bairro da Ameixoeira (July 2011)



Picture 3 - *Magical Bag* Project animation at Bairro da Ameixoeira (July 2011)



Picture 4 - *Magical Bag* Project animation at Bairro da Ameixoeira (July 2011)

3 p.m., we are at Ameixoeira, a poor neighborhood outside Lisbon; a van coming from *Bela Vista* Education Center just arrived. Six youngsters, two resident educators and three Chapitô animators stepped down carrying a large bag - the ***Magical Bag***.

A ***Magical Bag*** animation is now taking place. As programmed with Chapitô's partner *Associação de Desenvolvimento Comunitário Raízes*, the group of youngsters and their animators got ready to open two workshops (Circus and *Capoeira*). Children, young people and grownups, men and women, from the community approached. They are all invited to participate.

The project ***Magical Bag - Animation for social (re) integration*** was conceived in the context of the work that is being developed by Chapitô's animation team for quite a few years now, with youngsters with ages ranging from 12 to 20 years, accomplishing internship measures in two Centers of the of the Ministry of Justice: the *Bela Vista* Education Center and the *Navarro de Paiva* Education Center.

The ***Magical Bag*** project has created a show, which constantly changes the performers (protagonists), and the script, adapting itself to the artists and their environment, allowing the intervenient to demonstrate their circus skills, to perform street animations, and to transport the magic of circus arts to schools, kindergartens, community centers and Lisbon neighborhoods.

The project promotes visits and dialogue with local organizations to extend different kinds of partnership, the presentation of small shows of public attraction and the organization of workshops Circus Skills, *Capoeira*, Plastic Arts, Music and Story Telling and Oral Tradition, involving young people living in underprivileged areas.

We are also trying to reach not only the youngsters (under custody of law), but also those who passed by the Centers and showed some interest in Chapitô's activities, creating a bridge that may encourage their socialization and social insertion process.

The distinctiveness of the ***Magical Bag*** project lays on the fact that the young participants are under the custody of the Court of Justice and, placed in Education



4. Please describe the objective(s) of the project.

The ***Magical Bag*** project has commitments that require the simultaneous development and assessment of new experiences on different fronts and renewed terms of involvement in social networks. Our main concern is to design ever-new forms of intervention offering alternative futures to unsettled youngsters with early disadvantaged life courses.

Some "out-of-common" figures are in focus: at-risk or drifting youth, young offenders confined under the supervision of judicial authorities correcting life trajectories, talented people, animators, architects of the show, etc. In addition to these figures, are all the people organizing and carrying on specific programs, a team of project workers responsible for the whole intervention process.

We talk about a founding social mission already part of Chapitô's pre-history exploring thresholds of ordinary reality. A humanistic proposal centered on personal and social development. A new paradigm for social development and intervention projects based on four key principles:

1. All the attention and total dedication are focused on very special people. Unusual and special because they are marked by the stigma of precarious personal relations to the world and to others. With these people, we construct positive narratives sharing horizons where walls stood before.
2. All the animation in action, distinctive mark of the Chapitô project, has an alternative, cosmopolitan, innovative, integrated, inclusive character. This is the condition of its sustainability and political relevance, calling upon new ways of doing and thinking the city, the citizens, and citizenship.
3. All our skills, arts and crafts are oriented to invent new ways to outwit marked (evil) destinations, to improve the lot of young people in exclusion situations and to intervene in the field of educational and cultural activities (art education), through animation and training. We believe that the development of expression and communication capacities helps to reduce marginalization and enhances the willingness to build acceptable social futures with personal meaning.
4. We are an educational and socio-affective resource: We develop an educational praxis founded on close relationships, dialogue and negotiation. We foster the personal significance of life courses and the social dimension of the learning experiences.

Based and planned within this background of general principles, the ***Magical Bag – Animation for Social Re-integration***, project pursues the following specific objectives:

- (i) To create a possibility for vulnerable young people to have more social and cultural opportunities;
- (ii) To promote circus skills and arts to stimulate ones sense of self-esteem and positive self image;
- (iii) To promote close collaboration between the local partners and youngsters under the custody of the Court of Justice through thematic workshops and street animation;



- (iv) To change the methodology and the approach of the local authorities towards the social exclusion of youngsters of deprived quarters.

5. How was the project implemented?

The founding axis of Chapitô's project, the so-called **Animation in Action** project (where the **Magical Bag – Animation for social (re) integration** emerged) is oriented, supported and developed by a systematic civic function of citizenship culture. Our vocation is to communicate, to diversify languages and cooperatively look forward to a common world. To welcome, integrate and include, educating for citizenship is the motto of Chapitô's social intervention.

The project will be 30 in 2011, but its prehistory dates back to the 70s, within the frame of the artistic movements engaged in social change through animation, circus arts, concerts, ephemeral shows and a socio-cultural intervention focused on the Afro-European Portugal of the end of the century.

Circus wise, the history of Chapitô mingles itself and becomes entangled in the history and the life course of its forerunner: Teresa Ricou (Tété), the first Portuguese woman clown.

In the social area, since 1985, with the children and youngsters of *COAS* – (*Centro de Observação e Accção Social*) actually the *Bela Vista* Education Center, and from 1999 also with those of the *Navarro de Paiva* Education Center - all of them under custody of the juvenile court, we develop a socio-training animation work. We wish to collaborate, through aesthetic-expressive activities, to foster their social inclusion and sense of belonging. These young people have lived in highly adverse conditions.

In the absence or malfunctioning of socialization through institutions considered normal – like family and school – and learning the hard way to survive, not surprisingly, these boys and girls have the bands / gangs of their "underworld" as "reference groups" and they adopt their values, habits and motivations. Nor should it be surprising that, eventually, these young people are confronted with the Juvenile Courts becoming the target of judicial measures determining their immediate future.

We face heavily cumulative situations: after the tribulations that led them to exclusion and the contingencies of underground living, by judicial order they are confined in closed institutions where rehabilitation is sought through specific educational programs.

We have to be able to produce "miracles". This is why Chapitô permanently develops inside and outside socio-cultural interventions and is committed to keep in touch and offer support when necessary in the post-guardianship period, always fostering inclusion opportunities. We do not give up any attempt to support "our youngsters". Furthermore, we want them to be happy, and included.

Chapitô's team is especially skilled in exploring new links between "maladjusted" (in socialization process, that is to say, in time for corrective deviations) and a world that, like its own, is not within-the-ordinary and, at the same time, is stimulating, welcoming, and motivating. With children and young people under custody, we work with every day animation programs (with routines and rituals) and organize artistic experiences. In addition, everything is part of a rather cosmopolitan network of artists, artisans and entertainers



known to be "special" and a variety of figures and situations that encourage destination twists and have an impact in shaping present and future dispositions.

It is a challenging pedagogical project: It is often necessary to call into play both the emotional sphere (maximum consideration for the people concerned, paying particular attention to the relational environment) and public life (self- presentation, performance, citizenship) – during the socialization process and the renewal of life projects eventually previously blocked.

The intervention is based on a team with a rearguard, a team of about fifteen artists and project workers. Chapitô is an affective partner and an educational resource. In addition, the **Magical Bag** project provides a permanent routine through "workshops" where expression and communication capacities are trained, sustained by Arts. In this way, exercises of citizenship are carried out in a playful and friendly environment, an intervention that is at the same time humanistic and professional / artistic. Chapitô's team has always been a "special" team, willing and available to deal with "special" people.

The intervention of the **Magical Bag** Project is permanently adjusted and concerted together with the Education Centers responsible and our cooperation gains increased relevance and consistency whenever it is the result of a dialogue with the various authorities that operate within the Education Centers: Teachers, Technical and Technological Trainers and Resident staff.

In this long history, there have been several times when Chapitô also intervened to provide better institutional solutions, particularly regarding schooling. Again, this was implemented mainly through art education in a vast and varied program including initiation to circus arts, music, *capoeira*, in addition to outside sports practice (golf) and the production of a news paper in order to support the learning of reading and writing.

In round numbers, over the past 30 years, the community Chapitô already developed programs involving hundreds of children and adolescents, young people who may be considered "at risk" or socially unsettled, most of them without consistent primary support (family and community).

At another level, regular and semi-structured, Chapitô follows and offers support to a small group of young people including some former internees (in the order of 15%), and yet at another level, fosters initiatives and opportunities for interaction with the networks of the young people involved. Many of these have vague destinations of social inclusion and therefore without much success – and with several unfortunate prison destinations. Chapitô, following the difficult life path of these young people, tries to offer social and legal support in the sense of their routing to the outside world, welcoming them at the *Casa do Castelo* (Castle House) – a transitional space for life normalization. A comfortable home and the beginning of a professional life, may allow for new forms of socialization (such as having friends), believing that one day they will be able to shape desirable and realistic futures. So be it, for our common good.

Chapitô, as a cultural institution open to the city, functions as a privileged space for the reception and socialization of any of the young people coming from the Education Centers and in particular those who embody the **Magical Bag**.



It is true that Chapitô's collective experience benefits of an unusually rich and productive capital (which may be a sign of "advanced modernity") based on participation, action and reflection involving various agents from different areas: education, arts and crafts, design and master professionals, along with a variety of operators. The project has always valued, and developed, an artistic environment as well as art skills and it grew up distinctively oriented to cultural miscegenation and the performing arts and crafts, exploring the parallels between the circus arts and the ethno-alternative cultural expressions of minority influence.

A world that really has a special empathy for the "sui generis". The artists and master artisans are beings who often manage to overstep taboos, stereotypes and ethnocentrism. Our team is indeed very special, very sensitive, acting with great accuracy and rituals appealing to each other's performances. There seems to be some sort of connection, even historic, between artists and "doomed". This form of combat against early social exclusion bets on the dynamics of socio-cultural and socio-educational animation and on expertise strategies, with intense cultural exchanges between different social actors. It then becomes more difficult to single out the boundaries of exclusions, including and blurring the barriers between rebels or "unsettled" and the normal common sense society.

The great achievement, 30 years passed, is that a NGO, through its persistence and quality of work within a government agency now benefits of strengthened recognition and appreciation. Nevertheless, as can easily be imagined, this kind of process and experience is not free of constraints, obstacles and various sorts of conflicts.

The intervention model continues with successive adjustments and improvements. In this way, Chapitô becomes a stronger resource for the life paths of those who meet the loops of the injustices of the world. Are we not experts in magic spells?



Picture 5 – Chapitô's animator with the youngsters during the training session

The first presentation (2001) of the ***Magical Bag*** at *Cova da Moura* was a show specially conceived to commemorate the Association *Moínho da Juventude's* birthday. The second performance occurred in partnership with the Project *Escolhas* promoted by the *IRS* (Institute of Social Re-Insertion). This project was acting in the surrounding urban areas of Lisbon to prevent early criminality. Through this partnership, it has been possible to pursue the analogous objectives of both projects, strongly reinforcing both actions, based on an integrated and participated local development.



Picture 6 – The youngsters during a performance at Damaia

They enjoyed it and we believe it was a very well spent afternoon. It was obvious that a social space was created, sharing new knowledge and relationships. In this way, we were not only creating a multicultural space, but also an intercultural space, where everyone could learn with each other due to the horizontal learning / teaching methodology.

In this intense and exciting journey for all those involved, we have selected in the last five years of the ***Magical Bag***, the most significant events and sustained partnerships:

Place of the visit	Date	Nr. of youngsters involved	Animation	Audience
<i>Pavilhão do Conhecimento</i> – Flying Bicycle Release	17.02.2006	4	Circus	Families, children and youngsters from several schools and institutions
<i>Jardim Botânico da Ajuda</i> – Autumn Festival	30.09.2006	6	Circus, Theater, Capoeira	Families, children from several schools
<i>C.M. Lisboa</i> – Lisbon Carnival Corso	20.02.2007	13	Circus, Capoeira, Magic, Music	Animation open to the general public
<i>Jardim Botânico da Ajuda</i> – Spring Festival	06.05.2007	13	Circus, Capoeira	Families, children from several schools
<i>Praça do Comércio – C.M.Lisboa</i> , Diversity Festival	13.07.2007	5	Circus	Animation open to the general public
<i>Associação Tese – Bairro da Galiza</i> – Flagging World AIDS Day	01.12.2007	6	Capoeira, Plastic Arts, Circus, Magic	Youngsters of the community
<i>Quinta Pedagógica dos Olivais</i> – Spring Festival	28.03.2008	6	Capoeira	Children from several schools



Quinta Pedagógica dos Olivais – Farm Anniversary	16.04.2008	1	Circus	Children from several schools
J. F. de Marvila – 'Marvila dos Sabores' – Marvila Flavours Festival	19.06.2008	5	Circus	Animation open to the community
Bairro da Ameixoeira - Associação Raízes	10.07.2008	6	Circus, Capoeira	Youngsters of the community
Quinta Pedagógica dos Olivais – Farm Anniversary	30.04.2009	6	Circus, Capoeira, Music	Children from several schools
Associação Tese – Bairro da Torre: Community Day	30.05.2009	6	Circus, Capoeira, Music	Animation open to the community
Óbidos – Associação de Pais e Encarregados de Educação	06.07.2009	6	Circus, Capoeira	Children
Óbidos – Associação de Pais e Encarregados de Educação	10.02.2010	6	Circus, Capoeira, Music	Families
Óbidos – Associação de Pais e Encarregados de Educação	17.03.2010	6	Circus, Capoeira	Children
Quinta Pedagógica dos Olivais – Farm Anniversary	16.04.2010	4	Circus, Capoeira, Music	Children from several schools
Associação Tese – Bairro da Torre	29.05.2010	6	Circus, Capoeira, Music	Youngsters of the community
J.Freguesia S. Domingos de Benfica	10.12.2010	7	Circus, Breakdance	Seniors
Associação Portuguesa de Artes Marciais – International Marcial Arts Awards	05.03.2011	4	Circus, Breakdance	Adults, youngsters
Quinta Pedagógica dos Olivais – Farm Anniversary	16.04.2011	7	Circus, Capoeira	Children from several schools
Bairro da Ameixoeira – Associação "Raízes"	27.07.2011	6	Circus, Capoeira	Animation open to the community
Mafra – Inauguration of the Community Church of the Holy Christ	15.08.2011	5	Capoeira	Animation open to the community



6. Were partners involved in planning and/or development and/or implementation of the project? If so, who were they, and what were their roles?

Chapitô, along the years, as a civil society organization, has been creating several partnerships and integrating multiple social networks, official and private, national and international, having acquired several statutes, namely of Public Utility, of Manifest Cultural Interest, IPSS – Social Solidarity Private Institution, NGOs (integrating the Portuguese platform).

The **Magical Bag** is rooted in this paradigm of networking, with supported cooperation, negotiation, intense dialogue between routes, and building "circuits of communication" (between institutions, communities, different contexts and subjects) by integrating and valuing multiple languages, promoting different narratives, calling upon multicultural significant experiences, which represent potential synergies for better social regulation and development.

In this decade of **Magical Bag** interventions our best partners were:

Programa Escolhas (Choices Program) – Community development project, acting in socially disadvantaged neighborhoods through social and educational activities with the aim of preventing juvenile delinquency and crime.

<http://www.programaescolhas.pt/>

Pavilhão do Conhecimento – (Knowledge Pavilion) – *Ciência Viva* Project: a public space for the divulgation of science and technology. Through this partnership, "our" youngsters have free access to permanent and temporary exhibitions.

<http://www.pavconhecimento.pt/home/>

Jardim Botânico da Ajuda – (*Ajuda* Botanical Garden) – Institution that groups documented collections of living plants for research, conservation, exhibition and scientific research. This partnership permits access to tours and activities at discounted prices.

<http://www.jardimbotanicodajuda.com/>

Câmara Municipal de Lisboa – (Lisbon City Hall) – various shows presented by Magical Bag during the Festivals and major events in the city, allow us free access to sports practice and visits within the space of Monsanto and to the education and cultural offers in the district.

<http://www.cm-lisboa.pt/>

Associação Tese - (Thesis Association) – promotes projects of local development and education for development – in partnership with local actors.

<http://www.tese.org.pt/>

Quinta Pedagógica dos Olivais – (*Olivais* Pedagogical Farm) – develops projects framed along the lines of non-formal education, integrating educational and recreational leisure components-where it is possible to join in the day-to-day tasks. Under this partnership these experiences are accessible to our youth.

<http://quintapedagogica.cm-lisboa.pt/>



Associação Raízes – (Roots Association) – develops projects and activities with social, educational, professional, cultural and economic interest in various areas of the District of Lisbon.

<http://raizes.pt/>

Óbidos – Associação de Pais e Encarregados de Educação (Obidos – Association of Parents and Guardians) – the animations have appeared in different contexts: on the one hand, the promotion of workshops for school children, on the other, the presentations at parties or events at school and the community.

Associação Portuguesa de Artes Marciais – (Portuguese Association of Martial Arts) – Promotes the study and practice of East Asian martial arts in order to encourage the training of their members' physical and mental balance. They cooperate with Chapitô inside the Education Centres.

<http://www.apam.pt/>

Junta de Freguesia São Domingos de Benfica – (Parish of Benfica) – A government unit at local level. Under this partnership, we received material support for activities (eg, land and seeds for a lawn area for the practice of Capoeira and Breakdance).

<http://www.jf-sdomingosbenfica.pt/>

Câmara Municipal do Seixal – (Seixal City Hall) – In partnership with Magical Bag young people can make free use of the council's educational and sports opportunities.(eg. visits to museums and tours on the frigate).

<http://www.cm-seixal.pt/cmseixal.site>

Câmara Municipal de Cascais – (Cascais City Hall) – In partnership with Magical Bag young people can make free use of the council's educational and sports opportunities (eg boating, sailing).

www.cm-cascais.pt/

Associação Moínho da Juventude – (Youth Mill Association) – Assumed today as a Community Project, it was built by the residents who were faced with common problems. Through a joint action, they were able to extend and consolidate the foundations and objectives of their action.

<http://www.moinhodajuventude.pt/>

National Institutions, Chapitô's partner's supporting the *Magical Bag* Project:

The Art Institute from the Ministry of Culture, the General Directorate of Social Welfare from the Ministry of Justice , the Social Security Institute, the Ministry of Education and the Youth Secretary of State.

7. How did you build in plans to measure the performance of the project? Has the project been evaluated? How, and by whom?

The sustainability, efficiency, social sensitivity and public credibility as well as the innovative character of the ***Magical Bag*** Project call for a regulation / evaluation culture with high standards.



The broad and strongly participated context resulting in its dynamic, ask diverse evaluation methodologies and tools to collect the pulse of the project at various levels, as well as the opinions / views of the various players.

We therefore implemented a "network of self-and hetero-regulation" at three levels:

(i) Restricted Internal Regulation

- Weekly Team Meeting
- Quarterly Meeting and Program Evaluation
- Annual Assessment Meeting
- Training Meetings
- Summary report and photographic / video record of the "Magical Bag Project."
- Educational and Pedagogical Supervision, assumed by a Pedagogical Rearguard.

(ii) Internal Regulation Extended

- Chapitô Sector Meetings

(iii) External Regulation:

- Annual Reports of the **Animation in Action/Magical Bag** Project presented to the Main Board of the Education Centers, the Directorate General of Social Reintegration and the Ministry of Justice.
- Participation of the Project Coordinators in the Pedagogical Council Meetings of Education Centers.
- Quarterly DPSS Meetings (focused on the Development of Personal and Social Skills of the youngsters).
- Annual Review of the Project, with the Education Center's responsables.
- Feed-back from the partner institutions of the **Magical Bag** Project.

8. What were the results? How far were the objectives of the project achieved?

The purpose of the **Magical Bag** project is to help heavily marginalized youngsters, socially isolated, to find ways of fulfillment by developing their own communicative and social skills. We believe this will give them a sense of pride and promote their self-esteem allowing them to "gloom" and transcend their difficulties.

Chapitô has collaborated in a research on the social exclusion of disadvantaged young people that live in deprived areas (shantytowns), and in the course of this study we've noticed that cultural interventions in these areas were indeed very limited due to the local entities' lack of resources, both material and human.

Portugal is, since the 90's, the European country with the largest rate of poverty, with the lower income / salaries and with the lower GDP. These indicators lead to social exclusion, especially in the suburban areas of Lisbon.

From our own experience of working with vulnerable young people, we realize the value of the circus arts in motivating them to learn. We noticed that some of them found in the circus



skills a vocational way to build their own life project with the help of our social workers and animators.

We believe that the main result and positive impact of the **Magical Bag** project was the valorization of the youngsters, who felt useful and integrated in a project that gave them the possibility to communicate and interact with other children, young people and with a different kind of population. Furthermore, the stimulation of their own creativity surprised them positively, making them aware of their learning and teaching capacities in the playful and relaxed atmosphere of the circus arts.

From the quantitative point of view, we do not yet have longitudinal studies that allow us, trustfully, to identify the impact of the project in the hundreds of young people who took part and participated in it. However, we have "case studies" showing that the project was vital in the life histories of some of the young people who claim and assume a more significant linkage with Chapitô as an institution, especially with Chapitô's network of strong personal relations and projects.

In the Annual Reports that we regularly produce and socialize, as a scientific and civic exercise, in books, videos, brochures, photographs and papers published in the media, the **Magical Bag** Project is perceived as a reference for innovation, epistemologically and politically consistent.

The general and specific objectives that define the nature, ecology and methodology of the project (see Section 4) were and still are clearly met. The arts and culture, the positive multicultural communication and socialization experiences, the commitment to solidarity, the ethical responsibility and civic paths followed by the young people participating in the **Magical Bag** project may not always be sufficient to counter life stories with so many early "shadows", but they certainly construct narratives with new windows of hope and, above all, with tools to face and overcome fears and obstacles. Just that and all that!

And the boldness of the inter-institutional dialogue between the Chapitô and the Education Centers of the Ministry of Justice, a permanent meeting of different worlds regarding their structures and processes, triggers paradoxical approaches that, by their instituting praxis, gradually found new insights and new grammars. The **Magical Bag** Project proves to be a "bright" locus of increased citizenship.

9. Are there reports or documents available on the project? In print or on the Web? Please, give references to the most relevant ones.

- Annual Reports of the Project **Animation in action**.
- Video presenting the **Chapitô**.
- Video presenting the social area of the **Chapitô** project: **A day in the life of...**
- Video presenting the **Magical Bag** project
- Leaflets, Brochures, Photos
- Web Page Chapitô www.chapito.org
- Blog Chapitô <http://chapitoblog.blogspot.com/>



10. Please, write a *one page* description of the project:

The project ***Magical Bag - Animation for social (re) integration*** was conceived in the context of the work that is being developed by Chapitô's animation team for quite a few years now, with children and youngsters with ages ranging from 12 to 20 years, accomplishing internship measures in two Centers of the *Direcção Geral de Reinserção Social* of the Ministry of Justice: the Educational Center of *Bela Vista* and the Educational Center of *Navarro de Paiva*.

The distinctiveness of the ***Magical Bag*** project lays on the fact that the young participants are under the protection of the Court of Justice and, therefore, they are lodged in the Educational Centers. These youngsters are the main actors of the on-going animations and social interventions. The objective is the strengthening of the bonds of these youngsters with their communities, in a process of socialization that aims at their social and communitarian integration after they've left the Centers, and give them the possibility to explore a new knowledge that will capacitate them to face work market and social constraints. It's Chapitô's belief that the enhancement of communication abilities and empowerment of the youngest populations from underprivileged areas is a relevant strategy to reduce poverty and social exclusion and to prevent crime.

The intervention is based on a team with a rearguard, a team of about fifteen artists and project workers. Chapitô is an affective partner and an educational resource. In addition, the ***Magical Bag*** project provides a permanent routine through "workshops" where expression and communication capacities are trained, sustained by Arts. In this way, exercises of citizenship are carried out in a playful and friendly environment, an intervention that is at the same time humanistic and professional / artistic.

The project promotes visits and dialogue with local organizations to extend different kinds of partnership, the presentation of small shows of public attraction and the organization of workshops: Circus Skills, Capoeira, Plastic Arts, Music and Story Telling and Oral Tradition, involving youth living in underprivileged quarters.

The ***Magical Bag*** project has created a show, which constantly changes the performers (protagonists), and the script, adapting itself to the artists and their environment, allowing the intervenient to demonstrate their circus skills, to perform street animations, and to transport the magic of circus arts to schools, kindergartens, workshops, community centers and neighborhoods.

The arts and culture, the positive multicultural communication and socialization experiences, the commitment to solidarity, the ethical responsibility and civic paths followed by the young people participating in the ***Magical Bag*** project may not always be sufficient to counter life stories with so many early "shadows", but they certainly construct narratives with new windows of hope and, above all, with tools to face and overcome fears and obstacles.

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