



**RED NOSES**  
**CLOWNDOCTORS**  
International

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Final report

# CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES programme evaluation

RED NOSES Clowndoctors International



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Prepared for: RED NOSES International

Reference: Contract, 20 January 2020

Submission date: 14 April 2021

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**Acknowledgements:** Authors would like to thank RED NOSES country offices and all people who have provided valuable input for this evaluation.

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## Needs

### AND OPPORTUNITIES



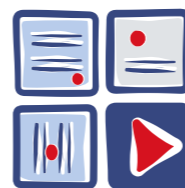
#### NEED FOR CARO

- › Children with disabilities (CwD) across CarO countries in their schooling have access to activities involving arts and sensory development, but lack access to humour and laughter.
- › Relatedly, the first CarO performance for educators and children alike is inevitably accompanied by anxiety, with many educators noting benefits for both the children and themselves of seeing the performance (or performers, with other formats) more regularly.



#### TARGET GROUPS

- › Children with multiple and severe disabilities are most deprived of access to humorous performances – CarO coming to their school environment is key.
- › However, educators across countries report being cautious about including children prone to strong reactions to social interaction and unpredictable behaviour in CarO shows. This concern hints to a need for more pre-CarO engagement with teachers to ensure children that could benefit from the CarO experience and are indeed its target group do not get left behind.
- › The CarO approach for reaching CwD who are home-schooled or study in integrated classes is not clearly defined at centralized and country levels at the time of evaluation.
- › Youth and adults with disabilities are arguably even more deprived of access to humour and laughter than children – RN offices are experimenting with CarO or CarO-like performances for older audiences to differing extents. The need to reach this extended target group is evident, but at the time of the evaluation there is no consensus around whether CarO should address it, and whether using the same or different formats and outreach strategies.
- › The milieu of children with disabilities, including educators and parents, has needs that CarO can also cater to, with the view to impact CwD in a more systemic way. Educators could benefit from a CarO toolbox for their every-day work with CwDs, parents could be engaged as spectators to celebrate their children's reactions to the show. Covid-19 and remote CarO formats present an opportunity in this regard.



#### CARO-LIKE FORMATS

- › RN offices and clowns welcome and are excited about possibilities to codevelop own CarO-like formats, as already done in Austria.
- › RN offices report some but not systematic use of other RNI formats with CwDs – for example Circus Pacientus, with promising results (see more on this aspect under the section on impact).



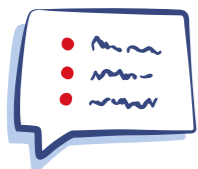
## LEARNING

- › Children with disabilities (CwD) across CarO countries in their schooling have access to activities involving arts and sensory development, but lack access to humour and laughter.
- › Relatedly, the first CarO performance for educators and children alike is inevitably accompanied by anxiety, with many educators noting benefits for both the children and themselves of seeing the performance (or performers, with other formats) more regularly.



## SUSTAINABILITY

- › CarO presents an opportunity for fundraising – RN offices report having institutional funders for the programme that are here to stay. Some factors that may make CarO attractive for funders: female workforce; corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategy focused on community and inclusion; track record of funding programmes, activities for CwD; prioritisation of culture and social development nexus; focus on promoting emerging artistic formats – e.g. new circus.
- › CarO impact on a greater scale and on the longer term rests on the CarO approach getting incorporated in school curricula – the tried and tested format and its success presents an opportunity for further research on impact and advocacy with educational institutions in participating countries. Other formats, e.g. training for nurses in the Czech Republic, present lessons learned and pathways to successful advocacy could be explored for CarO.



## IN A NUTSHELL

- › Children with disabilities (CwD) across CarO countries in their schooling have access to activities involving arts and sensory development, but lack access to humour and laughter.
- › Relatedly, the first CarO performance for educators and children alike is inevitably accompanied by anxiety, with many educators noting benefits for both the children and themselves of seeing the performance (or performers, with other formats) more regularly. Organisers and performers alike recognize opportunities to more systemically impact this group and explore the impact of approaches to meeting them across participating countries. Questions to consider are the degree to which to decentralise not only the performance but also design of the CarO approach, and how to maximise learning about what works and when, namely what innovations may be appropriate to specific contexts or hold merit for the development of the overall programme.



## TARGET GROUPS

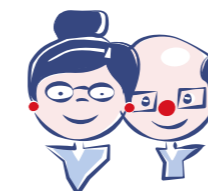
- › CarO impacts CwD most directly, but also their educators, the school community, the RN offices offering this format, clowns performing it, and RNI as an umbrella organisation. This evaluation could gather little to no information on CarO impact on parents, but with the current approach of reaching children at schools, parents and carers are neither directly targeted nor affected by CarO.
- › While not designed for this target group, CarO has been performed to differing degrees for older audiences, including adults, which according to clown and RN office feedback has been seen as relevant and impactful in some but not all cases. The evaluation had had no outreach to institutions catering to adults with disabilities that have hosted CarO.
- › Children without disabilities but learning alongside this group as children with behavioural issues in Hungary, or children from vulnerable groups such as Roma in Croatia have been also reached by CarO.



## CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

The evaluation can reliably speak to short-term impacts of CarO:

- › Educators note improvements in participating children's communication skills, interest and ability to open up and share, react to emotions, play and replicate humorous/clowning performances.
- › Thanks to CarO, children accumulate positive memories and a sense of well-being and self-worth.
- › CarO contributes to a sense of belonging in children's groups – they root, cheer for each other, show empathy with each other not only during but in class activities immediately but even after time has passed after the show. Educators report positive effects on individual children joining new groups for the first time after experiencing CarO together.



## ADULTS WITH DISABILITIES

- › Though not a target group of CarO, adults across CarO countries have benefited from the performance in its original or adapted forms.

The impacts, though varied, are, based on feedback from performers and organisers, mostly positive, especially in light of considerable demand from educational and care institutions.



## EDUCATORS

- › Educators are as emotionally touched by CarO as they are inspired to apply elements of CarO in their everyday work with children. Educators have mentioned interest in themselves using the shawl, keys, dressing up and playing as tools to stimulate the psychosocial and sensory development of CwDs.
- › Educators note gaining new learnings about the children they work with courtesy of CarO – children often surprise them with their reactions, they learn of new channels to reach the children they work with, share a new appreciation for the capacities children have and feel motivated to reach them in ways that CarO manages to.
- › As is the case for specific groups experiencing CarO, educators note impacts on team-building and shared excitement on the educator workforce and even the whole school community.

## RNI, RN OFFICES, CLOWNS



- › Clowns and organisers alike report finding immense meaning in being able to impact CwDs through CarO.
- › There is great interest among clowns in different countries to form part of CarO, meaning there is more 'potential workforce' should CarO expand its reach in the participating countries. At the same time, a potential expanded scope of CarO – in terms of the target groups it reaches, or additional services it offers (more prep and post-show follow-up, workshops for educators) – would require considerable reinforcement or reshuffling of resources across the different programs run by RN offices.
- › Clowns report that CarO improves their artistic and musical abilities, develops new sensibilities, and provides tools they use in other clowning formats.
- › Likewise, participating RN organisations report an increasing professionalisation of the clowns but also the organisational structures and processes in place to successfully manage CarO. RN offices note fundraising for CarO is different from that for other programs and some have found institutional funders that expectably will continue funding the programme for the foreseeable future.



## OTHER RNI FORMATS

- › While the evaluation is focused on CarO, other formats used more or less systematically to also reach CwD have been frequently mentioned. CarO-like performances developed in Austria, adaptation of Circus Pacientus to work with CwD hold promise for RN offices to have a greater impact on children with disabilities. In the case of Circus Pacientus, which involves the school community and carers, there is a possibility to have impact at institutional and systemic levels.



## DRIVERS OF IMPACT

- › The CarO structure, plot, its simplicity, length, the intimacy of the environment where it takes place, the professionalism of the clowns, the music, the volume and energy of the show, the name song, the costumes, and the abundance of sensory elements to engage children, on their own terms, are all drivers of the incredibly positive impact that CarO has on children, educators and the school community alike.
- › Elements that help jog the children's memory of CarO like pictures or videos, red noses, props used in the show – keys, shawl, are reported by educators as contributing to its impact, also on a longer term, when available to the educators.
- › The preparatory element of clowns receiving information on participating children, their needs, contributes to the innate ability of the clowns to adapt to each child in the performance.
- › The unfaltering enthusiasm of the clowns individually and with each other in the trio format, of the RN offices and RNI as the umbrella all transpires into amazing energy and care going into each performance, which is a major driver of impact.
- › Innovations adopted across countries like the CarO Tour (Hungary, to a lesser degree Croatia and Lithuania), pre-CarO live exchanges with teachers (Hungary), systematic sending of red noses home with children (Croatia) have reportedly contributed to impact. A big innovation in Hungary is introduction of the CarO 'tender', meaning schools have to apply for the experience. Applying this process as an alternative to the outreach efforts used in other countries, has reportedly addressed some inhibitors of impact like fatigue, lack of attention to preparing for CarO by some institutions.
- › Seeing CarO for the second time is reported as more impactful for children and educators alike, as both are more at ease to fully embrace the experience.





## INHIBITORS OF IMPACT

- › CarO when performed as a one-off experience is seen by educators as limiting impact – on the children and themselves.
- › Receiving institutions/hosting educators do not always understand/follow instructions. This finding suggests there is room for better preparing the ground for CarO, before it arrives in the receiving institutions. Misunderstandings about what CarO is, how to prepare for it, which children, how many of them should be present, all limit impact, not least by creating anxiety for the teachers and distracting the clowns from their main mission.
- › RN offices offering CarO report differing degrees of ‘fatigue’ by receiving institutions, and a big difference in enthusiasm to host CarO between those they consider as ‘CarO ambassadors’ versus others who are yet to receive the show or have not engaged with the programme.
- › The lack of a clear M&E system and learning exercises that could be informed by emerging findings may act as an inhibitor of impact.
- › Likewise, the evaluation also found there is little exchange between country offices on their experiences running CarO, the success or lack thereof of different adaptations that have been introduced.

## IN A NUTSHELL

CarO has spectacular impact on groups of people in particular need of humor and laughter – children with disabilities and their milieu. CarO holds potential to have even more impact – suggestions by evaluation stakeholders include more regular performances, development of additional CarO-like format. To have more impact at systemic and institutional levels, CarO should work more with educators and receiving institutions through additional pre and post-show engagement, formats and tools to engage, enable educators to apply the CarO toolkit and approach through tailored workshops. Ensuring impact at this level and its sustainability will require conducting research on what works, when and why, and using findings to support advocacy efforts, for example to have clowning/humorous elements introduced in educational curricula for children and educators to support their psychosocial and sensory development.



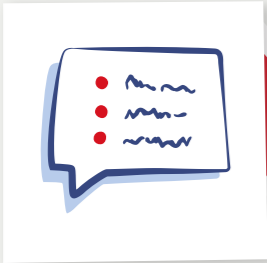
## M&E

- › Monitoring and Evaluation in CarO is decentralised both in terms of data collection but also the approach and tools used.
- › At the central level, it is not clear how information gathered quarterly from country offices is used and the impact of findings that emerge.
- › Standardised evaluation forms for written feedback were not useful for RN offices as a learning tool and have been adapted or their use altogether discontinued in different countries.
- › Verbal feedback from educators experiencing the show has been identified as crucial for clowns and organisers, and appreciated by educators. At the same time, it happens ad hoc, and there is not a systematic approach on how formalised this process should be, how regular, whether reflections shared should be written down and fed back to the program managers.
- › Learning at the country level on approaches to monitoring and evaluating CarO performances is localised and not systematically gathered at the umbrella level. For example, feedback forms have long been adapted in Hungary with good results, a learning other countries could have taken on board with timely sharing of information. Comparability of findings emerging from feedback forms is compromised by their inconsistent use, and the different formats in place across countries.
- › At the same time, RN offices and CarO organisers and clowns are very conscious and act as evaluators in their own right by constantly absorbing information that speaks to what is working, when and why. Many adaptations are introduced in different countries based on this feedback, even if it happens ad hoc.

## BASELINE

- › Developing an effective M&E system at country level and feedback loops to the umbrella level will be key in order to facilitate a baseline and subsequent assessments of CarO performances and their impact.
- › The evaluation hints at impacts at various levels, that can be monitored using/adapting the suggested indicators.
- › Data collection especially relating to impact of CarO on children will require input from receiving institutions. This could form part of the ‘CarO contract’ with schools, who can be engaged in partners for learning about the impact of humorous play on psychosocial and sensory development of CwDs.

# M&E and Baseline FOR FUTURE MEASUREMENTS



## IN A NUTSHELL

CarO has a strong impact on children with disabilities but also other groups including their places of learning, other persons with disabilities, the clowns themselves, organisations managing and clowns performing CarO. For amplifying this impact and reacting on the many opportunities identified here for how CarO can develop, it is crucial to systematically gather information on what works, when and why. Involving receiving institutions in the process of gathering data will be important for gauging impact on children, especially on the longer term.

Internal M&E findings should be also validated with broader stakeholder groups (academics conducting relevant research, policymakers, DPOs etc). This could help to identify research needs and ultimately be used for advocacy on how to enhance access to humorous performances for children and possibly adults with disabilities.



## 1. Introduction

Welcome to the first evaluation of RED NOSES International 'Children with Disabilities programme' CarO. An evaluation essentially constitutes research about a programme, who it reaches, how, in what ways and towards what change. This evaluation aims to:

- ✓ *'present an accurate and nuanced picture of the needs and opportunities faced by children with disabilities in Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia and Slovenia.'*
- ✓ *examine the impact to date of the Children with Disabilities programme in Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia and Slovenia, showing whether and how the programme has interacted with relevant systems to affect both short-term and sustainable changes for the benefit of children with disabilities;*
- ✓ *serve as a baseline against which the next phase of the programme will be compared as a measure of its impact.'*

We understand this evaluation will be used by RNI artists and managers, to both reflect on achievements to date and to consider what changes could make CarO more impactful going forward. As such, this evaluation is both 'summative' and 'formative':

- **Summative evaluation:** The summative view aims to assess the performance of the programme by reviewing actual achievements against initial expectations - the focus is on understanding what has been achieved in terms of genuine and lasting change and why.
- **Formative evaluation:** The formative perspective aims to enhance performance with a view to the future, most notably the design and delivery of future RNI programmes, and more specifically, strengthening the understanding of how outputs are transformed into outcomes. Here, the focus is on developing pragmatic recommendations to help the stakeholders to improve the design and implementation of future programmes.

The final report has been prepared on the basis of a desk review (see Annex I for full list), interview programme in all seven countries where CarO is performed (see Annex II for full list) and direct observation of CarO performances in Austria, Croatia and Lithuania.

### The final report is structured in three parts:

- 1. Methodology:** Evaluation scope, objectives and methodology. In this section we also present descriptive data across the countries participating in CarO and the programme's Theory of Change as understood by the Evaluators.
- 2. Findings:** Evaluation findings on:
  - Needs and opportunities faced by children with disabilities;
  - CarO impact;
  - Baseline for future measurements – indicators informed by Evaluation findings for CarO to use to measure progress from year to year, a review of the Monitoring and Evaluation in place across the country offices and finally a baseline assessment. Information for each evaluation question is comparative whereby information from individual countries is synthesised and key messages developed.
- 3. Conclusions and recommendations:** This section takes stock of findings and suggestions for improvement emerging from findings across all target countries.

<sup>1</sup>Lithuania was added to the list of countries for examining the impact of CarO. While financed by a source other than the C&A Grant that directly funds this evaluation, findings in Lithuania add value to the comparative cross-country analysis of CarO.



## 2. Methodology

This section provides an overview of the evaluation scope, objectives and methodology.

### 2.1 Scope, objectives + methodology

Data collection methods vis-à-vis the main type of information gathered from each is presented below. A full evaluation matrix is included in the Inception Report.

✓ A review of programme documents and relevant written sources (see full list of written sources consulted in Annex I).

➤ The document review facilitated an understanding of organisational aspects relating to CarO including in specific countries and horizontally at the RNI level and, through monitoring reports, questions related to impact. A review of relevant literature on access to culture and humour by children with disabilities was key for understanding the needs and opportunities of children with disabilities in countries where CarO is performed.

✓ Interviews with RNI team, donors, RN country office staff, CarO clowns, educators and school administrations of receiving institutions (full interviewee list is included in Annex II). These were conducted as part of data collection missions to RN offices and participating schools in Austria (October 2020), Croatia (February 2020), Hungary (March 2020) and Lithuania (March 2020). Interviews in the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Slovenia were held remotely due to Covid-19 travel restrictions.

➤ The extensive interview programme and broad range of stakeholders consulted allowed to cover the full range of evaluation questions with this method and triangulate findings by data collection method.

✓ Direct observation of selected Caravan Orchestra performances (Austria, Croatia, Lithuania (the latter online)). Direct observation was planned in all countries covered, however, was constrained by Covid-19 travel restrictions.

➤ Information gathered during direct observation included practical nuances of how CarO 'arrives' in a given setting, rules of engagement (for taking pictures, interaction), reactions of children and educators.

The main value added of direct observation was that it served as a segue to post-performance interviews with participating educators. Evaluators noted children's reactions and prompted educators during interviews on whether specific reactions were usual for the participating children, and what they found surprising.

#### Data analysis

Throughout the data analysis and reporting process, we used data triangulation to ensure reliability of the gathered data. The triangulation approach is based on comparison of acquired data on the same question/issue across different sources of information as well as through different data collection methods, e.g. the same information was confirmed by several people independently of each other during interviews or a finding from the CarO show observation or from feedback form was later on confirmed in an interview. We applied triangulation in three steps: firstly, by identifying potential sources of information for a particular question/issue at hand; secondly, by using each feasible source of information to obtain evidence on the same question/issue; and finally, by comparing and assessing all data from different sources. We consider as reliable and report on consistent data obtained across different sources. By comparing different sources of information, we limit subjectivity and partiality in data processing and ensure impartial conclusions. Triangulation is helpful not only to cross-validate the findings but also to see different dimensions of the same question/issue.

A potential constraint related to the data collection for the CarO evaluation is the fact that CarO is a unique format with other programmes and even organisations similar to CarO and RNI being completely absent in the countries in question. Thus, interviewed stakeholders and especially educators cannot compare CarO with any other similar intervention. It is therefore common that educators and receiving institutions are very grateful for having CarO and their feedback might lack a constructive critique. We tried to circumvent this bias by asking specific questions that might reveal important issues that educators would not have mentioned otherwise. Another difficulty related to the data collection is an overall lack of research about medical clowning programs and their impact on children with disabilities. To this end, we included an expert on special education and inclusion of disabled children as well as a creative arts therapist as

peer-reviewers with whom we discussed questions that arose during the data collection. A final related constraint is related to the way interviewees were selected, whereby the Evaluation Team relied on the RN country offices to suggest relevant and available interviewees in receiving institutions. A mitigating measure is that Evaluators got to visit institutions being visited by CarO during the field missions, meaning they were not pre-selected but random.

### 2.2 Descriptive comparison

Before presenting the evaluation findings, we present an outline of the Caravan Orchestra programme in each country below.

TABLE 1 CarO General information

	Austria	Czech Republic	Croatia	Hungary	Lithuania	Slovakia	Slovenia
CarO launched	2012	2012	2017	2014	2015	2013	2013
# staff overall	75 clowns 30 office	86 clowns 21 office	25 clowns 12 office	34 clowns 8 office	18 clowns 7 office	62 clowns 13 office	20 clowns 7 office
# staff CarO	19 clowns 1 office	5 clowns 1 office	9 clowns 3 office	5 clowns 3 office	6 clowns 3 in office	7 clowns 2 office	6 clowns 5 office
Central instrument	Ukulele and Guitar	Guitar and flute	Accordion	Accordion	Guitar	Accordion and guitar	Accordion and ukulele
Performed for adults?	No, teenagers under 18	Yes	Yes	No	Yes, occasionally	Yes	Yes, but only young adults.
CarO2 <sup>2</sup>	Yes, 2 <sup>3</sup>	No	No	No	No	No, under preparation	No, under preparation
Online CarO	No	No <sup>4</sup>	Yes	No <sup>5</sup>	Yes	No	No <sup>6</sup>

#### CarO scope

TABLE 2

	Austria	Czech Republic	Croatia	Hungary	Lithuania	Slovakia	Slovenia
# CarO clowns in the regions (outside the capital city)	19	1 <sup>7</sup>	4 <sup>8</sup>	0 <sup>9</sup>	0 <sup>10</sup>	0	0
Regional coverage	4 regional teams cover all states <sup>11</sup>	Demand-based travel by central team	Demand-based by central team + 1 regional clown	Demand-based travel by central team <sup>12</sup>	Demand-based by central team	Demand-based by central team	Demand-based by central team
# children/ clients 2019	621	333	68	50	3	78	66
# shows/ 2019	93	37	16	36	5	54	30

<sup>2</sup> CarO 2 refers to a new show that is similar to the current version of CarO in terms of methods used, but differs in the storyline. In several countries, the development of such a show was under way at the time of the evaluation. The name 'CarO 2' is generically used to refer to any CarO-like formats yet to be developed and named.

<sup>3</sup> Fairy Tale Play (for older children with disabilities) and Caravan Kitchen (for same target group as CarO)

<sup>4</sup> Tested twice but not developed further

<sup>5</sup> Performed outside in Spring of 2020

<sup>6</sup> Under preparation at time of drafting evaluation report in January 2021

<sup>7</sup> One CarO clown is based in Olomouc; the CarO team is all based in Brno, technically a region, but acting as the central team.

<sup>8</sup> 1 clown each in 4 regions

<sup>9</sup> New regional team of 5 planned in 2021 subject to Covid-19 developments

<sup>10</sup> Plans to train clowns in northern Lithuania to expand CarO coverage

<sup>11</sup> Except Oberösterreich and Vorarlberg regions in which CliniClowns is traditionally more established – donor market

<sup>12</sup> 'Tour' format – 5-day trips by central team.

**TABLE 3** CarO funding

	Austria	Czech Republic	Croatia	Hungary	Lithuania	Slovakia	Slovenia
Individual donations	x	x	x			x	x
C&A grant	x	x	x	x		x	x
Other corporate sponsors	x		x	x			
Public institutional donors					x <sup>13</sup>		

## 3. Evaluation Findings

This section presents the main evaluation findings. The corresponding evaluation questions draw on the ToR ('Evaluation Questions', p.3) and include some additional questions added by the Evaluators. The evaluation findings below address questions related to needs and opportunities faced by children with disabilities (3.1), impact of Children with Disabilities Programme to date (3.2) and baseline for future measurements (3.3). A full list of evaluation questions addressed is provided below.

### Needs and opportunities faced by children with disabilities

1. What cultural, systemic, and other factors influence the access of children with disabilities (CwD) to humour and art?
2. What cultural, systemic, and other factors influence the access of CwD to empathetic interactions?
3. How do cultural and systemic stances on integration and inclusion affect the psychosocial wellbeing of CwD?
4. How does the programme add value to the institutional and systemic reality in the target country?<sup>14</sup>

### Impact of Children with Disabilities Programme to date:

5. What short-term impact has the programme had on CwD, care takers, and decision makers?
6. What long-term, institutional, and systemic impact has the programme had on the psychosocial wellbeing of CwD?
7. To what extent has the programme impact been in line with the RNI Framework of Change?<sup>15</sup>
8. To what extent has the programme had an impact on adults with disabilities? What unexpected impact, positive or negative, has come from the programme? To what extent is the current format of Caravan Orchestra address appropriately needs and opportunities of CwD?

### Baseline for future measurements:

9. How is the programme monitored and evaluated?<sup>16</sup>
10. Which indicators measured in this evaluation can be used to track future progress of the Children with Disabilities programme?

<sup>13</sup> Lithuanian Council of Culture

<sup>14</sup> Question added by evaluators.

<sup>15</sup> Analysis presented in the conclusion – see recommendations

<sup>16</sup> Question added by evaluators

## 3.1 Needs

### AND OPPORTUNITIES



Needs assessment refers to the extent to which CarO addresses an existing need in the countries where it is performed. Questions addressed:

1. What cultural, systemic, and other factors influence the access of children with disabilities (CwD) to humour and art?
2. What cultural, systemic, and other factors influence the access of CwD to empathetic interactions?
3. How do cultural and systemic stances on integration and inclusion affect the psychosocial wellbeing of CwD?
4. How does the programme add value to the institutional and systemic reality in the target country from the perspective of funders?



AT A GLANCE

### ACCESS TO HUMOUR AND ART BY CWD:

- Educational programmes for children with disabilities across the countries under study include elements of arts and sensory development, however limited to no access to humorous/clowning performances.
- The need for early intervention into psychosocial development of children with disabilities is evidenced by the eager reception to the show by all stakeholders interviewed.
- The focus of CarO on children with multiple and severe disabilities, and coming to their usual environment, is particularly appropriate given this group is most deprived of access to culture.
- On the contrary, the evaluation finds in some countries, for example Hungary, children with severe or multiple disabilities may be home-schooled entirely or partially. CarO has no approach to date for reaching this target group, nor an approach to assessing the extent to which home-schooling is applied for children with disabilities in the different countries.
- There is no uniform or clearly documented approach on how CarO organisers go about mapping relevant receiving institutions and conducting outreach.

### CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES:

- Integrated classes although a promising development for inclusion of CwD pose a challenge for the standard CarO approach of visiting classes for CwD in mainstream schools or specialised schools for children with disabilities.
- In Hungary, where children with behavioural issues learn alongside CwD, provides an opportunity to learn about impact of CarO specifically on this group. Anecdotal evidence gathered by this evaluation suggests CarO has been successful in having a positive impact on children with behavioural issues there.





AT A GLANCE

- › There is demand for CarO to reach the same children more regularly, or with an adapted format.
- › CarO can like be appropriate for target groups beyond children with disabilities; across countries it has been performed for babies in palliative care, teenagers under the age of 18 (same and adapted formats e.g. in Austria), young adults, adults and seniors.

## WHAT ABOUT EDUCATORS AND PARENTS?

- › Work with educators whether through workshops as being developed in Hungary would ultimately benefit not only the teachers, but also the children, potentially in a more long-term fashion.
- › There are no developments across countries to reach parents as a target group but particularly educators stress the importance to engage with parents to ensure better livelihoods and stimulation for children with disabilities.
- › Some funders, implementers and beneficiaries see CarO as having the potential to contribute to relieving pressure on government services, providing an alternative intervention to existing services, and decreasing children and staff stress levels. Corroborating potential for this kind of impact requires a strategic and systematic approach to research, monitoring and evaluation, and advocacy.

## 'SELLING' THE VALUE OF CARO

- › Contributing to the added value for funders and supporters is the professional, researched and innovative approach to working with children with disabilities. In Lithuania, the institutional donor – Council of Culture – places specific emphasis on promoting new circus, and appreciates CarO for its circus/clowning element.
- › CarO is a programme that is 'palatable' for institutional donors when it fits with their values.

### 3.1.1 Pre-CarO situation

Children/persons with disabilities were mostly a new target group for RN organisations covered by this evaluation. At the same time, many clowns and other staff at RN have had exposure to children/adults with disabilities through their studies, other work, and even clowning. Across countries, clowns mention having encounters with this group through other formats as well, particularly hospital visits. In Slovenia, RN had been visiting institutions for adults and children with disabilities prior to starting out with CarO, albeit without a specific format adapted for this target group. The organisers and clowns there shared a strong desire to gain more knowledge of possible ways to work with children with disabilities and wanted to have a standalone programme for this group. In Slovakia, clowns shared receiving positive feedback from parents of children with disabilities during hospital visits that the clowning format is particularly appropriate for their kids and encouragement to work with this group. Indeed, across countries and persons interviewed, there was agreement that children with disabilities and by extension their care providers, caretakers, and adults/seniors with disabilities are an important target group that RN organisations are well placed to meaningfully reach and positively impact. In that sense, **the availability of CarO as a programme developed through collaboration between RNI and CliniClowns<sup>17</sup> was seen as 'organic' and 'natural' and welcomed by all involved** – RN chapters, clowns, care providers, care takers, donors and of course children, and, where applicable, adults with disabilities. In terms of scoping by RN offices of the 'need' for CarO in the participating countries, the evaluators find there was no standardised approach. Based on availability of data such as centralised registers of specialised schools and/or the willingness of relevant public sector representatives to share such information, CarO organisers across countries had an easier or harder time mapping out the target institutions. In several countries the target institutions to visit expanded from public sector ones to third sector – e.g. NGOs working with the target group, as well as to institutions catering to other target groups like adults with disabilities.



*“With the development of the programme, you get smarter, more professional. Now we have statistics, we are aware of all the [special] schools, classrooms, we have learned a lot. At the start we really didn't know as much as we do now about the institutions themselves.”* CarO organisers, Lithuania.

### 3.1.2 How schooling is organised for children with disabilities

In most countries covered by this evaluation, children with disabilities receive a mix of national/school-specific education plans and personalised/individual ones, which often integrate music, theatre and sensory work. Clowning/humour as a means/tool to work with children with disabilities did not come up in feedback as present in such education plans, however it would be interesting to explore whether education plans in some countries explicitly include this element. In most countries, education of children with disabilities remains segregated, whereby children with disabilities experience education in specialised institutions or separate classes within mainstream schools. In some countries like Hungary, the extent to which children with disabilities are integrated in mainstream education differs considerably by region. Across countries, children with multiple or more severe disabilities are rarely if ever integrated in mainstream classes, even in countries where children with less severe disabilities are on the whole well integrated in the education system, as in Slovenia. The exception to this may be Austria, where a 2015 report<sup>18</sup> on the Tirol region shows about 20% of children with multiple or severe disabilities learning in integrated classes.

In both Slovenia and Austria, reaching children with disabilities who learn in integrated classes has reportedly posed a challenge for CarO as it caters to the children with disabilities but not their peers. In Slovenia CarO organisers shared

<sup>17</sup> Dutch NGO that developed the CarO format.

<sup>18</sup> *Inklusive Bildung in Tirol (2015)*, p. 11. Available at: [https://www.tirol.gv.at/fileadmin/themen/gesellschaft-soziales/UN-Konventionen/tiroler-monitoring-ausschuss/dokumente/stellungnahmen/Stellungnahme\\_Inklusive\\_Bildung\\_Tirol\\_Letzterversion\\_schwer\\_9.10.15.pdf](https://www.tirol.gv.at/fileadmin/themen/gesellschaft-soziales/UN-Konventionen/tiroler-monitoring-ausschuss/dokumente/stellungnahmen/Stellungnahme_Inklusive_Bildung_Tirol_Letzterversion_schwer_9.10.15.pdf)

Given that feedback gathered for this evaluation can answer the above listed questions to a limited extent, the focus of the discussion below is on the need for CarO as understood by the organisers, performers and receiving institutions. The discussion is also informed by desk research on how schooling is organised for children with disabilities in the countries under study and about access to humour and art for this group within and outside the educational programmes in place.

receiving a lot of demand from institutions with integrated classes to see CarO but they have not been able to meet this demand with the current format. In Austria, likewise, CarO has been played for children with disabilities in integrated classes to a limited extent. There, interviewees provided mixed feedback about the possibility of performing CarO exclusively for children with disabilities possibly picked out from different integrated classes in a given school. This issue merits exploration in further development of CarO as some of the feedback suggests that with increasing integration of children with disabilities into mainstream schooling the CarO target group is 'disappearing'.

Hungary is a unique case across the countries as children with disabilities there fall within the category of children with special education needs (SEN). This group includes children with learning difficulties and behavioural issues, some of whom can be said to belong to families at risk of social exclusion. The inclusion of the target group of CarO – children with severe and multiple disabilities – is seen by inclusion experts as 'somewhat contentious' in the Hungarian education system despite the National Public Education Act 190/2011 providing for inclusionary measures for all children in the country. Children with severe disabilities receive so-called 'developmental education', a specialised education programme often provided for children in home settings or a mix of schooling at home and at a specialised school. The implications for CarO are that the target group is expanded in Hungary's case to children with challenging behaviour, however as reported in the section on impact, CarO has worked very well for this group as well. Another implication, however, is that the specific CarO target group may be home schooled, requiring a different outreach strategy and/or format. From feedback gathered in one specialised school, a child who is mostly home-schooled was brought in specifically to see CarO and with great results.

### 3.1.3 Opportunities for children with disabilities to access art/music/humour

Common to all countries was feedback that while music, art, theatre, sensory education is integrated into curricula for children with disabilities, CarO is a very special case given it is so well adapted to the realities and needs of children with multiple and severe disabilities and the schools catering to this group. In most countries it was mentioned that CarO is either the only programme suitable for children with complex needs or one that is most suitable. CarO addresses challenges educators face in expanding access to art and culture for children with disabilities by removing the need to commute, the uncertainty of whether certain children can handle the trip, lights, noise, and whether educators will have to spend the shows they are attending with some of the children in the hallway.



*“Normal theatres are not that pertinent for these kids.”* Educator, Slovakia

*“Children with not that severe disabilities have some opportunities to access art but for those that are heavily disabled it is very difficult. Cinema or theatres are not made for them.”* Educator, Slovenia

It can be deduced from the feedback gathered that a personal approach as in CarO is not available in other offers of arts and culture for children with disabilities. Humour was also not mentioned often across the countries as a tool employed to work with children with disabilities. CarO is seen across the board as meeting an important gap of artistic and cultural opportunities for children and young adults (when applicable) in countries where it is performed. In Austria, an additional play (Fairy Tale) was developed for children with disabilities of a higher cognitive age, the target group reached by CarO is therefore expanded. In Austria also another play was developed (Caravan Kitchen) for the same target group as CarO. Feedback in other countries is that initiatives to develop another show inspired by CarO are either being considered or developed to reach more children (e.g. older children), to have other formats to offer the same children the CarO experience more often, and/or to give the opportunity for clowns to express themselves artistically by contributing to the development of such new formats.



*“Children with disabilities are a group that is not usually spoiled with a musical, humoristic performance”,* Caro clown, Austria

Across countries, CarO organisers and clowns through work with the show have become increasingly aware of the needs of the milieu of children with disabilities – their care providers and caretakers. There is wide agreement that CarO and the skills/experience of the organisers and clowns of applying humour and clowning to work with children with multiple disabilities presents opportunities to reach these groups. It is seen that work with educators would ultimately benefit the children themselves, and there are initiatives under way as in Hungary to engage with this group through workshops. There are no developments across countries to reach parents as a target group but particularly educators stress the importance to engage with parents to ensure better livelihoods and stimulation for children with disabilities. A format that is seen as possibly reaching this group more is 'Circus Pacientus' that has been performed for children with disabilities in Hungary and Lithuania. This format through a more intensive several day exchange and involvement of the school community and care takers can potentially achieve a more lasting impact. Feedback from clowns that have performed this with children with disabilities suggests there is particularly strong impact on the self-worth of children with disabilities, who through concentration and consistent effort learn to do circus tricks, and their achievements and unique abilities are ultimately celebrated by their peers, educators and care takers.

Finally, while adults with disabilities are not an explicit target group of CarO and feedback on the suitability of CarO for this target group ranges from cautious to enthusiastic, this group is across the board seen as equally if not more deprived of humour and culture in their lives, especially if care is provided in institutionalised settings. This sheds further light into the importance of early intervention for increased social inclusion of children with disabilities as CarO.



*“We started to discover how big this world is – so many institutions taking care. There are many groups we can approach with CarO.”* CarO Manager, Croatia

### 3.1.4 Value-added from perspective of CarO funders

Overall, CarO is financed differently (see Table 3 – CarO funding) across the countries running the programme. Funding sources ranging from grants covering all countries (C&A ) to country-specific grants, donations from private companies, prize money from competitions (Croatia), money collected from income tax allocations by individuals and individual donations (primary funding source in Slovenia). Interestingly, while in some countries persons responsible for fundraising at RN chapters say raising money for target groups like children with disabilities and for example the elderly is harder than say children in hospitals, in other countries the specific focus on children with disabilities has helped attract steady institutional donors (Hungary, Lithuania). In Croatia, funding for CarO was first obtained to pilot the programme to see whether it can then be kept on in the portfolio. Also in Croatia, CarO was selected by a specially appointed commission and later voted as number one by the public from among 700 applicants for a grant for social interventions. This result testifies to the recognition of the importance of the target group and approach of CarO in the country.



*“Psychosocial support encourages the development of cognitive, functional, communication or social skills of users, and as play is the best way to communicate, especially in difficult and stressful situations, RED NOSES with their*



*creative work bring an innovative way of communicating with children with disabilities, bringing them a world of play, laughter and fun."* Deputy Head of the City Office for

Social Protection and Persons with Disabilities of the City of Zagreb

Feedback from donors that have contributed to funding CarO in different countries emphasises the importance of the nexus between art/social integration/public health, the innovative approach of clowning/circus as a means of reaching children with disabilities, the specific focus on children with disabilities and the proactive/professional approach and ability to communicate/present CarO by the RN organisations. Various funders, including the main donor for CarO in 2020 – the C&A Foundation, emphasised how well RN works, and how the values inherent in this work align with their values and areas of focus. C&A puts a specific emphasis on women (the majority of their workforce and their clients), children, education and health, and CarO ticks all the boxes. The funder in Lithuania noted that continued financing for CarO can be attributed to the good reporting by the programme organisers, and the ability to illustrate its impact on the target group. Finally, also in Lithuania, the CarO funder has been particularly pleased with the adaptability of RN in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic, when they managed to absorb grant funding by reorienting to remote CarO, which may be made even more impactful given the limited social interaction and access to art and culture during lockdown conditions.



*"Immediately liked the idea of Caravan Orchestra, as it brings a friendly novelty to children with special needs in Slovenia."* pharmaceutical company in Slovenia.

In Hungary, an insurance group that is a steady institutional donor for CarO, invites CarO to a Christmas event at a home for children with disabilities that they sponsor. In this event, the staff get to live the CarO experience with the children and the clowns and find it invaluable.

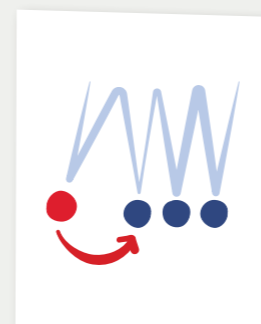


*"The next day the girl (...) phoned and said it was so beautiful and heart-breaking, and had tears in my eyes and thank you. She couldn't find the words, but was overwhelmed by her emotions. They like it really, and they are really fine with this programme, there's no question about supporting another programme, there's only CarO."* Head of fundraising at Red Noses Hungary

**Based on information gathered for this section on needs and opportunities, the work RNI is carrying out through CarO can be also seen as potentially:**

- 1) relieving pressure on government services (otherwise children would be on waiting lists for other interventions),
- 2) providing an alternative intervention that may not be offered by the state, and
- 3) decreasing children and staff stress levels, potentially resulting in less staff burnout, sickness, or turnover.

Such effects could further be explored in collaboration with the receiving institutions, potentially through outreach/ data collection performed by them in their own right, and furthermore used in advocacy to expand the use of humorous interventions with CwD.



The impact criterion in evaluation is meant to assess what difference a given intervention made – whether expected, unexpected, short to mid-term or long-term. Questions addressed:

5. What short-term impact has the programme had on CwD, care takers, and decision makers?
6. What long-term, institutional, and systemic impact has the programme had on the psychosocial wellbeing of CwD?
7. To what extent has the programme impact been in line with the RNI Framework of Change?
8. To what extent has the programme had an impact on adults with disabilities?
9. What unexpected impact, positive or negative, has come from the programme?
10. To what extent is the current format of Caravan Orchestra address appropriately needs and opportunities of Cwd?



AT A GLANCE

## CARO IMPACT ON CWD AND THEIR MILIEU

- CarO positively impacts children's communication skills, ability to concentrate and open up, trains their memory and leads to play and imitation. It is also seen as contributing to a sense of belonging in a group and has facilitated adaptation periods for new children in a given group.
- The impact seems to be enhanced for children seeing the show for the second time. The previous experience with the show translates into a higher curiosity to explore the set, a happy familiarity with the sequence of events and ability to showcase what they remember.
- CarO's impact also reaches the educators many of whom acknowledged that the show provided them with new ideas of how to engage with the children and often take these lessons into the classroom and integrated them into their interaction with the children.
- CarO impacts the care takers only to a limited extent either through experiencing the children's good mood after the show or through sharing the experience with children by watching online CarO in those countries where this remote format had been launched.

## CARO IMPACT AS PER RNI FRAMEWORK OF CHANGE

- Data gathered in this evaluation does not allow to gauge long-term impact. Feedback gathered suggests that for sustainable impact to be achieved CarO could experiment with different frequencies of visiting schools and gathering data on impact. Another possibility is to work with teachers for them to incorporate CarO-like techniques in their teaching. Finally – systemically reaching the milieu of CwD would require outreach to and engagement of carers.



AT A GLANCE

- › Institutional impact can be said to be achieved by CarO more ad hoc than systemically to date. Initiatives like teacher workshops in Hungary have potential for strengthening impact at this level.
- › The evaluation gathered no evidence on system-level impact. Impact at this level would require a strategic approach, a research and monitoring system and advocacy/outreach to decision makers. A good example of system-level impact would be inclusion of humoristic play in education programme curricula complete with training for teachers in relevant techniques.

## CARO FOR ADULTS

- › CarO reaches adults with disabilities more or less systematically across countries despite not being specifically developed for this target group. The outreach of CarO to older audiences, however, differ from country to country. Austria is the only country where older audiences are not targeted by CarO at all.
- › The feedback gathered through the evaluation suggests mixed results in relation to CarO's impact on adults with disabilities, While elements like music, smiles, songs and the personal attention that CarO offers leads to a euphoric effect on any group of viewers, some consider that the simplicity of CarO in terms of its storyline and plot may underestimate the cognitive capacities of adults who, despite their lower cognitive age, have different lived experience than children.
- › In some countries, undesired effects were experienced when performing CarO for adults such as not meeting the psychological needs of this target group or sometimes leading to inappropriate dynamics between viewers and clowns. In some cases, the shows triggered aggressive behaviour of some viewers, something not reported in relation to the effect it has on children.

## CARO IMPACT ON CLOWNS AND RN OFFICES

- › Through work with CarO many clowns find new meaning to their work, expand their artistic abilities and develop new sensibilities. They likewise learn to work with children and persons with disabilities and apply this learning in other professional and personal contexts. RN organisations are impacted positively by CarO through increasing professionalisation and new skillset of their clowns, more opportunities for clowns to fill organisational roles, diversified funding sources, and the possibility to reach a target group most people involved appreciate and find meaningful.



AT A GLANCE

## CARO FORMAT FIT FOR ADDRESSING NEEDS OF CWD

- › The evaluation found many driving but also inhibiting elements for the CarO success to date.
- › The main drivers include: simple storyline and plot; appropriate length of the show that makes it possible for children to process the story and at the same time fit in their attention span; props, music and intimate format allowing to capture the children's attention and approach them individually; costumes that make it appealing for children and supports their sensory work; musical endowment of the clowns who are trained, synchronized and approach the show with professionalism and empathy. Prior knowledge of the audience is part of the clowns' preparation and is considered as one of the most important factors for CarO success.
- › Among the inhibitors we can found: not following the instructions by the receiving institutions; insufficient communication with the receiving institutions prior to the show that can result in a selection of an inadequate space for the show, inclusion of higher number of children than recommended, and in not providing all the important information about the children's likes and dislikes prior the performance. While the presence of educators during the show is considered important for the safety of the children, at the same time it can hinder CarO success since educators are often nervous or worried about the show and children's reactions.





The following section on impact is structured alongside the following aspects: (1) impact of CarO on different groups, (2) factors supporting the impact; (3) factors hindering the impact; and (4) CarO outreach.

### 3.2.1 Impact of CarO on different target groups

#### 3.2.1.1 Short-term impact on children with disabilities

Given CarO's focus on children with disabilities they are the group benefiting most and most directly from the programme.

While educators share numerous benefits CarO brings for the participating children, in several countries it was mentioned that without an expert assessment and a thorough discussion around specific cases, it is hard to gauge the impact the performance has on children. Particularly educators who accompanied children from other classrooms could not comment on the impact the show had on them as they could not compare their reactions to their usual behaviour. Likewise, while teachers have a feeling that CarO makes a lasting imprint on the lives of the participating children, many admitted not knowing whether the impact goes beyond the immediate and short-term reactions elicited in children by the show.



*“First news were specifically from my colleagues. They told me something really fantastic is happening here, these guys are coming, the kids behave like in a magical lesson and they enjoyed it so much. (...) It was really surprising, they're not always that open – sometimes the kids keep several steps between themselves and visitors.”* Special education teacher, Csillagház Általános Iskola

At the same time, there is broad agreement among educators interviewed in different countries on the overwhelmingly positive immediate impact of CarO on participating children. The immediate impacts mentioned are the positive charge to the children's day, the fact that they are more excited, open and talkative after the show, that they laugh, interact with the clowns in their own way. Educators note that many children react in ways unexpected to them. Some note that children with high levels of anxiety sometimes are more receptive than could be expected and others, more extraverted, remain quiet/shy during the show. Also educators note that for some children the show has a calming effect, whereas others are excited by it. Indeed many educators said the impact on specific children differs and cannot be generalised. Sometimes, they said, a child would not engage with CarO at all but be sad or even cry when the clowns were leaving. The name song was mentioned by pretty much everyone as the most special CarO element because of the impact it has on the children. Hearing their name sung, getting that personal attention from the clowns makes the children feel important, proud, and this feeling is further strengthened by children supporting and cheering for each other during this experience.



*“We had a boy in our class who passed away shortly after CarO came to the school. It was very touching because he reacted so positively on the show and I cannot remember any other situation when he was so happy as during CarO.”*  
Educator, Slovakia.

Some educators believe that since CarO connects with children on an emotional level the impact is likely to be long-term. Likewise, educators emphasised that children remember the performance as evidenced by clowns appearing in their drawings, or by their reactions if they get to see the performance a second time. In several cases clowns mentioned later seeing children they performed to in CarO during hospital visits, where the children remember them even without the costumes. On the other hand, some educators note the one-off nature of the CarO experience as opposed to more long-term engagements like therapy is likely to have just a short-term impact. Indeed many of the interviewed educators said they wished CarO came more often to their children – to the tune of twice/three times per year. Alternatively, educators wished the clowns would come with other performances for this target group. The discussion below provides an overview of the benefits mentioned by interviewees without attempting to gauge whether they are short- to medium-term or long-term.

➤ A positive impact on **communication** skills of the children. This was mentioned both for verbal children who engage both with the show and afterwards share their excitement with educators, peers and parents, but also and non-verbal children. Several educators mentioned children being more prone to communicating their feelings possibly as a result of CarO. For example a school in Hungary that works with children with multiple disabilities, who are mostly non-verbal and cannot move, uses emotion cards as part of a check-in routine every morning. According to an educator, while children did not engage with this activity much before CarO, since the show children have shown more interest both in communicating their emotions but also learning/reacting to those of other children in the group. Some feedback suggests children after the show remained more prone to touching each other, laughing. Verbal children spoke about their experiences. Non-verbal children used pictures and signs to try and communicate with educators who were not present in the show to share their experience and excitement as shared by an educator who was not present with her group during the show.

**“**Also they wanted to express their feelings much more – they wanted to express how they feel about things and each other, they wanted to express their fears about things, their joys – this is really important for us, because sometimes we just don't know what's inside of our kids.” Special education teacher, Hungary.

➤ Many educators also note benefits on participating children's **concentration and attention span** – many were surprised children could focus for as long as 45 minutes on the performance.

**“**For children that are very autistic, can't concentrate well, avoid eye contact and can barely stay put in a seat – this is education, not just relaxation. We try all sorts of tricks we learn from Pinterest to keep the children's attention for five minutes, whereas here they manage this for even 30 minutes.”

Social pedagogue, Lithuania.

➤ CarO has a special way of getting children to **open up** – in several cases educators shared their surprise about how receptive e.g. children with autism spectre disorders, were with the clowns. The openness CarO elicits in non-verbal children has been mentioned by several educators. Interviewees shared various stories of CarO eliciting responses in children that completely do not interact with their environment. This was also shared of a child who had experienced clinical death in a hospital, where the name song, performed as part of a hospital visit, elicited her first reaction to a stimulus and greatly touched everyone involved. Educators reflect that this 'surprise' effect might lead to an overall receptiveness to new experiences. Several interviewees – including performers and outside observers – mention the



special moment in the show when the ‘ice breaks’ – when CarO manages to draw in/awaken the senses of the participating children.

**“** I cried sometimes, the emotional level in a room can be up to the top – you can really feel the moment inside of the show, when all the children, assistants and parents exhale/release/let go of the tension... and then this little soul inside of everybody just goes out.” CarO organiser, Croatia.

- Educators also note probable benefits for training participating children’s **memory** – they learn and sing songs, remember the sequence of events in CarO, the characters.
- **Sense of belonging in a group** was mentioned by several educators and confirmed by direct observation. There was an overwhelming sense of togetherness in the group – kids cheering for each other, touching each other for encouragement during turns having their names sung and sharing their excitement.
- Feedback from educators suggests CarO may have benefits for specific children’s **adaptation period** when starting out in nursery or a new school or group, as in examples mentioned for Hungary and Lithuania where specific children’s adaptation to a new environment was helped by the CarO experience.
- An indirect impact of CarO on participating children is that educators across countries mention getting to **see their clients in a different light**, expanding their understanding of specific children and the way they interact with the world. This has been mentioned specifically in relation to second performances, when educators say they are more at ease to observe the children. The new insights into the children and their ability to react, what can elicit reactions, etc, likely transpires back to the children. Indeed various educators noted adopting elements of the show into the classroom – like shawl, keys, playing with clown noses, drawing with the red colour.
- **Play/imitation** has been mentioned by many educators as an effect CarO has on the participating children. Children with different degrees of ability have attempted to imitate CarO since experiencing it. Children draw the clowns, hum/sing the tunes from the CarO repertoire. An educator in Slovenia shared that her class enjoyed CarO so much the kids performed it for another class in the school. Educators across countries mention that children started ‘making music’ on various objects, playing clown-like games, dressing up, singing each other’s’ names, playing with objects that remind them of the show – scarves, keys. Interestingly, these games often involve other children, reflecting the social and bonding nature of the CarO experience.

Concerning the impact of seeing CarO for the first or subsequent times, feedback from educators across countries suggests specific benefits of seeing CarO performed more than once. Both children and educators are more at ease the second time to fully experience and open up to CarO – for children knowing for example when their names will be sung is reassuring. Educators mention the children are more active the second time they see the show, explore the set and props more, while they in turn are more able to observe and take in the children’s reactions.

Concerning the impact of CarO on different target groups, as mentioned earlier, its impact cannot be generalised across groups. A common finding that emerged in this respect is that educators are not always sure which target groups CarO is appropriate for. Educators have particularly been anxious about including children with severe disabilities or behavioural issues in the show, and their experiences with both are discussed below. Importantly, CarO reaches children with multiple vulnerabilities in some of the countries. For example in Hungary, through CarO tours whereby a CarO team travels to a far-away region for a 5-day visit to reach more remote locations, the show reached children with disabilities who are also Roma and live in social exclusion. In Hungary, where children with disabilities learn alongside peers with special education needs/challenging behaviour, the latter group sometimes includes risk group children.

**Children with severe disabilities** – feedback in several countries suggests that educators are sometimes anxious and unsure whether to include children with more serious conditions like autism spectre disorders in the performances.

They worry whether loud, sudden sounds or movements will not trigger an unwanted reaction. Also educators mention different phases of a given child’s disorder and worrying how they would react to CarO during peak times when children’s behaviour is less predictable. In all such cases their fears were appeased in reality as children’s reactions have been overwhelmingly positive and there have been very few situations where a child would be overly excited or disturbed to the point of having to leave the room. In Croatia, an educator in a specialised school for children with multiple and severe disabilities said they took the fact that no children of the four shows performed there had a seizure, cried or had any unexpected reaction, to mean that the children liked the show and learned new experiences. Educators in several countries reflected that children with lower intellectual development are touched more by CarO at the emotional level.



*“Regardless the kind of the reaction, it is always a healthy reaction. For children with really severe disabilities, it can be just a smile or a palm release, but even this is a lot. It is always about experiencing the feeling, regardless the reaction”.*

CarO clown, Czech Republic.

**Children with behavioural issues** – in countries where specialised education is organised for children with disabilities alongside peers with behavioural issues as in Hungary, educators also fear whether children prone to disruptive behaviour will not interfere with the show or their peers’ ability to enjoy it. There, educators and CarO organisers discussed the impact on both children with disabilities and their peers with behavioural issues, and found it worked equally well for both. Children with disruptive behaviour, who do not engage with the learning process easily, were to the educators’ surprise willing to abide by the clown rules in CarO.

Finally, reflecting on the different impacts CarO has on children with disabilities, as discussed above, educators emphasised several elements they find to be drivers behind the positive impact.

#### **Some relate to aspects of the show:**

**Music** overall was seen as a strong connector, especially the name song. Various interviewees noted the **shawl** as an element that really engaged children, even those who up to that point in the performance may not have been interested. The **structure of CarO** and how it builds up step-by-step is seen as something that reassures children and keeps their excitement in check. The **duration** was appreciated by educators as something that trains children’s ability to concentrate. The **degree of stimulation** was mentioned by interviewees in several countries as just right. Educators find CarO strikes the right balance between offering a rich, meaningfully constructed and stimulating show, while at the same time being appropriate for children who do not do well with too much stimulus. Educators also praised CarO for being **easy to follow and understand**. They find CarO communicates through emotions and is prudent with words – this has been particularly noted as key for children who are not verbal. The **intimacy of the CarO environment** – it being performed in the familiar environment where children learn every day, with the same children they regularly interact with, was seen as really facilitating children’s reception to the show.

#### **Others relate to the CarO approach:**

The **intimacy of the CarO environment** – it being performed in the familiar environment where children learn every day, with the same children they regularly interact with, was seen as really facilitating children’s reception to the show. Importantly, educators across countries emphasized the importance of **CarO coming to the schools and classrooms** which removes the hassle of traveling with children and ensures those children who are seen as not being able to handle trips outside are not left behind. A key driver of positive impact in the view of educators is the **possibility for children to interact with CarO on their own terms** – whereby interaction is invited but not forced. This was reportedly not a luxury often afforded to, but much needed and appreciated by this target group and the educators, who are

used to constantly having to 'control' the children in social interactions, particularly offers of art and culture lest they 'misbehave'. Several educators shared anecdotes of children's reactions that can be construed as acting up, but clowns managing to work with it and organically incorporate into the show. The freedom to engage with the show as one would like is seen by some educators as teaching children to embrace new experiences and to communicate. Finally on this point, clowns having information about conditions and preferences of participating children helps with this mutual respect and careful invitations to engage. Clowns have shared anecdotes of little details they thought of to include – like touching/offering an object or similar, based on the information they had on a specific child.

#### Yet others relate to follow-up:

**Elements that jog the children's memories of CarO** like pictures and videos of the performance, red noses, keys, shawls and other objects from the performance were seen as important drivers for children to relive the CarO moment and remember the show.

### 3.2.1.2 Short-term impact on care/education providers

Educators cite numerous benefits CarO brings to them as people and professionals. Experiencing CarO firstly brings with it a positive charge on the day of the show and supports educators' work with children with disabilities and promotes the use of humour and clowning. It also contributes to the dynamics at schools by promoting community building.

Teachers, headmistresses and social pedagogues cite the 'magic atmosphere', positive mood, that **lightens their day and load**. Educators in Hungary, Lithuania, Croatia, Czech Republic reported working in difficult conditions, being subject to exhaustion, low pay, physical and emotional overload, feeling undervalued and experiencing burnout. The effect on teachers is seen as 'therapeutic' both during the show – many mention feeling uncomfortable even having their name sung as they are not used to the attention – but also after the show, when they feel more relaxed.

Educators and school administration representatives across countries share that **CarO contributes to their work with the children**, inspires them. Educators get to observe the kids in a different light, when this is not often possible during a hectic school day. Several educators found it was 'eye opening' to see what reactions are possible in their children and the channels to get through to them. They note that these lessons, new ideas of how to engage with the children, are taken into the classroom and integrated into their interaction with the children. While sensory/musical work with children with disabilities is commonplace in educational programmes, educators found CarO offered them new elements to work with – for example for shawl/water element was mentioned by several educators as something they've either started experimenting with in their classrooms or plan to as a result of seeing children's reactions to in during CarO. A reflection from a clown in the Czech Republic who also gives yoga classes to persons with disabilities is a learning how important it is for the children to feel like 'superstars' from time to time, through specific and individual focus on each child. She believes CarO is a good example of how to work with children with disabilities for social workers who are not used to take an individual approach to children in their work.



*“Programme is sensory – exploring sensory information very much, lots of concrete materials from the fairy tales or activity – they have a chance through the activity to explore concrete. If we talk about making smoothie, they explore yoghurt, blueberries. CarO is also like that, because our clients have a chance to touch Red Noses, to touch everything that is in the show – this helps them to understand what is happening.”* Programme Coordinator, Croatia school.

Overall, CarO can be seen **as promoting the art of clowning as a potential pedagogical tool to work with children with disabilities**. While the evaluation found no evidence of clowning used in pedagogy, several interviewed educators expressed their enthusiasm for this being the case. In Lithuania, CarO organisers believe that just by being exposed to CarO, receiving institutions and educators get to experience a 'new normal' in relation to how children can experience art and culture, in that in CarO they're free to react, participate, and this is admissible and even desired. Educators and CarO organisers across countries shared with the evaluation team the recognition that educators can be a CarO target group in their own right, as it can serve as a stress relief mechanism and teach them methods to work with the children, and in a sense themselves. In some countries educators emphasised also the opportunity to reach parents of children with disabilities in this way. In Croatia, the RN CarO programme manager recognising the conditions in specialised education feels they can do more for the teachers and school staff, as they do through the humour in healthcare programme. Reportedly in the Czech Republic the art of humour and clowning is incorporated into the psychology curriculum. At the same time, organisers share this is not easy to do, and in the past, experiences have been facilitated by a personal contact with someone interested in spearheading such an effort. In Hungary, CarO developed as a programme to include in addition to the show workshops with teachers. The first such workshop had to be put on hold due to Covid-19 developments in March 2020. In Slovenia one educator attended a pedagogic circus workshop inspired by CarO that she felt broadened her horizons and inserted the circus pedagogic into her teaching.

An important benefit of CarO is that it contributes to **community building in schools** – in several countries, educators shared that CarO contributes to solidarity between teachers who have to organise themselves who gets to see the show and share in the excitement. A school in Lithuania shared running a roster of who has already seen the show and is yet to see it among the teachers, to make sure each gets a turn when a new CarO visit is announced. In the same school, CarO has come to be seen as part of the school community in the three years the programme has been visiting. School principals are also often engaged in the success of CarO and share pleasant interactions with both CarO organisers and teachers accompanying children to the shows. In Lithuania an educator who facilitated CarO first performing in her school rejoiced in getting a personal thank you from the school principal for cultivating this important initiative there.

Through the impact of children being more cheerful, better able to concentrate, express themselves, educators find their work and own methods are made more effective. An educator in Hungary shared that the show teaches her children to be present in the moment, reflecting the philosophy of the present moment inherent in clowning for CarO and nurtures their clients' emotional intelligence.



*“They wanted to know how the other is, how they feel, not just themselves. I think that was a great big step. It really helped my work.”* Special education teacher, Csillagház

Általános Iskola

### 3.2.1.3 Short-term impact on care takers and decision makers

The evaluation found no evidence of CarO reaching decision makers as this target group has not been interviewed or systemically targeted, however evaluators received some feedback on its impact on caretakers. Overall, educators and school administrations noted that they were receiving limited if any feedback from parents as they are not directly engaged by CarO. There have been, however, some cases when parents/care takers got to experience CarO more closely or first hand – through photos/red noses/videos sent home with the kids, remote CarO when performed for families, through hospital visits. In Croatia, where parents can be the personal assistants for their children during the school day, some parents get to see the show together with their children. Finally, some educators have received feedback from parents about the children being particularly upbeat upon returning home on the day of the CarO performance – feedback suggests children imitate playing music, sing, feeling happy after the performance. In Austria, a teacher shared being able to film a CarO performance and share it with parents, who were impressed to

see their child's reaction. Educators in some schools share memorabilia such as photos of the performance with the parents through the children's diaries or otherwise; in Croatia, CarO viewers are sent home with a red nose. In several countries there have been cases when children who had seen CarO perform in their schools later saw and recognised the clowns during their hospital stays – this was seen as having a positive impact on the children's hospitalisation experience and also touched the parents.

Remote CarO in some countries (Lithuania, Czech Republic) reached families as opposed to schools during the period they were closed in the spring of 2020. Clowns and organisers believe this serves as an inspiration for the family, as they share this collective memory and can repeat some of the parts with their children. In Lithuania, an educator shared an anecdote about CarO performing for one family, where a child with a disability had a smaller sister who got particularly into the show and started rolling around the floor and otherwise engaging with the clowns. The family was refreshed to see the clowns work her goofiness into the show, with clowns sticking out their tongues, etc, thus relieving the embarrassment of the other family members. An educator who was present said it was very special for her to experience this with the participating families.

As discussed earlier in this section, parents are recognised by educators especially as a target group in need of art and humour as well, and there is an overall desire for CarO to reach this group as well. As educators, parents of children with disabilities often face difficult conditions, burnout, and can do with the stress relief and inspiration, tools to work with their children, afforded by CarO.

### 3.2.1.4 Long-term institutional and systemic impact on psychological wellbeing of CwD according to RNI Framework of Change

The RNI Framework of change includes beneficiaries from all programmes, whereas the specific ones that apply to CarO include: children with disabilities, parents and other family members, care providers. For the listed target groups, RNI, overall, seeks to contribute to a higher emotional well-being, **greater social inclusion and more supportive environments**<sup>20</sup>.

The feedback gathered suggests the CarO artistic format and encounter with children brings positive emotions and memories, an improved ability to concentrate, communicate with others and show empathetic reactions. Through educators taking on board elements and tools of CarO and the overall therapeutic effect it has on them, children receive more access to humorous play and more pleasurable emotions. Likewise, children receive individual attention and their individual talents are celebrated. At the same time, the evaluation received limited feedback on benefits to self-image of the children, less painful emotions or strengthened ability to cope with difficulties as this would require feedback from the children themselves or an assessment of the changes they experience.

Concerning **long-term impact for children with disabilities**, the intended long-term impact of RNI work should lead to more positive memories, improved self-image and strengthened ability to cope with difficulties. Within the scope of this evaluation and the data available it is impossible to say the extent to which the indicated short-to mid-term impacts translate into long-term impact for children with disabilities. Moreover, the evaluators gathered feedback in a limited number of schools selected by RN chapters in the different countries, meaning it is not possible to determine the extent to which the found positive impacts are representative of all schools receiving the show. While this level of impact is not systemically approached by CarO at the moment, there may be some ad hoc long-term impact on children whose educators are motivated by CarO to adapt new approaches, seek new learning opportunities, or learn new insights about how to reach the children they work with.

Concerning **institutional impact**, the intended impact is increased use of humour and art, more empathetic interactions and more efficiency and success, in CarO's case, with CwD. The evaluation found some examples of educators

being inspired by CarO to use humour and art, and seeing their children in a different light - recognizing new abilities, ways to reach/understand the children. There is also some evidence suggesting that experiences like CarO help care providers cope with their often wanting working conditions and psychological load. At the same time, impact at the institutional level rests on the strength of the ties between specific schools and educators with CarO, and the programme to date has not impacted institutions in comprehensive and sustainable fashion. Institutional impact looks likely to be strengthened by new developments in countries like Hungary, where CarO will reach educators through workshops to this target group, and Croatia, where they are considering how to better reach this target group. Institutional impact can be said to be achieved by CarO more ad hoc than systemically to date.

**Systemic impact** – at the systemic level, RNI aims to provide greater access to humour and art, greater access to empathetic reactions and support for access to both to happen. A key pathway identified for this is a greater understanding of the positive impact of humour and art on specific persons in need, in this case children with disabilities. This pathway is yet to be paved for CarO as despite the great scale of the programme – in some countries reaching almost the entire target group, there is little understanding of the impact this has had on the children and educators that work with them. This evaluation and dissemination that will follow can foster a greater understanding of the positive impact of humour and art on children with disabilities on the short term, and promote data collection efforts needed to reliably gauge longer-term systemic impact. A strategy on research and advocacy and outreach specific to the target group of children/persons with disabilities across participating countries that could support systemic impact is yet to be developed.

### 3.2.1.5 CarO impact as per RNI Framework of Change

- ▶ The evaluation has not found an evidence of a system-level impact. Systemic impact would be multiplied through more research and advocacy on the use of clowning and humour in work with children with disabilities, training educators and ultimately bringing these elements to curricula for the education of CwD. A good example of a systemic impact would be inclusion of humorous play in official education techniques and educational programmes/curricula.
- ▶ Feedback from educators and clowns suggest that to achieve a long-term impact on children, more frequent visits would be needed. This would result in CarO being a kind of therapeutic intervention for children which are capable to gauge a longer impact. Similarly, a longer-term impact could be achieved if teachers take over and incorporate certain elements used in CarO into their lessons.

### 3.2.1.6 Outcome on adults with disabilities

Adults with disabilities are not a specific target group of CarO, but the show developed across countries in a way that reaches this group more or less systematically. Concerning target groups beyond the prescribed target group – children aged 8-11/12, feedback across countries suggests CarO has been performed with good results for new-born babies in palliative care (Czech Republic), adolescents and young adults (most countries), adults (mixed results – see below) and the elderly. Austria is the only country where older audiences (with the exception of adolescents for whom two other CarO-like shows have been developed) have not been reached by CarO, reportedly because this would not be in line with the agreement with the Dutch developer of the show, CliniClowns. Based on the experiences of the organisers and the performing clowns, performances for adults led either to no longer performing for older audiences (Lithuania, Hungary), doing so occasionally based on demand (Slovenia, Slovakia, Czech Republic), or actively exploring opportunities to bring CarO to older age groups (Croatia).

To speak of the need for reaching this target group, as discussed in the section on needs and opportunities, there is demand for CarO or CarO-like performances for young adults and adults, possibly also older persons. There has been a demand across countries for CarO from institutions catering exclusively to adults, but especially those working with different age groups, namely day care centres that include children and young adults.

<sup>20</sup> RNI Framework of change, Annex III



In terms of the CarO format, feedback from clowns that have performed for older audiences suggests that while the CarO language (music, smile, the beauty of the moment, the name songs and the personal attention this brings) is universal, there may be a need for some adaptations to enhance how adults experience the show. Some clowns felt that CarO being simple as it is, may underestimate the cognitive capacities of adults, even if their cognitive age is like that of children, because of the life experience they have. A clown in the Czech Republic reflected that while children experience CarO as a musical and visual performance linked with the senses, adults and elderly experience it as a story. This suggests that when working with adults, the story could be made more intricate.

Feedback on the impact of CarO on adults is mixed. On the positive end of the spectrum, in Slovakia, Czech Republic and Croatia, feedback suggests the show is suitable for adults of whatever age and has a 'euphoric' effect on them. In Slovenia, experiments with young adults also yielded good results. Applying the same process of collecting information on viewers ahead of the show allows clowns to adapt the performance to the specific group, as noted in Slovakia. In Croatia, CarO organisers are particularly keen to reach adults with disabilities, recognising the big demand for humour in the lives of persons with disabilities, especially in institutional care. This demand is confirmed there by institutions organising care for adults with disabilities themselves contacting the RN chapter to invite CarO and even offering remuneration. The team has performed for day care centres and a psychiatric hospital, where they said CarO elicited positive responses of individuals who were depressed and not prone to interacting with the environment according to feedback they received from carers after the show. In several countries it was observed by organisers and clowns performing in the geriatric programme that CarO could be performed for elderly audiences, especially persons with dementia as they have 'closed channels' and CarO 'always finds a way'. Finally, in Hungary, a clown due to join a CarO regional team noted that CarO training has transpired into her regular work with adults with disabilities. She finds the clown transparency and the touching moments clowning brings has proved as successful.

In countries where there have been some attempts to bring CarO to adult audiences with less desired effects (Lithuania, Hungary), the issues centre around physiological needs of adults and sometimes inappropriate dynamics that may occur, especially between male viewers and female clowns. An experience by clowns in Hungary also suggests the show can bring out aggression in some adults. At the same time, feedback from individual clowns suggests that even in countries where the consensus is to work exclusively with children with disabilities, there are clowns who would like to reach adults with disabilities and find meaning in doing so.



*“We started it, we got very squeezed scope – children from this age to this, cognitive age this to that, older with cognitive age that is lesser than x. We followed instructions but as we’re rebels at heart, we’ll try out different publics, we went to the hardest. Clown is rebel, there’s an aspect of opposition.”* Red Noses representative, Croatia.

### 3.2.1.7 Unexpected outcomes

In addition to the target groups including children with disabilities, their care providers and less directly their caretakers, the evaluation found evidence of CarO impacting positively on the participating clowns and country offices that run this programme, discussed in turn below. The evaluation found no evidence of negative unexpected impacts of CarO.

#### Red Noses organisations

Having CarO as part of the programming appears to carry relevance for different RN country chapters, for some of which CarO was organically expanding the work they do. Some mention that they find it important – as organisations and as clowns – to reach children with disabilities as a target group, and appreciate CarO as facilitating this. Indeed, in

several countries recruiting clowns to perform in CarO was reported as easy since more people wanted to join the show than they were able to accommodate. Many clowns had had previous experiences working with children with disabilities, further motivating them to join the show.

Different RN chapters across countries as well as RNI have cited impact on the organisational level. For RNI part of the motivation to onboard CarO first in Austria and then elsewhere was to address a 'blind spot' – children with disabilities, who are in specialised institutions and otherwise unreachable by the clowns. Across countries, RN representatives reported finding it meaningful and important that they reach children/persons with disabilities as a target group in need of access to humour and art. In Lithuania, CarO organisers note that working with this new target group has brought more visibility and publicity to the work of the RN chapter as a whole.

In some countries, RN representatives shared that having CarO in their repertoire has expanded opportunities for funding. In some cases this is because funders opt for funding different programmes from year to year, and adding new ones makes such new funding available. In others, however, as in Hungary and Lithuania, CarO has stable funding largely or entirely covered by one donor who finds the programme important and is inclined to continue funding this specific format because of the alignment with their own strategies, target groups and values.

Also related to organisational development, as a new programme, CarO offers opportunities for more people involved as clowns or in other roles to engage in new organisational roles in their country chapters – as CarO programme managers, for example. This, for the people involved, has been cited as important for their personal development and professionalisation, and in line with their values. Likewise, the possibility to be cast for CarO works as a motivating factor for clowns who may continue to find meaning in the work they do through the possibility of engaging in different types of clowning experiences. RN organisational representatives note that their work overall is enriched by the higher sensibilities clowns develop when working on CarO.

#### Red Noses clowns

Many of the clowns interviewed confided with the evaluators that CarO is their favourite programme and one they either really wanted to get to perform or got happily 'sucked into'. The mentioned impacts can be broadly grouped into impact on the emotional level and impact on learning.

In terms of emotional impact, CarO clowns mention feeling charged, euphoric, satisfied, positive, gratified by the experience and the instant nature of the feedback they receive from children with disabilities, whom they find to be precious and transparent. One clown has called this an 'enchantment moment'. Another clown said they become a better person courtesy of performing CarO. CarO clowns mention the intense energy exchange they share with each other and the audience – children and educators alike – that at times brings them to tears. Given the different nature of clowning for CarO compared to, for example, hospital visits where clowns feel more pressure to entertain, make children laugh, clowns say they are able to bring more of their personality to the performance and find this gratifying and enriching to the overall clowning experience and artistically inspiring. Finally, from feedback gathered, CarO for many clowns serves as a welcome break to the routine of hospital visits or other programmes where more improvisation effort is required. In this sense many clowns noted how each show is a unique experience and children's reactions are always unpredictable. They appreciate the CarO structure, scenario, costumes, all of which give them an opportunity to experience the present moment more strongly with their little viewers.



*“These shows are about being together, and if you manage to have a good time goofing around with the kids, it’s so great, you feel like you woke up and did your morning exercise.”* CarO clown, Lithuania.

The impacts on learning relate to **working in a trio/team**, to the **fixed structure, different pace, energy and focus on the present moment** needed for CarO compared to programmes where clowns have to improvise more, and finally to the tools and approaches for this **specific target group** – children and/or adults with disabilities.



*“The clown is about the present, totally strongly about the present – not to suffer from the pain of the past, and not be anxious from the fears of the future. (...) We come, open the door, go in, open the trunk, opening each other, we are together, we enjoy being together, and we leave, we leave everything open.”*

CarO clown and Artistic Director, Hungary.

Many clowns shared that CarO taught them a lot about synergy, an organic compound in the team, fleeting exchange of roles among the trio and viewers based on something shared between all of them. The benefits to working as a team come from different ‘stages’ of performing CarO from preparation, concentration and harmony in the performance, and clowns say this transfers to other programmes where they perform in teams.

The importance of being in the present moment resonated in all interviews and is reflected in the discussion of different evaluation questions. Clowns throughout countries say CarO really helped them to control their energy for CarO, learn to receive, listen, be more sensitive about what’s happening in a given moment, learn to balance between improvisation and structure. All this, according to CarO performers, helps them recognise what the show means, improve non-cognitive qualities as people and ultimately attain a deep connection with each other and the viewers that being in the moment facilitates.

Finally, as a new programme specifically targeted to children with disabilities, CarO has taught clowns tools and approaches, to both children, but also adults with disabilities. Clowns often encounter this target group in other RN programmes and in their other activities, and say they have developed a new sensitivity to this group, better understanding how to engage. Notably, clowns report being motivated to connect with children with disabilities in a different way and learn more about them, gain insights into their world. Clowns share a way of seeing the kids as ‘precious beings’, to whose level they get to ascend thanks to CarO, and this is highly felt by educators.



*“From all events at the institution, CarO clowns are the top most wanted because of their approach with the children. Our children in other educational programmes/events are underappreciated, and here they are each a participant.”*

Educator, Lithuania

The name song has been something most clowns shared using in other settings including for children with disabilities but not exclusively. Finally, while musical prowess is a prerequisite for clowns performing in CarO, some clowns mentioned they really improved their musical skills courtesy of performing CarO. Indeed, in some countries CarO clowns are trained by and perform alongside professional concert musicians.

### 3.2.2 Factors supporting the impact

Finally, reflecting on the different impacts CarO has on children with disabilities, as discussed above, educators emphasised several elements they find to be drivers behind the positive impact.

#### Some relate to aspects of the show:

**Music** overall was seen as a strong connector, especially the name song. Various interviewees noted the **shawl** as an element that really engaged children, even those who up to that point in the performance may not have been interested. The **name singing part** has been equally identified as one that is appealing to almost every child. By many clowns the name singing part is viewed as an ice breaker, a moment that makes children feel special. For this purpose, the names of children are solicited beforehand. The **structure of CarO** and how it builds up step-by-step is seen as something that reassures children and keeps their excitement in check. The **easy plot** with many repetitions avoids overstimulation, children are free to react as they wish and they are given space to process the show and respond to it or do not respond at all. The **duration** was appreciated by educators as something that trains children’s ability to concentrate. The **degree of stimulation** was mentioned by interviewees in several countries as just right. Educators find CarO strikes the right balance between offering a rich, meaningfully constructed and stimulating show, while at the same time being appropriate for children who do not do well with too much stimulus. Educators also praised CarO for being **easy to follow and understand**. They find CarO communicates through emotions and is prudent with words – this has been particularly noted as key for children who are not verbal.



*“The name singing part is very moving for me. Children might not react to everything in the show but they all react to their names. This is a very strong part that we know will work for almost every child.”* CarO Clown, Slovenia.

#### Others relate to the CarO approach:

The **intimacy of the CarO environment** – it being performed in the familiar environment where children learn every day, with the same children they regularly interact with, was seen as really facilitating children’s reception to the show. Importantly, educators across countries emphasized the importance of **CarO coming to the schools and classrooms** which removes the hassle of traveling with children and ensures those children who are seen as not being able to handle trips outside are not left behind.

**Careful sensing of each child’s mood and setting the right rhythm and melody** (energetic, fast, slow, calm, soft) are important for a smooth development of the show and children accepting it. Finding the appropriate approach depends very much on the child’s character. That is also why, knowing the audience, including their names and basic needs facilitates this aspect, and is key for a successful performance.

A key driver of positive impact in the view of educators is the **possibility for children to interact with CarO on their own terms** – whereby interaction is invited but not forced. This was reportedly not a luxury often afforded to, but much needed and appreciated by this target group and the educators, who are used to constantly having to ‘control’ the children in social interactions, particularly offers of art and culture lest they ‘misbehave’. Several educators shared anecdotes of children’s reactions that can be construed as acting up, but clowns managing to work with it and organically incorporate into the show. The freedom to engage with the show as one would like is seen by some educators as teaching children to embrace new experiences and to communicate. Finally on this point, clowns having information about conditions and preferences of participating children helps with this mutual respect and careful invitations to engage. Clowns have shared anecdotes of little details they thought of to include – like touching/offering an object or similar, based on the information they had on a specific child.



### Others related to communication:

Work ahead of the performance is a key factor for CarO's success. This consists of an exchange and clarification of expectations on both sides, RN chapter and the receiving institutions without which the show could not run smoothly. Good preparation ahead of the performance is seen by both sides as crucial for success. Before going to schools, clowns clarify the show and its development to the receiving institution, including how many children should be in one group and what would be a good space for the performance.

Explaining the instruction verbally whether by phone or in person seem to be particularly effective and helpful. This is especially useful as sometimes the instructions are not sufficient to avoid teachers/educators from being stressed and doubtful as many of them see the show for the first time. This issue has been tackled for instance in Hungary where they started conducting face-to-face presentations by the CarO programme manager or artistic director. A visual map is also included in the presentation which helps to explain the set-up of the show. The presentation is considered as very effective by the Hungarian RN office, and this was confirmed by the teachers, who noted that it was helpful for them to get familiar with the programme beforehand.



*“Everything was so well prepared that when CarO arrived for the first time, it already seemed that they arrived home. (...) She explained in detail how the show will look like, how they will have to organise the space; they were already sure the programme will be good, the kids will enjoy, and that the performance will be professional.”* Director of primary school division, Hungary

*“We have part of the prep we go there (...) to make a presentation for the teachers about the programme, what it's about, about our experiences, what we want to ask from them to support the programme, how to do to have the best result. Since then the cooperation is much stronger and much more professional.”*

CarO Clowns and Artistic Director, Hungary

**Post-CarO communication** is equally important, especially for the clowns and the programme as such. Post-CarO discussion with educators/receiving institutions is an excellent opportunity for clowns to receive feedback and discuss the show when it is fresh in the mind of both, teachers and clowns. However, such a discussion is not always possible due to other commitments on either the clowns' or teachers' side or bad timing (overlaps with lunch, nap periods during the day when teachers are busy).

### Yet others relate to follow-up:

**Elements that jog the children's memories of CarO** like pictures and videos of the performance, red noses, keys, shawls and other objects from the performance were seen as important drivers for children to relive the CarO moment and remember the show. In many institutions, photos are often published on bulletin boards, in school newspapers or sent to parents by email.



Below we present a comparative table related to pictures taking during the performance in each country.

	Austria	Czech Republic	Croatia	Hungary	Lithuania	Slovakia	Slovenia
Pictures allowed during show?	Very restrictive – only group picture at the end of the show (exception such as RNI needs photos for printing)	Yes	Yes	Only at a designated time, at the end of the show	Only at a designated time, at the end of the show	Yes, but due to GDPR it varies from institution to institution	Yes, but due to GDPR it varies from institution to institution

Making sure that children do not take over the show and to ensure the continuity is often seen as challenging, but a key aspect for the success of the show. Feedback from the interviewed clowns and direct observation reveals a mixed reception of physical contact by children. On the one hand, the possibility for children to make physical contact with clowns is seen as very valuable by several interviewed clowns in different countries. It is also one of the reasons why CarO during Covid-19 – whether presential with no physical contact or remote, is seen as inferior to the live experience. On the other hand, in some cases physical contact initiated by children is seen by performers as disturbing the storyline and requiring to cut short the performance.

Prior experience with CwD is helpful but not imperative for CarO clowns. While some of the clowns started working with CwD for the first time through CarO without having prior experience, many already had some exposure to this target group, either through clowning (e.g. Circus Pacientus in Lithuania or Hungary) or in their previous work. Albeit it was noted that prior experience is somewhat helpful for the performing, many clowns acknowledged that no training can prepare them 100% for the children's reactions, and only practice and performing can increase their skills and knowledge on how to react correctly. A mixed feedback was also gathered in relation to the need of a special training on working with this target group, as it is available for instance for the geriatric programme. While some clowns said they would not want a specific training, others however noted that if working with CwD is to become a bigger focus of the country chapters or RNI, there will be a need for additional preparation for clowns working with this target group. This was particularly relayed in relation to performing Circus Pacientus for CwD which requires much longer and intensive engagement compared to CarO.

Gender composition of the CarO teams might be able to determine certain dynamics of the show. In Lithuania clowns noted that children seem to be more open to female clowns than to their male colleagues. Thus, mixing up the team members to explore different gender combinations can be an interesting thing to explore.

### 1.1.1 Factors inhibiting the impacts

Receiving institutions do not always go by the instructions. This might result in putting the performance in a space that is too small or misunderstandings about the seating arrangements. The extent to which the guidance provided by CarO organisers is understood by the receiving institutions also varies, and this presents a challenge to organising the programme. This is sometimes due to the fact that the communication is not done directly with a teacher that will accompany the kids to the show but goes through headmasters/headmistresses who may or may not pass on all the information needed to duly prepare for a smooth CarO experience.

Not receiving specific information about the likes and dislikes of each child was noted as problematic by the clowns. If this happens, clowns cannot tailor the show to the children's needs. Sometimes, the information provided is not always useful, e.g. information including descriptors like 'wears glasses' does not provide value added to the clowns that would help them to tailor the show.



*“Those letters that precede each show, they are very well formulated. We internalised the rules basically with the first show. (...) the more difficult aspect for the teachers was to complete the biographies – the cognitive age of the children, their capabilities – it’s not always clear, sometimes teachers would come ask what to write. It took us some time before we realised that it’s much more simple – whether the kid will stay in the seat type of thing.”* Educator, specialised kindergarten, Lithuania.

**Inadequate space** can negatively affect the effectiveness of the show. Choosing a suitable space was mentioned as a very important aspect as it needs to be familiar, safe and big enough (some 16m2, according to the possibilities of the individual institutions) to accommodate the clowns and all the elements of the show.

**Presence of educators** during the show is important for both children and the clowns but according to some feedback gathered can negatively impact the success of the show. For children, presence of educators is important because having a familiar person around bridges the gap of the strange/unknown person in the room and decreases children’s anxiety. Moreover, it is crucial for the sense of security/safety that is provided by familiar persons and environment. Educators can capture and mitigate reactions of children in case there are too many emotions. For clowns, the presence of educators can give them a sense of safety and peace by being able to count on support from them if the children’s behaviour is too strange or difficult. Clowns can maintain non-verbal communication with the educators during the show. In situations when the clowns feel insecure about some of the children’s reactions they can search reassurance and support from educators which ensures a safe development of the show.

**Online CarO format** has not been viewed by all countries as appropriate. Covid-19 has obliged the offices across countries to stop performing CarO either entirely or for a certain time. In some countries where CarO resumed, children had to be seated (in normal conditions, children are allowed to move freely) and were not allowed to approach clowns to keep the requisite two meter distance. The show also included less touching, e.g. children received own keys and clowns had to wear facemasks. All of these aspects might hinder the effectiveness of the show as the sensory work including touching and being free to react as one feels are at the core of the show. At the same time, performances made under such restricted conditions in Austria were seen as successful and a worthwhile experience for children, according to the feedback from a direct observation of the performance and subsequent interviews with educators and clowns.

**Feeling insecure by clowns** might negatively impact their performing. Nevertheless, insecurities about the show and children’s reactions, e.g. whether CarO will work, what the children’s reaction will be, etc. reportedly ease down after some time of performing CarO. In another case, it was noted that little comfort with the structure by one clown from the team made it hard for all three performers. Feeling insecure led in some cases to situations where clowns focused more on the structure of the show and less on observing children’s reactions, and on the connection between them and the children.

### 1.1.2 CarO outreach

CarO is organised on the basis of both, addressing demands (schools reaching out to RN to bring CarO) and through proactive outreach by the RN chapters to eligible institutions, with the latter resulting on some occasions in schools not always being properly prepared for receiving CarO. This has happened for instance in Hungary and to a lesser extent Lithuania and Croatia where the receiving institutions has not informed teachers properly on how to prepare the classrooms, number of children that should be present, etc. This could be interpreted by some schools not being sufficiently ‘bought into’ the unique offer of CarO. To address this, CarO organisers in Hungary decided to introduce a ‘tender’ to have schools competitively ‘bid’ to receive CarO performances. Initial feedback suggests this process addresses the challenge mentioned above and possibly makes the show more valuable in the eyes of its recipients.

**In terms of outreach, CarO’s rather centralised presence in the capital cities (team, costumes, props) determined the first shows reaching the capital cities and their surroundings.** The centralised nature of performances was gradually complemented with expansion to further regions as the need to find ways to expand was recognised across countries. This was done either through parallel teams being established in different regions (already in Austria and under development in Hungary and Croatia), individual clowns in regions trained for CarO (Austria, Czech Republic), or CarO tours (in all but Austria). Outreach was furthermore expanded by remote CarO being offered in some of the countries. For example in Lithuania, it was demand-based, whereby families from across the country were invited to request the performance.

CarO’s regional outreach differs from country to country with some countries having regions with significantly lower outreach (e.g. some regions in Lithuania) and with many relevant institutions that have not been visited yet (e.g. in the Czech Republic). Despite the regional differences, interviewed stakeholders found the regional coverage effective, reflecting the country context and demand principle. In smaller countries such as Lithuania, Slovenia or Slovakia, the CarO clowns are in general centralised in the capital city, and there are no clowns based directly in the regions. Given the shorter distances, the clowns are able to travel from the capital into the regions more easily. Austria is the country with most regionally based clowns.

To increase the effectiveness, the performances in regions are usually organised for more institutions that are within a reasonable radius of each other. This the case for instance in Croatia, Slovakia or Czech Republic. In Hungary, the regional performances are organised as tours of five days with sleepovers and three performances per day. Sleepovers are common also for Croatia and other countries if they travel to very remote regions. In Lithuania, there are plans to develop a new team in the northern part of the country which is up to four hours from the capital city where the team is currently based, and which makes it the least visited part of the country by CarO. Organisation of the performances also in other remote regions would be much easier from there and the entire effectiveness of the programme in terms of its outreach would increase. In addition, in some countries the shows are organised per city or region, e.g. in the Czech Republic, where during one month they organise shows only in one city or region, depending on demand/ number of relevant institutions in the given city.



	Austria	Czech Republic	Croatia	Hungary	Lithuania	Slovakia	Slovenia
CarO format	Pro-gramme visiting schools based on offer and demand	1 school 2 performances (some-times 3)	1 school 2 performances (or 2 schools and 4 performances if in the regions)	Project-based (# performances per school depends on school size, number of visits needed etc). ‘CarO tour’ for regional coverage.	Once per month in Vilnius (two shows) and once in the regions; (three shows)	Usually 1 school 2 -3 performances (or more schools and performances if it is in a remote region)	Usually 1 school 2 performances (or more schools and performances if it is in a remote region)

Source: based on the information provided in country reports





In the table below we briefly summarise the peculiarities of each country in terms of CarO structure, team and organisation.

Peculiarities	
<b>Austria</b>	Regional team structure since 2019. Two additional plays developed for CwD. Clowns employed by the organisation since 2019.
<b>Czech Republic</b>	CarO performed for new born babies in palliative care. A lot of eligible institutions still not visited by CarO, hence the need for CarO 2 is less urgent. Most of the funding comes from individual donations.
<b>Croatia</b>	CarO started as a pilot through local institutional donor grant. Institutional openness to working with adults with disabilities.
<b>Hungary</b>	CarO under expansion at time of evaluation: new 5-strong team due to join in another region. <sup>21</sup> 'Tour' format (5 days x 3 performances/day) for greater coverage and teacher workshops. <sup>22</sup>
<b>Lithuania</b>	Online CarO developed early Spring 2020. Institutional donor for CarO (Lithuanian Council of Culture). Small size of the country means same institutions especially in Vilnius are visited annually
<b>Slovakia</b>	External empirical research on CarO conducted as a part of a master thesis. External comparative analysis of the feedback forms.
<b>Slovenia</b>	Use of Ukulele as one of the main instruments. Performed only for children and occasionally young adults. Preparation of CarO II funded by C&A grant but paused due to Covid-19.



- › At the same time, feedback sessions with teachers post CarO are performed ad hoc rather than regularly. There is no formalised approach to documenting or addressing this feedback.
- › Feedback from clowns about their personal experiences from different CarO performances is likewise not approached in a standard way. Evaluators found such data to be gathered, monitored and acted upon by CarO organisers in Croatia.
- › Tracking progress of the Children with Disabilities Programme and especially its impact on CwD and receiving institutions will require input from receiving schools.

### Monitoring and evaluation

In terms of monitoring and evaluation in place in different countries, the evaluation found the following:

There is **no clear centralised Monitoring and Evaluation system of CarO at the umbrella level**, with the exception of some tools – information gathered quarterly by RNI and institutional feedback forms. There is no system for analysing this information comparatively, and further the type of information gathered varies by country. All in all, monitoring and evaluation of CarO happens at a decentralised – country – level, and there is not much in the way of synthetic, cross-country evaluation of the feedback gathered, the learnings that emerge, including on the processes of monitoring and evaluation and how to take findings into account.

**Monitoring and Evaluation at the country level ranges from less to more formalised**, but existing everywhere to some extent. RN offices do internal evaluation meetings twice to once a year, involving different people are involved in this process. This has reportedly been useful for reassessing processes and performers.

M&E, **results of its assessments, are not 'socialized' with the broader stakeholder group** – e.g. receiving educators, experts.

**Evaluation forms that have been standardised and used across countries have not been seen as helpful.** The main monitoring and evaluation tool across countries have been feedback questionnaires that receiving institutions are asked to fill in after the show (usually a few days after the visit of the clowns). Most of the countries have been using the same questionnaire translated into their languages. Nevertheless, the evaluation forms were not seen as helpful as the findings received from them did not help the country offices adjust their work. The feedback from the evaluation forms has been often very positive without constructive critique, confirming the already known facts about the show, making it not very useful for improving the programme.

**So some countries stopped using them.** In most of the countries, receiving institutions receive a feedback form after the performance asking about different aspects of the show. Slovenia stopped using these forms altogether. There, receiving institutions are given an opportunity to provide a short comment or a brief text about the show which is often used for PR purposes.

**Others have adapted the questions.** The main changes introduced have been mostly revolving around having less and more concrete questions or/and more open-ended questions. This stemmed primarily from a need to collect more specific answers and gauge CarO's impact, which the original questionnaires were not able to provide. Different formats are used across countries: While in Austria and Lithuania the country offices use paper feedback sheets that are handed to the schools' representatives after the show, in other countries such as Croatia, the Czech

### 3.3 Baseline assessment



The objective of this section is to suggest indicators that could be used for future progress tracking of the CarO programme. Questions addressed:  
11. How is the Programme Monitored and Evaluated?  
12. Which indicators measured in this evaluation can be used to track future progress of the Children with Disabilities programme?



- › Standardised evaluation forms circulated to all countries to use for gathering feedback have not been seen as helpful and in many cases have been adapted to better meet the individual RN office needs.
- › There is no standardised approach to gathering feedback forms, with formats including paper, googledocs, and electronic word documents.
- › Speaking with teachers/educators right after the show is seen as the most effective way of getting useful suggestions and prompts about the performance.

<sup>21, 22</sup> On hold due to Covid-19.

Republic and Slovakia electronic formats are used. In Hungary, they collect feedback through 'googledocs' which limits work involved for organisers.

**Verbal feedback is also crucial, especially for clowns:** Several clowns acknowledged that verbal feedback they receive just after the show is much more useful than written evaluation forms that are often too positive and not so deep. At the same time, it is not always possible for clowns to stay or teachers to have the chance to exchange with them after performances and no clear approach on whether this constitutes part of the work they should do in addition to performing, and how such feedback should then be fed back to the country offices.

**Monitoring can be focused not only on receiving institutions but also on clowns' wellbeing and their reflections of the shows.** In Croatia, not only teachers but also clowns are asked to provide feedback on specific shows. Clowns fill in an online form for each show they do, reflecting on their performance and special moments. This type of feedback provides useful information especially for the CarO coordinator who can assess on the basis of the feedback provided whether an internal discussion is needed, whether the team or individual clowns need some support and how clowns cope with the work in general.

### 3.3.1 Baseline for future measurements

In the table below we present indicators that can be helpful for measuring CarO's impact on different types of stakeholders (target groups) that are involved in CarO. We furthermore suggest who would be the most suited to collect the data (collector) and provide examples for some of the indicators showing how the baseline assessment could look like (values).



**TABLE 4:** Suggested indicators for monitoring CarO's impact

Target group	Indicators	Collector
<b>Children with disabilities</b>	How many children have seen CarO for the first time?	Receiving institution
	How many children have seen CarO for second or more times?	Receiving institution
	How many children that have seen CarO are located in rural areas?	Red Noses office (CarO coordinator)
<b>Other clients</b>	How many children have additional vulnerabilities (e.g. ethnic/linguistic minorities, socially disadvantaged families/groups)?	Receiving institution
	How many babies have seen CarO?	CarO Coordinator
	How many young adults have seen CarO?	CarO Coordinator
	How many adults have seen CarO?	CarO Coordinator
<b>Educators</b>	How many elderly/seniors have seen CarO?	CarO Coordinator
	How many educators/teachers/social workers have seen CarO for the first time?	Receiving institution
	How many educator/teachers/social workers have seen CarO for second or more times?	Receiving institution
	How many educators/teachers/social workers got to exchange with clowns after the show?	Clowns
<b>Receiving institutions<sup>23</sup></b>	How many educators/teachers/social workers have got exposed to related activities, e.g. workshops?	Receiving institution
	How many institutions received CarO in a given year?	CarO coordinator
	How many educators exposed to CarO in receiving institutions used elements/tools learned from CarO subsequently in their work with CwD?	Receiving institution
<b>Clowns</b>	How many clowns have taken new responsibilities (e.g. training other team members, having a new role in the organisation, etc.) thanks to CarO?	Clowns and/or CarO coordinator
	How many clowns feel more inspired overall to remain in clowning?	Clowns and/or CarO coordinator
	How many clowns have improved their understanding of the target groups?	CarO coordinator
	How many clowns have improved their musical skills?	CarO coordinator
	How many clowns got to contribute to programme development related to CarO (CarOz, workshops for educators, similar)?	CarO coordinator
	How many clowns are on Red Noses chapter payroll?	CarO coordinator
	How many clowns have improved their understanding of the target group?	CarO coordinator
<b>Red Noses organisations</b>	How many new institutional donors has the organisation gained because of CarO?	Red Noses office (person in charge of fundraising)
	What innovative outreach formats have been developed in connection with CarO (e.g. teacher workshops, other organisational for outreach such as tenders)?	Red Noses office (CarO staff)
	How many new programmes/projects have been developed for children with disabilities (e.g. CarO 2)?	Red Noses office (CarO staff, artistic director)

<sup>23</sup> Possible to explore in a participatory fashion with 'CarO Ambassadors' in enthusiastic receiving institutions how to measure the benefits for the schools themselves – e.g. less sick days by teachers, less staff turnover or similar.



## 4 Recommendations

### BOX OF TOP RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ Key opportunities for CarO going forward are to consider the 'depth' and 'breadth' of how the programme should develop. Depth refers to how comprehensively the same children are reached, whether through additional performances, different formats (Caro-like performances, other formats like Circus Pacientus), capacity building/other workshops with educators, formats and approaches to engage their carers, or even the systems within which they learn. Breadth refers to the target groups that CarO or CarO-like formats could impact – the evaluation found evidence of this format being suitable for older audiences.
- ▶ CarO has tremendous impact on children, educators, performers and organisers alike. Impact for children receiving a one-off performance is likely to be limited to the short term, according to educator and expert feedback. This speaks to the need to consider the 'depth' to which CarO has the capacity to develop, and how to plan resources needed.
- ▶ CarO teams could meanwhile consider how to maximise impact at the current level of available resources. Materials to jog children's memories of CarO possibly presents a low-resource opportunity to improve impact – e.g. through sharing of visual, musical, sensory CarO memorabilia, as e.g. a video message from clowns, CarO songs. This is relevant also amid the current pandemic context.
- ▶ The Covid-19 pandemic is looking to continue being a disruption to CarO particularly among other RN programmes – this presents both challenges but also opportunities for developing CarO in this period. For example, CarO can be performed outside, remotely for children attending institutions, or directly to families.
- ▶ There is room for a more systemic approach to learning what works, what doesn't and why in relation to CarO and various process adaptations in place. This holds true both at the country level, but particularly at the umbrella level. An up to speed M&E system could facilitate such learning, being mindful however of not overburdening CarO organisers with data collection and reporting.
- ▶ Learning should also take place in partnership with broader stakeholder groups including receiving institutions and educators, which can be CarO partners for data collection on its impact on children with disabilities.
- ▶ Promising innovations to keep an eye on as CarO develops include the CarO tneder and workshops for educators in Hungary; Remote CarO formats explored by Croatia and Lithuania teams;



## 4.1 Needs and opportunities

- ▶ CarO has started very important and needed work with a target group that is seen in all countries where CarO is performed as deprived of access to humour and art. This work should continue, finding formats to reach this target group amid the uncertainty of Covid-19-related developments.
- ▶ While the need for CarO is a given, there is room to conduct 'scoping' exercises in the countries where it is underway to identify children with disabilities that may be 'left behind' using the usual CarO approach, for example CwD learning in integrated classes and those that are home-schooled, and approaches for reaching them should be developed. Suggestions for reaching CwD in integrated classes include either performing to both CwD and their peers in formats like the 'Fairy-tale play' or performing CarO exclusively for CwD.
- ▶ With a view of having long-term impact on CwD, RN offices that are part of CarO should explore possibilities to reach the same children with a certain frequency. To determine an 'optimal frequency', there could be monitoring of impact on children who see the show more than once.
- ▶ CarO organisers could track the extent to which CarO reaches target groups with multiple vulnerabilities (children with disabilities also belonging to socially marginalised target groups e.g. Roma, other ethnic/religious/linguistic minorities, children living in poverty).
- ▶ RNI should continue research on the impact of CarO and other clowning formats (Circus Pacientus) on children with disabilities and advocate for inclusion of circus/humour in educational programmes developed for this target group. Also of interest is to explore whether there are educational programmes targeting CwD in specific countries that explicitly include clowning and humour as tools for working with this target group. The implications of this would be to learn 1) what kind of strategies and by what kind of actors have worked to include innovative elements into educational programmes and 2) consider the lessons learned from employing these tools in practice.
- ▶ It is advisable to research the extent to which CarO relieves pressure on government services and specialised education providers, and decreases staff and children's stress levels. Findings on this type of impact could have implications for further fundraising and advocating for inclusion of humour and art in educational programmes. Such effects could further be explored in collaboration with the receiving institutions, potentially through outreach/ data collection performed by them in their own right.
- ▶ CarO has the potential to have institutional and systemic impact in line with the RNI Framework of Change, however the type of activities that could contribute to this are underdeveloped at this time. An example of an activity that could contribute to institutional impact are workshops with teachers, as conceived in Hungary, to share the know-how of clowns on how to work with CwD. An example of an activity that could contribute to systemic impact is advocacy to promote inclusion of humorous play in educational curricula.
- ▶ Beyond the school environment, CwD are majorly influenced by their home environment. Educators across countries are becoming increasingly aware of the need to work with parents of CwD. CarO organisers could explore opportunities to reach parents, as already being done ad hoc through for example remote CarO during lockdown in Lithuania when CarO was performed to families at home while schools were closed.
- ▶ CarO is a unique cultural offer not only for CwD but persons with individual needs at any age range. RNI should consider facilitating exploration by CarO organisers in countries willing to explore the fit of CarO for other target groups to do so, documenting lessons learned along the way.



- › The focus on persons with disabilities, the researched and professional nature of CarO, the promotion of new circus/clowning for social integration may facilitate fundraising with well-targeted funders, whether public or private. Given the great demand for CarO and not limited to CwD but other target groups as well, the programs in different countries could expand by targeting institutional donors rather than relying on individual donations.
- › Fundraising for CarO where there is not a steady institutional donor could focus on organisations with a responsible approach to doing business, and a women-dominated workforce.

## 4.2 CarO impact

### 4.2.1 CarO impact on CwD and their milieu

- › As CarO aims for a long-term impact, keeping the memory alive is important, so an additional opportunity is to jog children's memory with CarO memorabilia shared after the show, whether visual, musical, sensory. Initiatives to engage with the schools sometime after a CarO performance to invite them to, for example, prepare a short video message for clowns or perform a CarO-like show (with kids dressing up as clowns, coming up with performing names, etc), could also contribute to this.
- › CarO could be performed more than once for the same children, for example with a year or even shorter interval – especially for children with severe and/or multiple disabilities, the familiarity with CarO when reliving the experience is reassuring. Educators also note benefits of being able to better concentrate on the children's reactions.
- › Feedback from educators suggest that many of them would be keen to include clowning methods into pedagogy. RNI country chapter could start considering teachers as a potential CarO target group. This could include teaching them new methods to work with children that are used in CarO. To this end, workshops could be organised for teachers (and even parents), as it is already planned in Hungary.

### 4.2.2 CarO impact on adults

- › Adults are often reached by CarO in several countries despite not being the primary target group. While clowns noted that they have overall a very good experience performing for this target group, in some countries also undesired effects appeared such as not meeting the psychological needs of this target group or creating inappropriate dynamics between viewers and clowns. Adapting the storyline by making it more intricate was suggested as necessary to enhance the impact of CarO on adults.

### 4.2.3 CarO impact on clowns and RNI offices

- › CarO was a logical programmatic continuation for all of the country chapters. RN institutional impact could be furthermore strengthened by new developments within CarO, such as incorporating new target groups into the CarO's outreach. This might be through directly reaching new audiences (elderly, new born, children with behavioural difficulties) or reaching educators through teaching workshops,
- › Clowns experience a variety of emotions, whether it is during the preparation for the show, throughout the show itself or after it. While it was noted by several CarO coordinators that more or less regular meetings are held with clowns, it is recommended to put a stronger emphasis on the clowns' support in terms of management supervision which could be a possibility for them to voice their insecurities if a performance did not do so well/ or had different expectations. This could be done either through specific regular meetings or feedback form that would be filled in after each performance.

### 4.2.4 Communication

- › Given the importance of 'setting the stage' for a successful CarO performance whereby educators and children are at ease to fully engage with the show, CarO offices could explore either face-to-face meetings with the receiving school community, a remote call in lieu of a live meeting or a video recorded by the clowns about what to prepare and keep in mind to facilitate a successful performance. The first two options are preferable given the possibility for interaction, and question and answer sessions.
- › Key things to communicate include the preferred target group – that children with severe disabilities should be included in the show, and their reactions are unlikely to interfere with the show itself. This would address a persistent anxiety for educators, and ensure that the target group is reached, as children with milder disabilities already have more exposure to offers of art and humour.
- › Schools have different approaches to preparing the children for CarO – some prefer to introduce it ahead of time, others opt against it to keep children from getting overly excited and unable to focus on other activities before the show. There is room to explore which approach works better for schools and why, and consider (optional) recommendations to schools on the basis of such exploration.
- › CarO can consider a uniform organisational format whereby the main point of contact in a receiving institution has a clear role (liaising between the CarO team and teachers, school director).
- › The idea of a 'tender' for schools to receive CarO worked well in Hungary, and could be explored in other countries, particularly where most schools have been visited and there is a feeling of 'fatigue' rather than excitement on behalf of receiving institutions. This tender could be open to other types of organisations (e.g. private providers of care for children with severe, multiple disabilities, whether non-profit or for profit).
- › CarO clowns would be well placed to perform also Circus Pacientus for children with disabilities. These two formats as well as any other existing or future programmes performed by RN Clowns could have two 'tracks'. One for children with disabilities and one for other audiences, thus developing the 'portfolio' of programming available to this target group and facilitating synergies between such programmes in a given country and through international coordination.
- › CarO should consider how to further engage with educators (workshops, more face time ahead of or after the performance) and parents/care takers to ensure long-term sustainable impact for the children in their everyday environment.

## LIST OF SOURCES CONSULTED FOR DESK REVIEW

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**Austria**

- › Evelin Riedl, Programme Manager, Red Noses Austria, 9 and 20 October 2020 (remote)
- › Peter Lanser, School Director, Allgemeine Sonderschule Zams, 7 October 2020 (remote)
- › Katharina Moritzer, Teacher, Salzburg, 8 October 2020 (remote)
- › Susanne Zajec, Teacher, Landessonderschule Hiterbrühl, 9 October 2020 (remote)
- › Andrea Rauscher, School Director, Landessonderschule Hirtenkloster, Graz, 12 October 2020 (remote)
- › Helga Jud, Clown, Red Noses Tirol team, 15 October 2020 (in person)
- › Manfred Unterluggauer, Clown, Red Noses Tirol team, 15 October 2020 (in person)
- › Gabriela Fuchs, Clown, Red Noses Tirol team, 15 October 2020 (in person)
- › Vanessa<sup>24</sup>, Teacher, Anna-Bertha-Königsegg Schule, Salzburg, 15 October 2020 (in person)
- › Martin Beck, Clown, Red Noses Vienna team, 20 October 2020 (remote)
- › Jutta Pichler, Artistic Director and Clown, Red Noses Vienna team, 22 October 2020 (remote)
- › Katharina Scheutz, Clown (Kitchen Orchestra), Red Noses Steiermark team, 29 October 2020 (remote)
- › Christina Matuella, Regional Programme Director and Clown (CarO 2), Red Noses Tirol team, 29 October 2020 (remote)

**Croatia**

- › Anamarija Jurišić, Clown Manager, Red Noses Croatia, 26 February 2020 (in person)
- › Nikola Dabač, Artistic Director, Red Noses Croatia, 27 February 2020 (in person)
- › Davorka<sup>25</sup>, Clown, Red Noses Croatia, 27 February 2020 (in person)
- › Ines<sup>26</sup>, Educator, Centre for education sloboshtina, Zagreb, 27 February 2020 (in person)
- › Principal, Educator, Centre for education sloboshtina, Zagreb, 27 February 2020 (in person with translation by an assistant)
- › Deniza Drusany, Executive Director, Red Noses Croatia, 28 February 2020 (in person)
- › Ivana<sup>27</sup>, CarO Coordinator, Red Noses Croatia, 28 February 2020 (in person)
- › Miriam<sup>28</sup>, social worker, Red Noses Croatia, 28 February 2020 (in person)
- › Zoran Vukič, Director, Red Noses Croatia, 28 February 2020 (in person)

**Czech Republic**

- › Jan Kyncl, Clown, Red Noses Czech Republic, 21 October 2020 (remote)
- › Ondřej Klíč, Clown, Red Noses Czech Republic, 22 October 2020 (remote)
- › Radka Blatná, CarO Coordinator and Clown, Red Noses Czech Republic, 22 October 2020 (remote)
- › Veronika Luxová, Educator, Special Kindergarten, Prague 8, 22 October 2020 (remote)
- › Klára Geislerová, Educator, Special autistic elementary School, Brno, 26 October 2020 (remote)
- › Zuzana Vodičková, Clown, Red Noses Czech Republic, 26 October 2020 (remote)
- › Alena Seoud, Head of Fundraising, Red Noses Czech Republic, 27 October 2020 (remote)
- › Lucie Matyášová, Clown, Red Noses Czech Republic, 28 October 2020 (remote)
- › Romana Sagnerová, Educator and Head of the day care centre in Zlín, 29 October 2020 (remote)
- › Marie Muchková, Educator in the centre Nováček in Plzeň, 29 October 2020 (remote)

**Hungary**

- › Tünde Gelencsér, Artistic Director, Red Noses Hungary, 10 March 2020 (in person) and 17 April (remote)
- › Piroska Török, Programme Manager, Red Noses Hungary, 10 March 2020 (in person)
- › Bence Borus, Fundraiser, Red Noses Hungary, 10 March 2020 (in person)

- › Zsuzsa Magyar, Head of Fundraising, Red Noses Hungary, 10 March 2020 (in person)
- › Veronika Kata, Head of Primary School Division, Special education Teacher, Prizma EGYMI specialized school, 11 March (in person, translation by Piroska Török)
- › Nora<sup>29</sup>, Special education teacher, Csillagház Általános Iskola, 11 March 2020 (in person)
- › Gabi Aniko, Director of primary school division, Head of fourth grade class, Arany János EGYMI, Székesfehérvár, 12 March 2020 (in person, translation by Piroska Török)
- › Andrea Gerle, CarO programme leader, Red Noses Hungary, 12 March 2020 (in person)
- › Roland Mangold, Clown, Red Noses Hungary, 21 April 2020 (remote)
- › Andrea Kiss, Clown (will join CarO, has done Circus Patientus with CwD), Red Noses Hungary, 29 April 2020 (remote)

**Lithuania**

- › Renata<sup>30</sup>, Vaida<sup>31</sup>, Coordinators, Special School of Kaišiadorys (rural), 6 March 2020 (in person, post CarO)
- › Daiva<sup>32</sup>, Educator, Special School of Kaišiadorys (rural), 6 March 2020 (in person, post CarO)
- › Artūras Dubaka, Danguolė Petrikaitė, Žilvinas Beniušis, Clowns, Red Noses Lithuania, 6 March 2020 (in person, post-CarO)
- › Simona Nemeikšytė, Programme Manager, Red Noses Lithuania, 10 April 2020 (in person)
- › Justė Liaugaudė, Artistic Director and Circus Patientus Clown, Red Noses Lithuania, 10 April 2020 (in person) and 20 April 2020 (remote)
- › Sandra Masevičienė, Fundraiser, Red Noses Lithuania, 10 April 2020 (in person)
- › Justinas Narvidas, Šarūnas Gedvilas, Circus Patientus Clowns, Red Noses Lithuania, 20 April 2020 (remote)
- › Zita Vyšniauskienė, Panevėžys Special Kindergarten Jūratė, 28 May 2020 (remote)
- › Benedikta Dikavičiūtė, Social pedagogue, Vilnius Special Kindergarten Ciauskutis, 28 May 2020 (remote)
- › Lina Žilytė, Senior specialist, dissemination of culture and art, Lithuanian Council of Culture, 4 June 2020 (remote)

**Slovakia**

- › Zuzana Ambro, Executive Director, Red Noses Slovakia, 27 October 2020 (remote)
- › Janka Kvaková, Educators, Special school in Piešťany, 28 October 2020 (remote)
- › Mirka Kolkočová, Educator, Special school in Bratislava, 29 October 2020 (remote)
- › Janka Sovičová, Clown, Red Noses Slovakia, 2 November 2020 (remote)
- › Mária Benkovská, Clown and CarO coordinator, Red Noses Slovakia, 4 November 2020 (remote)
- › Lucia Barczy, Clown, Red Noses Slovakia, 16 November 2020 (remote)
- › Boris Bačík, Clown, Red Noses Slovakia, 18 November 2020 (remote)
- › Ján Morávek, Clown, Red Noses Slovakia, 20 November 2020 (remote)

**Slovenia**

- › Ana Lavrinc, Clown and CarO coordinator, Red Noses Slovenia, 11 March 2020 (remote)
- › Pérola Regina Ribeiro, Artistic Director, Red Noses Slovenia, 11 March 2020 (remote)
- › Varja Golouh Prodan, Managing Director, Red Noses Slovenia, 12 March 2020 (remote)
- › Marko Kalc, Clown, Red Noses Slovenia, 19 March 2020 (remote)
- › Eva Škofič Maurer, former Artistic Director, Red Noses Slovenia, 20 March 2020 (remote)
- › Katjuša Škrabec, Educator, CUDV Draga, Debeli Rtič, 20 October 2020 (remote, translation by Ana Lavrinc)
- › Maja Dekleva Lapajne, Clown, Red Noses Slovenia, 2 November 2020 (remote)
- › Alenka Marinič, Clown, Red Noses Slovenia, 3 November 2020 (remote)
- › Justin Durel, Clown, Red Noses Slovenia, 3 November 2020 (remote)

**Others**

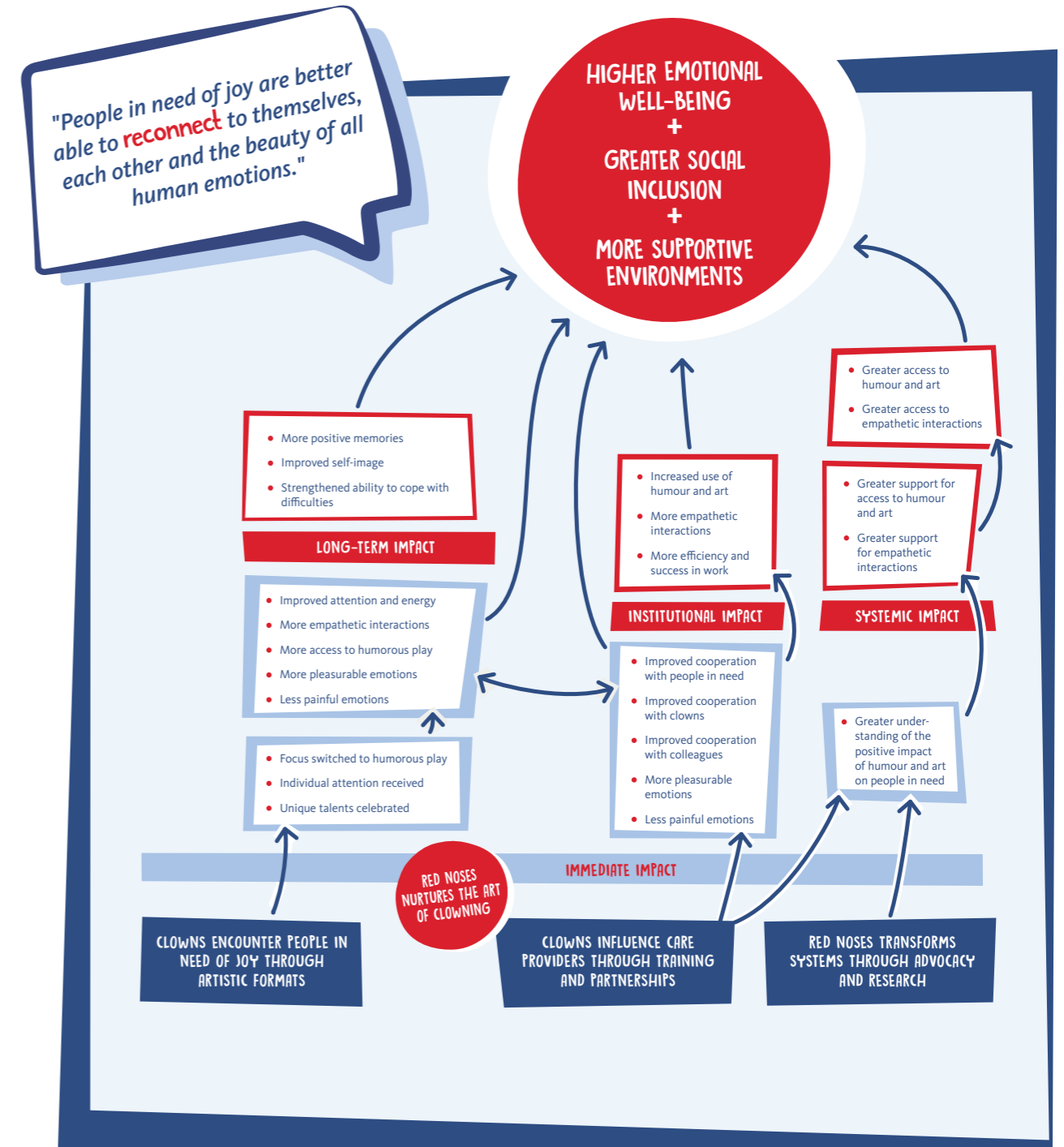
- › Charlotte Langemeijer, responsible for research and impact, CliniClowns Netherlands, 6 April 2020 (remote)



- Giora Seeliger, Artistic Director, Red Noses International, April 20, 2020 (remote)
- Hanneke Heessels, former project leader and director of the show, CliniClowns Netherlands, 6 April 2020 (remote)
- Natalie Porias, Deputy Managing Director, Red Noses International, April 14, 2020 (remote)
- Nicole Villgrattner, Artistic Development, Red Noses International, April 20, 2020 (remote)
- Norbert Wilhelm Scheele, Director C&A Austria, 17 September 2020 (remote)
- Christophe Dumalin, Deputy Artistic Director, Red Noses International, 25 March 2020 (remote)
- Nicole Villgrattner, Artistic Development, Red Noses International, 16 April 2020 (remote)

**Direct observations**

- **Austria:** two performances in Anna-Bertha-Königsegg Schule, Salzburg, 15 October 2020 (note: under COVID adjusted circumstances)
- **Croatia:** Centar za odgoj i obrazovanje Velika Gorica / Center for Education Velika Gorica with 1 performance, 27 February 2020
- **Lithuania:** direct observation in special school of Kaišiadorys (rural) 6 March 2020 and direct observation of online CarO, children and youth pensionate, 26 May 2020 (remote)



RED NOSES is an artistic organisation bringing humour and laughter to people in need of joy.

For 25 years, RED NOSES has been making a difference for patients, families and medical staff in countless health and care facilities in Europe and beyond.

RED NOSES International (RNI) empowers vulnerable audiences, such as children in hospitals, people in geriatric centres, patients in rehabilitation centres, youth with mental and multiple disabilities, refugees and other displaced persons.

The figure of the clown is extremely human and touches individuals deeply by bringing them relief and hope in moments where they cannot connect to their positive emotions.

RNI is based in Vienna, Austria, and is the headquarters for the largest clown doctor group in the world.

[www.rednoses.eu](http://www.rednoses.eu)



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