



**Emergency Smile missions**



In the frame of Emergency Smile, the outreach programme of RED NOSES International, we can observe the access to culture for migrants in quite different contexts, such as for Ukrainian people living in Moldova to refugees residing in Greece.



- What are the issues relating to cultural rights that you see in your country's migration processes? Please provide relevant information concerning laws and regulations, programmes and measures, services and practices that seem relevant.

Our observation is that for people living in Reception Centres in Greece, the access to cultural activities can be very difficult. Especially since the beginning of the COVID 19 pandemic, it is not possible for the residents to leave the centre freely, with the consequence that when allowed to leave, they will need to use these chances to visit doctors/lawyers/grocery shopping. There are quite some community centres that offer cultural activities for people on the move, such as on Lesbos: Paréa and in Athens One Happy Family (to name just two). Due to this reason, RED NOSES International, with the Emergency Smile programme tries to reach people inside the Reception Centres, in order to break as many possible barriers to access cultural activities.

- Please share good practices in protecting the cultural rights of migrants to access cultural resources and services, to enjoy their heritage and that of others, to use their language in private and in public, to participate in cultural life, to freedom of artistic expression and to take part in decisions that impact their cultural life. Please focus more on new and/or forced migrants.



We see our activities as a co-creation with the audience. If our audience is composed by one predominant cultural group, as for example in Moldova when working with communities from Ukraine, then the clowns will pick a typical song from Ukraine or ask the public to teach them one. When working in Greece with a group of Unaccompanied Minors, all from Somalia, they asked them to select songs from their home country to be played at the beginning and at the end of each intervention.

# Artistic interventions in communities on the move

Emergency Smile (ES) is a program implemented by Red Noses International (RNI) in different crisis settings that aims to enable joy and promote the emotional well-being and resilience of children and youth affected by crisis and their support systems.

The main intervention of the ES Programme is the ES Missions. In a mission a transnational group of specially trained Clown Artists, together with a Head of Mission develop a holistic intervention in a crisis setting (our focus is on people on the move). In a period of 3 to 4 weeks, a diverse portfolio of artistic formats is implemented to reach audiences through tailored approaches.

Red Noses International is implemented its Emergency Smile programme in the following countries for Forcibly Displaced Persons:



An up to date overview of our work is visible on the programme's facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/EmergencySmile>

## Why clowns?

The figure of the clown greatly contributes to the empowerment of vulnerable groups. People can easily relate to and connect with the clown, a light-hearted and emotional character who constantly faces personal and emotional challenges.

The real power of the clown, however, lies in the ability to successfully deal with failures and turn them into personal victories. By reversing weak aspects into strong ones, healthcare clowning offers essential tools to aid in problem solving, acceptance and adaptations – all vital elements needed to empower people and help them manage their challenging circumstances.

## What do we do?



Our interventions take different forms to adapt to the different audiences present and to the context we are working in. Children have always been at the core of our work, however in the last years we have been focusing more and more on a community approach. With our artistic activities we aim at meeting everyone and creating more supportive environments- because we all have a right to find relief through creativity and humour!

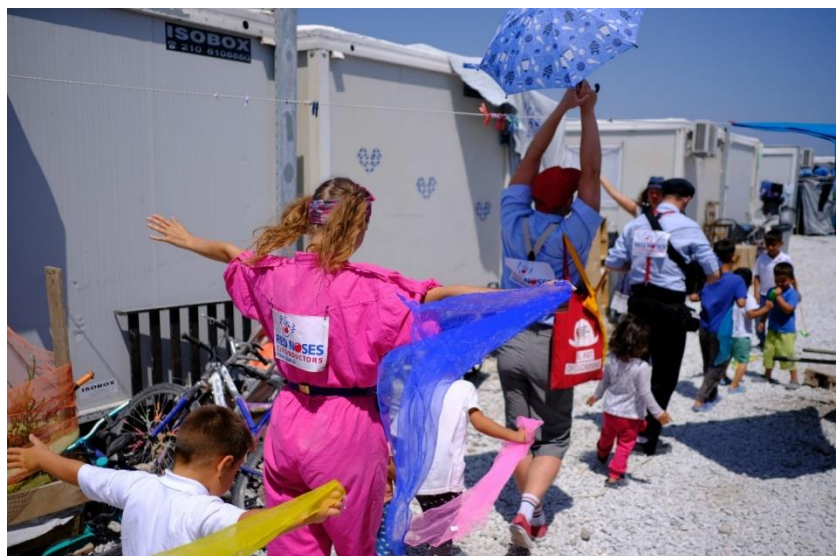
We work using four main formats: For children and their families we use clown shows with specific topics such as safe space, travel, hope etc.; musical parades to bring laughter and music everywhere; and circus smile workshop to engage through circus skills.

We also implement humour relief workshops which is aimed at aid workers working in crisis situations. Through a series of games, awareness exercises, communication exercises, and an introduction to humour in crisis led by professionally trained artists, the workshop aims to increase the emotional well-being and resilience of people who work with people affected by crisis. By the end of each workshop, the participants should have:

- Learned new, humorous coping strategies for stress;
- Felt energized and refreshed;
- Connected more strongly to their team members.
- Learned new tool on how to include humour in their daily interactions with beneficiaries

## Impact

By including children and youth in activities in which they can experience and learn about joy and positive emotions they acquire strategies to deal with stress and anxiety and cope with adversities. The activations of creativity and imagination ameliorate their problem-solving skills thus improving life skills such as confidence, resilience and agency.



Through clowns' encounters, children and youth living in crisis situations experience emphatic mindful human connection. They feel more included by acquiring new ways of participating, expressing themselves and interacting with



others. They improve their relationships with peers and aid workers and improve their feeling of belonging.

Their parents/relatives have the possibility to create positive memories together with their children and be able to experience lightness and joy again through playful interactions.

By experiencing each other in a different and playful context, our expected impact in the long term, is for everyone in the community to be able to collaborate in a more synergetic way.



**“The Red Nose Clowns have brought so much joy and laughter into the camp the past 7 weeks. During Circus Smile I saw kids gain confidence and feel empowered through the skills they were learning.**

**I got to see kids that have been robbed of their childhood have a chance to just be kids again--they could let go of their worries and fears and just play. The clowns have made a lasting impact on the children of Mavrovouni Camp.”**

Laura Rensberger - Head of Education, Eurorelief

Christopher Bailey, Arts and Health Lead at World Health Organization, who visited our activities in Moldova this summer, describes our short term impact in a short interview here: <https://youtu.be/Z-F3oy4fhQQ>



In their recent Call to Action “**Arts and health: supporting the mental well-being of forcibly displaced people**”, the WHO call all those working in humanitarian settings to invest in the arts as a means of social integration and cohesion and as a tool to improve the mental health and well-being of all. The report brings the example of **Red Noses clowns working in the context of Emergency Smile** in Lesbos, Greece. The specially trained healthcare clowns provide children living in a refugee with a space for triggering their creativity, improving their resilience in face of adversities, and expressing their emotions through play. The document highlights that promoting artistic and cultural activities can help the people involved in migration in their recovery process and integrating more rapidly into a new socio-cultural context.