

Initiative	City Pirates
<p>Description</p>	<p>City Pirates is a social football project in Antwerp, Belgium. The project is based on the believe that football can change the world. City Pirates are active in five complex areas (Merksem, Linkeroever, Luchtbal, Deurne & Dam). These areas are known for poverty, unemployment and drug trafficking. The youngsters growing up in these areas are vulnerable and often connected to the streets. Where others see problems, City Pirates see opportunities. They believe that if they give these youngsters the trust, the warm welcome and the structure they need, they can and will amaze us. And what better way to make the connection than through football?</p> <p>And it works. City Pirates currently reaches 1300 Pirates on a structural basis, aged between 5 and 18, boys and girls, 100 nationalities. What binds them in the first place is the love for the game.</p> <p>The organisation has a team of 6 social workers. Based on the trust that is built through football City Pirates can visit the players at home. During such a visit parents ask us questions about administration, job search, debt mediation, the school results of their kids, violence.</p> <p>Because of the vulnerable and complex context the youngster grow up in, City Pirates tries to assist the parents in their pedagogy.</p> <p>Although the youngsters have the dream to become a professional football player, there is a need to be realistic. Most of them will not make it to a professional level. For this reason at City Pirates the focus of the programme is on the youngsters' school results. The organization gets in contact with their schools, does a follow up on their results and the youngsters get homework assistance at the club. School results always come first.</p> <p>City Pirates also give other competence workshops like acquiring digital skills (Digitale Wolven), music and dance workshops in their River Side Studio, assistance in finding a (student)job, cleaning the neighborhood, organising European Erasmus+ Projects, and are actively present on the public squares in various neighborhoods.</p>
<p>Implementation</p>	<p>The implemented activities are based on trust. It is important to create a safe place. The youngsters feel at home at City Pirates. They can be who they want to be, and they are assisted by people of their own neighbourhood.</p> <p>The key person in City Pirate is president. He is the captain and founder of the project. Many of the resources were funded by him. In addition to these resources, City Pirates have many private and public partners. It is important to have an open communication with collaborators, without communicating too openly with the media/outdoor world, avoiding stigmatising the youngsters.</p> <p>Football connects. Football attracts a lot of people. In that way it is a great "product" to combine with social work and to share your work/story to a board of directors/public government.</p>
<p>Impact</p>	<p>City Pirates was founded 10 years ago. The project has grown a lot since its beginnings. It started with 170 members on one location, and now has grown to 1300 members on 8 locations in 5 disadvantaged areas of Antwerp. The young participants have grown together with the</p>

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	<p>organisation. In terms of impact: during the season 2018-2019 City Pirates organised 227 home visits and 133 school visits and had more than 500 social files.</p> <p>In the upcoming years many of the young participants that have been part of the organisation for years will reach the age of 18. City Pirates plans to put their degrees in numbers and check how to best support the youth on the job market.</p> <p>The objective of the project is to make sure that the children of the young participants will not need the assistance that the current young people needed. City Pirates aims to help the young participants prepare for life and give them the life lessons and structure they miss.</p>
<p>Lessons learnt</p>	<p>What worked well in this project was the focus on football authenticity and promoting self-confidence.</p> <p>The project promoted values as equality, respect, social engagement.</p>
<p>Conclusion</p>	<p>City Pirates started as a pilot project and is now growing towards a model project. The hope is for other clubs (football or different) to follow their example. City Pirates also want to help other clubs that would like to develop similar projects</p> <p>When replicating this practice City Pirates recommends to start small. Take small steps for example:- offer compensation of membership fees (or foresee a payment plan);</p> <p>– offer homework assistance by volunteers.</p>

Visit the SIDFOOT website for more information and resources: <https://www.sidfoot.eu/>

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