

Press Release

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Strengthening the mental health of youngsters before they need help:

KBC & Cera Foundation spotlights the first six projects supported

Strengthening and empowering youngsters before problems escalate. That was the ambition behind the launch of the KBC & Cera Foundation earlier this year. Through its brand-new website, the Foundation is presenting the first six organisations to receive its support. Their projects focus on prevention, developing talent, social connection and mental resilience, with the aim of giving youngsters the opportunities and support they need to flourish.

Making youngsters stronger before they ask for help

Young people today grow up in a society with high expectations and increasing social pressure. Early-stage support can help prevent warning signs developing into more serious problems. The KBC & Cera Foundation therefore supports organisations that help youngsters develop their talents, build networks and become more confident in themselves and their future.

In this way, the Foundation hopes to be a catalyst for lasting change. During the first phase, it is deliberately focusing on organisations that already have a track record of social impact and that are ready to take the next step, expanding their proven approach to reach even more young people in the future.

Imke Baetens, external member of the Advisory Board of the KBC & Cera Foundation:

'When youngsters are struggling, the signals are often visible much earlier. That's why investing in prevention is so important. The organisations that are being supported today show how accessible initiatives can empower young people in their own communities, before they ask for help.'

Six organisations, one shared ambition

The organisations supported by the Foundation differ in approach and focus, but they have one common goal: empowering young people before difficulties mount up. In doing so, they combine proven social impact with an ambition to scale up their effectiveness. That potential to reach more young people was a decisive factor in the selection process.





Group Intro: tackling school absenteeism through early intervention

Groep Intro's PACT project (Plan for Attendance, Connection and Future) is helping pupils and schools to tackle problematic patterns of absence. The organisation regards attendance at school as a key factor in ensuring welfare, social connectedness and future prospects. PACT follows an intensive approach, supporting both the school and the pupils over a one-year period. The organisation intends to broaden the roll-out of this approach to additional schools and regions.

City Pirates: more than a football club

City Pirates uses football to leverage personal development. Through a combination of sport, youth work and welfare work, the organisation supports more than 1 600 young people, helping develop their self-confidence, social skills and sense of social connection. This support is reinforced by helping young people develop a positive identity and a strong sense of belonging: as 'pirates', they are part of a tightly knit community. The organisation intends to further broaden its impact in Deurne and make its approach available to other organisations in the social/sport and youth landscape.



Warme Scholen: building a motivating school climate

Warme Scholen supports schools in creating a positive school atmosphere in which welfare, motivation and academic performance serve to reinforce each other. That's more than just a 'nice-to-have': the number of pupils with problematic levels of absence has been rising for years. In the next few years, Warme Scholen aims to expand its approach into Brussels and Wallonia.

TADA: practical workshops during school hours

TADA (ToekomstAtelierDelAvenir) puts young people at school in contact with inspirational professionals and role models. Working alongside schools with a low socioeconomic index that take in young people in vulnerable situations, it helps them to discover their talents and broaden their future prospects. Over the next few years, TADA aims to roll out its *Programme at School* nationwide so that it can reach more young people.





JINC: practical learning experiences with professionals

JINC strengthens the networks and opportunities of young people growing up in vulnerable situations. It enables youngsters to discover their talents and available options by meeting professionals and taking part in practical experiences. The organisation aims to extend its impact to additional towns and cities in Belgium, paying particular attention to young people who currently have limited access to professional networks.

Young FENIX: from street therapists to community building

The mission of Young FENIX is to provide preventive mental health support to young people that are 'under the radar' and give them personalised guidance where needed. Through street therapists and mental health coaches, the organisation offers accessible support for improving mental health, resilience and future prospects. Young FENIX aims to further boost its impact in Antwerp before gradually expanding to Brussels or another major Flemish city.



This selection reflects the breadth of the Foundation's approach, from education and talent development to sport, community building and accessible mental health support.

Independent experts help provide direction

The KBC & Cera Foundation works with an independent advisory board that provides detailed support with selecting and monitoring projects. The board members are **Imke Baetens** (Professor, VUB Brussels University), **Bruno Vanobbergen** (Director-General, Catholic Education Flanders), **Aagje Rottiers** (Policy Officer, Opgroeien Agency and child psychologist) and **Dr Caroline Depuydt** (Medical Director, Epsylon NPO).

Patrick Kindt, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the KBC & Cera Foundation:

'The organisations that we are highlighting today show how prevention can take many different forms. What they have in common is not just their social impact, but also their ambition to reach more young people. By helping successful approaches to grow further and increase their reach, we want to contribute to lasting change for as many young people as possible.'

New website brings projects and skills together

The new website serves as a central platform where visitors can discover the supported organisations, the members of the Advisory Board and the Foundation's activities. The website marks an important next step for the Foundation, offering a platform on which to make its mission, activities and ambitions visible to a wider public.

The six organisations being presented today are part of an initial selection of scaling projects with proven social impact. In 2026, the Foundation deliberately chose to support initiatives that have already demonstrated their added value and are ready to take the next step. From 2027 onwards, organisations will also be able to submit their own projects and apply for financial support. Information on eligibility criteria, selection procedures and timelines for future calls will be published on the website.

Working together to build a strong generation

The challenges that confront youngsters today demand the commitment of many organisations, experts and support partners. It requires a joint effort from everyone involved in order to offer young people the opportunities, support and resilience that they need. Only by doing this can we work together to build a strong generation.

With this first batch of projects, the KBC & Cera Foundation aims to contribute towards a society in which young people can find support when they need it, develop their talents and face their future with confidence.

More information about the supported organisations, the members of the Advisory Board and the Foundation's mission can be found at www.kbccerafoundation.be.

About KBC & Cera Foundation

The KBC & Cera Foundation is an initiative of KBC and Cera to invest jointly in the mental wellbeing of young people. Its operating resources are financed through annual contributions from KBC and Cera. KBC Bank, CBC and KBC Asset Management transfer part of their management and entry fees from a social investment fund to the Foundation, while Cera provides an equivalent financial contribution.



Sofie Spiessens
Corporate Communication Manager
+ 32 2 429 85 44 – sofie.spiessens@kbc.be

KBC Group NV – Havenlaan 2, 1080 Brussels

KBC press releases are available at www.kbc.com or can be obtained by sending an e-mail to pressofficekbc@kbc.be