

Integration through sport :
Sample in CHATEAURoux

The action called “Uni Cité” was born in 1997 from a common initiative of the city council, the police and the “Fédération des Organisations Laïques” (“la Ligue” -League for education- at the county level), in cooperation with UFOLEP (sport department of “la Ligue”).

This year 1997 saw the local football team acceding to the national 1st league (for 1 year) and the rule of this championship didn’t allow the kids to get free entrance for the 2nd time of the game, as they use to do before. Then, everybody was afraid of their non understanding and of their possible reaction against people, cars or material during the matches, all around the sport place which is very close to a “difficult” part of the town where a majority of immigrated people are living.

An agreement was found with the football club and a supporters club was set up... but an educational one!

- during the “home games” the kids go to the stadium together with educators
- several times a year the youths go to the city visited by “their” team. There, they meet a local youth association with which they have diverse activities such as sport (football or other), sightseeing... then they assist to the game TOGETHER with their “local friends” (same benches, same educators...)

Beside these activities directly linked to the football games, they are invited not to stay as spectators but to practise sport activities by themselves: not only football!

Step by step they were encouraged to organise activities by themselves (with trainer’s help, of course): tournaments, one day trips with practise of ice skating or karting, canoeing or walking, short open air stays under the tents...

Some of the youth wanted to set up their own football club. That was refused in order to avoid the creation of a “ghetto”. They were invited to joint the different existing clubs in the neighbourhood.

The experience was a success and still work on. In ten years several hundred of people were concerned and now and, for some of them it’s their turn to be trainers or educators!

Nowadays the “club de supporters” is integrated as a section of a youth house and the members have the opportunity of participating to a lot of activities together with the other people.

In June 2006, the youth house got a gentlemen agreement with the middle school head master and 40 youth had the opportunity to spend one week in Stuttgart during the football WC. There they could visit the country, meet young Germans, play football and see games on big screens together with their partners. They are now preparing the visit of their German friends in Châteauroux, next summer.

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