



**GHENT**



261,500



## Challenge

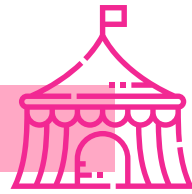
Young people in some areas of Ghent are particularly at risk of social exclusion, and not being engaged by traditional educational and social activities. There was a need to engage these youths in a meaningful way. The re-use of churches is high on the Flanders agenda as religious practice is declining. Combining meaningful reuse with respect for the monument and for the community around it is a challenge



## Solution

Ghent decided to work with local organisations to revitalise the social housing quarter 'Malem' with a community arts practice that offers qualitative training and creates infrastructure for circus artists. The partners did so in a former parish church listed as non-protected heritage. Ghent is a breeding ground for creatives, giving them space and support. Circus gets special attention in the current term of office. Focus is also set on children and youngsters, and on participation and audience development.

# CIRCUSKERK



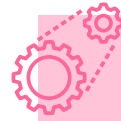
Circus and activities for young people at risk



Adaptive re-use of heritage buildings



Quality of interventions on cultural heritage



## How ?

- CIRCUSPLANEET, founded in 1999, works with children and young people at risk, using circus for non-formal cultural education and community building.
- In 2015 CIRCUSPLANEET bought the former church in the Malem neighbourhood, a social housing quarter, built in the fifties on the borders of Ghent's historic city centre, and CIRCUSKERK was born. The church was renovated and is now open for activities.
- The city, local schools and leisure organisations introduce young people to the CIRCUSPLANEET. In the longer term, youth can subscribe for activities. Ghent funds up to 80% of the subscription fees through a reduction card called 'UitPAS'.
- Facilitated by Ghent, transversally through its different departments, CIRCUSKERK provides room for professional and non-professional artists as well as the local community. It engages these groups through small scale festivals and performances intra and extra muros, CIRCUSPLANEET.
- CIRCUSPLANEET and the municipal administration are using their experience to develop new projects in other parts of Ghent with similar challenges. One of the goals of CIRCUSPLANEET is to reach out to all children of the city by the end of 2025 with projects based in different neighbourhoods.

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## Budget/Financing

€ 1.5 million

This includes:

- Purchase of the building: €400,000
- Renovation works: €1.1 million

Financed by:

- Private investor/sponsor: 46%
- The municipality: 7%
- The region: 20%
- European Regional Development Funds: 27%

## Management

- The purchase and renovation of CIRCUSKERK was supported by the city council.
- CIRCUSPLANEET organised and supervised the purchase and renovation of the building with a team of external experts. The City of Ghent departments of culture, youth, finance, education and strategic planning were involved.
- Through the whole purchase and building process, CIRCUSPLANEET involved stakeholders: children and youngsters, circus artists, residents of the neighbourhood, and local partner organisations.



## Transferability

- Study the building in all its aspects: energy use, stability, heritage aspects. Use this study as a solid basis for a master plan for renovation.
- Assist organisations through the process of building with public finances. Fund them to hire specific expertise.
- As an organisation, do not be afraid of this investment. The fact that CIRCUSPLANEET is financing almost half of the project with its own funds gives the organisation a very solid position for future development. Owning property also opens new doors



## Impact

- Purchasing CIRCUSKERK boosted the organisation of CIRCUSPLANEET, from a turnover of €350 000 to €650 000 since 2015.
- Membership doubled from 500 to 1000.
- Employment grew from four-and-a-half to eight full-time-equivalent staff.
- 26% increase in participation of children and youth at risk.
- Revitalisation of the neighbourhood.
- "Our neighbourhood felt very closed and apart from the city before CIRCUSPLANEET came. Now it feels connected and linked. Things have changed," said a resident of the neighbourhood.
- 39 circus artists working and living in the city area use the building for training and creation.



## Links

- <https://www.circusplaneet.be/>
- <https://www.circuskerk.be/circuskerk>



## Contact

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