

Giving hardship the red card

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On occasion of the UEFA Champions League final at the Olympiapark in Munich it was announced that UniCredit Foundation and Hvb would be extending their partnership with the Buntkicktgut association. It was back in 2009 that UniCredit first began supporting this association which uses street football as a tool for favouring integration among young immigrants that live in conditions of social hardship. The history and the goals of the project as described by [Rudiger Heid](#), director and founder of *buntkicktgut*.

***Buntkicktgut* is considered a pioneering project in street football. What does it consist of? Could you briefly talk about it?**

«It was around 1995/96 when I discovered that football and even more street football was an ideal and attractive medium for a continuous work with socially disadvantaged and marginalized young people - especially with a migration background. With my background as a geographer and a high sensitivity for issues of migration, ethnical or political conflicts and regional disparities I was engaged in so called community lodgings for war refugees and applicants for political asylum. Many individuals and families living there with their children came from Afghanistan and Africa, but most from former Yugoslavia in order to take refuge from the terrible and the whole decade lasting Balkan wars in the 1990s. Street football and its team and identity building opportunities opened a way to communicate with these young people without appropriate language knowledge. At this time you could not find a similar approach in Germany or another European country and even more: street football was not considered as important tool for social work. Meanwhile this opinion has changed a lot and many projects in other cities and countries have been inspired by *buntkicktgut*.

The basic elements of success of *buntkicktgut* are the existence of a continuous league system in different age categories which guarantees the continuity of the contacts and long term involvement of the target group as well as their very close participation in nearly most aspects of organisation, development and decision making processes inside the league system.

Participation projects like the league council, being a referee or a break'n'ball artist open up opportunities of taking over responsibilities, gaining self confidence and social competences. This creates reasonable free time activity and inspiration. We even publish our own street football magazine called *buntkicker* - another participation project at buntkicktgut - where the youngsters can show their editorial skills and talents. Moreover, duties as referee, league councilor or editor enable an insight into several communication tasks.



Since 2009 we could establish with the support of the UniCredit Foundation our neighborhood based project called '*street football work*'. Young participants with a high degree of social responsibility and organizational abilities become '*street football workers*'. They offer not only an open weekly training and coaching program on their local pitch but are going to build up teams which continuously take part in the league. The municipality of Munich appreciated very much the social impact of this approach not only in the involved neighborhoods but for the social peace in the whole city and we hope that it will again expand its funding of *buntkicktgut* in order to assure the sustainability of the setting.

Our general objective is to allow social and cultural exchange and to promote respect among youths of different nationalities and cultures, offering them an opportunity for healthy and meaningful entertainment. *Buntkicktgut* is a bottom-up project where kids help to create the daily league system and the project. It has to be mentioned that without their help we would have not reached the status we have today».

Why was football in particular chosen as a means of integration?

«*Buntkicktgut* picks up one of the most exciting leisure activities and turns it into an organized and permanent possibility for children and young people. Therefore the project is efficient in regards to preventing youth criminality and in dealing with violence: regular sporting activities can be used as a catalyst for reducing aggression and frustration and additionally functions as a team sport, which requires interactive and cooperative behaviour amongst the participants. Moreover, football is a language understood by everyone.

From our point of view football is an overwhelming medium to bring kids from different cultural and social backgrounds together. Especially where we find speechlessness between young people in different language settings, football creates opportunities of communication through body language, facial expressions and gestures».

The project was immediately successful and has evolved over the years. What point have we reached today?

«In the meantime *buntkicktgut* is not only an integral part of social work in Munich. [Gertraud Burkert](#), former Mayor of Munich expressed it this way: "*So many people from Munich identify themselves with the *buntkicktgut* values: fairness, tolerance, no drugs. *Buntkicktgut* has a powerful share in the preservation of a solidary urban community. Integration in terms of the intercultural area and within generations supports the social peace in our city.*" Moreover *buntkicktgut* has achieved national and international reputation as a model for successful and purposeful integration work. *Buntkicktgut* gradually expanded its competences and tried to adapt continuously its structures to the never ending dynamics of the project.

This process is facilitated by the support of strong public and private partners as the City of Munich and the HypoVereinsbank with the foundation of its holding company UniCredit.

Buntkicktgut is supported by several renowned personalities, amongst them the legendary goalkeeper [Oliver Kahn](#) who is patron of the organization and *buntkicktgut* ambassador [Claudia Roth](#), Federal Chairperson of Alliance '90/The Greens. We are proud to say that *buntkicktgut* is an integral part of sport and in particular football activities in Munich. Last year we made it possible to play 1200 league games on 180 match days with kids from all age groups. Throughout the whole year we informed a great number of students, volunteers, social workers, scientists from very different institutions and cities who wanted to visit the project. *Buntkicktgut* is regarded as a symbol of successful integration work in our city and may be as a landmark in '*social tourism*' to Munich.

Buntkicktgut is connected to different organisations in European and non-European countries and we are keen to improve these relations and moreover close more relations with other partners. We have established a network of national and international institutions and we have reached a level of competences to be transferred



to these and other locations».

The renewal of the collaboration between UniCredit Foundation and HVB with the *buntkicktgut* association was announced at the Olympiapark in Munich during the UEFA Champions League final. What are the project's goals for the immediate future?

«Since 2009 *buntkicktgut* is supported by the HypoVereinsbank. The renewal of the collaboration demonstrates how suitably the project fits into the migration program of the UniCredit Foundation. The success of *buntkicktgut* is principally based on a two-pillar strategy: The centre of the project is the preservation of the regular street football league in Munich, the long-term goal is the establishment of similar street football leagues in other cities and countries. The HypoVereinsbank supports essential steps within this process which has already begun: the street football network in Germany is being extended, international collaborations in Switzerland, Austria, UK, Poland, Serbia, Cameroon, Togo, China, Lebanon and Iraq are being completed.

We have established a network of national and international institutions and we have reached a level of competences to be transferred to these and other locations. Therefore we will now elaborate coaching and transmission concepts for these and other partners in order to multiply the social impact of our approach. In addition to this networking we want to establish *buntkicktgut* as a social label and product and to develop part of it into a social enterprise».

Bayern Munich FC is the project's partner club. How is it involved?

«Good relations and a support of *buntkicktgut* by FC Bayern München started in 2003 when the Vice President of FC Bayern [Bernd Rauch](#) initiated and organised a so called '*Nostalgie-Derby*' between former players of the two top clubs of Munich – FC Bayern and TSV 1860. *Buntkicktgut* benefited from the net proceeds of ticket sales and the media attention. We appreciate still this recognition of our work by the officials of the club which was continued in the

following years in many sporadic events, invitations and visits of professionals of FC Bayern. [Christian Nerlinger](#), until July 2012 Sport Director of Bayern München, was personally involved into *buntkicktgut* since 2007. After his carrier as a professional football player he did not only start to screen and coach *buntkicktgut* kids in the frame of our weekly participation project '*FC Interculturale*' but opened us many doors to some new and helpful contacts.

During the last years *buntkicktgut* and the FC Bayern München became very close partners not at least due to the engagement of the HypoVereinsbank and UniCredit Foundation. FC Bayern is involved in particular at common events by providing its facilities as well as logistic and event know-how if needed. In order to reduce operational costs FC Bayern helps us to integrate its partner companies and sponsors in such events.

With the support of FC Bayern we were able to create a series of international streetfootball events yearly, now already established as the *buntkicktgut-open UniCredit Cup*. The first international *buntkicktgut-open UniCredit Cup* was held as a two day event on the training ground at the [Bayern](#) headquarters in the Säbener Strasse in 2009. In the following year 2010 [Uli Hoeness](#), President of FC Bayern München, participated in a press conference in the Munich City Hall as the patron and ambassador of the second edition in the Olympiapark. Professionals of FC Bayern Women's Team visited our 2011 festival on the Munich Königsplatz and played together in mixed teams on the pitches of the HypoVereinsbank. In 2012, and just one day before the UEFA Champions League final in Munich, the sport director of FC Bayern München, [Christian Nerlinger](#), participated at our final ceremony of the fourth edition of *buntkicktgut-open UniCredit Cup* in the Olympiapark. In addition to these events *buntkicktgut* was asked to build up the '*Team Germany*' at the FC Bayern Youth Cup 2012. Our selected talents of young migrants thus had the opportunity to play the final matches in the Munich Allianz Arena under the eyes of several officials of the FC Bayern youth department. But moreover FC Bayern is always a strong partner for our daily work. This is expressed and due to the mutual respect we often feel. [Uli Hoeness](#), President of Bayern Munich: *'I am impressed about buntkicktgut and its outstanding integration work. Of course*



we as FC Bayern München are appreciating such approaches and we will try, together with our longstanding partner HypoVereinsbank to support *buntkicktgut* and the important tournaments. I send all participants my best wishes and good luck'».



On the weekend of the UEFA Champions League final there was a 32-team street football tournament. What was this experience like?

«The *buntkicktgut-open* have been organized since 2009, the start of our partnership with UniCredit and its Foundation. All four editions have been both impressive in terms of participants, football skills and their overall multicultural atmosphere of the tournaments. We have had guests from China, Poland, Serbia, Austria, Switzerland, England as well as teams from all over Germany. It is a very amazing and exciting experience for the kids to get together with peers from so many other cultures and countries.

As an organisation we have seen exciting matches, met a diverse range of interested and interesting people and could intensify our cooperation with other youth organisations. We are especially proud that the on-site tournament administration was handled by UniCredit/HVB volunteers. They are doing a very professional job and make sure that we can fully focus on the experience for the kids».

Are young talents emerging?

«In 15 years of *buntkicktgut* a lot of talents have emerged, some now playing as professionals in different clubs of the first, second and third division. Some former participants of *buntkicktgut* have reached a professional level and are even integrated in the actual professional team of Bayern Munich as for example [Diego Contento](#).

At *buntkicktgut* they are free to show off their best tricks, something that might not be possible in the club teams they also play in. In Munich we have our talent screening and selection team, called '*FC Interculturale*'. The team trains once a week with our professional football coach Davor and his young assistants [Oussman](#) and [Deniz](#). In addition to that we have strong cooperation with various football clubs in the Munich area where talents from *buntkicktgut* receive further qualified support to develop their skills and abilities».

What can street football teach to professional football and vice versa?

«At *buntkicktgut* and with our street football concept young people learn to organize themselves as a team, without a coach or team manager telling them what to do. This teaches them to act and communicate self-dependently amongst themselves and with other people.

In this environment of self-dependence combined with a structured offer like the street football league and its participation items responsibility and creativity will emerge. Our experience from this approach might be taught as summarized in one sentence: ***Let's trust in the abilities and curiosity of young people if you give the proper setting. What professional football can teach to the kids is to stay focused and disciplined. By following your goals with certain persistence you are more likely to reach them – on and off the pitch***».



Buntkicktgut

the Intercultural Street Football League Munich was founded in 1997 by Memo Arikan and Rüdiger Heid, director of the organisation and conceptual head of the project. In the beginning it was designed as a street football league between community houses for war refugees and applicants for political asylum. Today over 2.000 active participants are gathered in a continuous street football league. They are taught interpersonal skills like intercultural understanding, respect and peaceful conflict resolution via football. Director and co-founder **Rüdiger Heid** describes *buntkicktgut* as follows: *"buntkicktgut is a European paradigm for integration by street football. The decisive, conceptual difference to similar events is the continuity of the street football league, which unlike sporadic tournaments lies in the regular working basis with children and young people and a regular contact amongst the teams"*.

The success of the social commitment of the league activities has been honoured on different levels: Munich's Mayor, Christian Ude, handed over the supporting prize **"Münchner Lichtblicke 2000"** for the dedicated commitment combating xenophobia and violence. In August 2002, *buntkicktgut* was awarded in Berlin with **the first prize in**

the nationwide Competition for Integration by the Federal President of Germany, Johannes Rau. In January 2008 buntkicktgut received the Prize of Integration by the German Football Association (DFB) and Mercedes-Benz in Stuttgart-Sindelfingen.

Theodor Weimer, spokesman of the board, sums up the key benefits of the co-operation: *"We are part of one of the major European banking institutions located in 22 countries. An essential parameter for our group's achievement was the successful junction of different corporate cultures in the different countries. Therefore we are able to appreciate integration and we promote it powerfully. buntkicktgut is a path breaking initiative playfully demonstrating young people how enriching cultural differences are."*