


Why The Ensur Company supports  
ToekomstATELIERdelAvenir vzw



**“We help less  
fortunate kids  
build a brighter  
future”**

Pieter De Witte

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**The Ensur Company and ToekomstATELIERdelAvenir (an educational program for disadvantaged youth) have been a socially engaged tandem for almost ten years. “For us, this is not an obligation to serve a good cause,” emphasizes Reinold Vanhevel (one of the founders of The Ensur Company), “but our contribution to having a positive impact that actually changes lives.” Pieter De Witte, CEO of ToekomstATELIERdelAvenir (TADA): “Every euro invested in our non-profit organization yields a return of 20 euros for society.”**

They go way, way back. This is immediately clear when Reinold Vanhevel and Pieter De Witte greet each other warmly at AXA’s Brussels headquarters, TADA’s base of operations. Both CEOs share a professional past as consultants, “and when we founded Ensur ten years ago, Pieter was one of our first employees,” Reinold muses. What both also have in common: the drive to put their social commitment into action from an early age. “When Pieter left Ensur after only a relatively short period of time to lead TADA, he naturally left a void in our start-up. At the





same time, I had a lot of admiration for his choice: he could just as well have chosen a more evident career path." Pieter: "However, it was an obvious choice for me: TADA unites two worlds that are close to my heart – and my head! – working with businesses and creating social added value. One of the ways in which this manifests itself is that we run our non-profit organization professionally in all areas, like a real SME."

► "Everyone who teaches a class agrees: it is energizing"

**Reinold Vanhevel**

In no time, The Ensor Company jumped on TADA's bandwagon. Reinold: "With the founders we committed ourselves from the start by teaching those youngsters, something we still keep doing. And nowadays we also give every employee at our company the opportunity to contribute. This is not always obvious, because classes are on Saturday and sometimes those lessons are not particularly structured like in a school, but everyone who participates in a class agrees: it is energizing."

### **What is TADA's raison d'être?**

**Pieter:** "An increasing part of the population is growing up in a vulnerable situation, which means that they miss out on a lot of opportunities. Even I, working daily with youth from disadvantaged backgrounds, notice that I overlook the small opportunities I've been afforded. This ranges from school choice, my parents' network, exciting activities in which I could participate, higher education where it was obvious that I had to just put my feet under the table to eat and for the rest study... The youth we work with don't have any of that. For me, it was obvious that I could become a plumber, or a lawyer, or a doctor. For those young people, it is more difficult to believe in their own future – and we are trying to break through that. What we want is for them to say: *'Those people around me are not so different. Even though it may not seem like it, I can become whatever I want.'* Our goal is to be there for them at numerous moments when they make decisions and where they cannot count on the right support or advice from their immediate environment.

That is why we involve as many organizations and companies as possible such as the Ensor Company in TADA, because it is by connecting young people with lawyers, consultants, photographers... that those kids feel first-hand that they have so many possibilities."

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**Pieter De Witte**

### **Youth in disadvantaged situations can be challenging to reach. How do you go about that?**

**Pieter:** "That observation is correct. This is why we focus on young people aged 10. At that age they are just young enough to be reached and they have the unique age where they start to become worldly wise and at the same time are still a bit naïve. We present TADA in about 60 schools – mainly in Brussels, but recently also in Leuven where we test a model during the week. We ask the 10-year-olds who participate if they want to make a three-year commitment. After those three years, we maintain contact with them through our alumni activities. So, we guide every TADA participant in the longer term."

**A great strength of TADA is that the teachers bring together all kinds of professional expertise. In addition to The Ensor Company, there are other companies and organizations that are committed to providing lessons on Saturdays.**

**Pieter:** "We are very grateful for that. Every Saturday there are thirty classes, each with four ateliers. A small calculation and you realize that we need 120 teachers per lesson Saturday – and that 30 weeks a year. That requires some organization – we have about 60 employees (37 FTE – also for our



► “Every employee at The Ensor Company feels that ours is an authentic commitment, not some obligatory patchwork to support a good cause”

**Reinold Vanhevel**





alumni and other activities), and indeed a lot of partner organizations. Fortunately, some partner companies see this as an employee value proposition, so people see that their company really means to make a social contribution. TADA is 90 percent privately supported. Working with partner companies provides special added value. We notice that when we call on the expertise of teachers such as that of The Ensur Company, the response of the participants and the satisfaction of teachers themselves is a lot higher.”

**What does The Ensur Company’s commitment consist of?**

**Reinold:** “Ten years ago, when Ensur had just taken off, with the founders we committed ourselves to teaching an entrepreneurship course. In a very simple context - after all, we are talking about ten-year-olds - we guide the young participants in setting up a small business. We teach them to think about a

product, what it might look like, how they will sell it, how to acquire customers, how to check whether they are making a profit... In practice, this is about very recognizable things for that age group such as baking waffles or making chocolate milk, but the essence is that they are included in a mindset that is not obvious to a child. In this way, we share our passion for entrepreneurship in a very accessible way.”

“TADA now focuses on disadvantaged young people, but honestly: I would appreciate it if my own children could also follow such a course through their school. Those kinds of subjects should be included in the basic package of the regular education system. After all, you get to know different professions and discover a new world that can offer opportunities later on. The concept of TADA is very relevant, indeed. We also don’t realize enough in how many families extra help is welcome.”

“The collaboration started because there was a personal connection with Pieter, but

## ► TADA: empowering futures, one workshop at a time

TADA (ToekomstATELIERdelAvenir) is an educational program that supports young people from underprivileged backgrounds in discovering and developing their talents. Since its foundation in 2012, TADA has inspired and guided thousands of young people.

### How does it work?

#### ► Three-year program.

Young people between the ages of 10 and 14 attend workshops every Saturday, given by professionals from various sectors.

#### ► Alumni activities.

After the program, TADA continues to support young people through a network that helps them make important choices in their lives.

#### ► Practical approach.

The workshops offer hands-on experiences, from entrepreneurship to creative and technical skills.

With personal guidance and inspiring role models, TADA inspires young people to seize opportunities that would otherwise remain out of reach.

in the meantime, we are building support in all ranks of The Ensor Company. And even though everyone is incredibly busy and there are 101 reasons not to supervise such a Saturday session: if you do such a session, you get a lot of energy from it. In addition to this practical support, we also donate the proceeds of our warmathon every year: we encourage every employee to exercise and give TADA one euro for every kilometer they run. There is a lot of diversity within The Ensor Company and although our employees rarely come from disadvantaged families themselves, I notice that these initiatives have a great appeal. Everyone feels that it is an authentic commitment, not some obligatory patchwork to support a good cause. We strive for real impact.”

**TADA has been around for 11 years now. The first participants are now 20 years and older. What is the impact so far?**

**Pieter:** “I see a powerful, positive impact among the participants as well as teachers and partner organizations. As Reinold said, the teachers often get an energy boost, but many also draw wide eyes and only realize after such a series of lessons how many privileges most of us have and how strongly they influence our lives without us being aware of it. This goes beyond a personal experience: we also notice that TADA has an impact at company level with our partners. They get a better understanding of how to approach certain things if they want to become a more diverse organization.”





► “TADA makes a huge difference. There is the individual victory for the kids, but also a great added value for society”

**Pieter De Witte**

“The impact is also noticeable for the participants. Of course, not everything is measurable. For example, we see that some former students are now working at TADA in one way or another, are doing an internship at one of our partner organizations or are guest lecturers. TADA is also part of the solution to a major problem within our education system: students do not reflect the demographic composition of our society. Not that we want all our youngsters to end up being doctors or lawyers, but we want

them to be able to make the right choice. We notice that we are making a major correction and that the distribution of TADA young people over the different fields of study is much closer to the average distribution in Brussels. Not bad, if you know that we really look for our participants in schools with the lowest socio-economic score (SES), and then select the young people who need us the most. Within that group, 30% (according to some studies even 45%) do not obtain a secondary education diploma. Among our alumni, the school dropout rate is maximum 10%. A huge difference. This is not only an individual victory for the kids, but also provides great added value for society. After all, school dropout entails an enormous cost because if you have no diploma, you run a big risk of being unemployed (on average they do not work 60% of their working life), there is the loss of tax revenue and then there is the unemployment benefit. Purely in direct costs, every euro that is invested in TADA, is worth 20 euros in societal return.”