

Indoor playgrounds

An indoor playground is a typical kind of recreative activity which is visited mostly during week-ends. Besides the family that comes here to have a rest while their children are playing, there is often a possibility of organising children's parties here, of welcoming school and/or group outings and so on.

An indoor playground consists of a huge steel construction with several floors on which various playthings have been installed, such as slides, crawl pipes, twisting paths, ball baths and so on. All elements are made of soft and fire-resistant materials almost entirely precluding injuries and ensuring absolute safety for the playing children. Such a playground is called a 'Funhouse'. Such a Funhouse may be up to 10 metres high, divided into several floors and is mainly directed towards children from 3 to 12 years old, though this depends on the motor abilities of the child. On less occupied moments younger children can play in a Funhouse too and there are Funhouses adjusted to toddlers. Besides this Funhouse there are often other recreative areas such as a playground for toddlers and/or babies, bouncing castles and so on.

The 'phenomenon' of indoor playgrounds originates from Great Britain and the United States where such funhouses exist for a long time already. They are to be found in big malls as well as in towns and cities.

Ameco Projects is market leader in Belgium, Holland and Luxembourg, holding a market share of 65% in the sector of indoor playgrounds after the softplay principle, mostly called 'Funhouses'.

Realisation of a Project:

One of the initiators who is also a shareholder or will become one in the company, should hold a certificate of Business Management. This is required to incorporate the company.

Looking for a suitable location is vital as this can only be situated in a residential or recreative area. In all other quarters it will be impossible to obtain a license.

You may look for a building lot and erect a very simple and economical industrial construction or you may buy or rent an existing building.

The building should preferably consist of some 800 m² useful surface with a free height of 4 metres or more. Easy access is an advantage and there should be enough parking space (a requirement to obtain a licence is often that you have 1 parking space per 10 visitors though commercially speaking more parking space is recommendable). If the building is situated close to a main road it may be a commercial advantage while on the other hand a quiet and rural location will be more successful in the summer and can preferably be complemented by an outdoor playground.

However, there are playgrounds which are bigger or smaller, higher or lower, near a main road or quite the opposite. The above touchstones are not to be handled unconditionally. Most of the time you will have to apply for a building licence or a change of use. We advise to inquire with the city or municipal authorities about the possibilities and to invite the senior fire officer to advise you on fire safety regulations.

Once the building has been found, you can start your preparations, including:

You will have to decide on the lay-out of the building and the installation of the Funhouse, discuss fire safety and safety precautions, possibly in consultation with the fire officer. The playground needs to be talked about and designed, taking into account the theme you wish. Then you will have to draw up offer and plans, contract and so on.

Cost and Proceeds of an Indoor Playground:

The price of a Funhouse depends on many factors such as: surface, number of floors, condition of the floor, playing capacity as for number of kids, decoration and kind of activities. The price also depends on the distance from factory to site, and on national regulations applying to design. A Funhouse can be built in some 3 to 6 weeks depending on size and capacity.

Besides the playground other investments must be made too, such as:

General design, catering, decoration and so on. Depending on the catering system you choose, it may be simple or quite extensive and more expensive. There are indoor playgrounds with a very limited catering, even with soft drinks from a vending machine only. But most of the time soft drinks and alcoholics are served which means in Belgium that opening taxes have to be paid. And as for food, this too goes from simple snacks to extensive menus. This option substantially determines the size of investment and overheads, but also the proceeds.

Once operational there will still be overheads of course:

Rent or instalment of the building, repayment of investment, staff, maintenance, insurance...

In exchange for all these expenses you will receive a lot of proceeds to be divided into two categories:

- On the one hand all entrance charges. One of the main advantages of an indoor playground compared to other sectors is that one more player does not result in extra costs; in other words, except for depreciation all entrance fees are gross profits completely!

- On the other hand there are proceeds from catering which, as said above, depend on the system you will choose.

The average indoor playground in Belgium is open on Wednesday afternoon, Friday afternoon, Saturday, Sunday and all holidays. This means some 225 days a year without taking into account groups that come outside usual hours. A simple multiplication of the playground capacity, the number of opening days and the entrance fee per child gives you a first idea of cost-effectiveness.

Ameco Softplay Funhouse

Advantages of Ameco Funhouses:

High service level = better project

** Advice and support from experienced people always results in a better project and better cost-effectiveness.*

Superior Quality:

** Seamless softplay floor on the entire surface, longer life and less risk of injuries.*

** Ameco safety nets are fitted by means of some special technique which keeps them very tight and ensuring a longer life.*

** Special design of softplay gardens for babies, toddlers and pre-schoolers.*

Improved Safety = less Insurance

** Faster evacuation in emergencies thanks to larger lattice size of the basic construction (2440x1220)*

** Less risk of injuries thanks to seamless softplay floor.*

** Children find it very difficult or impossible to climb on the Ameco safety nets.*

More Flexibility = larger gap between the competition and you

** As our funhouses are made to measure, they make optimum use of the building.*

Easy Maintenance - Less Costs

** An hygienic seamless floor that is easily cleaned covers the entire surface.*

** Easy access to clean thanks to the bigger lattice size of the basic construction.*

Lower Cost = Smaller Investment

** As Funhouse is built at the site there are no costs of expensive pre-mounting at the factory.*