GRASSREUTS

SAFETY AT FESTIVALS

Guidelines developed in The GrassrEUts project 2024 -2026

KUN
CENTRE FOR EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

SCH Sziget Cultural Management

The GrassrEUts is an EU-funded project under the Creative Europe programme, with the mission to promote European and neighboring music on international stages and to enhance the visibility and competitiveness of emerging artists. The network featuring Sziget Festival (Hungary), NOS Alive (Portugal), EXIT Festival (Serbia), and the Jazz Festival of Carthage (Tunisia) Ukrainian artists will also participate in the project, supported by the partner All-Ukrainian Association of Music Events, with the aim of strengthening their international presence and continuing their artistic journey in the face of ongoing challenges

The guidelines are divided in two different sections: part one on diversity, part two on safety. Follow the QR-code to read another part of the guideline.

SAFETY AT FESTIVALS

These guidelines build upon experiences from festivals in Norway and is further developed by KUN Centre for Equality and diversity in cooperation with representatives from the festivalsin a workshop and with Sziget Cultural Management. We give advice on how to make the festival safe for everyone and prevent violence, harassment, sexual harassment and abuse.

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> *Me and a friend were standing quite close to the stage during the concert, and we got so tired of boys getting too close and touching us, and trying to rub their crotches against us..... We stood close to the stage and that the guards could see that we were bothered, but they did not react. Next to us, two girls started arguing and then the guards reacted immediately, and they were thrown out. In the middle of this, the artists shouted from the stage "Fucking whore" and "fucking bitch". We were discouraged and just chose to leave.*
>
> *Festival participant*

Violence and abuse is a serious problem with high costs both for the individual who is exposed and for society. Prevention is better than having to deal with the fallout once incidents happen. This guide provides tips and advice on how you as an organizer can prevent and deal with violence, sexual harassment, assault and rape at festivals, concerts and other large events where many people gather.

WHAT IS SEXUAL HARASSMENT?

Sexual harassment refers to unwanted sexual attention that is perceived as a problematic bythe person to whom the attention is directed. Sexual harassment can be:

Physical: fondling, hugging, kissing

Verbal: sexual innuendos and suggestions, comments about body, appearance or private life

Non-verbal: intrusive eye contact or looks, gestures, body movements, flashing and the like

WHAT IS SEXUAL ABUSE?

Sexual abuse means forcing another person to have sexual relations that they do not want, whether it is through violence, threatening behavior or if the person in question is unable to resist the act or is unable to give consent. Sexual abuse includes acts, or attempted actions, that involve involuntary physical contact such as touching, licking, sucking, masturbation, sexual intercourse and rape.

In other words, sexual abuse involves deceiving or forcing another person to have sexualrelations that they do not want or are unable to consent to.



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"Sexual harassment and abuse exist on a continuum, and thus all measures that can prevent sexual harassment will also serve to prevent sexual abuse as defined in the Penal Code."

Norwegian Sports Confederation

WHAT DO WE KNOW?

Violence and abuse affect different people in different ways, and some groups are more vulnerable than others. Both life situation and background impact on vulnerability to assault, how the assault is experienced, and on the ability to seek help. Factors that can affect vulnerability are disability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic background, minority background, age and gender.

We know that sexual harassment happens at festivals, as in society in general. We also know that there is a higher risk of abuse occurring where people meet and drink alcohol. Six out of ten female bartenders in Oslo have been subjected to physical sexual harassment in the last 12 months. Almost everyone who harasses is a guest. (Korus Oslo 2019)
A survey conducted at festivals in the UK found that one in five festival goers and more than two in five among female festival goers under the age of 40 had experienced unwanted sexual advances or harassment at festivals. (YouGov 2017).

Being subjected to harassment is unpleasant as it happens, but it can also cause lasting damage by reducing the feeling of security of the person concerned. Also, it affects the festival experience for others who are not exposed themselves, but who witness it. It is unpleasant to feel obliged to intervene and confront others, it can also be unpleasant to witness an incident without having the opportunity to intervene or not daring to.

SEXUAL ABUSE

Every year, the police receive reports of rape at festivals. Being subjected to rape or other sexual abuse can cause permanent physical and psychological damage to the victim.

Both sexual harassment and abuse affect a festival's reputation. It may result in more people being hesitant to attend, or parents not wanting to let their offspring participate.



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ORGANIZERS' RESPONSIBILITY TO PREVENT AND STOP SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND ABUSE

Sexual harassment entail less serious incidents as well as more serious incidents and sexual assaults that are covered by the Penal Code. The less serious incidents also affect the festival experience for those concerned and those who witness them. Measures should be taken at several levels, from the festival management to the shift manager, artists, volunteers, and participants.

A large event is subject to various requirements that you as an organizer must comply with. As an organizer, you must assess risk and how it can be reduced.

“He slapped my butt. It's completely normal, it just happened.”

Festival goer

EVENT PLANNING

CLEAR STANCE AGAINST HARASSMENT, SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND ABUSE

Preventing harassment, sexual harassment and abuse must be integrated as part of the mission statement of an event if it is to be upheld. In this way, it will also be reflected in leadership, and will be a guideline for the work with the event.

- **Emphasize** to all contributors, artists and audiences how you want the event to be. It is not enough to say that one should "avoid violent episodes or other undesirable incidents". Be specific about what you want, and feel free to make your own festival rules where you state clearly that you do not tolerate any kind of violence, harassment, sexual harassment and abuse. Tell the festival goers what to do if they experience, or see someone who experiences, unpleasant events.

- **Make it clear** to your hired security company what forms harassment may take, and that you want them to intervene against sexual harassment. Ensure that those who collaborate with the security company are clearly notified about this.

- **Help** festival goers with education about safe and responsible partying. Festival guides, released pre-event (on the website, newsletter, etc.) containing basic advice (stay hydrated, never lose your friends, never leave your drink unattended, etc.) can help your visitors to avoid risky situations and protect their own health. This approach can also strengthen the sense of safety at your festival.

- **Encourage** festival goers to take care of each other. Highlight the festival rules, for example in connection with ticket purchases, where the buyers must tick the box to have read and approved the rules. The rules can also be posted on the festival website, in Facebook updates before the festival, and as posters at the event itself.

> **The risk is: Excessively drunk people who have no limits. Those who walk around alone, and girls are vulnerable**

Professional guard

EXAMPLE OF FESTIVAL RULES

We want to create a good festival experience for everyone, regardless of gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance, body size, ethnicity, age, music preference, prowess in sports, or enjoyment of Japanese anime. Everyone is welcome as long as they do not intentionally do something that ruins the joy of other festival goers. Join us in contributing to a positive, safe and inclusive community.

hese Festival Rules are a joint obligation whether you are an artist, volunteer, employee or in the audience. If you participate in our event, you should be able to expect that you will be treated with respect and dignity, and we expect you to treat others in the same way.

Harassment of any kind, such as racist or sexist language, use of violence, forcing one's sexuality on others, exposing others to attention they do not want, groping, fondling, deliberate intimidation, stalking, unwanted photography or filming, will not be tolerated.

If a person expresses that they do not want contact, you must respect that. Do not stalk others, or try to interfere with other people's festival experience in any way. If you continue to give unwelcome attention to another participant, you may be expelled from the area.

If someone stalks you, harasses or attempts to attack you, you must report it to a guard or any other of our staff members as soon as possible and we will help you. If you witness harassment, help the victim and report to guards and/or other employees.

We wish to create a better festival for everyone, and would like to hear about incidents. All participants should feel confident that they can report harassment from any person associated with the festival. No retaliation will be tolerated. All information related to the report of harassment will be treated confidentially, unless otherwise required by law (overriding health and safety considerations), or approved by the parties concerned. Write to us on email or talk to someone in the event management.

RISK ASSESSMENT

We know that sexual harassment happens, and that there is a risk of abuse at large events. Everyone has a responsibility to prevent and to stop it if it happens. In the planning, measures including general awareness, training content and design of the area should therefore be included.

A risk and vulnerability analysis should form the basis for the security work at an event. Here,you map the probability of an incident occurring, what consequences it is likely to have, and what should be done to prevent or reduce posssible consequences.

Start by describing the type of event you have, and consider how these factors affect the risk of sexual harassment and assault :

- Who is the target audience?
- What is the age composition of the audience?
- What is the expected behavior like?
- What time of day should the event take place?
- What time of the year?
- What does the area look like, in terms of dark corners and hiding places?
- What has happened before?
- What kind of artist(s) will come: if they are aggressive, express a certain view of women, racist attitudes, derogatory language about different groups of people, there may be reason to reconsider the booking.

Factors to include in risk analysis and planning of measures are:

- Young people are particularly vulnerable to sexual harassment and abuse. Especially young girls, but also young boys. At the same time, remember that all genders and age groups can experience harassment. No one should have to put up with physical contact or advances they find uncomfortable.
- Other groups that are vulnerable are people who challenge the norms of gender and sexuality, such as lesbians, gays and transgender people.
- Alcohol and drugs increase the risk of being exposed and exposing someone to sexual harassment.
- People who are so intoxicated that they cannot take care of themselves are particularly vulnerable. Some drugs are used to drug people and then sexually assault them while they are so drugged that they are unable to resist.
- The risk of sexual harassment increases where there are a lot of people and crowds, such as in front of the stage and in the line for the toilets.
- A gang can circle one victim and sexually assault and/or exercise other violence.
- Attacks can happen in toilets.
- Attacks can take place in bushes and more secluded or dark places inside or outside the festival area.

> *If I see that the girl is very drunk, I take her to the side and ask if she knows him from before. Get her to get hold of her friends, and get them to help her home.*
>
> *Professional guard, female 28 years old*

Your risk assessment should also contain a crisis communications plan, on how would you react and manage internally and publicly a sexual harassment/abuse case or any other kind of crisis. Your crisis communications plan should focus on the following objectives:

- Deescalating the situation to avoid fake news, panic, uncoordinated staff actions.
- Helping and protecting the victims.
- Showing a clear stance, case management and communication both internally and to your visitors and the public.

SITE DESIGN

Choose the location of different activities based on purpose. Try to avoid dark areas that require a lot of patroling and add lights if necessary. Guards should have flashlights if the event takes place in the dark. Consider whether the toilet areas should be separated with urinals and toilet cubicles separately. Also, secure the area around the toilets to avoid places to hide away.



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“I have a lady on my lap who I know will be keen, at least if I give her seven liters of wine.”

Song lyrics by a Norwegian artist

CHOICE OF ARTISTS

The choice of artists affects the mood and the audience that comes. An aggressive artist with sexist lyrics helps to legitimize harassment and stirs up the mood. It can be difficult to avoid such artists, but as an organizer you have a choice and can also make some demands. If you have made your own festival rules, artists should also be aware of them and confirm that they comply with the requirements that are set.

Participants feel safer if there are participants of different ages at the event. A diversity of artists can contribute to a diverse audience and prevent one group from taking over and making those who belong to the minority more vulnerable.

SECURITY

Although everyone who works with the event has responsibility, security is particularly important. It is therefore important who the guards are, and how they carry out the assignment. Make sure to have diversity in age, gender and preferably also ethnicity among guards.

TRAINING

Everyone, from admission to sales and clean-up, must help make the event safe. Therefore, consider a joint training where the objectives of the event are presented, and where topics such as good hosting, responsible alcohol management, prevention, recognition and handling of sexual harassment and abuse are addressed.

Some must be assigned more expertise and responsibility than others. A division between a security officer, area managers, well-being hosts, and security guards is common. All of these must work actively against violence, harassment and sexual harassment and must be trainedaccordingly.

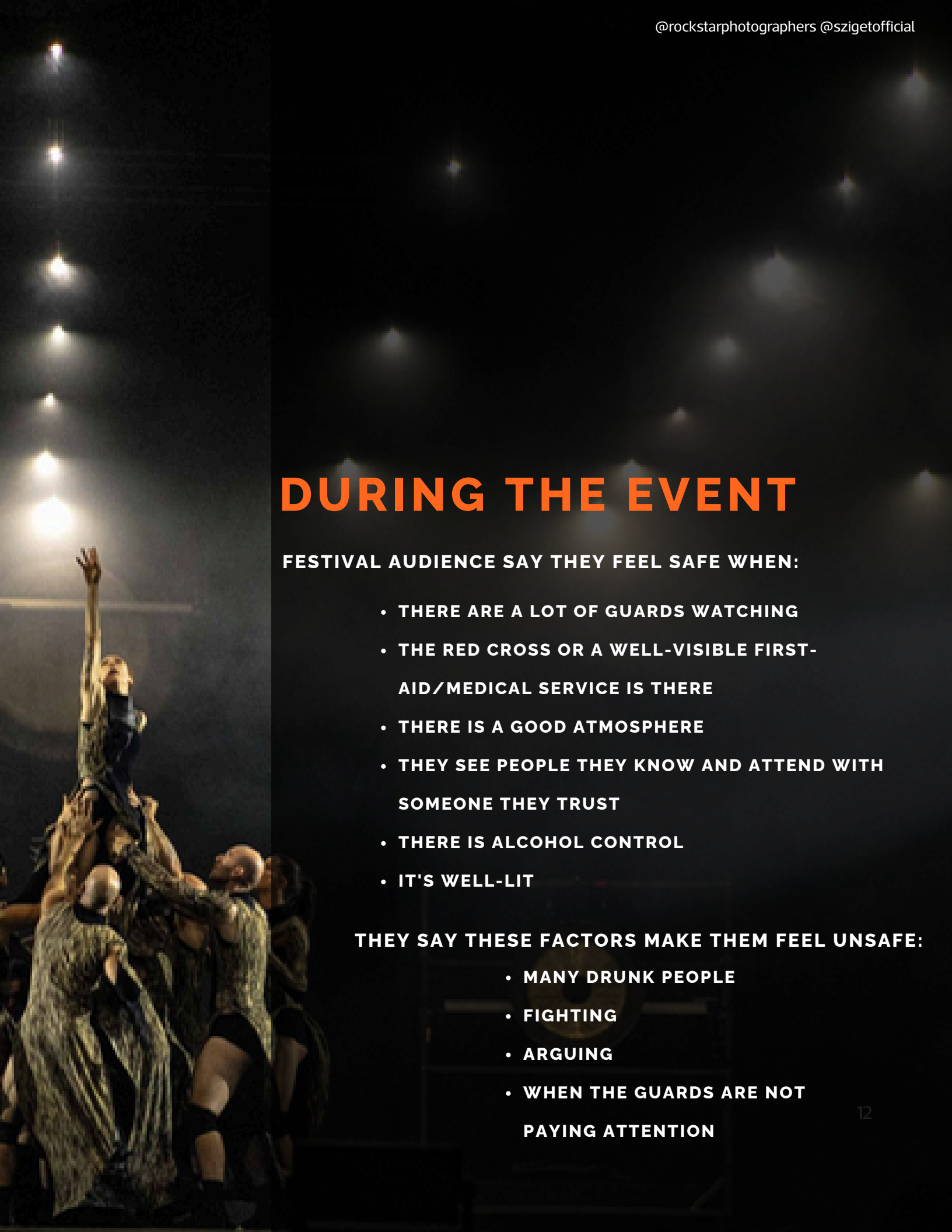
Provide basic information for your entire team about the festival, both via training and information materials (handbooks, maps, real-time communication channels, like WhatsApp or Discord). These should contain the whereabouts of the festival venues, services, exit routes, also guides & rules of visitor engagement or crisis situations. Uninformed staff make the visitors feel unsafe.

BELOW IS AN EXAMPLE OF HOW THE SAFETY WORK CAN BE ORGANIZED, FROM THE STEINKJER FESTIVAL:

- The event is divided into teams according to functions: guard, catering, environment, sales, artist, rig, etc.
- Each team does an analysis for their area, and defines the risk and need for action. Where is the greatest risk of sexual harassment? Where can abuse happen?
- The safety manager and the HSE manager hold separate meetings for area managers.
- The security manager sends out information letters to everyone who will be on duty. This says something about the goal of the festival, what their responsibilities are and what they should keep an eye out for.
- All guards receive yellow reflective vests and their own accreditation cards with important phone numbers.
- Everyone meets one hour before the event starts, receives information from the shift leader and are assigned their areas.
- Each area manager reviews special challenges for his or her area, distributes communication equipment and goes through reporting routines.

In addition to permanent area teams, it is advisable to have a roaming team that goes around and steps in as reinforcement if needed.





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DURING THE EVENT

FESTIVAL AUDIENCE SAY THEY FEEL SAFE WHEN:

- THERE ARE A LOT OF GUARDS WATCHING
- THE RED CROSS OR A WELL-VISIBLE FIRST-AID/MEDICAL SERVICE IS THERE
- THERE IS A GOOD ATMOSPHERE
- THEY SEE PEOPLE THEY KNOW AND ATTEND WITH SOMEONE THEY TRUST
- THERE IS ALCOHOL CONTROL
- IT'S WELL-LIT

THEY SAY THESE FACTORS MAKE THEM FEEL UNSAFE:

- MANY DRUNK PEOPLE
- FIGHTING
- ARGUING
- WHEN THE GUARDS ARE NOT PAYING ATTENTION

> *If we see someone who is starting to get drunk, we get in touch and suggest that the person take some food and drink some water.*
>
> *Guard at the Steinkjer Festival*

If someone complains and someone finds it uncomfortable, as long as we see it, we will do something about it. We have to show that it's not okay.

Professional guard

We don't need to have cactuses under our arms.

Professional guard

EFFORT

CREATE A GOOD ATMOSPHERE

A good atmosphere is created by the audience and the organizers together. Friendly guards and service staff who smile and wish the participants a nice evening are calming and set the mood.

A clear stance against any form of violence, harassment and sexual harassment can be showcased on posters at the event itself, through encouragement from the stage, and throughguards that are decisive and intervene quickly. Also, make sure that your audience also knows where to turn if they experience something that is not okay. Encourage them to have fun, to respect and take care of each other. Be careful on setting and maintaining the vibe. Too much security and badly worded signs can increase anxiety and a sense of fear.

Monitor the signs of a possible conflict, unacceptable behavior, (e. g. a loud drunk group in the crowd) to be able to intervene well before things could go out of hand.

Example from Norway with inspiration from Dare to Care campaign in Sweden:

6 TIPS WHEN YOU SEE BAD BEHAVIOR

- Dare to be the first to react. Contact the person who is being harassed rather than focusing on the person who is being rude/unkind.
- Break the situation. Distract, contact and start talking about something else. You can ask what time it is or where you can find the food stalls. You can also ask “are you okay?” “should I get help?” “do you want to leave?”
- Speak up! If you feel safe, you can also speak out directly to the person who is behaving badly. Be clear and objective, and avoid getting into a discussion. Here are some examples: “that comment sounds racist” “it’s not okay to talk to others that way”, “it doesn’t look like she appreciates you holding her like that”.
- Look around - do others see the same thing as you? Are there others who can react?
- Get help. The guards don’t see everything. Help them become aware.
- It’s never too late. It's always nice to know that someone saw you. You can be the one to help after something has happened. “I saw what happened, are you okay? Is there anything I can do for you?”

ALCOHOL MANAGEMENT
We know that people who are excessively intoxicated are more vulnerable to sexual abuse and are at greater risk of overstepping other people's boundaries. Conscious alcohol management is important in order to avoid sexual harassment and abuse. People who are clearly under the influence of drugs must not be allowed to enter or must be expelled from the event.

As an organizer, you also have a duty to ensure that people who need it receive the necessary assistance. For example, it is not enough to expel a drunk youth, ensure that he or she gets home safely. Also, make sure that there are people they can trust who take them home or arrange a ride.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR WHISTLEBLOWING
Establish a system for the audience to report violence, harassment, sexual harassment, and abuse. This can happen both during and after the event. Professional guards have a special responsibility, but make sure that everyone who works for the event also knows who to contact. Remember that observations made during the event may be important in a possible criminal case afterwards.

There is a range of specialized medical services, welfare, support service and anti-abuse solutions that can be added to your festival safety net. On-site psychologists, youth counsellors, anti-abuse features (Angel Shot, panic button) can enhance the prevention and effective handling of harassment and abuse cases.

THE STAGE AREA
We know that a lot happens in the crowd in front of the stage, and it is difficult for guards to have the necessary overview and to be able to physically intervene if necessary. Guards in front of the stage must have a good view over the audience and have good communication equipment. At bigger events, a CCTV system can be vital in monitoring crowd movements and recognizing crisis situations that are invisible from ground level. CCTV footage can also serve as evidence in criminal cases.



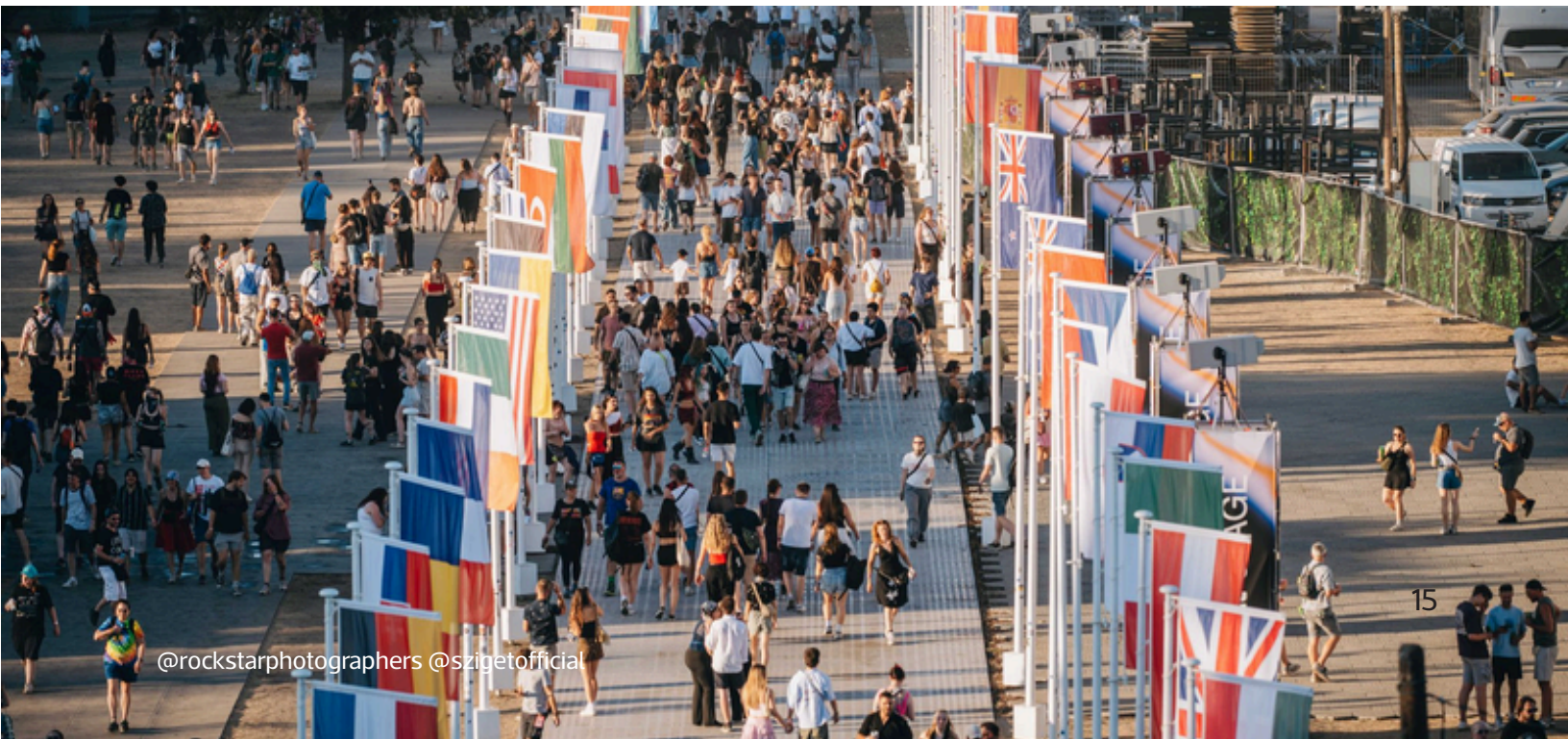
ESTABLISH A SAFE SPACE
Having a safe place in the festival area that is quieter and more secluded can be a good measure. Make sure that the participants meet someone they can talk to and who can help those who feel unsafe, or who have experienced something they find uncomfortable.

TOILET AREA
Make sure to have a continuous watch, and preferably also a roaming team that visits the toilet area. Have zero tolerance for two or more people entering the toilets together. They both contribute to increasing the queue and are outside the guards' control when they are in there. There is no guarantee that both consent. Make sure guards have the option to unlock the doors from the outside.

Make sure you have enough toilet capacity to avoid participants starting to use other areas to go to the bathroom. Here it is especially important to ensure enough capacity for women as they are more exposed when they have to undress to use the facilities.

ABANDONED AREAS
If someone has consumed too much alcohol and does not feel well, they tend to seek their way out of the crowd and want to be by themselves. Then they are also more vulnerable to being approached by someone who can exploit the situation. Couples can also seek getting away to cuddle or argue, in both cases a rule can be introduced that the guards must contact them to find out if everything is okay.

OUTSIDE THE FESTIVAL AREA
We know that some people take the opportunity to seek out places where they know that there are many intoxicated people to take advantage of their lower judgment. The police should be notified of suspicious activity outside the area. Here there is also an opportunity to increase security by collaborating with night owl services or youth teams in the municipality.



INTERVENENTIONS

SECURITY

Guards at all levels have a responsibility to avert criminal acts and ensure that everyone is well and has a good time. It is everyone's responsibility to intervene when people do not respect the boundaries of others and behave in an unpleasant and harassing manner.

Guards should keep an eye on what is happening, and intervene when necessary or make sure someone else does. The guards have to walk around and show that they are there and paying attention. It is also important that they make contact with the festival goers, are nice and approachable, and show that they care.

There will be volunteer guards who come in at the last minute and who have not received advance information. Make sure these are updated. Also distribute the volunteers based on suitability – the tallest should be in front of the stage to get the best possible overview. Guards in the toilet area must dare to speak out clearly and be ready to intervene if necessary.

An awareness team can be a good attachment to the security service. While guards are often tasked with duties that make them less mobile (guarding posts that they cannot leave) awareness teams, recruited from 'festival youth' age groups are specialized and solely tasked with roaming around to keep the atmosphere friendly, intervening in fights, harassments, and provide help if anyone asks for it.



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😊	😊	🤔	🤔	😡	😡	😡
Flirting and touching that is mutually wanted	Teasing and joking where both parties are in on the joke	Teasing and joking around where one party seems uncomfortable	Touching and groping where one or both parties seem heavily intoxicated	Touching random people passing by	Making comments and advances that the other party clearly shows are unwanted	Saying slurs and derogatory comments to others

SANCTIONS

There must be consequences for harassing and not respecting others' boundaries.
It is important to have clear protocols of handling a harrassment/abuse cases. Relevant reactions may be:

- A warning.
- Expulsion from the area and confiscation of access cards/festival bands
- Reporting to the police

IT HAPPENED. WHAT DO WE DO THEN?

If an assault has occurred, the police and the nearest sexual assault reception center must be notified and take over. In the meantime, it is important to secure the crime scene and potential evidence. Make sure that the victim does not wash themselves. Take care of underwear and clothes. Save social media texts and messages. Check with other guards if they have observed anything, it may be important in a possible court case.

Harassment and abuse can happen, even if you did everything to prevent it. Your responsibility as the representative of a festival, guard or participant is how you manage the situation and how you communicate about it.

- How do you handle a visitor/staff complaint about a possible incident? (What do you answer, how do you investigate the case, who do you involve?)
- How do you treat the victim? They should never feel themselves left alone or that you are not on their side.
- What do you offer as help, act of support or compensation?

BE SAFE!

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