



## Practice Sheet

### Project Title

Nightlife Stewards

### Location

**DISTRICT:** City Centre

**CITY:** Rotterdam

**COUNTRY:** The Netherlands

### Duration

Started in 2013, ongoing

### Key Words

Nightlife - Youth – Safety experience - Intervention - Community Safety Partnerships - Public-private cooperation

### Background (what motivated the activity/project)

Living, working and recreation come together within the city Centre of Rotterdam. The dynamics associated with the different “functions” of the city entail certain risks. Young visitors, mostly locals, cause nuisance in public spaces when they are on a night out. Enhanced police effort was required to engage in preventive and mitigating measures with regards to the enhancement of security and tranquility in the nightlife. Additional professional support was needed.

Therefore, in 2010 and 2011 experiments were conducted with nightlife stewards in two of the busiest entertainment areas in Rotterdam (Stadhuisplein & Kruiskade). The nightlife stewards created a better and safer atmosphere in these areas. After these experiments, the nightlife stewards were officially introduced in 2013.

This nightlife stewards project is carried out by the MEION foundation, which selects and trains the stewards. MEION’ activity with regards to stewards is financed by the City of Rotterdam’s Department of Public Safety. More information about MEION, part of Stichting veilige steden, can be found here: [www.stichtingveiligesteden.nl](http://www.stichtingveiligesteden.nl) (in Dutch).

The stewards remuneration is equally paid by the City.

### Objective(s)

- Creating a safer atmosphere in the nightlife
- Improving the feelings of safety for the public of nightlife venues and events for the residents
- Improving hospitality for the entertainment of the public
- Improving safety without police intervention or enforcement
- Decrease police deployment actions
- Co-produce of nightlife security initiatives

- Knowledge transfer: Training of skilled stewards who can further train their new colleagues

### Target Group(s)

- Nightlife public
- Nightlife entrepreneurs in the entertainment areas in the center of Rotterdam
- Residents around the entertainment areas
- Government partners within the security domain

### Activities and Strategy

As mentioned above, this project is being carried out by MEION. The MEION foundation originated from the aim to develop suitable solutions for social issues. They have in-house knowledge and experience in this regard. MEION is carrying out the 'nightlife stewards' project on behalf of the City of Rotterdam. MEION's nightlife stewards are specialised in reducing nuisance and improving social safety for the nightlife public.

12-14 nightlife stewards are trained and mobilised. are trained to: deal with large groups of visitors, possibly under the influences of alcohol and drugs, prevent or tackle aggression or violence and provide first aid. They are youth workers who are specially selected for their communication skills. The mobilisation of nightlife stewards has a precautionary effect: they prevent incidents. The human contact that is established between the stewards and the entertainment public often prevents escalation. This method reduces nuisance, disturbances and violence.

Nightlife stewards have three main activities: (1) hospitality and helpfulness for the entertainment public, (2) intervening and de-escalating, (3) preventing intoxication: drug and alcohol abuse. Nightlife stewards are also alerted at the end of the night, when large groups of visitors leave. By acting friendly but stern, they prevent many harmful activities and incivilities such as loitering, urinating in public and noisiness. Finally, the stewards are also able to provide first aid. Since 2017, all nightlife stewards have followed a first aid course. They always have a first aid kit with them so they can treat the most common minor injuries. In practice, this appears to work well.

Every Thursday, Friday and Saturday evening, nightlife stewards are deployed in various entertainment areas in the center of Rotterdam. They act as hosts for visitors. They talk to visitors on the streets and make contact with groups. Together with the police, the enforcers of the city (a branch of the City Organisation responsible for the order and tranquility in public spaces, with more limited power than the police with regards to interventions and sanctions)<sup>1</sup>, and the security guards of nightlife businesses ensure that nuisance and incidents are prevented and mitigated. The stewards notice where nuisance or aggression might take place. During the evening they are in contact with police and municipal enforcers. The stewards can direct the police or enforcers to the right spot to prevent big(ger) aggressive events. The stewards wear recognizable uniforms, different from the police, enforcers and security.

As indicated above, the nightlife stewards work closely with the police and other security stakeholders such as security guards. Under good cooperation agreements, the stewards are

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<sup>1</sup> Enforcers of the City: They are part of the City's Organisation structure. They have executive powers in different areas. One of these areas is public space/public order. They work alongside the police but their powers are very limited in comparison. They cannot carry any defense tools or weapons. However they do have a specific uniform. They can write penalty tickets for minor incivilities.

complementary to the partners in the safety field. Good coordination with all parties has resulted in a clear division of roles and tasks. Before each shift, there is a joint briefing with the police and enforcers. Furthermore, close contact is maintained with all parties during the night. When assessing a possible threat of escalation, the police is called immediately.

After each shift, reports of the stewards' findings are written. For each location a description is given on what the stewards have seen, heard and done. The municipality and the police are thus provided with information obtained during the night. This information can be noise-pollution-related, but also, for example, it can refer to further development of the activities carried out and new opportunities for action.

The Department of Public Safety of the City of Rotterdam initiated the project and finances it. In cooperation with the police and the nightlife industry the Department decides which locations are included in the working area of the nightlife stewards. During the night the stewards work closely together with police and municipal enforcement, as indicated above. Police intervene when severe incidents occur related to public order and public safety, such as fights, the use of weapons and drugs. Municipal enforcement is there for smaller misdemeanors such as urination in public spaces.

### **Partners**

Department of Public Safety of the City of Rotterdam leads the activity in partnership with:

- MEION (City has a contractual relationship with MEION, this entity executes the tasks that are given to it by the City with regards to the nightlife stewards: their selections, training and mobilisation)
- Police
- Enforcers of the City of Rotterdam (executive branch of the City Organisation with regards to the enforcement of public order and tranquility)
- Entrepreneurs in the entertainment areas
- Security guards of the nightlife businesses.

### **Key attention points and recommendations for other local authorities who seek to tailor this activity to their local needs**

If a municipality would like to work with nightlife stewards, it is important that every partner involved is on the same page (seek to obtain the same goal through a clearly defined strategy/action plan/process): the police and the City in the first place. Besides these two actors the nightlife entrepreneurs should also be involved and enthusiastic about this approach. Effective cooperation agreements between these partners must be made for this reason. Nightlife entrepreneurs, security guards, the police and enforcers must accept and respect the role of the stewards. They must all collaborate with respect to the same vision.

### **Perspectives**

#### **Public health stewards**

The nightlife stewards can be mobilised in different ways, for example, as public health stewards. Covid-19, which is currently a global problem, requires a contribution from all stakeholders in the public field. In Rotterdam the local authority together with the police, made the choice to keep youth workers of MEION in the public spaces as much as possible. This is to ensure the social distancing of children, young people and adults by informing and advising them. The nightlife stewards are deployed as 'public health stewards'. They contribute to the greatest possible awareness-raising among the population of Rotterdam about the contagiousness of the virus and the health risks

involved. In this way too, they fulfill an additional host-role in the City. Since these tasks are very close to their regular work, they were not specifically trained for this.

Next year (2022) the contractual cooperation with MEION will end, but the mobilisation of nightlife stewards will go on under a new public tender. MEION, among others, will get another chance to train and mobilise youngsters who make the City more welcoming and safe