

Practice Sheet

Project Title

The Night Council's Messages and Tools for Prevention

Location

City of Liège

Duration

Ongoing since 2019 (no fixed end date)

Keywords

prevention, sexual harassment, communication, awareness-raising, nightlife, tools

Context and Nature of the Problem

The City of Liège – which offers a wide range of nightlife activities, especially for young people – has noted that its nightlife activities are concentrated in a specific urban area. Such a concentration can cause problems and lead to added risks and dangers related to the liveliness and dynamism of the nightlife offer, including increased drug consumption, sexual harassment, noise pollution, anti-social behaviour, etc.

The target zone of this project – the so-called “Le Carré” district – has long had a bad reputation due to safety concerns and anti-social behaviour at night. In order to co-produce concrete solutions, the municipality organised meetings alongside local stakeholders, seeking to analyse and remedy the problems specific to this zone and, ultimately, to transform its image. These consultations led to the development of various specific actions intended to improve security during nightlife activities (e.g. engaging in prevention campaigns). From this point forward, the city committed itself to a prevention-focused approach, by means of an information-sharing and awareness-raising campaign targeting nightlife areas and specific festive events.

Objectives

Within the framework of the ongoing projects led by the City of Liège's Night Council, preventive messages regarding the use and abuse of harmful substances and the problem of sexual harassment have been integrated into the City's Prevention Plan and are disseminated through an array of concrete actions and initiatives.

In addition, prevention of dangerous behaviours must coexist with ecological considerations: the City of Liège is committed to remaining a zero-waste and zero-plastic entity, and this commitment is of particular relevance when it comes to the distribution of goodies and flyers bearing preventive messages. Consequently, new modes of intervention and new prevention tools have been developed, aiming to be eye-catching and appealing to young people while respecting environmental considerations.

Specific objectives:

- To disseminate preventive messages to raise awareness about risky behaviours (such

as alcohol and drug abuse) and to combat sexual harassment in nightlife.

- To develop communication tools to facilitate the dissemination of preventive messages while ensuring the attractiveness of these tools, and of nightlife entertainment in general, for young people.

Target Group

Partygoers/nightlife users, with a specific focus on young people attending festive/nightlife events in Liège which do not have an age limit.

Strategy and Activities

When a new tool is developed as part of the City of Liège's Prevention Plan, it is essential to consider its attractiveness to young partygoers. Following this, a reflection starts on the exact content of the prevention messages. Below are some concrete examples:

- For the “Les Ardentes” Festival, the City of Liège developed a range of temporary tattoos (based on traditional tattoo shapes) incorporating preventive messages (e.g. “Real men don’t hurt others”, “What about politeness? Damn it!”). On site, festival-goers were asked to take a quiz on issues related to prevention in the party environment in order to “earn” the temporary tattoo of their choice. The time taken to apply the temporary tattoos also allowed the workers to discuss relevant topics with the young people. As this event took place in the summer, the city also distributed recycled cardboard fans bearing various important messages (e.g. “I don't let myself be influenced by the group”, “During the party and on the way home, I remain vigilant”). This allowed festival attendees to fan themselves while simultaneously reading important advice for personal and public safety and easily accessing useful phone numbers (e.g. for the police, ambulance, lost property).
- During Saint Torè (a student folk festival), the City of Liège designed several tools in collaboration with the General Assembly of Liègeois Students. They printed preventive messages such as “No abuse, even if you've been drinking” onto the materials distributed during the festivities. These included stickers to be put on the distinctive caps of the “baptised” (partygoers who have successfully completed their initiation into a student committee) and reusable eco-cups. Based on previous observations of local needs, bandanas with prevention messages were also designed and distributed outside nightlife centres. These bandanas included a blank space in which young people were asked to write down the contact details of their designated “evening buddy” (someone who had come with them to enjoy the festivities and would serve as an emergency contact). This was intended to emphasise the importance of looking after your peers during nightlife activities, ensuring their safety right up until they get home.

Partners

The initiative is piloted by the Night Council of the City of Liège¹ with the support and collaboration of:

- The “Ardentes” Street Music Festival, which generously provided a designated space on the site for the entire duration of the festival, as well as free entry for staff.
- The General Assembly of Liégeois Students (AGEL), which supported the distribution of prevention tools and reserved a designated space on the site of its garden party.

Budget

All equipment used is financed by the City of Liège via either the Night Council or the Prevention Plan, according to the available budgets. The field teams are made up of staff working under the framework of the Prevention Plan, who make themselves available for this initiative during their working hours. In 2019, €10,000 was set aside for the actions of the Night Council. About half of this sum was spent on purchasing prevention and awareness-raising tools.

Results

During the 2019 “Ardentes” Festival, around 1,500 young people were reached by the awareness-raising and prevention activities. During the Saint-Torè Festival, 3,000 eco-cups and 3,000 stickers were given out to students. Furthermore, during the on-the-ground fieldwork prevention actions, 700 bandanas were distributed. Sadly, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the other planned activities had to be cancelled.

Evaluation

Debriefings conducted with the prevention workers following the various actions were very positive. The tools enabled them to initiate real and meaningful exchanges with the target audience and the goodies were very popular. The City has not carried out a full impact assessment but anecdotally during the “Ardentes” Festival several young people came back to the City’s stand every day to get new temporary tattoos, which demonstrates the project’s success and popularity.

Next Steps

The tools described in this Practice Sheet will continue to be used and distributed during future nightlife activities. However, the City will also continue paying attention to evolving youth interests and trends which could be used and adapted to produce new effective preventive messages in the future.

Further Information

¹ Composition: The Council is made up of stakeholders of Liège’s social and nightlife (café owners, festival organisers, students, etc.), the Police, the Fire Brigade, relevant municipal services (commerce, city cleaning, etc.) and elected political representatives forming part of the Municipal Council, under the authority of the Mayor.















