

# YOUROPE @ FOF

International workshop on Human Resources & wellbeing



## Future-Fit Festivals at Future Of Festivals Convention 3F Training event E 3.2 | November 25 & 26, 2022

Arena Berlin, Eichenstraße 4, 12435 Berlin, Germany

Report written by Carina Küpper; Images by Carina Küpper & FOF

# **3F @ Future of Festivals**

## **International Workshop on human resources & wellbeing at festivals**

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Friday, November 25<sup>th</sup>, and Saturday, November 26<sup>th</sup>, 2022

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## **International Workshop on human resources & wellbeing for festival crew members**

YOUROPE (The European Festival Association), in collaboration with the Berlin-based conference Future of Festivals, presented an exclusive two-day international workshop dedicated to the actors behind the festival scenes. "Our teams are the most important asset we have. Therefore, we should also pay our utmost attention to it," said YOUROPE general secretary Holger Jan Schmidt about the motivation to do the workshop.

An intensive exchange of experiences was especially important after the involuntary pandemic break and the challenging festival season of 2022.

The workshop was presented with the support of 3F Future-Fit Festivals, a project of YOUROPE (The European Festival Association), co-funded by the European Union.

## **How are you, 2022? & Co-creation workshop**

The festival and event industries have been through a lot in the past years. In the first workshop, participants joined Prof. Katja Ehrenberg from Fresenius University of Applied Sciences to look at what typically leads to different forms of stress in companies and which effects this has. They talked about how the festival summer of 2022 was experienced. Was it more stressful, less stressful than the last full season before the pandemic, or about the same? Did anything change at all, and if so, for the better or for the worse?

To start, Prof. Katja Ehrenberg has introduced herself. Katja Ehrenberg is a professor in the Department of Psychology at the Fresenius University of Applied Sciences in Cologne and a freelance systemic consultant (SG-certified). Her focus in teaching and research as well as her freelance work as a trainer and coach is on topics of applied social and communication psychology, resource activation and empowerment, including stress in the workplace and team building. Katja got in touch with the event industry through her expert presentations at several YOUROPE conferences, where she presented her book "Stay sound & Check yourself - Stress and mental health in the live music and event industry", published together with Holger Jan Schmidt.

In the next step, all workshop participants introduced themselves and expressed their thematic wishes. Topics like the needs of the employees, mental health, the problem of phases with extreme high work load and longer rest phases came up. In addition, it was about the difficulty of personnel acquisition, also in relation to the large number of people needed during a festival's

implementation. The topics of incentives, creating long-term relationships and self-care also came up.

After the round of introductions, all participants were sent on a journey through time. Together they thought about the festival industry before Corona. A few quotes from people in the festival industry were shown: "I totally underestimated that positive stress is also stress", "The emptiness after the festival is huge. It's like falling into a hole", "My biggest problem is saying no, of course", "It is stressful in a way and on a level that you only realise once it is over." It became clear that the festival industry is a very special industry and also has special characteristics in terms of mental health. This results in typical demands and typical resources and benefits.

Typical demands:

- fulfilling many different roles and role shifting
- a high level of unpredictability in the sector
- extreme and/or irregular working hours
- road life and everything that comes with it
- financial insecurity
- personal involvement, a tendency to self-exploit
- emotional vulnerability of people in arts / culture

Typical resources and benefits:

- creativity and autonomy
- informal working environment, like-minded people
- strong and immediate feedback during gigs
- finding meaning in expressing oneself
- fostering social / political change
- being part of something that connects people worldwide
- positive image, respect, admiration of others

Katja said that a certain amount of tension can easily result from the typical demands. This is not a bad thing at first, because activation and stress within a certain framework are okay and even conducive to productive work. It only becomes difficult when the phases of recovery are missing. Together with the participants, she considered which effects stress can have. In addition to an aggressive and irritable nature, it was also mentioned that there are people who withdraw when stressed. Tunnel vision can also be developed, in which people are no longer able to think clearly. It becomes problematic when phases of complete recovery are missing. Katja explained that if stress cannot be completely relieved, even small things can lead to a mental break-down.

Together with the workshop participants, they reflected on how they felt during a corona summer without festivals. Quotes from people in the festival industry were showed and reflected: "I really feel lucky at the moment because marketing developed to a whole different level", "I try to do things that I actually never really had time for. But the need to work is there, and we need to show that we are still there", "There's a parallel pandemic happening which has to do with wellbeing or mental health."

After that, the workshop members shared their own experiences. Here it emerged that the unevenly distributed workload was a major problem. Some employees were set at 0%, while others worked even harder than before and worked more like 160%. Part of the team sat at home and didn't know what their colleagues were working on; they lacked security, information and transparency. While half of the team was working on new concepts and maintaining marketing,

the other half had time for friends, family and new hobbies. In retrospect, people learned during the pandemic that it would have been better to involve the non-working half of the team in the current processes and keep them up to date.

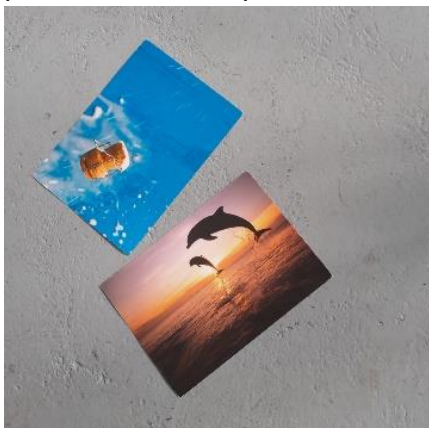
Afterwards, the 2022 season was discussed. The team members, some of whom had not worked for two years, were now challenged and were expected to function again as they had in the past. To make matters worse, a lot has changed in the personnel structure both within the team and on the side of the service providers. All in all, this led to a very stressful 2022 festival season.

To record the learnings and wishes for the coming festival season, ideas were written on cards. Divided into "Stop", "Keep" and "Start". In "Stop", everything was collected that should not be continued in this way. This included unevenly distributed workloads, cost-cutting measures affecting the team, staff shortages, and negative energy. In the case of "Keep", everything that has already worked well and should be retained was summarized. Self-confidence, crew love or team cohesion, and revised processes, for example with regard to salaries and benefits, were mentioned here.



*Together with Prof. Katja Ehrenberg workshop members collected learnings and wishes on cards labelled "Stop", "Keep" and "Start".*

In "Start", everything was written down that should be newly included. The ideas included a mental health team or establishing trusted people to whom one can turn if one does not feel well mentally. In the best case, these persons should also be appropriately trained and subject to a duty of confidentiality. It would be desirable if this person could also allocate additional vacation days for extremely stressful phases, so that the persons concerned can first recover before they continue to work. Talking about the current emotional state could also be promoted through guided discussion rounds that support an exchange of experiences. In addition, it was also mentioned that team building should also be promoted outside the team, i. e. with external partners, for example with team events. It was also discussed that managers should be trained accordingly and that deputies should be introduced for each person. In line with this, a 2-shift arrangement for at the event would also be conceivable to reduce the workload. In addition, more care for the crew at the festival was expressed, this can include passing drinks and food to remote locations, that there are clean toilets and retreats for the staff. In general, a transparent and appreciative interaction was desired.

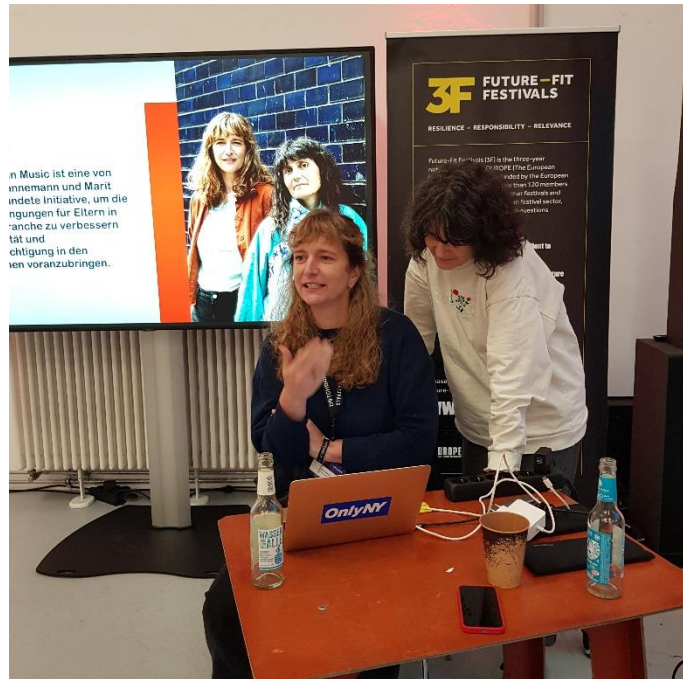


*Pictures chosen by workshop members to reflect their feelings.*

At the end of the workshop, each workshop member was asked to pick one or more picture(s) from the cards on display that reflect their own feelings and describe how they want to work in the future. In the context of the pictures the following things were often mentioned: team cohesion, celebrating successes, allowing rest periods, self-care, remaining curious.

## Parenthood in Music: Keynote & workshop on family-friendly festivals

The workshop of "Parenthood in Music" was about how to organize a family-friendly festival. At the beginning of the workshop, the two workshop leaders, Steffi von Kannemann and Marit Posch, introduced themselves and talked about how they co-founded the initiative "Parenthood in Music". "Parenthood in Music" is an initiative to raise awareness about how parenthood affects working conditions in the music industry. Parenthood is one of the main reasons for inequality and often results in mothers and single parents not holding leadership positions or having a career as an artist. With this initiative, Steffi and Marit aim to create innovative working models to achieve a modern and inclusive music industry. The goal of their work and workshops is to develop empathy for parents in the music industry.



*Steffi von Kannemann (left) and Marit Posch from "Parenthood in Music".*

At the beginning of the workshop, some statistics on mothers at work were presented:

- 75% of managerial positions are held by men.
- In 2020, 65% of all working mothers worked part-time, while for it was only 7% of men.
- The gender pay gap between women and men is 19%, in the music industry it is even higher at 25%.
- The gender pay gap is relatively small for younger people at 8%, but it increases rapidly from the age of 30.

As a result, there are many women who do not have children because of their careers, Posch said. In the study "Pregnancy and Motherhood in the Live Music Industry 2020" by Women in Live Music, 21% of childless women surveyed said they decided against having children because of their careers. The biggest challenges, according to the study "Towards a sustainable career for parents in the music industry 2021" by she said.soshe, are the lack of a support system, a lack of respect for mothers in senior positions, and the feeling of being disadvantaged due to parenthood.

This unequal gender distribution is also reflected in the line-up of Germany's five biggest festivals. Only 10% of the headline slots had a female member (source: "Who sets the tone here?", Musikwoche 2022).

In connection with the shortage of skilled workers in Germany, which has hit event companies particularly hard, it is necessary to consider how to make it easier for mothers to work in the music industry. This raises the question of how companies can become more family-friendly. The following points should be considered:

- Women's participation in the workforce increases when there are better childcare options available.
- Diversity management increases empathy as well as employee satisfaction and loyalty.
- Increasing the proportion of women in management positions raises awareness of the issue of combining family and career.

After creating awareness for parents in the music industry, the next part of the workshop was to examine together how festivals can become more family-friendly. The following questions were addressed:

- Should we organize more festivals, concerts and events during the day so that artists and staff don't have to work late? But also to give parents the opportunity to be there and to involve children?
- How do we make it possible that artists with children can be booked for festivals and how does this create more diversity?
- Which conditions/requirements must be met internally and externally to give both artists and festival staff the opportunity to do their job?

The following things were suggested and discussed as solutions:

- Providing family-friendly tools for artists and staff, such as breastfeeding rooms, quiet rooms, headphones for children, etc.
- Provide family-friendly structures for artists and staff at the festivals, such as family-friendly accommodations, 24-hour childcare, more visibility of parents on panels, special children's areas and/or programs for children.
- Provide family-friendly structures for staff before and after the festivals, such as transparent pay scales, better work schedules, shared leadership positions/job opportunities, etc.

Finally, it was concluded that the percentage of women in the job increases with better childcare opportunities, better recognition and better salary. More women on stage and in higher positions can lead to a snowball effect, so that more girls feel inspired and motivated to work in the music industry. Diversity management leads to more empathy and satisfaction among employees.

The proposed solutions are often associated with increased costs. Therefore, it was considered where savings could be made to implement these solutions. For many festivals it could be a first approach to save on expensive headliners or exaggerated decoration to make the above ideas possible.

## **Demographic and generational change in the festival industry**

At a time when festivals are celebrating their 30th, 40th or even 50th anniversaries, one of the most natural topics is generational change. But how does that work at festivals, which often have very individually grown structures? It is not uncommon for these festivals to have a founder with whom everything converges over a long period of time. What has to happen to ensure that a successful process is maintained even after the founder left the company? What are the challenges? In the following workshop, two team members of Karlsruhe-based festival DAS FEST from two different generations, Kevin Leider and Markus Wiersch, presented the results of a bachelor thesis supervised by their company.

At the beginning of the workshop, the two speakers introduced themselves. Markus Wiersch is project manager and head of security at DAS FEST, has been working in the festival industry since 1992 and has been with DAS FEST for more than 30 years. Kevin Leider has already been with DAS FEST for 7 years and works there as assistant to the production manager and takes care of the organization of the production office. He was born in 1992, the year Markus Wiersch started working in the festival industry. Thus, two generations are united in the realization of DAS FEST.



Kevin Leider (left) and Markus Wiersch from DAS FEST.

In addition to the generational change, which was the main topic of this presentation, service, security, fighting climate change, and inclusion are also significant for a sustainable festival, they said.

After 2 years of reorientation triggered by the pandemic, a generational change became visible. This can be seen in the following points:

- Migration of the founding generation (age, health, insecurity)
- Loss of know-how, experience and expertise
- Different self-image of work ethic
- Lifestyle vs. career (work-life balance)

The older generation as well as the younger generation are facing many new challenges. However, these also offer a multitude of opportunities for change. The most important aspect for a well-functioning and profitable generational change is to create an environment that favors this change. This includes:

- Early integration of ideas originating from the younger generation
- Open-mindedness of long-term employees towards new ideas
- Building up young team members including a perspective on a leadership role
- Confidence in the process of generational change

An important point here is the handover of responsibility and trust in the new ideas of the younger generation.

In the following, the scientific thesis, which was written with the support of DAS FEST at the Karlsruhe Hochschule, was discussed. The title of the thesis is "Demographic Change and Generational Handover in the Festival Industry" and deals with the core question "How to stay relevant across generations?" On a European level, the study investigated how festival organizers deal with demographic change and generational handover, both in relation to their own organization and in relation to the changing target audience, and what challenges and opportunities exist for the festival industry. The following data emerged from a survey among festival organizers:

- More than 65% are affected by demographic change
- Just under 80% feel that generational handover is important
- More than 70% perceive demographic change as an opportunity for innovation

- Successors come primarily from within the company (57%) followed by external (30%) and family members (13%)

It should be emphasized that the study showed that the key elements of the festival do not change due to demographic change. It is rather individual elements and positions that change, but the core of the festival remains the same.

At the end of the presentation, the workshop members talked about how they are affected by generational change and what significance this topic has. It emerged that there are various problems. One of the biggest problems is finding new young employees who have an appropriate work ethic. According to the workshop participants, although the job in the festival sector is still very popular and there are enough applicants, the work attitude is often not suitable. Often requirements are desired that are difficult to implement in a festival setting.

## **Awareness doesn't stop at the backstage gate: Panel discussion & group workshop**

Awareness – especially in the areas of sexualized violence, equality and diversity – has been a hot topic in the event industry for some time. Especially in front of and on stages. The panel discussion and subsequent workshop focused on backstage. How can crew members deal with unreasonable demands, toxic power games, and unhealthy hierarchies? These can arise in cooperation with artist productions, but of course also in their own teams.

First, there was a panel discussion with Karin Tonsern of the network Sisters of Music and Viola Balser-Schuhmann from Hamburg-based festival MS Dockville. Panel host was Jule Detlefsen from music magazine "Flutwelle". This was followed by a group workshop led by Sebastian Fleiter of Atelier Fleiter.



*Panel discussion: Karin Tonsern (Sisters of Music), Jule Detlefsen ("Flutwelle") and Viola Balser-Schuhmann (MS Dockville).*

Karin Tonsern has a master in event technology and works as an independent production manager, stage and tour manager. She is also the founder of Sisters of Music, a non-profit network of and for women working in the Austrian event industry. A resulting project, "Sisters on Site", evaluates events in regards to sexual harassment and sexual violence. Viola Balser-Schuhmann has been working at Kopf & Steine GmbH since 2018. As Head of Artist Relations, she has been in charge of the entire artistic pre-production including the stage technical interface since 2021. Kopf & Steine GmbH is

responsible for the events MS Dockville, Vogelball, Spektrum, MS Artville and Habitat. As a freelancer, she also works as a stage manager and performer in clubs and at other events. Jule Detlefsen is founder and editor-in-chief of "Flutwelle", a music magazine for girls and young women.



The panel started with the connection between awareness and safety. For Viola and Karin, awareness means being aware of when and how visitors feel safe. The goal is that all people on site can feel comfortable at an event. For this you have to be aware of the different perspectives at an event and recognize any discrepancies. Particularly important is the appreciation of the artists but also of the employees. Karin pointed out that the appreciation of security service providers and cleaning specialists is often lower than of other employees. She emphasized how important it is to treat all employees with respect. This is more important than ever, especially considering the increasing staff shortage. Viola also added that this hierarchy often exists with opener acts and headliners and advocated treating these two groups with equal respect.

Viola got more specific on the topic of artists and awareness. With artists, there are two areas that you should look at in relation to awareness. Firstly, the demands and expectations with which an artist comes to an event, and secondly, the misconduct of these artists in relation to awareness. As Head of Artist Relations, Viola has often seen that the expectations of the artists are not identical to the previously agreed on terms, which can lead to problems on site. As Head of Artist Relations, she is often disrespected in discussions with artists and their management. She demands a change on the management level; women in these positions should be given more trust and responsibility. Diverse teams and appreciative behaviour can help with this.

One of the problematic behaviours of artists is girl scouting. Here, young women from the audience are brought backstage by artists. The organizer has no influence on this sexist behaviour. It is also difficult here that the organizer is often dependent on certain artists and books them, although he is aware of their misconduct in the backstage area. Viola emphasizes that if you don't want to do without certain artists, you should pay even more attention to providing appropriate safety concepts and conducting educational campaigns in these special cases. This can also include, for example, banning shirtlessness. In her opinion, an event organizer also has an educational task to perform.

The following discussion was about how to deal with such dependencies on artists, but also on superiors and clients. Karin explained that as a freelancer, she feels freer to address grievances because, in the worst case, she is only not booked for a follow-up job, but her employment is not at risk as it is, for example, with permanent employees. She addresses grievances but tries to de-escalate them quickly. She is helped when she has a sense of allies. At an event where she doesn't know anyone, she feels more uncomfortable addressing misconduct. Viola went on to talk about tour managers and artists who exploit dependency to pressure employees. Her tip in case of rude requests is to try to negotiate at eye level. Basically, Viola is also concerned to meet the needs of the artists and to create a place of retreat for them and a place that feels "like home". It is important to her that one is aware that artists are also in a certain relationship of dependency to the organizer. She also spoke of female artists who were harassed by security and technicians.

Karin pointed out that there is often no awareness concept for crew members and if there is one, it only takes effect on the day of the event and not on the set-up days. She explained that it is still difficult, especially for women, to be recognized and tolerated in the technical field. According to her, there are currently few processes in place at events to protect crew members, so she urged to always be aware and vigilant.

Jule asked Viola if their awareness concept can be implemented 100% at MS Dockville. Viola explained that it is difficult to implement the concept 100% and pointed out that it is also difficult to measure. She talked about how you can tell if an awareness concept is well or badly implemented, and asked if it is good if no one comes to the awareness team and thus no cases of harassment are reported or if it is a successful concept implementation if many people report to

the awareness team. This question remained open. For Viola it is important to realize that awareness concepts are constantly in transformation.

Karin was asked by Jule whether the topic of awareness at events has improved recently. Although the topic has recently received more attention, the existing concepts often do not work, Karin said. Poor training and misconduct by the responsible persons are the problem. With her "Sisters on Site" program, she has experienced that people on site are designated as awareness contact persons but have not received any briefing on this. This can be more disruptive than helpful for those affected. Karin sees the problem in the fact that the concepts are developed at the desk. The concrete implementation on site is often incomplete. Karin mentioned the importance of also dealing with the perpetrators. It must be clear how to deal with the perpetrators; also, the victim must be told what happens to the perpetrators. Viola spoke from her experience and explained that it is important that the affected person gets to decide what happens to the perpetrator.

At the end of the panel, Jule raised the question of what you can do as an organizer to address the issue of awareness. Karin said that it is important to become aware of the objectives in the first step. The questions "What do I want, what do I not want?" and "How do I get there?" should be addressed. Viola advocated dealing with one's own limits and communicating these to the visitors, artists and suppliers. She emphasized that service providers and teams in this area are growing and there are increasingly better structures and people with background knowledge to work with. Finally, Karin emphasized that it is important to approach the topic with more openness.

Inspired by the previous panel, the participants could then become active themselves. In a group workshop led by Sebastian Fleiter, the participants considered what they should pay attention to in terms of awareness in advance and at an event itself.

Sebastian Fleiter works as an artist, designer, entrepreneur and consultant in various contexts. After training as a stage designer in Cologne and London, he studied fine arts and visual communication. Founded in 2007, Atelier Fleiter specializes in communication concepts and projects. His mobile showcase project "The Electric Hotel", informally teaching about electricity, has been touring the international music festival scene since 2011. Fleiter also travels the world as a coach on the creative industries, workshop leader and think tank member.



*Workshop leader Sebastian Fleiter of "Atelier Fleiter".*

Before the participants started working together, Sebastian listed the difficulties of the topic again. Among other things, he mentioned the different hierarchical levels and lifestyles that come together. Another problem is that rules have often been established in the past without being discussed together. In addition, it is often unclear who has been defined as the contact person. Furthermore, clear structures and schedules are often missing.

Together, the participants thought about what could be done in the run-up to an event to improve awareness:

- **Code of Conduct:** Create a Code of Conduct can improve expectations and manners and should be integrated into the awareness concept.
- **Rider:** Riders sent by the organizer to the artists can already state expectations regarding awareness.
- **Booking:** Make sure that the booked artists represent the values of the organizer.
- **Structures:** Create clear structures and communicate these openly.
- **Hierarchy:** Make sure workers across all hierarchical levels are shown appreciation; integrate all employees across all levels.
- **Equality:** Communicate at eye level.
- **Improve internal communication:** Good internal communication and a good team feeling have a positive impact on visitors.
- **Junior staff training:** Appropriate training and promotion of female managers.
- **Select a suitable security service provider:** Securities can be an important part of an awareness concept, but often security crews consist primarily of men. The use of female security can positively change the atmosphere at an event. A good communication basis between security and visitors is important for a successful awareness concept.
- **Structural measures:** Illuminate dark areas, have enough toilets for women so that they do not have to look for other places, for example dark places, to go to the toilet.
- **Consult with other festivals:** Establish community rules about which requirements are met by artists and which are not.

The next step was to see what could be implemented during the event.

- Have separate backstage rooms for crew.
- Panama system also for crew: establish code words and create retreats.
- Allow freedom of decision for the (awareness) team.

Finally, it was again emphasized that an open exchange within the festival organizers is important. The topic of awareness is a constant process and one can increasingly learn from each other.