

YES Group seminar @ ESNS 2024



**Future-Fit Festivals at
31st YES Group Health & Safety Seminar @ ESNS**
3F Training event E 3.9 | January 17 & 18, 2024

Stadsschouwburg, Groningen, The Netherlands
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FESTIVALS



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International seminar on Event Safety

After the accident at Roskilde Festival in the year of 2000, The YES Group was created to improve safety for festivals across Europe. Now, the YES group has become a strong network, led by a team of high-profile experts in Event Safety and Crowd Management, representing large and small venues and festivals in Europe.

This year, on the 17th and 18th of January, the 31th YES Group seminar took place in Groningen, NL. With its 65+ participants from over 17 European countries it was the largest YES Group seminar to this date.

Day 1

Survey: Feedback from 2023

To start the next two days of (re)connecting, sharing knowledge and expertise, Pascal Viot from Paléo Festival in Switzerland, co-coordinator of the YES Group, presented the results of a survey among participants of the seminar.

Not only the results from 2023 were covered but also the differences between managing festivals in 2022 and 2023. In 2022, issues like lack of security staff, chaos, and infrastructure problems were prevalent. The following year, while challenges like staffing shortages persisted, they receded slightly into the background. Weather emerged as a significant factor, with sexual harassment also becoming a bigger concern.

Following the summary, attendees shared their 2023 experiences, especially of emergencies. An example was given by one festival, which had faced a heavy thunderstorm the night before opening, causing damage to fences and tents. However, with a collective effort, the festival was able to rebuild and open nearly on time. Morten Therkildsen from Roskilde Festival in Denmark encouraged collaboration among organizers.



Seminar participants. Photo by May-Britt Morgenstern

Various other challenges were discussed, such as handling emergencies like heart attacks and missing children; issues with communication between authorities and event staff during emergencies were also brought up. The closing discussion talked about the changing dynamics of crowd behavior, with some attendees preferring more space between each other. Strategies for managing crowd density, such as the cooperation with the booking department and physical site changes, were explored. The importance of considering attendee perceptions and entitlements, influenced by social media opinions, was highlighted.

Overall, the presentation emphasized the evolving nature of festivals and the importance of collaboration, all in all an excellent way to start the 2-day seminar.

Happiness Festival – Assisting a Festival with its Site Design



Presenting the festival site. Photo by May-Britt Morgenstern

The Happiness Festival in Germany, hosting 9000 visitors a year, had encountered a rather personal challenge. Despite the stunning view of the main stage from a distance, thanks to a 6m height difference caused by a hill, this setup presents some challenges. The potential for overcrowding, with visitors pushing downhill and risking accidents, is a concern for the festival. Geographical limitations have prevented the relocation or extension of the stage, while sanitation issues have complicated toilet placement. Additionally, specific emergency exit locations have been mandated by authorities.

Following an introduction with pertinent details, seminar attendees were provided with site maps and asked to brainstorm ideas and offer feedback on the situation. What could go wrong letting 65+ people working in event safety face the same problem? Turns out: nothing, if there is enough coffee. Every group presented and discussed their ideas from relocating the sanitation stations and catering to where to use metal panels. Giving an update on the situation is planned for next year's seminar, so stay tuned.



Participants presenting their ideas. Photo by May-Britt Morgenstern

Rock am Ring – Managing Sideways Access during In- and Egress at a Mainstage

Ingo Mertens presented the comprehensive crowd management system designed for the mainstage at Rock am Ring Festival, located at the Nürburgring racetrack in Germany. Access to the festival's mainstage poses several challenges due to its unique location, having prompted various enhancements over the years.

Accessing and exiting the two front-of-stage areas requires visitors to traverse narrow racing boxes, which also serve as emergency exits. This configuration has

led to issues with maintaining clear pathways in the racing boxes, informing visitors in front of the entrance during emergencies, and potential collisions between entrance and exit lanes.



Egress at the Rock am Ring mainstage. Photo by Ingo Mertens



*Pit lane emergency exit signs at Rock am Ring.
Photo by Ingo Mertens*

Attendees of the seminar were briefed on the current technical setup, materials used, and several proposed ideas for further system improvement.

The presentation also outlined the evolution of the crowd management system, highlighting both historical changes and current strategies.

Emergency Planning for Events

The presentation from Emma Parkinson, a lecturer and planner in emergency planning as well as crowd safety, provided an overview of emergency planning and its key components, including anticipation, assessment, prevention, planning, response, and recovery. Emphasizing the importance of the "Choose Life" philosophy, it highlighted various types of emergencies and the need for thorough preparation.



*Emma Parkinson, Morten Therkildsen and Sander Teunissen (left to right).
Photo by Pascal Viot*

One focus revolved around the **OODA loop**, which was developed by John Boyd, a military strategist and United States Air Force Colonel. It covers the **four areas observe, orient, decide and act**.

The "**observe**" phase stresses the importance of gathering accurate and timely information, empowering staff to report suspicious activities, and providing supervisors with essential information.

In the "**orientate**" phase, situational awareness and efficient resource allocation are key, with a focus on recognizing unusual events, understanding their implications, and making informed decisions.

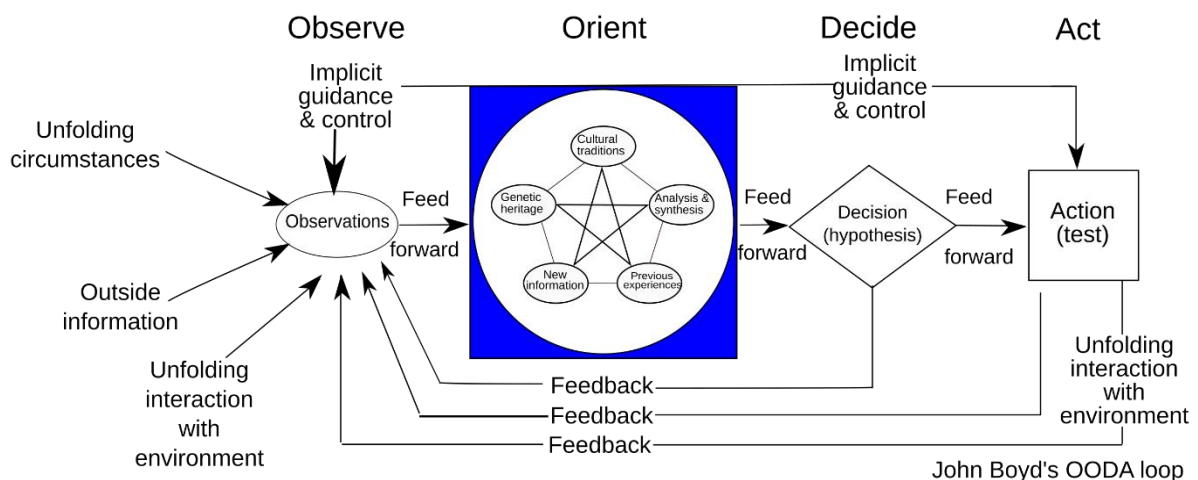


Diagram of the OODA loop by its inventor John Boyd.

During the “**decide**” phase, strategies for reducing decision time, minimizing errors through pre-event planning, and establishing clear responsibilities are discussed. The presentation advocated for the use of decision matrices and emphasized the importance of tailoring emergency plans to specific situations.

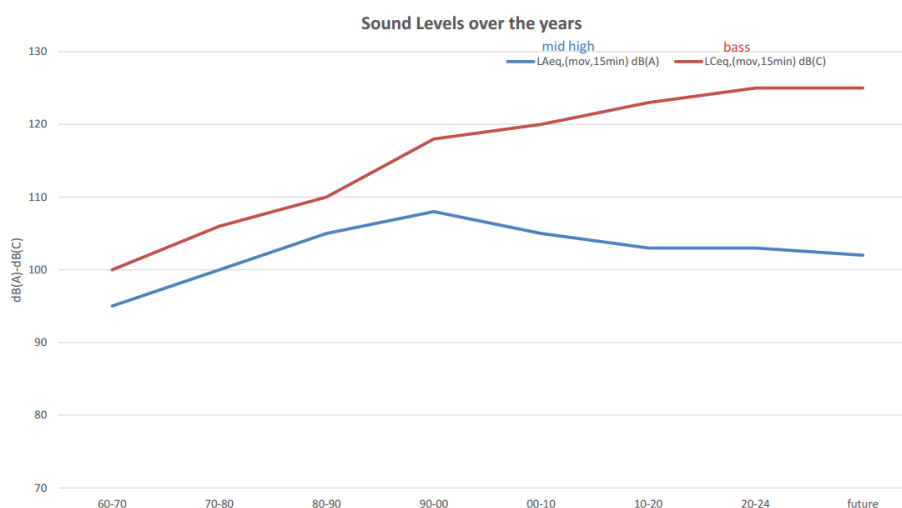
In the “**act**” phase, the importance of swift action, adaptation based on local feedback, and collaboration among staff members was highlighted. Hard copies of emergency plans were recommended, along with ensuring that everyone knows their role and maintaining open communication channels.

The presentation concluded with top tips for handling emergency situations, like emphasizing the importance of assigning tasks appropriately, gathering information about the skills employees possess beyond their primary duties, ensuring waterproof documentation, and facilitating group discussions to gather diverse perspectives on emergency planning.

The Influence of the PA Set-up on Event Safety

Peter van der Geer, an expert in audio and sound management, covered key aspects of event safety and optimizing sound levels at events in his presentation. He emphasized the importance of keeping all stakeholders – from the audience to sound engineers to artists – happy. Adherence to noise limits, ensuring ear protection for staff and attendees, and compliance with local laws and regulations are crucial to ensuring a safe and enjoyable event experience.

The presentation also highlighted the significance of the PA setup for event safety and compared historical setups like Woodstock 1969 to modern configurations like Pinkpop 2019. It became evident that the satisfaction of all involved parties – audience, technicians, and artists – is of utmost importance.



Graph showing the increasing sound levels over the last 70+ years. By EventAcustics

European Festival Awards: Nominees for the Event Safety Award

At the end of the first day, the five nominees for the “Event Safety Award 2023” of the European Festival Awards were able to present their applications and projects in front of the seminar. Each

year the award goes to a festival who played a substantial role in moving towards safer festivals and events.

The nominees were:

Pol'and'Rock Festival (Poland)

A music festival in the style of Woodstock held in Poland, emphasizing volunteer-based safety measures like the Peace Patrol and Medical Patrol. A volunteer-created command center coordinates incidents with professionals to prioritize attendee safety and comfort.

Happiness Festival (Germany)

Reliance on technological infrastructure for communication raised concerns about reliability during emergencies. To address this, the festival implemented a creative solution involving distributing door hangers with basic information and engaging content to keep visitors informed and entertained during potential evacuations.

Rocco del Schlacko Festival (Germany)

Awareness initiatives aimed to improve accessibility for the LGBTQ+ community, including clear guidelines for staff and assigning security specifically for LGBTQ+ visitors, along with training on gender-appropriate searches.

OpenAir St. Gallen Festival (Switzerland)

Feedback from visitor surveys had prompted changes in entrance procedures, such as distributing wristbands beforehand to streamline entry. Simulations were used to convince authorities of the necessity for these changes, resulting in improved crowd management and safety.

Pohoda Festival (Slovakia)

With a diverse audience, the festival prioritized crowd safety through comprehensive services including security training, first aid provisions, and hygiene services tailored to the needs of different visitor demographics.

Overall, all presentations demonstrated a commitment to innovative solutions and collaborative efforts to enhance event safety and ensure a positive experience for all attendees. Many thanks to all the applicants and their diverse and great projects this year.

Alexandra von Samson (freelance event safety expert) and Henrik Bondo Nielsen (Roskilde Festival) had the honors of announcing the winner of the “Event Safety Award 2023” at the Event Festival Awards ceremony that took place on the Wednesday of ESNS. The YES Group extends its heartfelt congratulations to the winner: Open Air St. Gallen!



OpenAir St. Gallen winning and accepting the Event Safety Award 2023. By May-Britt Morgenstern

Day 2

The Importance of Zone Ex / Last Mile



Íse Murphy-Morris.

Photo by Alexandra von Samson

During her presentation, Íse Murphy-Morris, an event consultant specialized in crowd safety, Zone Ex and many other safety topics, highlighted the increasing importance of event management, particularly in transportation logistics, due to disasters and the need to manage crowds effectively. Key challenges include managing resources alongside emergency services, with significant expenditure on crowd management and transportation. Risks are addressed through various strategies including travel dwell management, traffic and crowd management, signage for wayfinding, communication protocols, stakeholder engagement, and contingency planning. The focus is on viewing crowd management as a customer journey, because the visitors will spend 2/3 of their time traveling to and from the event, as well as emphasizing cooperation among emergency services.

The presentation also discussed the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles ([JESIP](#)) and the importance of adapting and evolving strategies to address changing needs. In addition, the presentation covered future challenges like fans camping in front of the venue for weeks or even months, as well as big crowds of fans gathering near the venue on the concert/event day.

Last Mile Management with Early Arrivals of (Young) Audience

Following the topic of Zone Ex, Ruud von Buren, a Health and Safety Manager, focused on managing event logistics, particularly for young audiences attending concerts like by BTS (South Korean boy band) in his presentation. Risk assessments are crucial, considering factors like the concert venue's location and other events in the area which can attract large crowds.

Strategies include crowd escorting and maintaining order at entrances to set a positive tone for the concert, because "the tone you set before the concert, sets the tone during the concert." Effective communication and proactive measures, such as providing information systems and phone chargers, are essential for ensuring smooth operations and visitor satisfaction. Additionally, establishing contact with visitors beforehand can enhance the overall experience.

Crowd Communication – Necessary Adaptations in Regard to Generational Change

This presentation contained two parts: part one was a follow-up presentation by Sander Teunissen, founder of [CrowdCows](#), from last year's "From Communication to Influencing Crowds' Behaviour", covering necessary changes in the audience communication. The second part was called "Regular and Emergency Communication via Social Media – The Approach to Young Festival Goers / Generation Z" by Daniel Brunsch, founder of [Guardian Angels](#).

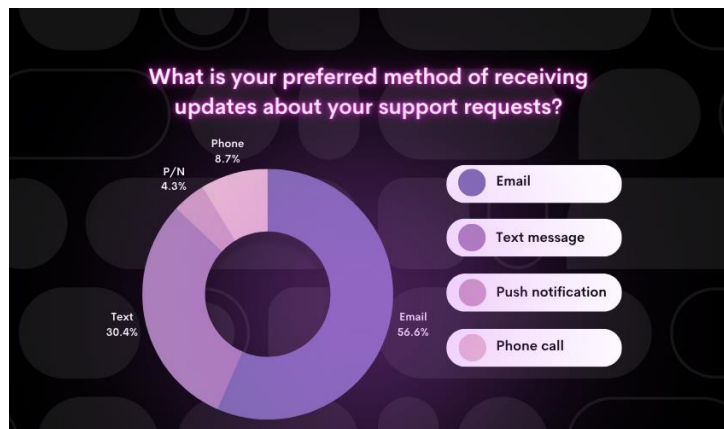
The first part delved into the intricacies of human decision-making and how we can use it for effective communication strategies. It emphasized activating the unconscious part of the brain,

known as System 1, to influence decision-making, while also recognizing the role of conscious thought processes in System 2.

Drawing from Daniel Kahneman's work on "Thinking, Fast and Slow," the presentation outlined various techniques to engage System 1, such as appealing to needs, social proof, storytelling, and emotions. Key insights included the importance of aligning communication with the recipient's ego style and implementing strategies like the DCM (Decision Communication Model) and Content Blindness to tailor messaging effectively.

Priming was highlighted as a subtle yet impactful method to influence behavior, along with the power of language and wording in shaping perceptions and responses. Overall, the first part of the presentation provided practical insights into leveraging cognitive processes to enhance communication effectiveness in real-life scenarios.

The second part by Daniel Brunsch explored the characteristics and behaviors of Generation Z, born between 1996 and 2009, and their increasing presence at events. Known for their high communication speeds driven by extensive phone and online usage, Gen Zers expect diverse and inclusive experiences with rapid feedback. However, they also exhibit heightened levels of anxiety and stress, particularly in crowded environments, leading to a preference for fast and frequent online communication over traditional cultural events.



[Why Gen Z Demands Exceptional Customer Support.](#)
Graph by Adebukola Ajayi

To effectively engage with Gen Z, event planners are advised to leverage social media channels, prioritize speed, convenience, and personalization in communication, and proactively communicate risks. Overall, understanding and catering to the preferences of Generation Z are essential for successful event management and communication strategies.

The Youth / Next Generation Project



Mads Therkildsen presenting his experiences during the youth exchange program.
Photo by Karina Gimlinge

To conclude two days brimming with knowledge and networking, the latest YES group project was presented. The youth exchange program offers newcomers in event safety the invaluable opportunity to immerse themselves in a YOUROPE festival, gaining insight into its safety structures and procedures and experiencing the behind-the-scenes operations. Participants not only learn about geographical differences but also delve into the intricacies of event safety, while the hosting festival benefits from a fresh perspective on its systems and valuable feedback.

May-Britt Morgenstern, a newcomer to the industry working in event safety, shared her firsthand experiences of 2023 Roskilde Festival, while Mads Therkildsen, a safety manager at Roskilde Festival, elaborated on the benefits and insights gained by the hosting festival. If you know a potential newcomer, regardless of age, or believe your festival could host such an exchange, please [reach out](#) to ensure the continuation of this program.

Following the youth exchange program, May-Britt Morgenstern and Mads Therkildsen discussed their journeys as newcomers in the industry and underscored the need for initiatives to enhance the appeal and accessibility of event safety careers for interested individuals.



*May-Britt Morgenstern.
Photo by Alexandra von Samson*

As we reflect on the insights and connections shared at this seminar, it's clear that our discussions have a lasting impact on the future of event safety. From practical strategies to personal experiences, each contribution has enriched our understanding. Looking ahead, let's carry forward the momentum gained here. Whether it's implementing new ideas or supporting emerging professionals, let's continue collaborating to make festivals safer and more enjoyable for all.

Thank You!

A heartfelt thank you to all participants, speakers, and organizers for their dedication and engagement. Let's stay connected and keep driving positive change in our industry. See you at next year's seminar around the third week of 2025!