



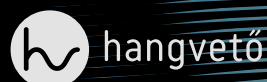
The European Showcase
Platform for World Music

SHOWCASE FAIR PRACTICE Guide for the skeptics



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SHOWCASE FAIR PRACTICE

Guide for the skeptics



First day at A to Jazz Festival 2023 in Bulgaria, Sofia; credit: A to Jazz Festival

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For the sake of clarity, we divided the documents into eight main topics, which equals issues raised in the survey.

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INTRODUCTION

“Music Is the Healing Force of the Universe”

This album title by Album Aylor, taken from lyrics written by Mary Maria Parks in 1969, has been a leading motto for any music activity that means more than purely aesthetics. Or means more than purely business.

Members of the UPBEAT Platform, 16 organizations and events from all over Europe, seem to follow this idea. This mission statement is especially valid for genres like global music or jazz, which are usually more engaged socially than pop music or other mainstream genres, or at least that is what we want to believe as leaders. Through organizing professional events, promoting new names on the scene, bringing people together and providing common space for artists and music professionals, we create a micro-world with both positive and challenging aspects. Most of the member events, from Estonia and Hungary to Spain and Lithuania provide not only concerts to showcase new bands, but also stimulate discussions on important topics, related to the music industry and beyond.

UPBEAT – The European Showcase Platform for World Music, is a truly unique initiative with its holistic vision and broad approach. It provides a clear system of development. The challenge of the platform is to build common ground for each event individually whereas each of these events has a different set of experiences, goals, local conditions and also differ from a practical point of view. Some of them take place in indoor venues, others (like WOMEX) change the hosting country almost each year. Some have more than 20 years of experience, and a solid ground for their own code of conduct (Mercat de Música Viva de Vic is a good example as the oldest showcase in Europe with 25 years of experience). Some of the members, on the contrary, are very new and learning how to develop by taking their first steps in the global music showcase environment.

Based on the survey, we perceive noticeable discrepancies among the members regarding their infrastructure, level of executing some of the rules on inclusivity and other major and minor approaches, etc. There are a few members who developed their own code of conduct or internal regulations regarding sustainability (social, economical or environmental):

Mercat de Música Viva de Vic - <https://www.mmvv.cat/en/sustainability>

Tallinn Music Week - sustainability goals based on UN Sustainable Development Goals called Agenda 2023 - <https://tmw.ee/sustainable-development-goals> .

Apart from the UPBEAT Platform members, we can share a short version, broad but useful, coming from our own experience of what is “fair trade practice” of the Dutch events:

1. **Specialized in global music Music Meeting Festival in Nijmegen: in Dutch.**
2. **One of the biggest multi-genre showcase event in Europe; ESNS in Groningen: in Dutch.**

What is important is that not only do these festivals have their codes of conduct and work accordingly, but also address these matters (good health and well-being, sustainable cities, gender balance, etc.) in their programming content, both in showcasing and conference parts.

The idea of the platform is to learn from one another, get inspired and apply criteria that help UPBEAT members to become sustainable events. In some of the member countries it is a state or municipality that regulates some of the cultural activities’ social responsibility. In other countries such principles are not codified. Our task was to collect the data and share the results and resources. We will provide examples to study and eventually to be implemented according to the abilities and local conditions.

Such topics as gender balance or working with local communities can be perceived very differently, depending on the diversity of the society and different demographics in the Czech Republic, Estonia or Slovakia compared, for example, with Spain with its historically diverse and mixed heritage and postcolonial impact. Therefore, a fair trade guide for the UPBEAT Platform is a complex task.

The document below is a set of universal recommendations in general terms. The main principles are based on the survey that we conducted among the members between 2nd and 16th June 2023. We received 13 answers out of 14 members. The survey results are attached to the document.

For some of the more complex issues we consulted with professional advisers:

Agata Etmanowicz/Fundacja Impact (on accessibility and disabilities) and Juliana Volož/JV-Promotion and Rok Košir/R.O.K Booking & Management (fair remuneration).

For the short introduction of the terminology, we would like to provide guidelines and choice of the words used:

- > Global music – interchangeable with term “world music”.
- > Social responsibility - interchangeable with term “fair trade” or “fair practice”.
- > Sustainability understood as:
 1. economical (business aspect),
 2. ecological (green environment),
 3. social (diversity, inclusivity, and equality).

For the sake of clarity, we divided the documents into eight main topics. Each of them starts with a statement or questions commonly known as skeptical. These are opinions that we often hear in our network. Some came as a result of the survey, others are just repeated common answers to excuse not being active in a particular field, etc. We will use them as examples and reflect on these doubts/arguments in the best way we can.

The areas are often intertwined. That is why some of the topics are described in detail.

To sum up the introduction to the fair trade guide, we would start with three major recommendations:

1. To work on the **code of conduct** for your own organization/festival if you do not have one - the more experienced showcase festivals who developed such formula can be a role models for your own one, adjusted to your circumstances, type of organization, size, location and character and can be named in different ways; however, the goal is to make it as uniform as possible for the all UPBEAT members.
2. Once the rules of fair practice or social responsibility are collected by your organization, please **communicate your internal code for the team** and the audience on your website, social media etc.; it has to be easy to find and transparent.
3. Make sure that **every member of the team is aware of the fair trade practices** that are introduced. The code needs to be communicated, discussed and revised from time to time. We recommend to consider updating it annually; by every member of the team we understand the core of the programming team, production team, communication team, but also volunteers and every freelance contractor who is involved in the organization of the event.

Last, but not least - the fair practice guide is prepared by Martyna van Nieuwland and Mateusz Zegan, recipients of Europe Jazz Network Award 'Music and Community' in 2022. Martyna - artistic director of Music Meeting Festival in Nijmegen, the Netherlands. Mateusz - musician and composer, active in the field of music and theater. From 2017 to 2022 they worked together in Katowice City of Gardens, Poland on social inclusion activities related with the music events.

1. Fair working conditions, aka “Showcases do not provide any fees, but promotion and exposure”

In this paragraph we build the overview and give recommendations in terms of remuneration. Each event organized, no matter the country, demands high costs of production. That refers to materials, technical equipment, sound and light, promotion, space rental, accommodation, transportation, catering, royalties and, most of all, crew and personnel. Economic sustainability is a matter of concern in every case. The events are subsidized either by national governments, regional governments or municipalities while some of them have sponsors. The members search for external funds like Creative Europe or other ways of funding their events. The budgets of the festivals differ, depending on the size, financing, and character of the organization. Often there are a few team members who work on the production the whole year round (or longer) and a group of freelancers and volunteers who join at a certain moment on the production timeline.

Fair working conditions relate to two groups on which we would like to focus:

1. Organization - production personnel,
2. Showcasing artists - musicians.

Ad. 1

- > We advise revising the fair pay rules of each country, depending on the annual entitlements in the national employment standards, making sure that nobody is underpaid and that fees are being shared equally, depending on the role and responsibilities, types of duties and number of hours dedicated to the task.
- > Transparency - following the fair remuneration rules in each country, it is important to maintain transparency and be able to communicate the financial criteria to the employees, explaining the reasons of the particular salary range.

Ad. 2

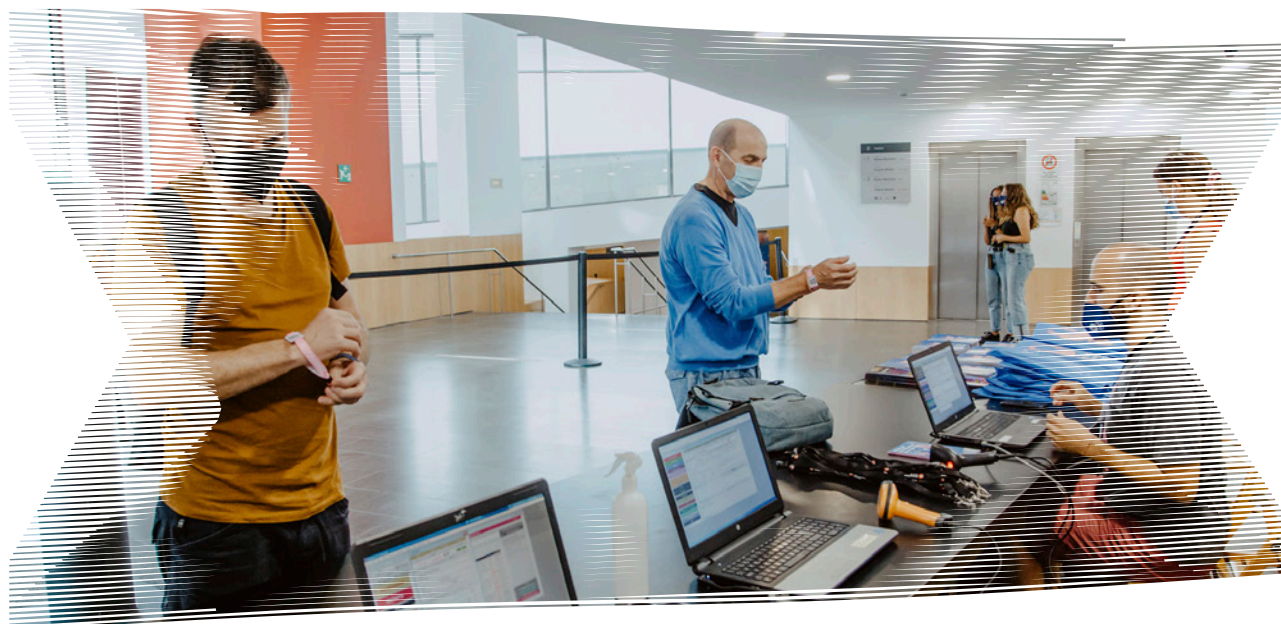
Showcase festivals have their own characteristics regarding artist fees. In most of the cases artist fees do not apply. Showcase festivals are meant mainly to expose and promote the music. The majority of the bands are “emerging artists”, “newcomers” or local bands being presented to the international audiences. Therefore, the showcase festival is perceived as an investment and a common effort of different parts involved. The contribution of the organizers is thought of as coverage of the costs of transportation, accommodation and technical (sound and light) rider, often catering and beverages. However, sometimes even these expenses are not covered by the showcase festival. The conditions, again, differ from one event to another. In order to prepare a broader overview on the topic, we consulted the recommendations with the interested parties

(artists, managers and agents). The majority of the answers were related to the growing number of showcase events and the more challenging financial situation of the touring musician. In other words, for artists and agents, well-known “festivalization” was replaced a few years ago by “showcalization” with more and more showcases where artists just play there instead of regularly paid club gigs or even festival gigs, which were already a step towards the dangerous domination of the events over the club culture and day-to-day concerts. An interesting observation from our advisers – active agents who know both sides of the music industry – was that the growing number of showcase festivals is a turn off for the promoters who would rather attend tailor-made, curated festivals with eclectic, cutting-edge programs. Showcases became more of meetup events for the professionals, where music was secondary, presented in a time-limited (30 or 40 minutes) format. With the popularization of showcases grows problems with bands who get stuck in a showcase bubble: they play many showcase festivals without real effect. So it's crucial that besides covering travel costs and accommodation, bands receive some basic fee.

In order to make the effort economically sustainable for the artists and their agents/managers, the resulting proposal was:

- **coverage of flights and accommodation OR minimum of 150 EUR per person as a “fee” + accommodation for 2 nights for small festivals and minimum 300 EUR per person for large festivals.**

We would like to offer that as a recommendation, taking under consideration the fee criteria in 2023. We assume that the minimum fee might be growing each year (see Ad.1).



Mercat de Música Viva de Vic 2022, Vic, Catalonia-Spain - one of the showcase festivals that provide a fee to the performing artists.

2. Gender balance, aka “quality first, then gender” or “we present women, but we have no need to talk about it”

The survey we conducted among UPBEAT members showed a broad variety of attitudes, including toward the topic of gender balance. Some of the members are very positive about the idea and incorporated it (or had incorporated it a long time ago) to their everyday praxis, festival lineups etc. Other members are very skeptical and do not see the need to introduce any of the gender balance rules to their events or their teams.

In order to indicate why gender balance is important, we found directives much further afield than the environment of the music industry. Human Rights Career is an American organization focused on academic education, but their reasoning explains the social and economic aspects of necessity of gender balance very well:

<https://www.humanrightscareers.com/issues/10-reasons-why-gender-equality-is-important/>

As we can see, the impact of the gender balance policy is deeper and in long term; gender balance is often a first step to the balance on a wider scale and fair practice in a general sense.

In the music environment the topic of gender equality has been discussed widely for many years. The discussions concern:

- > The number of women in the organizations - quantitative matters,
- > (still) lack of women on leading positions - qualitative matters,
- > representation of women on stage + female bandleaders – quantity and quality coming from structures of power and decision-makers,
- > music education – the very beginning of the problem,
- > motherhood and career – touring, informal groups, networking etc.
- > mental health.

In case of UPBEAT members, the gender balance can be again understood in two categories:

1. Structure of the team - our recommendation would be **gender balance in the team** as a guarantee of the organization's sustainability and healthy work environment; however, we are aware of different models of organizations, number of team members, needs and current working conditions.

2. **Gender balance in the artistic program** – this issue is mainly discussed among festival directors, the question arising when showcase festivals have an open call and it is difficult to predict who is going to apply; the common answer in order not to give space to gender balance in the program is the reason for the quality of music. We would like to discuss this issue below and to elaborate on that topic.

Quality versus gender balance? Fact or fiction?

The most common response for having less attention to gender balance is “first quality, then balance”. However, these two qualities, which are equally necessary nowadays, can go hand in hand. In the showcase festivals with only an open call and limited number of applications, sometimes it is not possible to secure the equal number of female and gender-neutral artists. We would not recommend manipulation of the application process to create artificial results in order to include women. Instead, we would recommend disseminating information, encouraging underrepresented genders and communicating that the festival/event is strongly supporting their applications. Finding ambassadors and role models is crucial in this process, which may take years.

A different situation occurs when the events are curated and the program depends on an artistic director, board of curators, jury members or a team that decides the final lineup. Here we have much more chance to introduce fair practices, consider diversity and think about gender equality.

There are several organizations that work on gender equality in the music industry. Among others, two initiatives are very active and could be helpful for UPBEAT members:

3. [She said so](#)
4. [Keychange](#)

Some UPBEAT members are already a part of the Keychange initiative. The events that signed the pledge are: Waves Vienna, Tallinn Music Week and Mercat de Música Viva de Vic. Many of the members' states are not members of Keychange at all (Belgium, Slovakia, Macedonia, Lithuania, Hungary), so there is a chance to become a pioneer in your own country.

Keychange is not the only initiative that works on gender equality in Europe, so there is no obligation to be part of it. However, for now we cannot recommend any other more effective way to develop creative progress within the festival industry. A few facts about Keychange that are often unknown:

- > **50/50 gender balance DOES NOT** mean that 50% of the bands should be only female or gender-expansive bands. It is enough that a band has at least one female band member; ideally this woman is a bandleader,
- > Keychange obliges the festival **to report annually** on the status - not only about female, but also about other gender-nonconforming band members – to motivate festival organizers to revise their programmes and to provide proper data,
- > Keychange is a global movement with over 600 members, so **each one can find support, expertise and network** among the organizations and individuals. Festival coordinators can find a solid database of female and gender-nonconforming acts and music professionals; members can discuss their issues during online and offline events and get support from Keychange coordinators on gender equality related topics,
- > Keychange provides us with a **full research** report on Working Towards Gender Balance in the Music Industry:

To sum this chapter, we would like to suggest following steps:

1. Gender balance has become a necessity to reach social sustainability in the music sector: it is crucial to be part of networks, to receive funding and to be perceived as a progressive event with sufficient concern for social responsibility,
2. Gender equality does not only mean female acts, but goes beyond this binary position and refers to all underrepresented genders. Please consider that in your programmes and statements,
3. In order to start working on the gender balance policy within your organization - and it is difficult to establish the starting point - reach out to professional initiatives. Contact their leaders, read their philosophy and get familiar with their real policy, instead of having assumptions and false ideas of their rules.

3. Marginalized groups, aka “we treat everyone equally anyways, so why bother”

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) avers in Article 27 (1): “Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.”

Looking at answers from our respondents we can see that the events of the UPBEAT Platform members are open and conscious of socially marginalized groups. A preponderance of members are aware of the existence of marginalized groups/ethnic minorities. We may assume that it's the domain of global music festivals, something that distinguishes them from big commercial popular events. For many, the content of this chapter could be something obvious and also practiced. However, we find it important to return to and refresh this understanding – why we do it and what for.

Some of the members answered that their festival is equal, open for everyone without making any exceptions, without needing to define anyone. Obviously, that attitude sounds pleasant; nonetheless our knowledge of culturally excluded peoples' perspective (also excluded from participation in your events) can make this equality something much more alive. We are not equal according to our abilities to participate in events, so it is important that we get familiar with other people's barriers. For example, by using the categorization “elderly”, we are able to understand the specificity of the way that seniors are functioning in cultural life. These categorizations and differentiations should work as useful tools to expand our perspective. If we understand why participation and co-creation of our shared cultural life is connected with basic human rights, we should also see how (consciously or not) many people are deprived of that right.

If we don't know the boundaries of our ignorance and if we don't know limitations that characterize some social groups, then our activities will come up from the assumption that our events are open for “All”. But that “All” will remain as a bubble of ideas about your audience and artists. The best way to know and understand marginalized groups and their needs is to hear their voice - voice of speech and artistic expression. Without giving them the opportunity to present their point of view, without making an effort in cognizing perspectives of their marginalization, we condemn ourselves for being used by a socially established mindset, which itself can be the cause of creating this marginalization.

Besides the fact that it's common for you to know what groups we are talking about, and the fact that their specific situation differs depending on place, it's worth mentioning some of them:

- the elderly,
- people with disabilities,
- people with mental health problems,
- LGBTQ+,
- people with low income,
- women,
- kids and adults with an experience of growing up in an orphanage or foster house,
- kids and adults from underprivileged districts,
- migrants / ethnic minorities,
- people legally excluded from society (for example: inmates in prisons).



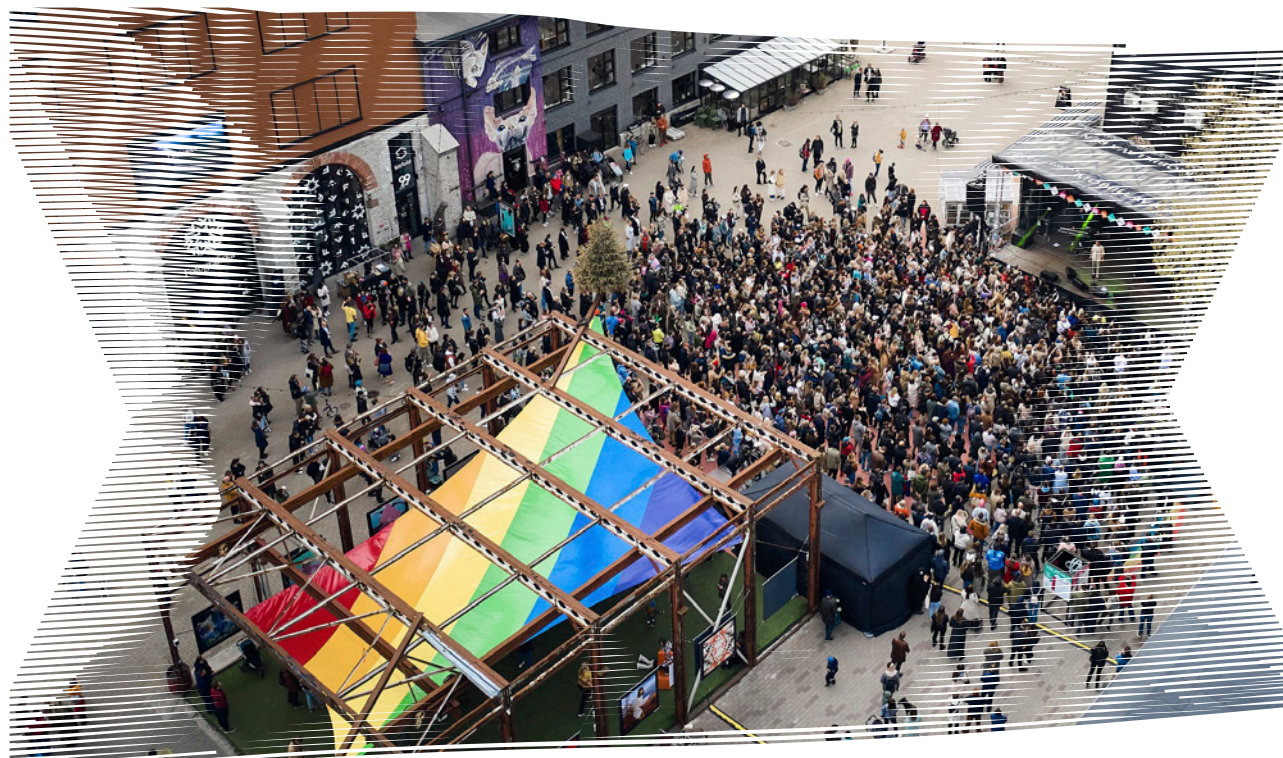
Budapest Ritmo 2020, Budapest, Hungary; credit: Neményi Márton

What we find important is, as François Matarasso says: ***“At different times they have been spoken about in our public discourse, but not been able to speak for themselves. Art is one of the fundamental, critical ways in which we can enter that world and speak about our experience, ourselves, our perspective.”***

We shouldn't restrict our view about marginalized groups only to the idea of passive receivers/ consumers. It is crucial to cooperate with marginalized people in the process of creating events and art. We should go beyond the distinction that splits people into artists and common people and realize the necessity to expand our landscape of knowing who an artist is. In this process, we may discover many benefits to our culture by adopting and implementing insights of people who are usually excluded from this process. As Joseph Beuys said: ***“Every human being is an artist, a freedom being, called to participate in transforming and reshaping the conditions, thinking and structures that shape and inform our lives.”***

Recommendations:

- Verify your ways of communication. Realize whether your ways of communication/ promotion are inclusive for e.g. elderly. Do they know about your event, about their possibility to participate? Do they know how to buy a ticket and if it is possible for them to do it? Maybe you have discounts. Is festival infrastructure and transportation inclusive for them?
- Part of your concert programme (and beyond) should be open. It is likely that for some of the people who are residents of the area of the festival, who may be a potential audience, buying a ticket is beyond their means. It's beneficial to look at the possibility of organizing some part of your programme for free (of course if the whole festival is ticketed).
- Present artists who represent marginalized groups (we got responses about Roma and Saami musicians performing at Budapest Ritmo).
- Invite people from marginalized groups to your organization. Provide a chance for consultation with them or hire them if possible.
- Cooperate with organizations specializing in work with marginalized groups - listen to their needs and experiences first.
- Fields that carry the topic of disabilities are more fully described in another chapter.
- Run co-education events led by artists invited for your festivals, bringing such educational programs and interactive workshops to people who don't have the opportunity to participate in such events on a daily basis.
- Take initiative. **Ask yourself questions about whether marginalized peoples' limitation, perspectives are known to you.**
- Many UPBEAT Platform members run great social inclusion programs. We encourage you to look at the good practices of other events and those who already have experience should share it with others.



Henri-Kristian Kirsip at Tallinn Music Week 2022 at Telliskivi Loomelinnak, Tallinn, Estonia

4. Policy against sexual harassment, versus “it never happens at our event”

“Festivals are microcosms of society and sexual violence is a problem that persists in our society.”

Taking commitment to tackle sexual violence is our social responsibility.

In our survey addressed to UPBEAT Platform members, we received several answers stating that sexual harassment problems did not take place or were not noted at their festivals. With it comes a belief that there is no need to face such situations as long as there is no overt, obvious communication space for all victims of sexual abuse and so long it is a realm of presumption in which we are not aware of the multitude of cultural factors that causes such information not to reach the organizers. Partially the content of this chapter derives from studies done by Durham Law School about sexual violence at UK Music Festivals. Studies found that 34% of female respondents reported being sexually harassed or assaulted at festivals. Moreover, 10% have experienced sexual assault at such an event. The responses also show that 70% of woman are concerned about sexual assault at festivals.

We may think that world music / jazz festivals' characteristics differ from big commercial festivals (which have been the subject of studies mentioned above), that your events are more friendly, open with a more intimate atmosphere. And probably you are right, that is great that we are looking toward creating friendly, responsible environments. But still, it should not be a reason to underestimate the possibility of such events to occur. Other studies showed that the organizer's approach and their trivialization is also a problem. At this point, it is important to provide a short definition of what sexual harassment is:

“It is unwelcome sexual behavior that's offensive, humiliating or intimidating. It can be written, verbal or physical, and can happen in person or online. Anybody can experience sexual harassment, regardless of their gender. When it happens at work, school or university, sexual harassment may amount to a form of discrimination.”¹

“In the patriarchal culture, men's violence against women is viewed as customary and normal, and thus so is women's endurance of it. This was articulated by participants, who referred to the normalization of sexual violence in their life – something that women expected and had been socialized to see as normal, just something that happens – which shaped their understandings and narratives of sexual violence and harassment at festivals. The women we spoke to gave accounts of their experiences of misogyny and sexist violence both before, and during, music festivals.”² “The women who were interviewed felt these factors created a cultural atmosphere where sexual violence was normalised and sometimes trivialised by friends, other festivalgoers, perpetrators and, in some cases, festival staff, including security.”³

¹ <https://au.reachout.com/articles/what-is-sexual-harassment>

² Bows, H., Day, A., & Dhir, A. (2022). “It's Like a Drive by Misogyny”: Sexual Violence at UK Music Festivals. Violence Against Women, 0(0). <https://doi.org/10.1177/10778012221120443>

³ <https://theconversation.com/festivals-must-do-more-to-address-sexual-violence-189188>

Regardless of size, format and capabilities of a particular festival, we want it to head in a direction where it is clear and obvious that objectifying women is unacceptable for all participants. Festivalgoers, crew and artists deserve to know that if they report sexual assault they will be listened to and believed, and that those working on site are equipped to handle all reports with knowledge and empathy. They also deserve to know that festivals are taking a proactive approach in preventing sexual assault, and that abusive behaviour will not be tolerated.

Whether or not you think such situations are possible at your event, there must be an established way to respond to such events that is completely open, available, and safe to potential victims.

1. We recommend that messages informing that the festival is a place free of sexual violence be **visible in the event area**.
2. Organize regular meetings with festival staff and volunteers and do not hesitate to ask questions whether any forms of harassment occurred during the events.
3. If any person wants to report such an offense, it should be clear to whom they can go or call with such information. The **contact person** for such matters should be a woman, or a group of people, but it is necessary that such a group includes a woman.
4. Your **website should include information that the festival does not tolerate sexual violence**. There should be a specific phone number or e-mail through which the person will be able to make contact.
5. Another additional possible activity might be conducting **surveys**, which includes sexual abuse questions. If the festival sends surveys to the public after the event, add questions about it. If it does not conduct any surveys then consider doing so.
6. Verify whether your **state or municipality has any laws that work against sexual violence** and, if so, assess the possibility of cooperation with such institutions.



Jazzaldia Festival Banner, 2022, San Sebastian Basque Country, Spain

5. Helping disabled people, versus “impossible to satisfy everyone”

This chapter is by courtesy of Agata Etmanowicz. Agata’s specialization is “everything audience related”. She wrote this text on behalf of her organization Impact Foundation (<http://www.impactaudience.org/en/>). Among other things, Impact promotes the a2 approach, combining audience development and audience engagement with accessibility. She has prepared a very practical and personal chapter for the UPBEAT Platform:

“I am going to start from the beginning: I do my very best to advocate for making music festivals (and other events) accessible to ALL PEOPLE (even huge outdoor festivals can be a good example that this is possible, like [Orange Warsaw Festival](#) or [Colours of Ostrava](#)).

In other words: I’m hoping to convince the unconvinced and at the same time strengthen a bit those who are already there doing it and who might need a bit more ammunition in their everyday endeavours, e.g. while constructing the next grant application, approaching potential corporate partners, (re)thinking audience development strategy or putting together the technical production plan.

I thought “what’s the best way to do that” and decided to take some of the most common statements and misconceptions regarding both disability and accessibility (coming straight from music events organizers themselves) and tackle them one by one.

So, here we go! Let’s start with the most obvious one:

“IT’S IMPOSSIBLE TO MAKE A MUSIC EVENT FOR ALL.”

Both true and not true. It is impossible to organize an event, any kind of event for that matter, not only music-related, that would respond to everybody’s taste, likes and preferences. But what is meant by “for all” in this context, in the context of accessibility is that NO ONE IS EXCLUDED from participation. Especially not because of one’s disability. And that is something very different. And definitely possible!

[Trust me. Been there. Done that. ;)]

That naturally leads us to:

“ACCESSIBILITY IS ONLY FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES.”

This one is undebatable and cannot be further from the truth. It also needs a bit more space to be properly deconstructed. We will do it gradually, step by step.

No matter what kind of festival or music event you are doing, you probably have an idea on who is attending it. You may even collect and analyze box office data and/or do proper audience research so you have a pretty accurate image. Let's go as far as to say that you are one of the few, who has done (and uses) audience segmentation.

Either way, you probably know (more or less) your audience's age, maybe you know where they are from. If by any chance, you're one of the lucky ones with the "fancy" segments, you could also know what motivates your audiences to participate. And I think, it might be safe to assume (with great probability), that all of you are quite well oriented to your audiences' music preferences. Again, either way, it does not matter how you organize your audiences into categories. There is really no such label, no such audience segment as "people with disabilities" (at least not in this context, nor there ever should be one). People come in all shapes and sizes, have different likes and dislikes, different habits. And some (of the same people!) are persons with disabilities. That's it.

One more thing that needs to be mentioned while discussing labels, segments, and various types of "boxes": the so-called "subgroups" within the larger category of "with disabilities". There are of course, people with blindness, people with deafness or d/Deaf persons, there are wheelchair users and many, many more. And each and every one of the "subgroups" is internally diverse. Therefore, while planning accessibility it is not only wise but also necessary to work with self-advocates with various disabilities – cooperate, consult and test the tools with as many of them as possible. It is also important to remember that the way people go about and do things is unique and specific to them, so one solution can be great for one person and totally useless for the other. And that's also OK.

It is also about looking at each and every step of your audience's journey and checking how and if it will be or can be accessible for different people through different senses. And later, while describing it, communicating it to audiences. Sticking with two "T's": tools and truth.

Communicate about tools for accessibility, not for the "subgroups". What do I mean by that? To be very blunt, it is, for example: instead of saying "for people who are blind", you say "there is an audio description".

And if there are five steps leading to the building, you say "there are five steps leading to the building". What you do not say is "the building is not accessible for wheelchair users". You say how it is, you tell the truth. You do not make a decision for others, you let them decide. Five steps might mean that the building is not accessible for some people but it can also mean that it is okay(ish) for others.

While persons with various disabilities may be the main beneficiaries, the intended users of the accessibility tools, everybody benefits from well-designed, user-friendly spaces, objects, communication tools, customer service, etc. Similarly, the majority of tools for accessibility (with few exceptions) are utilized by all audiences. The most "classical" examples are: closed captioning, ramps and slopes, wide entrances and toilets, pre-visit guides, plain language and easy reads (and the list goes on and on).

Also, on that note: there is no such thing as "special needs". People, in general, have very similar needs. The only difference is that some people come across barriers while trying to meet them. So they need support and tools. Same needs, different methods of fulfilling them. That's it.

And even if tools for accessibility were used “only” by people with disabilities, that’s never ONLY. That is what is necessary and needed for some people to participate in the event fully and equally. Therefore, it is important.

The next one, is actually quite close to the previous one - from “only” to “few”:

“ACCESSIBILITY IS JUST FOR A FEW PEOPLE. NOT WORTH IT.”

Even if only one person uses the tool, and without this given tool this person’s full participation in the event wouldn’t be possible, it is totally worth it!

“The worth” of accessibility is measured by organizers in time, effort and – of course – money. Very rarely is it looked at and estimated from the measure of audience perspective – based on the meaning, the importance of it for the person who is using it. I could offer here stories of various individuals for whom the tools for accessibility made participation in the event possible or made the experience fuller, richer or memorable. And they shared their experiences and are full of gratitude. Nothing makes me happier, nothing brings bigger reward, than knowing that my work contributed to that. But I would gladly resign from it. I would rather live in the better times where accessibility is a norm so there is nothing special about it, nothing to talk about, nothing for which to be grateful.

And... Is it really “just for a few people”? A) See above and B) Statistically speaking, in most of the European countries every sixth person has some kind of disability. We tend to think about disability through the lenses of assistive technology, i.e. wheelchair, hearing aid, cane, something that is visible “with the naked eye”. Not all of them are.

There is also a C). We often experience disability in one way or another throughout our lives. That’s not something that can be planned, like injuries, surgeries or illnesses that temporarily may require using assistive technologies and/or various types of support in general.

Let’s stay with the “worth” for a little bit longer (measured traditionally in money). The most commonly used – I will call it as I see it – excuse in the cultural sector at large, for explaining the lack of accessibility, is:

“WE CANNOT AFFORD IT.”

Before you make a final call, think if you really cannot not afford it. Here are three arguments to may help you decide:

1. In some countries providing access is required by law, no matter if you are a public or private entity. So, for example, even if “just” one d/Deaf person buys a ticket to the concert and requires sign language interpretation, the organizer is obliged to provide it. The penalty can be painful.
2. There is also public shame, something that in the good old days was called “bad press”. A post from one dissatisfied customer these days can easily start a proper (and in this case, let me just add, probably well-deserved) useless dispute.
3. In case you are planning to stay around for a bit longer and care about reaching new audiences, you probably are well aware of the fact that Gen-Z is very socially conscious. They care. So, if you do not, they may just not care about you. The choice is yours.

After going through those few basic arguments to prove that maybe you should just have to consider affording accessibility, let's have a look at the harsh, practical reality of the situation and balance it out with the few ideas on how you may do it.

Yes, it is true that some of the accessibility-related things can be quite pricey. Some of the costs are related to skills. Some things should be done by experts and preparation takes a lot of time (e.g. audio description, artistic sign interpretation, easy reads). Some are related to materials/infrastructure - renting out equipment, renting out space with no physical barriers or adjusting the space so it becomes barrier-free. Others, like installing induction loops or making tactile materials, are a combination of both skill and equipment/materials. Either way: there is a monetary value attached to making things accessible. Especially if one cares about quality and it is not just about doing it so it can be "crossed out from the list". So, the question is: how to cover the costs?

Please forgive me for doing it (not for asking but for answering the questions) but: how do you cover all other costs related to the organization of the event? In the past, there was no dedicated budget for social media campaigning, for SEO, for influencers. Nowadays, there is. Maybe in the near future, the costs of accessibility will also be included in the overall production budget. From the very beginning.

Deliberations and hopes aside, let's get into practical solutions. A few simple ideas follow.

The first thing you need to do is to plan and budget accessibility. Then start making new friendships: with self-advocates and with NGOs specializing in accessibility. They may be happy to support you. All you need to do is ask.

Money is needed?

Make some new friends in the corporate world. Many companies these days may not be interested in their "logo on the poster" and covering the costs of your headliners but they just might be interested in cooperating with you on making your festival or event even more inclusive. Begin with approaching those that have accessibility and inclusivity in their Corporate Social Responsibility policy. You may find out that through that partnership there is also an option to cover some other costs...

Also, include accessibility in your next grant application form. That will cover the costs and probably also get you more points during the evaluation process.

To be very honest, in my ideal scenario, it is neither about the obligation and the penalty for not meeting it nor should it be about potential benefits. It should be about the need, the necessity, it should be the normality. Hopefully, slowly but steadily, we will finally get there.

Another one, I come across there often is:

"MAYBE IT'S NOT IDEAL BUT OUR AUDIENCE WILL MANAGE."

I cannot understand how some of the most prominent, largest (in terms of scale) festivals in Europe can be okay with their audience “somehow managing”. How is that good enough?! Audiences should thrive, not just manage. With no exceptions. They come for fun, to spend time with friends, listen to their favorite artists or to experience something new but for any and all of that, first and foremost, people need to feel safe, secure and not to “somehow manage”. They need to be able to acquire information about the event, buy tickets, get to the place of the event, move around the space and use all of the facilities.

Towards that end, here comes something for all of those who may think that the above does not apply to them. Separate attention has to be given to:

“ACCESSIBILITY DOES NOT CONCERN US. WE DO EVENTS FOR MUSIC PROFESSIONALS.”

(i.e. showcases, conferences, capacity building).

Accessibility is not limited to audiences! It is also about musicians, journalists and all other professionals. From the top of my head, I can name at least a few great musicians (across genres) who also happen to be persons with disabilities. And the same goes for journalists and influencers.

So, when you organize your next event for professionals at least ask in the registration form if someone needs any of the accessibility tools. A few years ago, you wouldn't ask about dietary requirements, now it's a standard practice. Next step: point out inquiring about accessibility (tools not special needs!). And if and when it is needed, just provide it. Simple.

Have a look at your website and social media and check if they are accessible. If they are not, that could be one of the reasons some people were omitted from your event in the past. Any and every one of you can contribute to the change. And maybe, just maybe, more people with various disabilities will get interested in developing their careers in the music sector. Because they will get a clear signal that it is possible, that they can, that they are welcome.

To conclude: if you genuinely care about your audiences you need to care about ALL of them (not only the majority). Same goes for professionals. If you care, you create opportunities and give people choices. That's what accessibility is all about.

May the audience be with you!”

Agata
Agata Etmanowicz
Impact Foundation

www.impactaudience.org

To sum up, we would also like to mention some strategies of UPBEAT members like the Colours of Ostrava/Czech Music Crossroads team that does impressive work of “Colours without barriers”. Over 40 members of the Colours team are engaged to welcome people with disabilities. The numbers of visitors are also striking which makes Colours of Ostrava truly unique: 848 holders of ZTP and ZTP/P cards (holders of disability identification cards) and 20 sign language interpreters.



Colours of Ostrava 2023, Ostrava, Czechia; Credits: Colours of Ostrava

6. Guidance for volunteers and festival staff on being empathetic, sensitive and kind to others, aka “it is obvious in our environment”

This subchapter is a clear recommendation. Some of you may be reluctant to find it necessary, but the survey, as well as the experience with our own events, indicates that very basic communication and guidance is necessary. What is more, the guidance needs to be revised, updated and repeated every year. Festival staff changes, as happens with volunteers annually. Therefore, emphasis and repetition is crucial: First of all, to emphasize the ethics of the event and to strengthen its values and priorities; Secondly, to introduce the newcomers to the set of rules, sometimes unwritten, regarding issues of fair trade practice. Why so? Because we want our organizations to be a friendly environment for everyone involved, creating a place to work where people are willing to stay for years and audiences to return, build solid ground that is the only way to survive the crisis and to develop. Kindness and empathy sound perhaps less abstract for some but, in fact, is the first and very crucial basis for each type of sustainability, including a financial one. With a trusted and solid team, you can achieve more.

The idea may be too obvious; however, it needs to be reflected on in a proper way. Too often our convictions are based on assumptions. We read: “of course everyone knows that the world music environment is friendly, tolerant and open, everyone who works there is intuitively guided by the spirit.” In most of the cases that could be true. However, there are several other reasons why staff and volunteers are engaged in the production and the motivation to participate is not always based on ideology or mind-likeness. For students and interns that can be an urge to fill administrative obligations towards their university program. For some of the contractors, freelancers etc. there is financial motivation. For some of the employees hired in larger structures - events might be part of their full-time employment - one of the tasks on their packed annual calendar. The motivation level for different groups engaged can be very different. That is why we would like to emphasize the importance of communicating the basic values of collaboration: Trust, dedication, flexibility but, on the other hand – **highly professional structure** is the goal for UPBEAT organizations.

Recommendations provided are similar to gender balance, but in case of very basic values, the most important are role models presented by the management. In other words – we cannot expect a kind and empathetic team without a kind and empathetic structure and gatekeepers, festival directors and heads of departments who run the organization. Following the thought of Pelin Opcin, Director of Programming at Serious: “At the end of the day, we are not gatekeepers. We are gate openers.”

Practical steps in communicating the festival ethics are:

- > During the process of hiring: make sure that the call (job/volunteer position) already states what kind of festival rules apply. The same can be communicated during the job interview. Be clear that every person in the team is expected to be sensitive to others' needs, kind to one another, and respect some basic rules: peaceful way of solving the problems; collective and transparent solving the problem if interpersonal conflicts occur; positive attitude; avoiding offensive language and slurs; being willing to help; always checking what is your partner's workload; caring about the co-workers, audience and the guests; having responsiveness and respect towards the time of others, etc.).
- > Regular team meetings when everyone is allowed to speak and share their views – with minutes kept during every meeting; during the meetings keep on repeating that solidarity and mutual respect is the foundation for the organization.
- > Indicate one person in the team who has extraordinary interpersonal skills and will serve as a “soft HR” person in case of conflicts; the events are often time-consuming, demanding flexibility, creativity and problem-solving mode on; not everyone in the team can work under the pressure and some tasks need instant taking an action or making decision on the spot; having a backup and good internal communication in the team, building trust and making clear communication strategy is a helpful tool.

Please remember: the atmosphere in the team is easily felt by the “outside” world. In this case it is crucial how the decision-makers and CEOs create a friendly environment that will spread onto the guests and local communities. With a respectful attitude on every level, kindness is “contagious”. That is perhaps the most important value where other qualities are based upon and success for the future is secured.

7. Collaboration with local communities. Ensuring locals' involvement in your events, aka

“we are part of the city anyways”

The chapter is less a piece of recommendation per se, but rather interpretation of the survey, due to the scope of the issue and the individual character of each location of UPBEAT members.

Year 2023 will be the first full festival season after the pandemic. What we mean by that: new pole of ticket sales (without leftovers from 2020); new reality of international travel; budgets, sometimes locations; global inflation (also due to the war in Ukraine) provoking questions about the festival's future. As we speak, some of the festivals around Europe are canceled at the last moment, some of the events noted record sales and some well-established events with headliners complained that this year they did not sell out, as usually happened before the pandemic. Another important aspect, especially in outdoor events, are extreme weather conditions having a serious impact on the festival infrastructure and audience size. We discussed and monitored the situation of the events in Europe and overseas. Conclusions can be made in 2024 at the earliest, but we will probably notice more changes and shifts in the festival world in the next few years.

Showcase festivals seem to be in a better position due to their different character: professionally oriented and supported by the local governments and municipalities. However, we would challenge this opinion. With changing political landscapes, cultural events are at risk in every country. Commercial risk and dependency on ticket sales and sponsors is also less predictable and endangered than previously. That is why the involvement of local communities will be needed more than ever to secure the event's prosperous future, even in the case of showcase events specialized in the professional market (sometimes, especially in these cases). For most of the members who took part in the survey, engagement of local communities is a well-known topic and there is already a lot of activity focused on that matter. Taking into consideration that UPBEAT events can happen in European capitals like Sofia, Bratislava, Budapest, Skopje, Vienna or Tallinn or, on the contrary, in a small village like Barcice in Beskid Sądecki mountains, we tackle different problems of local communities. Capitals or major international cities have various target groups to engage:

- local minorities (we received three responses that Roma communities are part of the festivals both on the side of performers and the audiences),
- foreigners who live in the cities (working professionals, students, family members of the citizens),
- various groups or associations connected by common interest different than music.



Yoga classes at A to Jazz Festival 2023, Sofia, Bulgaria; credits: Pavel Koev

Thanks to an open and welcoming character of global music, there is lots of potential to attract these groups. However, to reach the goal, that demands networking, time and effort to create a common ground for the meeting and to fulfill expectations from both sides.

The most challenging however, is often to attract the citizens who are a legitimate and fully privileged part of the audience, but simply do not feel connected with the event due to a number of individual reasons. Most of the festivals have their ways to bring the local communities into their strategic planning:

- > Working with local contractors on production and infrastructure (local authorities, etc.),
- > Collaborating with venues and gastronomy,
- > Collaboration with local educational institutions (kindergartens, schools, universities, formal and informal education groups for organizing workshops); audience development and children programs are a separate topic not individually treated in this document but is crucial to provide a sustainable event,
- > Interdisciplinary co-productions with institutions and individuals representing other disciplines than music,
- > Inclusive projects for the groups having less access to the cultural events (a separate big chapter is dedicated to marginalized groups and social inclusion in general),
- > Reaching out to locally-based companies, both large and small, for sponsoring and barter situations.

Among UPBEAT members, we noticed a big step towards working together with local communities. **Tallinn Music Week** is an event that literally involves the whole city, including a deal with providers of public transportation; you can get a tram during the event, for free and in a green way.

A to Jazz Festival incorporates a showcase into the festival organized in a public park, free of charge (in this way the professional program and promotion of Balkan music is intertwined with the major jazz festival of the Bulgarian capital). Apart from that, A to Jazz is one of the best examples of how to work with sponsors and private initiatives.

Czech Music Crossroads evolved over the years with a shapeshifting result this year (2023) by moving the whole event to a district Ostrava-Poruba (that happened already in 2022) and combining it with the successful Festival v ulicích. Three factors are worth mentioning here:

- Changing location beyond the center into the residential area,
- Opening the showcase for the regular visitors during the outdoor event, diminishing divisions between professionals and the local audience,
- Collaboration with a multidisciplinary event that is Festival v ulicích: street theaters, activities for children, buskers, elements of performing arts like high-quality circus performances, etc.



Xurxo Fernandes at Czech Music Crossroads 2023, Ostrava, Czechia; credits: Martin Bambušek

8. Signage at the festival area promoting tolerance, empathy, and equality or, on the contrary, condemning homophobia, racism, or other forms of intolerance aka, “it is obvious, why talk about it even more?”

As a community of creators and producers, UPBEAT members are clearly declaring themselves as prioritizing action over theory. We put deeds first, then words. Our survey indicated that festivals would rather prove their work on social responsibility by introducing the programs and serving that during the event process rather than declaring it on paper. “We’d rather do it than talk about it” - in simple words - is often presented by the organizers on gender balance, inclusivity, etc.

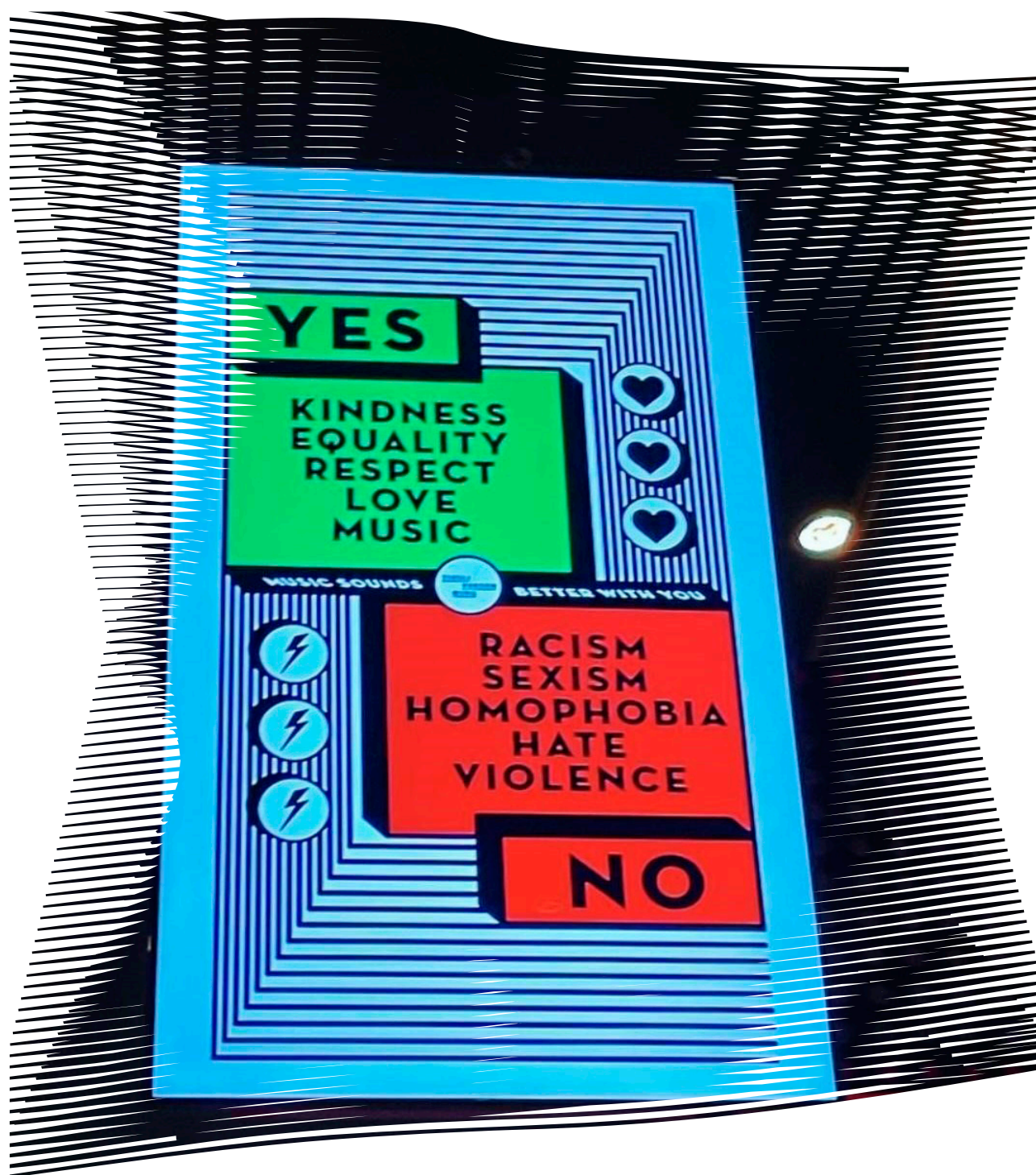
We support and admire this attitude. Nevertheless, we would like to encourage members to be more **open and outspoken about initiatives** on fair practices. Communication, sending signals, elaboration on topics - these are one of the most important issues that we noticed in the survey. There are too many assumptions that our festivals are open, equal, tolerant just by the definition of global music as being such. However, for gaining new audiences this assumption may be not clear enough.

Why is it important to communicate the festival values? (*by communication we understand: online (website, social media, ads, paid articles etc.) and offline (banners, posters, design and scenography of the festival site, printed materials, merch)

- > We are clear and direct about the event’s standpoint, which can **encourage more artists** to apply for the event.
- > **We gain new, varied audiences** who feel welcome regardless of feeling not accepted, whether by mainstream events, heteronormative pressure or patriarchal society.
- > Providing a direct **message to the festival staff** about code of conduct - the visuals are a reminder of the core values shared by the team.
- > **Signal for stakeholders** that require certain directives - grants, sponsorship, European projects etc.
- > Being **role models** for other cultural initiatives to encourage them to open their horizons and to self-reflect on their policy.

Examples:

1. Online: an [anti-discrimination code of conduct of Berlinale](#).
2. Offline: screens in a Dutch venue Tivoli Vredenburg in Utrecht, the Netherlands.



Conclusion

UPBEAT members, being based in different parts of Europe, face various challenges specific for their location, size of the event, character (more or less focused on professional market) and many other external and internal circumstances. We are thankful for any input to our survey that enables us to focus on particular matters and to prepare data analysis and general recommendations. The next step will be to work individually with each event to establish a tailor-made strategy for a particular showcase festival.

Almost everywhere in the world we notice that global music is treated as a niche genre. Many organizers complain about the diminishing numbers of audience, ticket sales and less interest from national or regional media. On the contrary, the UPBEAT Platform is a good example of joining forces in proving that global music has the best time ever. With strong membership of extraordinary events showcasing global music and cooperating all around the world and in/for/ with their local communities, UPBEAT provides an excellent opportunity with a full scope of new initiative for musicians and organizers.

We all have, however, a way to go to develop, improve our weaker sides and to learn from one another. As we mentioned in a chapter dedicated to kindness in the team, the whole process needs to start from the structure of power. To sum up, we would like to present one of the newest establishments in the music industry, which was announced in summer 2023 in Denmark. As we read: "Under the joint project 'Musiklivets Partnerskab' – an initiative by multiple organizations of the Danish music industry, JazzDanmark introduces the code for equal access – a code directed towards all partners of the Danish music industry." Musiklivets Partnerskab can be literally translated into Music Life Partnership. The rules that were established and declared are meant to regulate, secure and provide the code of conduct that allows solidarity in the music scene.

The code consists of six principles that respectable organizations are expected to follow:

- 1. Bias-conscious directors and coworkers**
Commitment to training and educating directors and coworkers in working towards challenging own stereotypes and prejudices to counteract ingrained and limited perceptions and beliefs.
- 2. Broad representation among gatekeepers**
Aspiration to a broad representation in positions and decision processes functioning as gatekeepers and practicing some power concerning evaluation, distributions, bookings, and employment.
- 3. Role models**
Commitment to working with diverse role models and idols in your internal and external work.

4. **A safe and inclusive culture**

Commitment to defining and spreading a safe and inclusive culture and work environment where no one suffers discrimination.

5. **Professionalization of the organization**

Commitment to work with establishing, implementing, and maintaining the necessary processes and guidelines for strengthening the professionalization of management layers, processes, structures, and operations.

6. **Data and transparency**

Commitment to measuring the effort, annual follow-up, and communicating about the activities and results to secure progress and transparency.

We found this information useful to share because many of the keywords mentioned above appeared during preparation of the document on fair practice:

- **transparency,**
- **role models,**
- **guidelines,**
- **communication,**
- **regulation of power structures.**

These basic qualities are present in each level of introducing fair practice. In the document above we provided the most general overview. We tried to keep it simple, direct and practical. All of the points mentioned can be (and should be developed) in praxis of every member of the platform.

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upbeat



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