

PARTYWISE.BE

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I will tell you more about how we are working in Belgium in the field of prevention in nightlife. As you will know Belgium is a small country in Europe, famous for its beer and chocolate. But Belgium also has a complicated political structure, which means that prevention is the responsibility of the Flemish Government. So, I am actually talking about the situation in Flanders, the northern part of Belgium and the Brussels Metropolitan area, which is, as you know the political capital of the European Union.

In 2001 the Flemish Association for Alcohol and Other Drug Problems (“VAD”) undertook “Bedrogen” or “Deceived”, the first awareness campaign of its kind about drugs and nightlife on a Flemish level. The positive reactions about this campaign and the willingness by nightlife professionals to support more structural prevention interventions was for VAD the motivation to develop a global prevention concept for nightlife and this resulted in Partywise.

Partywise starts from the idea that nightlife is a leisure domain where young people have fun in a relaxed and creative way. In this way Partywise also means partying in a responsible and amusing manner, or going out wisely. By that we want to promote the nightlife scene and to continue its positive aspects such as creativity, social complex, experiences without limits etc. But each coin has its two sides - everyone is being exposed to health risks by going out, both people who use drugs on a recreational basis and non-drug users.

Dutch and Flemish registration data from first aid organisations and emergency departments who operate at music events show this. About 1% of visitors to mainstream music events end up in a first aid station. Thirty to forty per cent of these visits are for drug related health problems. Thus going out wisely is not only linked to using drugs but also depends on the person and his or her environment. That is why Partywise opted for a global approach to going out healthily and safely. Partywise focuses on the quality of going out in a realistic way, whilst realising that drugs are part of nightlife. Partywise does not aim to deny or to promote use of (illegal) drugs.

In this way Partywise is a specific prevention application for nightlife in a differentiated prevention policy. Partywise intervenes on indicated health risks and health problems. The success of intervention is not necessarily dependent on the degrees of drug use in the short term. But Partywise means not a narrow harm reduction interpretation, but starts from an approach that is feasible for prevention in the field of nightlife. So in our vision harm reduction is not in contrast to abstinence.

Another factor that also plays a part in our approach is that nightlife professionals and local authorities only understand prevention from a repressive perspective, and just some of them are firm in their approach of the drug problem from a health perspective, to say nothing about harm reduction. So it is our first concern to sensitise nightlife professionals and local authorities. Therefore we have chosen our interventions to be realistic, preventive interventions, which involve all stakeholders. This is in contrast to one-site harm reduction interventions, which are maybe a little

too quick with isolated measures, for example the discussion at this moment about pill testing in Belgium and some other European countries. So we believe that a broadly based approach is the basis for continuity and gives us the framework to work on long-term interventions. Thus there will systematically develop more space for specific prevention and harm reduction interventions directed to specific risk target groups in a nightlife scene.

From this view on the drug theme, we have chosen with Partywise to aim at a prevention concept meant for both party people and nightlife professionals, which involves a mix of current preventative strategies built up around four pillars. To sensitise, to inform and to educate structural initiatives, legislation and local policy, and first aid care. For party people, Partywise developed initiatives on two levels - awareness and information. On the level of awareness we have a campaign that encourages everybody to go out wisely and, if necessary, to make sensible choices. For the campaign we have chosen to communicate with a universal icon language, because icons are the ultimate symbol of essential functional and useful information. The style of the icons makes Partywise highly recognisable. The central campaign icon will be illustrated by the 'i' symbol for information.

The campaign focuses on six main topics, which have a direct connection with drugs and going out: overheating, unity (the importance of friendship to protect themselves and others), combined drug use, emergencies (meaning concrete advice about what to do in drug related crisis situations), de-hydration, and nightlife, so it is a tribute to partying in a responsible way. Partywise informs in straightforward and playful way about nightlife, drugs and all aspects of a night out. This occurs in a brief and objective way with moralising suggestions and useful tips in order to maximise going out healthy and safely. Next to the central campaign image and the six main topics, there are still six sub categories of topics: safe sex, preparedness, healthy food, road traffic, law and party tourism.

For the first campaign period last Autumn we worked together with youth and music partners, advertised in magazines for the young, music magazines, assembled on location and spread posters, flyers and video clips to promote Partywise to a broad group of party people. In particular the co-operation with media partners and nightlife professionals was an important success factor. On the one hand, it gave more credibility to the prevention messages with our target group, and on the other hand we were able to use effective communication channels at marketing wise strategies to reach our target group, which improved their effectiveness. This is because these young people are situated in informal networks and have a trendy life-style, which renews itself continuously.

For our second campaign period we have chosen to party together with the party people. This occurred at the beginning of the summer holiday period in 2004, when we ran Partywise at the City Parade, Belgium's biggest (dance) music event with approximately 200,000 visitors. It is comparable with the Love Parade in Berlin. For this initiative we also draw party people into Partywise, for example: Partywise developed its own DJ contest, which was held before the City Parade with our media partners under the supervision of a well respected jury.

This summer we also started up the first edition of the Partywise booklet 'Streetwise'. On the one hand, the booklet contains prevention information, including data from our first research of drug use in nightlife in Belgium, with comments from party people about the results, and also some prevention messages about party tourism. This will be the central topic for next summer, because a lot of Flemish young people go to dance 'paradises' for partying. Also a lot of Dutch, French and German young people come to Flanders for our Summer Rock Festivals. Consequently this topic focuses on the phenomena of the 'time out' situation, as studies from the UK and the Netherlands have told us that young people use drugs more frequently and in greater quantity in these situations; but also the fact that unknown factors in a strange country can lead to unpleasant and risky situations. On the other hand the booklet contains recent information from the nightlife scene itself, such as up-coming DJs, lifestyles and interviews with the manager responsible for a peer support organisation. The booklet will be disseminated through music and fashion shops, youth clubs, nightclubs, dance events and summer music festivals.

More information about going out wisely can be found on the website. The website is the heart of the Partywise project for party people and is the best situation for working with the icons. The website includes six parts, of which "know how to Partywise" is the most important. This part is built up as an informative model where the visitor can work individually. Through the icons that symbolize each topic of the campaign, the visitor can search for the information he or she is looking for. It is enough to combine at random two icons on the screen, each time giving a piece of text on the right side of the screen including brief objective information and useful tips provided in a straightforward and playful way. This model means the visitor is not confronted with large pieces of text. He or she decides which icons will be combined and how much information he or she will read.

Other chapters on the website. One through which we have joined up with the party people, enables visitors to find information on the early warning system. Later in my presentation I will tell you more about this. They can read the booklet online and those who want can subscribe to the electronic Partywise information service. Also on the website some famous personalities from the music scene, for example major DJs, club managers and organisers of music festivals or dance events, give their golden tips on how to create a successful party. "Wise up" informs visitors to the website about forthcoming Partywise's activities, giving an overview of some interesting and useful links, while the Party Web area provides a party guide, an extensive going out agenda. And "More info for Wise Heads" gives more background information on the six main topics. Finally "Get stuffed", the Sixth Chapter, provides visitors with an overview of campaign materials.

Our second target group are the professionals. For professionals we developed initiatives based on sensitising, informing, educating and structural interventions. On a level of sensitising, informing and education, nightlife professionals have been informed by a direct mail about Partywise. They have also received campaign material and have been invited to co-operate with the Partywise project. Our past experience has shown that most nightlife professionals are convinced of the importance of creating conditions to enable people to party healthily and safely.

Because the organisers of dance events and music festivals, and club managers, have the need for objective information about new dangerous drugs and trends in drug use, we have extended the early warning system, which is part of the European EWS Network (which gives early warnings in the case of synthetic drugs) to nightlife. For nightlife it is about controlling information, and it means not only providing the warning, but also linking this to prevention information. In the same way we also inform the party people about new dangerous products and trends in drug use. This happens via the Partywise website, the booklet Streetwise and through the support of our network of nightlife professionals who hang up posters at their location, for example, or at nightclubs or dance events.

The first concrete education initiative is first aid of drug incidents. This education discusses the different party drugs and the meaning of recreational drug use in the nightlife context. Next, it focuses on the organisation of a healthy and safe environment for partying. It gives an inside view about first aid in drug incidents and basic skills to respond in an appropriate way. The priority target groups were those who were working within nightlife and have direct contact with party people, for example security staff, bar staff, youth workers etc.

Partywise also developed structural prevention interventions, the first initiative is a manual with guidelines for going out healthily and safely. It includes guidelines and brief information about creating a safe and healthy physical environment, supplementary prevention and harm reduction interventions, preventive control, and finally a tailored alcohol and drug policy for drug managers, organisers of music events, local government and youth services, with realistic and feasible prevention interventions. This manual is comparable with other guidelines, for example Safer Clubbing from the UK.

In our vision of a global prevention approach with a mix of current initiatives, we are currently exploring how we can make formal agreements to provide risk analyses from a health perspective, with explicit attention on drugs, via the organisation of music events in Flanders. We also tried to stimulate multi-disciplinary consultation on a local level between prevention work, health inspection, local government and organisers, particularly in preparation of a big music event.

Finally, about the fourth pillar: first aid and care from the Autumn 2004 prevention broadcast in Flanders, we will start with education sessions for youth houses, nightclubs, security organisations etc. Also the co-operation with the Red Cross, who regularly holds first aid stages at music events, will be intensified.

For the future, we aim in view of long term results, to continue, renew and extend our interventions - therefore permanently developing our vision on prevention and harm reduction is a priority. To realise this, VAD started to study on trends in drug use in the Belgium nightlife scene. A scientific base is absolutely necessary to refine our interventions, and gives us the opportunity to differentiate our prevention policy. This makes us able to anticipate more effective and efficient new developments. This fits also in the global vision of the Flemish Health Sector to differentiate and tune interventions into specific target groups. This is the way we want to develop Partywise in the future.

Thank you.