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The Healthy Nightlife Toolbox HNT

Evidence based working is becoming increasingly important, especially since resources for prevention activities are becoming harder to come by. By using the *Healthy Nightlife Toolbox* for gaining and sharing insights, we prevent field workers from having to re-invent the wheel and offer a solid knowledge base on how to create safe and healthy nightlife settings.

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Creating safer and healthier nightlife settings

At the Club Health conference in June 2010, a new tool for disseminating knowledge on creating safe and healthy nightlife settings was presented: *The Healthy Nightlife Toolbox*. The objective of this international project is to reduce harm from alcohol and drug use amongst young people. *The Healthy Nightlife Toolbox* project has resulted in a website¹ containing information on high quality interventions and literature; this website is stimulating the exchange of knowledge on evidence based drug and alcohol prevention in nightlife settings. It aims to make valuable information for creating a safer and healthier nightlife setting readily available to local, regional and national policymakers and prevention workers.

Five EU members have been involved in the development of the *Healthy Nightlife Toolbox*: NDI² from Hungary, VAD³ from Belgium, Irefrea⁴ from Spain, LJMU⁵ from the United Kingdom and Trimbos Institute⁶ from the Netherlands. The website contains a handbook for creating safe and healthy nightlife settings as well as databases with contact persons, References and evidence based and best practice interventions. In this way, *the Healthy Nightlife Toolbox* aims to contribute to a safer and healthier nightlife.

Why nightlife?

Going out in nightlife is a way for people to relax and have a good time. Nightlife visitors' motivations for going out are, for instance, socializing with friends and seeking romance and/or sex.⁷ Alcohol and drugs are often taken to facilitate sexual encounters but also alcohol and drug use itself (being intoxicated) are among people's motivations to go out.⁸ Substance use among nightlife visitors is often much higher than in the general population.⁹ A recent study in the Netherlands among «party goers» (i.e. people at large parties or festivals with over 5,000 visitors) reveals that in the last year party goers used substances far more often than the general population (Table 1 shows the exact data).

This is not only a health problem; it is also a safety problem. Due to substance abuse in nightlife settings, public safety, and public order itself, is often compromised.¹¹ Drinking establishments and nearby environments are places where incidents involving aggressive behaviour are most likely to occur.¹² A study conducted in four European countries found a strong relationship between frequency of intoxication and involvement in violence. Men who had been drunk five times or more in the last four weeks were twice as likely to be involved in a fight, and women five times more likely, compared to people who were never drunk.¹³

Furthermore, after a night out party goers have to get home. A strong relationship is shown between the frequency of drink-driving and participating in nightlife.¹⁴ Also drug-driving is not unusual after rave-parties.¹⁵

Nightlife is obviously an important setting for the prevention of substance use and related problems. Paradoxically, there are hardly any evidence based interventions in this field which have been proven

Substance	General population	Party goers
Alcohol	85%	96,5%
Cannabis	5,4%	45,6%
Ecstasy	1,2%	30,8%
Cocaine	0,6%	18,7%
Amphetamines	0,3%	11,0%
GHB	0,0%	7,8%

Tab. 1: 12 month prevalence per substance in the Netherlands.¹⁰

effective. There are some interventions that have been proven cost-effective but these can probably be seen as exceptions to the rule.

Evidence based working in nightlife

So that leaves us with the question: why is so little knowledge about what is effective in nightlife settings available? Why is relatively so little research conducted in a field that is so relevant to people's health and safety? There are some plausible explanations for this hiatus. It is relatively difficult to conduct research in nightlife settings compared to, for example, a school setting which is structured and therefore easier to reach. Furthermore, in comparison to other settings there are relatively few prevention efforts in nightlife. Consequently, there are fewer interventions to research. Notice however that this could be a vicious circle: little is invested in this field because there is not much known about efficacy compared to other settings.

Working with evidence based interventions in nightlife settings is not only important because of the increased likelihood of the efforts being effective. Nowadays, policymakers will be far more critical of an intervention's effects. More than ever, financiers of prevention efforts need to prove that money is being used efficiently. Increasingly, there will be competition between eligible interventions, and often activities in nightlife need to «compete» with evidence based programs in other settings. Developing evidence based interventions helps to convince policy makers to invest in nightlife.

Evidence based working is not only about using a scientific basis when analysing nightlife activities. It is also about self-evaluating one's own interventions, sharing knowledge, and not having to reinvent the wheel. *The Healthy Nightlife Toolbox* promotes evidence based working in nightlife by making relevant knowledge accessible to the broader public. Furthermore, it enables prevention workers to share their acquired knowledge and experience with interventions in nightlife settings with the rest of Europe.

The Healthy Nightlife Toolbox

The Healthy Nightlife Toolbox is a website containing relevant information for creating healthier and safer nightlife settings. It disseminates information on high quality interventions and Reference and stimulates the exchange of knowledge on drugs and alcohol prevention in nightlife settings. *The Healthy Nightlife Toolbox* aims to make the body of knowledge on the prevention of risky substance use and related harms in nightlife settings accessible to prevention professionals and policymakers. Another goal is to identify and review the available evidence on the prevention of risky substance use and related harms in nightlife settings. Furthermore, it stimulates the exchange of experience, expertise and scientific evidence on alcohol and party drug prevention in nightlife settings.

The Healthy Nightlife Toolbox consists of:

- An intervention database with evaluated interventions
- A Reference database with reviewed Reference on interventions
- An expert database with experts on prevention in nightlife from all over Europe who can be consulted by prevention workers.
- A «good-to-know» database with relevant Reference on creating safer nightlife settings
- A handbook with practical guidelines on how to create a safe and healthy nightlife
- News on safer nightlife, such as recent publications and forthcoming events
- A platform for sharing knowledge

The different databases are the core of *the Healthy Nightlife Toolbox*. The intervention database contains evaluated interventions in nightlife. All interventions in the database can be sorted and

searched for, by: issue addressed, intervention type, quality of evidence and effect. The issues addressed that can be searched for are: alcohol, drugs, sexual health, violence, transport and accidents.

Intervention types in the database are divided between professionals and training staff; intervention types include: pill-testing; education for nightlife users; community/multi component interventions; environmental measures; medical and first aid services; policing and enforcement; legislative measures; drink driving interventions; and a category «other». All interventions have been ranked according to the quality of evaluation by means of criteria based on the GRADE-system.¹⁶ The more stars an intervention gets, the stronger the scientific evidence is for the effectiveness of the intervention. In addition, the interventions are marked +, -, or ? to indicate what kind of effect the intervention has; a positive effect, a negative effect or no effect/mixed results.

The Reference database consists of articles on effectiveness of interventions in nightlife. The studies included have been selected through a systematic search of published academic Reference. The intervention descriptions in the intervention database correspond to Reference in the Reference database.

These databases on interventions can give you an insight into what works, and what does not. However, there is more to know about creating safe and healthy nightlife settings than just evidence based interventions. For instance, much is known about how to implement an intervention the best way and what factors should be taken into account. In order to be able to offer a complete overview of knowledge on creating safe and healthy nightlife settings, a handbook and a good-to-know database are also included in the toolbox.

The Healthy Nightlife Toolbox Handbook provides models of good practice including a structured methodology which can be used to identify and implement suitable effective interventions and policies. *The Healthy Nightlife Toolbox Handbook* offers guidelines for prevention workers including: background information on the use of alcohol and drugs in nightlife settings and the main health and safety problems resulting from this; advice on an integral approach to tackling these problems; and practical tools to do this. Furthermore it offers an overview of the different types of interventions that could be used and information about their efficacy with direct links to the databases.

In addition, the toolbox contains a good-to-know database with extra information such as Reference, reports and papers on general nightlife issues which may be useful and interesting to know. In this section you will find, for instance, articles on glassware in a venue or information about «drink spiking». Ultimately the goal of the *Healthy Nightlife Toolbox* is that all prevention workers know how important evidence based working is and to facilitate easy access to up-to-date knowledge that has been acquired by, and shared between, partners. This will help to create healthy and safe nightlife settings all over Europe.

The future of the Healthy Nightlife Toolbox

The development of the toolbox is the beginning of what, hopefully, will be an easier way of sharing knowledge in the nightlife prevention field in Europe. Web statistics show www.hnt-info.eu is already accessed by individuals from a wide variety of countries.

It does not have to take years for new (scientific) insights to be put into practice. Together with related projects, such as the Democracies, Cities and Drugs¹⁷ project and the Club Health¹⁸ project (which focuses on sharing local practices and knowledge on policy in nightlife), *the Healthy Nightlife Toolbox* can serve as a vehicle for continuous knowledge sharing.

Evaluation and publication of local initiatives makes knowledge about prevention in nightlife accessible to other prevention workers in Europe. This does not have to be a complicated or expensive process. *The Healthy Nightlife Toolbox Handbook* offers



an overview and guidelines on evaluation options. Furthermore, when an intervention is evaluated, the «contribute» button in the Healthy Nightlife Toolbox enables prevention workers to share their acquired knowledge of the intervention. This way, *the Healthy Nightlife Toolbox* will reflect what is happening in the field. Issues addressed in the toolbox will be representative of issues appearing in nightlife. For now, the focus of adaptation will be on translating *the Healthy Nightlife Toolbox* to as many languages as possible to make it accessible to as many EU member states as possible. In conclusion, to realize a lasting change in Europe's nightlife settings it is crucial to be updated on the latest insights and to ensure that interventions across Europe are evaluated. We would like to invite everyone working within nightlife prevention to share knowledge by contributing to and using *the Healthy Nightlife Toolbox*. ●

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Endnotes

- 1 Cp. www.hnt-info.eu
- 2 Cp. www.ndi-int.hu/ENGLISH.NDI/index.htm
- 3 Cp. www.vad.be/english.aspx
- 4 Cp. www.irefrea.org/
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