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# Party+, a European Network for Safer Party Labels

**Party+<sup>1</sup> is a European Network for Safer Party Labels, created in April 2009 by four Labels and Charters: Safer Clubbing (Switzerland), Q de festa! (Catalonia), Fêtez Clairs (Paris) and Quality Nights (Belgian's French Community). The main aim of Party+ is to improve nightlife settings through community empowerment by developing the existing Labels and Charters for nightlife venues and implementing new ones within European cities or regions.**

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## What are Labels and Charters?

Before attempting to understand the interest in gathering safer party Labels and Charters into a network at a European level, it is important to first define the specific contributions of these labels and charters in terms of health in party settings.

When partying, young people take or are exposed to a multitude of risks: consumption of legal and illegal substances, unprotected and/or unwanted sexual relations, risks to hearing, violence, problems related to road safety, public nuisances... These risks can lead to health problems, crisis situations and possible HIV and HCV contaminations.

Labels and Charters can reduce these risks by creating safer party settings and promoting relevant health services such as health promotion materials and information (e.g. earplugs, condoms, free drinking water, training of the clubs' staff, and leaflets about alcohol, emotional and sexual issues, tobacco, drink and drug driving and addresses of health NGOs).

These improvements have been proposed for several years to clubs in different ways, including through consultation with Public Health services and health NGOs. Guidelines, standards and/or recommendations have been proposed but without effect. Many field workers still testified of their difficulties in contacting club owners and organizing on-site information stands. We can thus imagine the difficulties involved with bringing a structural change to the environment of party venues.

Labels aroused more interest amongst club owners because they are not only focused on health problems related to drug consumption but also on the well-being and general health of the clientele. As well as this, Labels and Charters offer a capital gain in terms of image, communication, recognition of their work with the public and new networking possibilities.

## Why develop Labels when it is easier to establish a new law?

Labels and Charters allow sustainable services because they have been developed in a participative way with all the stakeholders. The services respond to the needs of all concerned actors. They have been established through field research and meetings and consultation with the public and club owners. The membership in Labels and Charters is thus made on a voluntary basis.

The fact is that laws impose useful services, but are always defined from the top down and may not be wanted or understood by club owners. A participative process can change the mentality of stakeholders, allowing the emergence of real commitment in terms of health service issues. For example, in Belgium, the law imposes a maximum noise limit of 100db in public places. No club respects this law. The implementation work related to the Label, especially the training sessions, have allowed club owners and staff to become more sensitive to the risks which they and their public are exposed to, and to set up new services including earplugs and even a limit of 100db for some venues. Even if these clubs do not adhere to the law, they all made a step towards raising public health issues.

Labels and Charters also assure perpetuity of health services' presence while previously diverse NGOs could only organize information stands sporadically. These initiatives assure the promotion of a positive and responsible party culture. The media regularly features stories about clubs when there is violence, problems related to alcohol or drug consumption and when damage has been caused to local residents. Now it is a question of valuing positive initiatives: the preoccupation of club owners to the health of their public. Through their communication and promotion, Labels and Charters provide an opportunity to underline these positive initiatives.

## Party+, a European Network for Safer Party Labels

In April 2009 four Labels and Charters (Safer Clubbing [Switzerland], Q de festa! [Catalonia], Fêtez Clairs [Paris] and Quality Nights [Belgian's French Community]), decided to come together to create a European Network of safer party labels called «Party+». Currently more than 70 party venues from important European cities are included in these Labels and Charters.

These partners have been working together for many years within the Safer Nightlife Platform of the «Democracy, Cities and Drugs» project.<sup>1</sup> They share the same values and provide common services, even if local realities cause certain adaptations to services. It was thus necessary to discuss and coordinate the most relevant methods of improving nightlife health and the criteria upon which the methods would be based. In 2009 the decision was taken to create a European Network which would join the organisations together but which would also help the creation of other Labels and Charters and integrate them into the network.

They agreed on a common base of criteria to subscribe to the network.

Firstly, it was deemed necessary that all members of the network

were working from within a local, regional or national label or charter and that all partners must respect the following criteria:

- Partners must follow a participative process, with a health promotion approach, which must involve:
  - Partygoers - at least at the level of consultation
  - Party professionals - at least at the level of operational participation
  - Health partners (NGOs, institutions) who must validate the content of the health promotion. This process has to progress towards maximum participation.
- Partners must provide access to health promotion material and information according to the needs of the public (e.g. leaflets, condoms, ear plugs).
- Improvements to the infrastructure and comfort of party venues to reduce risks of problems such as dehydration, for example by providing access to free drinking water.
- Training of party professionals including, for instance, first-aid interventions, information about drugs and legal frameworks, techniques for non-violent communication, hearing damage...
- The implementation must be effective, and projects must be well conceptualised, realised and evaluated. Good evaluation will allow positive readjustments to the project to be made.

### Party+ Objectives

The first objective will be the improvement of existing Labels and Charters through the sharing of experiences and know-how. We will organize seminars, involving project managers and club owners at which tools will be shared, including flyers and guidelines which are already partly available from the digital library of the Safer Nightlife Platform.<sup>2</sup> An important issue in this process will be the evaluation of existing Labels and Charters. To motivate more cities and regions to create their own labels more evidence based results are needed.

The second objective will be to help interested partners (e.g. cities, regions, health associations) with the development of their own Label or Charter. This help will be facilitated by visits from experts over several days, during which a better grasp of local realities can be made; this will help the positive implementation of a label. A methodological guide to facilitate this process will be created.

By developing community empowerment involving local policy makers and nightlife professionals, the project will involve new (non-traditional) actors for health in sustained, cooperative and ethically sound actions. This should occur both at regional and local level and across participating countries. Effective coordination will support the recognition of the importance of a holistic approach to public health.

The third objective is to serve as a reference for party-going tourists all over Europe. Existing labels and charters have created a diverse network of communications on a local and regional scale (websites, leaflets, social networks...). The creation of this network will create opportunities; for example, allowing the development of partnerships with tourist agencies and other promotional tools for the public. An association with the strong image of the clubs taking part in the network will add value by facilitating contacts among the media (journalists and advertising) and thus the knowledge of Party+ amongst organizers and partygoers.

European party scenes are currently experiencing high levels of mobility among partygoers, increased by promotions from low cost airlines. «A healthy settings approach to nightclubs allows environmental issues and substance use to be tackled together. Growth in international travel associated with nightlife and the additional risks posed by nightclubbing in an unfamiliar country mean that interventions are now required on an international basis.»<sup>3</sup> A unique logo, a website and common communication tools would be an adapted response in terms of geographic coverage to partygoers' mobility and cultures. Communication tools are aimed at developing the identity, the visibility and the coherence of the project, as well as promoting a culture of «responsible parties» through messages and fundamental services being present in every Label.

To reach these objectives, a «Party+ working group» has been integrated into the framework of the Nightlife Empowerment and Well-being Implementation Project (NEW Implementation). This European project will start in January 2011 and will last for three years, with financial support from the European Commission.

### Conclusion

*Quality Nights, Fêtez Clairs, Safer Clubbing, Q de festa!...* So many labels as initiatives concerned with improving the well-being of partygoers in different European cities. These labels tackle very real issues around the various risks linked to nightlife; positive results can already be felt within communities. Thanks to the participation and the collaboration of club owners, we have created a framework which allows more awareness of issues and a reduction of risks. A participative process is more effective because it allows for a sustainability of health services while recognizing that it takes more time to address and deal with the numerous difficulties. These labels create a positive image of the party, and of the clubs. The entire party-going public will benefit from a global approach to nightlife health promotion.

Through Party+ existing charters and labels have tended to improve through the sharing of experiences. Party+ can help interested partners in the development of their own Label and serve as a reference for party tourists from all over Europe. The party participates in the well-being of the community. Party places have a big influence on the reputation of a city and contribute to its economic vitality. A safe and lively nightlife culture can also be a tourist magnet. Thus, celebrate more, risk less!●

### References

- Bellis M. A. / Hughes K. / Lowey H. (2002): Healthy nightclubs and recreational substance use: From a harm minimisation to a healthy settings approach. *Addictive Behaviors* 27: 1025-1035.

### Endnotes

- 1 [www.democitydrug.org/index.php?page=safier-night-life](http://www.democitydrug.org/index.php?page=safier-night-life)
- 2 [www.democitydrug.org/uploads/DCD1.Guidelines/EN/M42.SFFER.NIGHTLIFE\\_GUIDELINE.EN.pdf](http://www.democitydrug.org/uploads/DCD1.Guidelines/EN/M42.SFFER.NIGHTLIFE_GUIDELINE.EN.pdf)
- 3 Bellis et al. 2002.

### Party+

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[www.qualitynights.be](http://www.qualitynights.be): Jean-Philippe Hogge and Yoan Pesesse  
[www.safer-clubbing.ch](http://www.safer-clubbing.ch): René Akeret and Alexander Büchel

### More Informations:

[www.democitydrug.org/index.php?page=labels-and-charters](http://www.democitydrug.org/index.php?page=labels-and-charters)